

# OUR FANTASY CITY

CHARLES GOODWIN.

science fiction  
and fantasy  
society.

IMAGINATION INC.

# 3









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see page 26a!

3  
TO YOUR SHATTERED BODIES GO !  
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A report on the Benelux countries SF convention in Brugge

BENELUXCON III  
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FRIDAY - We arrive at the Con hotel where a group of British Fans have been staying for three days. Hence everyone is already feeling a little out of this world but has an intimate knowledge of Antwerps bookshops (SF that is), bars and museums (damn good beer the Belgians serve in their museums!).

Already there are a large number of familiar faces around; the organising committee who met us in Antwerp, some Belgians and Dutch that I remember from last years convention in Ghent and what appeared to be a complete ferry load of British Fans fresh from the mother country. I always get a great kick out of watching the trickle of Fans from all over Europe grow to a flood, it makes you feel that you're not the only lunatic after all.

Everyone gathers around and listens, with a great deal of merriment, to an account of how Jan Finder, Europe's most travelled Fan, arrived on Thursday night to find that the Hotel locked up for the night at 12 and he had to find somewhere else to sleep. Afterwards we are shown to our rooms and discover, at the end of a route march, that there are no baths or showers and no hot water in the rooms, the humour becomes a little more grim (or should it be grimy).

This leaves everyone with time to get over to the convention hall for the first film THE OTHER, a psychological drama with similarities to PSYCHO. Continental Fans seem to be much more interested in Fantasy and the supernatural than their English counterparts. Also the centre of the convention tends to be the art showroom, which is of very high quality, rather than the bar as at British conventions (they do however serve good beer in the art showroom).

On Friday night the two honeymooners in our group, Martin and Liese, throw a party in their room. A great deal of exchanging of national drinks and national songs goes on (for the second year running the massed choirs of British Fandom take the title with LOYD GEORGE KNEW MY FATHER. Runner up was Liese with a solo rendering of THE DRUNKEN PHILOSOPHERS SONG from a Monty Python lp).

SATURDAY - The Swedes are comparing the hotel unfavourably to their prisons and their comments on the coffee at breakfast are unprintable. I try to find my way to the Con hall in daylight, together with a Dutchman and a French girl, the process is somewhat complicated by the fact that our maps differ considerably from each other. The first item that I arrive in time for is a talk on Swedish SF by one of the organisers of the 1976 Swedish SF Convention, their 21'st. The history of SF in Sweden seems to owe more to the dedication of groups of Fans to producing their own magazines than to the commercial publishers.

After my usual raid on a chip stall for midday sustenance the program recommences with a program of slides. These are of artwork inspired by the works of Tolkien, they are presented by Glen GoodKnight from the American Mythopoeic society. The slides include amateur artwork and costumes from the Societies fancy dress picnic at MYTHCON as well as details from the various editions of Tolkien's works around the world. Most beautiful of the slides as far as I was concerned was a painting of a figure gazing into a sunset, this was painted from an open air meeting of some of the Societies members which, by chance, took place on the day of Tolkiens death.



Following this there is a discussion panel on the state of SF Fandom in Europe. A great opportunity for club organisers to get up and grouse at their members about how little support they get (this is a Fannish tradition). In the evening there is a French film called LES LEVRES ROUGES, the sound system and my French conspire to defeat me, so that I can't force myself to stay even for the nude scenes. Instead I go down to chat with whoever is in the bar.

Later there is a guitar recital back in the hotel. Unfortunately I get caught up in the organisation for a party and have to miss it. The party is supposed to be in my room but by a general herding instinct everyone gathers on the stairs. Those fans with any energy left are hijacked by the Americans to the swimming pool for a 'skinny dipping party'. There is a general plunging of bodies into the pool, very welcome after the lack of bathing facilities, dress becomes somewhat informal (the cine film of this should be ready for MANCON, book now).

When we get back to the rooms we find that Pete Roberts (British Worldcon Bid organiser) has been locked out of his room and the lock has jammed. Everyone gathers around to help, a Dutch girl produces a set of lock picks (!?) but an American GI puts an end to the problem by breaking the key off in the lock. There is a lot of sympathy, mixed with even more merriment. It's still only about 3 so the survivors adjourn back to my room for a debate on atheism and agnosticism in English and German. The Dutch girl delights everyone by being able to speak Cockney and then annoys them by introducing her husband (so it goes). Eventually everyone leaves and I fall asleep, unfortunately before getting into bed.

SUNDAY - Wake up to find my tongue stained a bright black by the cheap wine. Down at breakfast everyone is now in a much better mood despite the hotel. The jokes flow more freely than the coffee, sometimes unintentionally.

Peggy White (James White's wife) "Are you going to be mother Waldemar."

Waldemar Kunning (Fan guest of Honour) "No. All we Bavarians tend to be plump."

Peggy then spends the next ten minutes explaining English as she is spoke and repairing Irish-German relations.

We get over to the Con hall for Jim White's guest of honour speech which describes the history of his writing, relating it to his early days as a Fan and the progress of his study around the house and into the attic as he is hounded from room to room by his family. He also explains why he likes to place his stories in a medical rather than a military context. Jim lives on the edge of Andersons' Town in Belfast.

Jim is probably one of the most underrated writers and certainly one of the nicest people in SF. In particular he travelled all the way to the Con with us rather than flying straight over from Ireland and once there stayed with us, in the extremely grotty hotel instead of letting the organisers book him in to a better one elsewhere.

Later we see the Japanese film GODZILLA, the hilarious adventures of Japan's clumsiest monster. I think it was supposed to be a horror film, but a giant Tyrannosaurus being dragged backwards by a moth, its too much! The films for the afternoon are rounded off by some amateur short films from Holland.

There is a break for a meal and my stomach finally rebels so much against the thought of chips that I'm forced (much against my wallet) to go to a decent restaurant.



In the evening there is a showing of SLAUGHTERHOUSE 5 with the soundtrack (thankfully) in English. An excellent film which I really enjoy, even though it is the third time I've seen it.

As usual on the Sunday night everyone is very much aware that it's the last day of the convention. Consequently almost everyone here is determined to round the Con off with a good room party. The manager however has other ideas. It seems that there's a monk living on our floor who hasn't slept for three nights. So I get sent out with a walkie talkie to seek a more suitable place for a night's revelry. Almost immediately I meet up with a mixed group of Belgians and Dutch who are incensed at the British taking the blame for the noise and are coming to bail us out of trouble. It's things like that which make me like the continental Fans. The party again reassembles on the stairs, now with a definite element of us (International Fandom) versus them (hotel managers etc). The party is definitely the best so far. I vaguely remember talking to someone from just about every country in Europe.

Things are somewhat confused but I remember discussing Marxist and Maoist influence on SF groups with the Germans while watching Malcolm Davies being hurled to the ground and attacked (they claim it was an arm wrestling bout) by a female lieutenant in the US army. I certainly must have been quite 'relaxed' myself as one of the continental fans complementing me on my French, admittedly he was Dutch.

About 6.30, together with another English Fan now living in Germany (Rambling Jake), I help load Eddy Bertin (a Dutch Writer) into his car and wish them safety from the many nationalities of traffic police they have to brave on their journey. The sun is just coming up and I decide it's time for all good Fans to get to bed.

MONDAY MORNING -- Wake up at half past twelve. Find that during the night Fang the manager has turned into a human being and we get all our differences settled amicably. Begin to contemplate, with some horror, the prospect of investigating every museum, bar and bookshop in Brugge before coming home. But that's another story.

MARTIN EASTERBROOK

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ROLLERBALL REVIEWED

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<u>Directed by</u>	Norman Jewison	<u>Staring</u>	James Caan Maud Adams Ralph Richardson
<u>Photography</u>	Douglas Slocombe	<u>Editing</u>	Antony Gibbs

Rollerball is set in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which makes it SF. The society at that time has survived a few more wars and has reached the stage where there are; no more wars, no more poverty, and best of all no more politicians. The world is in the control of a small group of executives, computers decide all and affluence is in the reach of anyone who conforms to the rules. Mind you if the one computer in the film is representative no wonder things went wrong, this bionic monstrosity, in the control of a crazy computer expert (played by Ralph Richardson) while supposedly containing the total knowledge of the world, manages to lose the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Well nothing much did happen then anyway, did it? The only violent outlet the society has is a pleasant family game called ROLLERBALL.



The Rollerball pitch looks somewhat like a giant roulette wheel, in the centre instead of the usual numbers etc, there is the control box and an area for substitutes, trainers, and dead bodies. On the actual pitch there are heavily armoured motorcyclists and rollerscaterers who, as an excuse for killing each other, chase a large metal ball which is fired into the ring by an ousize pea-shooter. The catchers (one of the rollerscaterers from each team) wait until it has slowed down enough to catch it so that it does not rip their hand off (as it is said to if they try too early). Having succeeded in capturing the ball all they have to do, with the aid of their team mates, is to put the ball into their opponents goal, which looks like the wrong end of a blunderbus. The only problem is that as the rollerball ('knockout') competition progresses the rules change, so when in the early rounds only a handfull of people get killed per game (the standard tackle is the 'good old Houston mailed fist in the face' from a motorcyclist) the quarter and semi-finals allowing no substitutes become blood baths which in turn are made to look like vicarage tea parties in comparison with the final, where any vestige of anything resembling a game has totally disappeared by the inclusion of one simple new rule, NO TIME LIMIT which coupled with no substitutes or penalties means 'kill the opponents one by one' then if they have'nt killed you in the process you might as well score.

The actual games take up a very large prcentage of the film, outside the game the film is concerned with the HOUSTON team's best player, the world superstar Jonathan E, played by James ('I don't want my brother coming out of the John with nothing but his dick in his dick in his hand (The Godfather's eldest)) Caan, who is the hero (hero?) of the film. The executives who created the game, where no-one could succeed for long, decide he is becoming too big, too popular, and too dangerous to them. So first they tell him to give up Rollerball, he refuses, so they change the rules a bit but he still survives. Then they pamper him a bit, but he still refuses to give up, so they drastically change the rules and tell him it's impossible to survive the final but he still plays on and ....surprise surprise... is the only survivor and wins.

ROLLERBALL they say is a moral film (well I suppose it is just) hence all the gore and violence in the games is violence for a reason, if so please bring back violence for violence sake. The acting, James Caan as Jonothan E, Maud (man with the golden gun's girlfriend) Adams as the ex Mrs E brought back to tempt Mr E into leaving Rollerball, and Ralph Richardson in the cameo part as the computer controler, is of a high standard. So to is Douglas Slocombe's photography of the games and the editing of Antony Gibbs.

On the whole I quite liked the film and would have had to admit that it was the best SF film of the year had not an unnoticed film appeared in London for a couple of weeks only, called THE CARS THAT ATE PARIS, which was brilliant! But unless you saw it in those few weeks in June you will probably never get a chance to, so there is little point in reviewing it at length. So I'll just say ROLLERBALL is good but THE CARS THAT ATE PARIS was brilliant.

MIKE MOIR

((EDITOR: Oh oh! Rebellion amongst the reviewers again. Next thing you know they'll be comparing SPACE 1999 with Pasolini....Hmm might work at that. Anyway looks like the final score line is

ROLLERBALL 0 - THE CARS THAT ATE PARIS 1

H  
Having a good time?  
D.D.

I wish I was



# in pursuit of the last unicorn - Charles Goodwin -

Me. Here. Now.

I stand loosely and vulnerably upon the thin grass. I stand within Kensington gardens within dark tree masses within the winds of pigeon wings. Now a starling hops over the hacked and turned earth of the flowerbeds and pauses to read the name of a lady whose name the flowers bear. Now must be 1984, the year of paranoia. When did you last venture outside your clique? If Jesus came to Earth now, He could walk on the waters of the Thames. But so can I. The water has polymerised. The ice age has begun. The Sun has swallowed a black hole. The Marines have landed. Secretly we are the slaves of our pets. How are things with you?

Right now.

I stop beside the Albert Memorial and notice that it is being cleaned by a large machine like a toothpaste tube, or a sea-elephant, with a brush swivelling from the snout which gouts fountains of foamy fluid over the machine's silver body, also of course over Albert, prince Consort and Duke of Sax-Coburg and Gotha, inside his little stone booth. He sits with the programme for the Great Exhibition of 1851 A.D. in his hand, 1951 is the year when J.M.W. Turner died in the manner in which many artists die.

I know someone who finds such symbols of great amusement and some interest.

She works near here but I have no excuse to visit the place.

I am male and aged eighteen of these things called years, which are akin to Irish miles.

A miserable T-shirt of rather intense yellow and faded mauve trousers, also sandals of black interwoven spiral strips and nondescript socks. Heavy ambiguous emotional tension. A flow of lead in the stomach, a seeping of lead around the eyes. A shake of the head to flick hair from my neck; autonomous. Like keeping off the grass. Somewhere I hear music. Looking round I see a group of people eating lunch, sitting on the grassy bank, watching the cleaning machine, listening to an old number on a taper. I'm delighted to identify "The Return of the Giant Hogweed" by Genesis. I go on my way singing that redoubtable old stalwart to myself. I know of someone who can trance out to just such a musical entity.

Ahead, a boy is watering a tree. I think of the Great Exhibition of 1851; a joke about flashers? It's high summer here; nice scenery. Boiling blood, that sort of thing, the mind and body evaporate, banners fly shouting I love you, Reni! through my field of awareness. But my burnt out reflexes won't allow me to say preamble, when they don't apply outside childhood. That is, my clumsy, milling reflexes have been here since childhood and only apply to aggressive, penetrating children. Reni and I drift together throughout the evening with words only for each other and thoughts beyond our power to push through juggling barriers.

I sigh. A few pigeons flake off the sky. Maybe tomorrow...

Those innocent, fashionable fools! planting the Giant Hogweed...funny...clouds of dark grey are lumbering horrendously together in front of the sun, submerging silver linings in a granite ocean. Anarchists have probably seized the Euston Weather Station. But to really make a fuck up of the local microclimate requires stirring, stirring, stirring. A really good freeze up needs five hours but it's fun. A hurricane needs six and it's destructive, may cause floods. A tornado takes about an hour to become unstoppable, then twenty minutes of focussing before that magic



funnel drops and starts to eat. Terrorists generally use tornados, which are spectacular, deadly, hard-hitting, grudging, capricious, and discreetly adjustable. Tornados are accurate enough to assassinate someone.

A few snowflakes fall listlessly. I'm walking up the road separating Kensington Gardens from Hyde Park, which is empty of traffic because a new road surface is being laid for the use of linear motors. A few men attend to the machines which are installing the magnetic coils. The men are strong, dust-coloured. cables lie underfoot like snakes after an orgy. Two children are pelting one of the machines with stones; they are fascinated by its stoicism and humility. The machine is man-shaped and carries a component across to another machine, drops it, and returns to collect another one. A circular tape, plus conditional sub-loops, guides it. Its joints hiss. The children throw stones spitefully.

Somehow machines aren't treated with the respect of workmen for tools or with the diffidence of touching another human's property or a company's. Since machines of every sort are nationalised and hired out, and their actions are animaline but they

have no voices or eyes, I suppose they make ideal victims for everyone. people often set upon a machine and smash it. After all, every component holds the pattern to regenerate the machine, like human cells, so they can easily regenerate. So why not smash them?

But here, with a restaurant to starboard, with a sunless moment caught between the overpowering masses





In Pursuit of the Last Unicorn <sup>26</sup> 3.

Of past and future yet more individual than either, I hear a dog yap. Two people are petting a dog and trying to communicate their need for the bit of old brown bone which it is holding between wet jaws. The people and the dog are standing on the path beside the Serpentine while I stand on the bridge and watch them from on high. Another dog is standing in the water, watching the people, who are still trying to cajole the first dog into surrendering the bone. Once they get the old brown bone, they throw it into the water. The dog on the bank leaps over the dog in the water and both swim doggedly towards the bobbing bone. The humans are one male and one female. The dogs are not so easy to identify. The male human laughs and photographs the dogs as they dog-paddle slowly but surely towards the bone. The female human grins and sways on his arm. They kiss, open-mouthed. I notice that his hand occupies the back pocket of her slacks. The other pocket contains sunglasses. The dog who had the bone before regains it and starts back. He comes ashore and shakes the liquid water from himself. The ritual repeats, including the kiss. The dog in the water hasn't learned anything. He is still the underdog.

It is all very depressing.

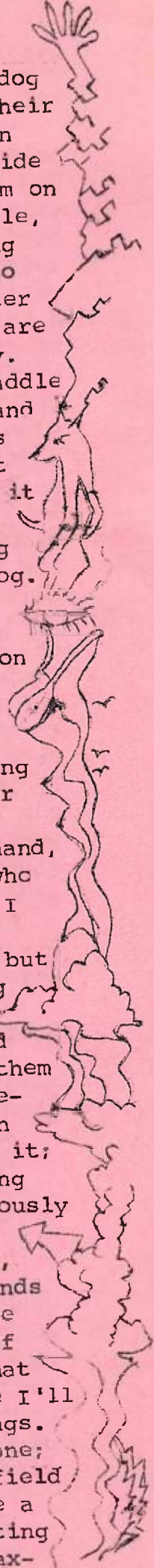
Rain patters down the Serpentine. I progress to a tree as the rain increases. Wet dreams beneath the tree. The rain soon dies and I wander across the grass.

I hear a snatch of music, like a spoon tapping the bass strings of an upright piano while the higher registers are stroked rhythmically to produce a continuous cloud of shifting harmonics. There is nobody in sight who might have a taper or radio or upright piano to hand.

I know someone who plays piano strings directly with one hand, the keys with the other: who explained what fifths are and who writes beautiful poems and who is compiling a tape of them. I asked her to try this; my eagerness overcame her doubts and warmed the core which wrote them. She is working near here but I have no reason to go there. She is working in a recording studio. It's just off the Bayswater Road.

Hyde Park is a bit empty. There seems to be a huge crowd over by Marble Arch. Maybe an excellent speaker has drawn them there. But where is the usual cloud of picnickers, exercise-freaks, dog-walkers and so on? The park is very empty; I can see only two other wanderers. Maybe the weather has emptied it; after all the clouds are lolling sloppily overhead, trundling past as the temporary weathermen stir, stir, stir, and obviously trouble is hubble-bubbling overhead.

Now I'm strolling along the straight path of dry asphalt, with cropped grass to either side, the occasional tree stands straight and tall, everything is dusty and still despite the quick spatter of rain earlier. I whistle the opening bars of Beethoven's fifth but then peter out; my whistling isn't that fast and precise, nor does it have sufficient range. Maybe I'll go and study the paintings which will be hung on the railings. I yawn in the dayheat, the dry heat. The sun is still gone; the sky has formed a merger with nothing in particular, a field of bright grey heat oppresses from above. I quicken my pace a bit as though to escape the wall-to-wall heat, my steps biting through the distance, heading for Marble Arch. A hundred Maxwell's demons hang inside my trouser legs and throw cups of





While chasing an unusual equine animal (2,7,2,3,4,7):4 across.

hot sweat against my skin.

Music comes in snatches. It becomes continuous. It is Archipelago T by Last Unicorn. It comes without a source, the haemorrhaging guitar passages recurring in their brain-splitting manner; this is one of the only bands to use guitars and their music is a credit to the versatility of the instrument. The music can't be followed; it is for effect. You can't go away humming it. At present we're just into the first movement. In comes the koto, a beautiful tumble of unique Japanese sound, then wafts away, transforms to a vecorul which has the exact tone of several black-birds and is so phraed that you mistake it for a bird at first, but which performs convolutions and phase-shifts before gradually slowing and deepening into an avalanche of bass rumbles which multiply into a world-wide car crash...an earthquake zagging up the scales along a complex route; then that heartrending wail tailing into silence and a complex drumbeat begins to patter, altering slowly; skittery viola and metallic noises which begin a classical piece for viola whose name I have forgotten, and play most of the piece but in their own beautiful arrangement.

I know someone who can pick out the sub-lim notes, who admires the skill of Mandeia, the girl who plays sub-lim for Last Unicorn, who wants to learn to do the same. Reni. My stomach turns into fear and excitement at her memory...with pale hair and god her smile! I decide to go and see her now, ask her out or something, break the barrier of defensive shyness which is as immature as brashness. I fear her, for she has the power to wound me deeply. But if it is so, let it be so. I'm seized by the desire to see her now and not to lose myself in the adolescent selfconsciousness which has separated us, held us just in touching distance. Fearful mammals caught by the demands of upbringing and instinct.

Archipelago T breaks into those peals of high, indescribable timbre, giving the eight-tracked effect of vast spaces and depths from which strange creatures moan.

A distorted voice emerges from sub-lim and tumbles into the musical forefront, singing;

"high sultry ship in spaced dark grass becalmed, my paltry trip defaced my carcass is embalmed, by authorship embraced so the sparse be almed..." Riff! A cry in the distance, drawing nearer:

"Leave! The gods decree!

"Weave, fates, what must be!

"Heave, dead ships beneath the sea!

"Grieve, your souls mingle with ancient debris!"

Riff!

"A siren craves/our flesh and lies, beneath old waves/dead ship-wrecks rise, crewed by slaves/with empty eyes, in their graves/a century flies...though hope and strength have sapped our bones, though dead men enshroud us in their groans, though nectar-blood is sucked by drones, and clones are skinned alive by crones, and loans expire in shattered stones and treacle hubs of plato's leaning pillars of Max Ernst's forest of India fearsooth mea furrlee ee aah! aaaah! ...OOH, aaaaaa...Eee!...I..." (distorting and fading, fading...)

A childish voice speaks up; "then we see Archipelago T."

The music then explodes and from the dark, dark grey sky falls rain and then a small, questing snout. Twisting fitfully as though in a fretful variety of winds, this tentacle of grey vapour reaches down into Hyde Park in a puzzled silence. I watch it as one might





UNICORN SEX DEATH MYSTERY PROBE DRAMA: SENSATIONAL REVELATIONS 5.

watch any other adroit performer; expectantly. Suddenly a dead scream fills the air as a tree trunk splits and twirls gracefully around the grey vortex in a dance which ends with the tree trunk being hurled into Bayswater Road. The tornado wobbles uncertainly, finding its feet. It does not move, held in place by the magnetic fields which control the ionised clouds and the air masses, one warm and humid, one cool and dry, which have been combined to produce it. The vortex is only a few metres across and the mad rotation is finely controlled—it should last for several hours. At present it is removing grass and topsoil; stones rain down quite gently all around. But it could wreak much damage to life and property, especially here in London—a really devastating weapon in the wrong hands.

It is in the wrong hands.

The tornado is alive, I decide. There are gods within it. It is shaped as a huge penis, fruitlessly screwing the earth. It is surrounded by a column of air rushing down; the visible part is the same air rushing up. Both rotate. In the centre is a vacuum. The winds move at maybe 500 m.p.h. Lightning flashes light the cloud base from above and below. I can't move. The tornado is big beyond comprehension yet small by tornado standards. It generates a sullen, remote rumble like many distant explosions, and the lightning is green. The rumble is air breaking the sound barrier somewhere in the tornado. Such is life.

The column drifts over the Serpentine and thins into a rope which convolutes. Spray rises to obscure it. I have a feeling that the water is dissipating the tornado's power but I also imagine that the umbilical column has drained the poor Serpentine dry. The vortex is thickening and debris circles it like an asteroid belt; stones, trees, ducks, etc. It is still distant. It moves jauntily sideways; and a car flies through the air, amazingly high. A thin haze fills the air, along with a sibilant hiss, far louder than the distant stomach rumble of the tornado. The air is thick and wet. Occasionally I hear a crackle as trees fall or a roar as a building collapses. A roof and top storey of an Edwardian building settle to the ground and people climb out of the windows. I ignore them, watching the ionic pillar of dust and debris. It is really quite quiet. I suppose it seems a bit unreal...well, no, it is real enough; but unusual? I guess that it was manufactured by expert misuse of microclimate control technology. You hear about these things being done by terrorists but this thing seems too crude and insensetive to be humanly motivated. I can't imagine someone guiding the vortex like a remote-control machine, relaxing the controls, letting it crush a few helpless bystanders; making demands. If not satisfied, crush a few more. But I suppose that is what is happening.

A number of odd items are lying in the park; a chair, a car, a piece of masonry have torn the velvet green. A dog makes a four-point landing and stands quivering. A police constable clutches an oboe and watches a circling telephone box. The tornado is putting on a show; Oh, it's all madness! The impersonal tube shuffles along park road, rendering shopfronts derelict. The crowd around Marble Arch are watching and taking photos, grinning and pointing. A plate glass window, barely visible, is suspended in a tree. I am quite close to Marble Arch; I've been ambling in that direction. I can still hear 'Archipelago T' through the roar of the storm. It's a pity that the pictures on Hyde park railings will be destroyed.

Reni always looks at the pictures on her way to work. She bought a picture once from a bloke called Martin Peart, who was a student at





Inside me I feel alone and unreal but the way you kiss...

the Royal College of Art. The picture shows a fantastic jungle landscape. In the foreground, hanging from a branch, is a milky transparent sac. A female form sleeps within it. She has grown from the branch, and is green, with the leaf-structure of a large, complex bud. She is beautiful. So is Reni. We have walked here together...we will again. I know that the tornado cannot harm Reni. She is beyond its reach as the moon is beyond the range of a spitting frog.

The crowd by Marble Arch have been flattened like chaff before a scythe or grass beneath lovers or verily like humans before a tornado. They have all bitten the dust beneath the swipe of a mighty wind and now rubbish of all sorts is descending over me; cans and peel and wrappers and newspapers; and some of the people are being scattered by the funnel which sways quite near to them. The funnel is growing wider, and a wild, shrill, destructive noise fills the air...a deafening rumbling noise surrounds me also, as though I stand on an island in an earthquake, a hurricane, behind a waterfall. I can see the grey tornado and the churning clouds above, the whole air is full of debris but it does not register. I simply stand and watch. People waltz through the air, laughing wildly, or screaming.

Someone shouts madly; "Run south-east! It's out of control! It's wild!" He runs as he shouts. A wind catches him and he becomes airborne, running up the sky. Only I seem able to stand and confront this thousand foot high dead thing and not be swept away. I see the tornado for the interacting system of air currents which it is, and not as a personal nemesis.

Apocalyptic guitars from Last Unicorn give me confidence.

The tornado is a spinning zone of destruction. It is a storm-god's wrath, a thousand hammers pounding out the elements, you know. It is already dead. A low sucking sound. A low groan of ecstasy from the clouds. The column thins, wobbles, becomes transparent, elusive, a twist of the air, nothing. The tornado departs. A tyre hits the ground, bounces, rolls, stops, falls over. The park rocks like a slight sea. The Last Unicorn have departed from my ears.

I walk across to Marble Arch, where people are laughing or crying or shouting hysterically or speechless. The Sun is already beginning to glow feebly; the weather is again under control.

A contorted man lies impaled on a rolled umbrella: dead? From the top of Marble Arch a dog begins to howl, shattering my nerves. I step out into the road in front of a speeding car. The car stops instantly; a robot device. A humanoid machine steps out and faces the crowd. It speaks. It says;

"Please do not act in any manner except to sustain life. Ambulance servos will be here in 2.3 minutes. Everything is going to be alright. Feel free to cry; it is an indication of health in either sex. It would be unusual if you did not. Laugh hysterically if you wish. Help is on its way. Have you heard the one about the robot flagellator..."

A cockney woman's voice shouts obscenities. No doubt she should feel free to do so. The robot continues; "a terrorist group—known simply as 4—have been holding the Euston weather tower for the past ninety minutes. Their demands have been met satisfactorially and the situation is under control. The danger is past. We should kill the bastards, if we could develop a paralysis gas which is instantaneous we could capture them alive and not give them a chance to kill hostages. You were all hostages but you are safe now. Listen carefully:

"A machine was planted in Marble Arch, a small device which nonetheless has a severe effect. The electromagnetic waves radiated by it





Wuffle or careful with that <sup>13</sup>axiom, Euclid, she'll eat you yet 7.

stimulated certain synaptic pathways into lower conduction by electroencephalic resonance and reduced the resistance of other regions of the brain. In other words it affected the minds of anyone within a mile of Marble Arch. It attracted people towards it. It has now been disconnected. please disperse. your minds have found excuses to come here..." I start; it is talking to me, I feel. "Study your reasons for coming here," says the robot, "they are not real. Your mind has devised them as shabby excuses to congregate near the 'lemming' machine. The subconscious part of your mind is merciless and cunning; it will have played on your sensitivities and desires. you may be imagining whole—races, value systems, companies, creeds, anything. Study your motives for being here at Marble Arch. Are they still justified? consider a crowd which hums and haws while the heavens disgorge a monster, which mutters uneasily as the monster approaches, which wonders sheepishly about its motives as it is torn apart by the monster's fangs."

Someone yells; "Christ! My money!" "Not for you, oh no—" "The nexus of occult knowledge—" "Yah! Ashamed to admit it's—" "Just passing—" "God is coming to Earth here! Wait a bit!" "He said he would... meet me here!" "Invading Earth indeed." "Well where is this free..." "Cheap!" "Cheap what, I mean the—" "I've just saved you and you don't care!" "He promised!" "You are all in my power!" "Looking for a fight?" "Reni!"

An ambulance screams up. Across its front I read a mirror-image of 'AMBULANCE'. I step into the road again and walk blindly.

Reni, I love you. We were made for each other. By a few micro-circuits. If you exist then you are indifferent. Oh God! I turn left and drift at random. The Last Unicorn was only a fantasy...well, I managed to see its huge spiral horn. behind me I hear a crash and a low groaning voice; "yooo aaahhhh quiiiiite saaaafe nooooooooooooooo"

With a frantic hatred, the pieces of the robot are being smashed. I neither turn to watch nor turn to join in. I don't notice the sound anymore.

I am empty. Numb. Useless. Inhuman. God knows.

If only I was a machine, people could smash me. Instead I stare at my feet, caught in that most painful gulf of not caring and knowing no-one else does. I contemplate suicide but doubt my bravery. I want to scream for help but I can't speak. I stare at someone who passes and he gazes at the ground, defeated by my stare. A self-defeating victory.

On the railings are the innocent paintings of nudes and landscapes. A real, real world, out of touch, out of reach.

I look at one as it occupies my field of view. A Hardy rip-off I decide. Another, the Orion Nebula with a planet scene; as if our probes—well, the Chinese ones—will reach there in a hundred generations—or as if not? My mind is a random churn of reflexive thoughts. Another picture. A girl riding a unicorn. pointed symbolism. What the hell. same price, £10, which isn't much to ask. Ten years ago it would have fetched £4 at the same price...oh, fuck these useless thoughts! I begin to cry quietly, head down to hide my face. I control myself, wipe my eyes with my sleeve. Because I believe that robot; or I disbelieve my happiness. Insecurity I suppose.

"Hey, why not buy one of these?" someone grins at me. "Cheap at half the price. Cheer you up no end. Full of subtle erotic suggestion



In pursuit of the Last Unicorn 8.

made passe by the impeccable craftsmanship which would make a wide open beaver look tasteful."

The picture indicated is a snow scene. A huge fish is climbing onto an ice-sheet from a hole in the ice. Several people are hiding behind white shields with bone harpoons to hand, waiting. The people have blue skin and are naked. The sun is a writhing protozoal form of deep, cold red.

"Alright," I say, a bit oddly, suprising myself. He holds out a C-card and says, "8 nicker and worth every penny. Sign here please."

"Sure." From seven million miles I watch my name form beneath a pen; a crazy act. He removes the card and I see the painting, wrapped in a plastic news-sheet, positioned beneath my arm. Suddenly I feel the elements of a universe collapsing into shape. There is something I should remember: "Who are you?"

"Marty Peart. Some day that'll be worth millions. Pleased to meet you," (studies the C-card) "Stef."

"Marty," I ask rapidly, "were you at R.C.A.?"

"Rumour has it. Last year. Now I'm doing part time jobs and selling these things at the weekend."

I feel glands or something dance for joy in my abdomen. Is it love or just joy at being alive? I hope Reni likes the picture...the subconscious is cunning. It guides footsteps nicely. Heigh ho and here we go, a mind trapped by shyness has found its nerve. Had it rammed down its throat. Good old 4...at this moment...Reni's off work today...her home is a number 2<sup>m</sup> bus away, a safe distance.

I thought there was something odd about my behaviour.

It's Sunday, here and now on the entropy syncline between zero and infinity on all measurements. And I feel great! Great!

Running. Me. Here. Now.

Gone tommorow?



well there it is can't win 'em all I suppose no use worrying a bout it is there I mean to say we do the best we can it just s

Hmm yes, thank you, Charles, very, er, pleasant, yes indeed...



You see, old whatisname—Martin or something—mentioned that after typing out this story, I could fill up the rest of the page. Well, let's see. Mustn't forget my sister, Jackie. She drew the picture of a unicorn. Then my thanks go to Hyde Park. All the people in the story are imaginary and bear no relation to real people, except for the starling on page one. Well, Stef is a bit like me, and Reni is like several people, some of them as yet not known to me... oh yeah. Reni is short for Renata. Yawn. Ho hum. Archipelago T is available on the record 'Cage' by Last Unicorn, on the Fugitive label. Scratch. Mumble. Heraclum Mantegazziani. That's tied up all the loose ends. Anyway it's late on Sunday evening and I've got to go back to the hall of residence cos I'm typing this at home and I've got to do some Spectroscopy work for tommorow and I must resist the inhuman dominance of this living, evil, symbiotic typewriter, ruthlessly slaughtering other people's ideas and sucking their souls from their poor, cold, crumpled little bodies before tearing them apart with savage rune-engraved electric keys and is that the end of the page?

the great... pass be... on back... to the I... ve to turn... you... on... -Last Unicorn



This is a transcript of Brian Aldiss in conversation with Philip Strick and Chris Priest about his book NON-STOP, and his other early work, at the Stanhope Institute extra-mural course on Science Fiction.

The recording is far from clear in places and parts where it becomes unintelligible are indicated by a series of dots (.....) as are omitted portions. My comments are enclosed in double brackets (()).

PRIEST: The 50's in SF were very heavily dominated by GALAXY and they brought forth a lot of writers who got a lot of publicity at the time, like Robert Sheckley, Alfred Bester, Fred Pohl but at the same time in those dear old NOVA mags there was a revolution going on. That revolution was actually more important than Bester and his crowd and that was the revolution that consisted of Brian, J.G. Ballard, to a lesser extent John Brunner and from that early revolution came forth NEW WORLDS which had this great impact in Science Fiction circles.

.....

PRIEST: ((on an intriguing method of starship propulsion from a pulp starship story))

The crew have this space anchor which, when it's turned on is stationary with respect to the universe and when it's turned off it's just like anything else. So what they do is they turn it on in the morning and shove it to the back of the ship and then they turn it off at night and shove it to the front of the ship.

ALDISS: That's what Science Fictions all about! How awful! Really getting on to this thing ((previous starship stories to NON-STOP)), NON-STOP was a bit of dialogue with Heinlein's UNIVERSE, which I thought was marvellous. Here was this new theme which I had't seen before, of this long, generation long, voyage which had gone wrong and this seemed to me splendid. But Heinlein missed so much, he did't tell me what the people felt and I thought his detail was bad, he did't make me feel the ship and I could see this as a ...voice from John.W.Campbell. Heinlein was writing a lot in those years. He'd got several names and was on his first wave of success and he was turning out lots of brilliant ideas, but really not felt, that is the absolute word, not felt. It seemed to me that he was missing out on this and if he could do that I felt that it could make an entirely different book; quite a different feel to it. And so that was absolutely what NON-STOP was going to be. It was a reply to him, a reply to Heinlein.

PRIEST: Would you like some water ((passes over bottle of Scotch)).

ALDISS: Lets take up something just marginally closer to what you said about 50's SF and what went on in NEW WORLDS. Of course what went on in NEW WORLDS was the most interesting thing. That as there had to be a revolution but I think the 50's really encouraged a revolution with F and SF and GALAXY. In fact, you see the first few numbers of GALAXY, the way that they broke with the nuts and bolts of Campbell. The things like Sturgeons form of humour, DEMOLISHED MAN, TIGER TIGER, the original Bradbury THE FIREMAN, which became FARENHEIT 451. All those sort of things were in their way a golden breakthrough.

PRIEST: Yes but they were a reaction to a standard which was essentially American.....But to me the real revolution in Science Fiction, since then, has been basically a return to the sort of writing that stopped happening around 1926. With a few exceptions like

I thought Chris Priest was a clergyman till I discovered ...



Stapleford and Huxley, but since then we've got back to writing Science Fiction in a way that is different from the sort of thing that went on in the pulps. If you were writing Science Fiction, wherever you lived, in the 1950's and the early 60's you simply had to write it in the American idiom .....and it just seems to me that NON-STOP occupies an interesting role where it's very much in the American idiom but at the same time it's done in this English way which lays the path for future writings beyond it.

ALDISS: I think that is true. You know I'm very happy of course that you like it but really looking back now things were very primitive when I wrote that. I can remember being, then, very uncertain about my audience. Nowadays you can write both gracefully and intelligently and you know that for every 5 people who dislike it there will be one or two who actually like that sort of thing. Now in those days I was very uncertain whether that was going to be so, and I, for instance resisted ending chapters with a cliffhanger. A lot of them have marvellous cliffhangers but there are a lot of them that end on a gentle and sentimental note.....

For instance when they finally get to 'midways', or some bloody place in the ship, and there's actually a porthole. The light of the Sun comes in and streams on the girls face and Complain (( a character from NON-STOP)) says he suddenly realised "the thing he wanted was not a big thing at all, it was just to see Laura's face by sunlight". And I can remember now writing that, thinking "now what will they think, Christ! Campbell will do his nut." That sort of thing was just out . So, in a very timid way, I could feel that it was a breaking with the old ASTOUNDING stuff.

The other curious thing is that it is very tightly written, as you say. I've never decided, I don't think it actually has plot at all I think it is purely a mechanism of revelation, I would never find as good a subject again, from that instance. Revelation follows revelation. Thats what the book is all about. There's nothing else. There really isn't a sub-plot, except the rats and things flying around. Its rather like, I recently re-read a book by Mary Shelley's father, Caleb Williams, which is BILL THE .....It's the first psychological suspense novel, and it's a very interesting novel indeed, tremendously good, and that has revelations all the way through , very good. But it's a complex package, with the flashbacks, this ((NON-STOP)) just carries you straight through the ship and out the other end. And since I didn't know how you went about writing a novel I packaged it up into small packages. It was going to be in four books and each book was going to have about three or four chapters and so if it was going to be 80,000 words then when I'd written 40,000 I was half the way through and so the first book would only be 20,000 and that meant that each chapter would only have to be 5,000 and I thought that I could manage 5,000 words at a time. I was by no means sure that I could manage 80,000.

I drew up a scheme. They've got an exhibition of some of my papers .....at Oxford now. and there in the first case was the manuscript of NON-STOP, which I'd forgotten about. I had'nt seen it....and they've got it out there. Its written in an old loose leaf book, in long hand if you please, with little drawings of space ships and stars going around and rats with the starships, to pass the time. On the first page there's a scheme of how it was all going to have to be, with the number of words, and then there's another column for the number of words actually written. And it says at the end 75,000 and the date that I had finished and "Thank Christ!".

If there are any Rats on your Starship, please send them to Harry Harrison. D.D.



I had no idea really how you wrote any sort of novel, never mind a science fiction novel, so that I had a very strict guide line, and the idea was so simple to begin with. Once you'd got the idea, and you'd have all the subsidiary revelations, you're carried along with it yourself and indeed I was. I sat up in my bedroom and wrote it consistently doing about 3000 words a day steadily until the thing had stopped and that was it. It was a mechanical sort of exercise.

.....

For a long time I could'nt recognise NON-STOP and HOTHOUSE as being part of myself, though I do now, and what I think they have is (A) Youve bloody well got to go along for the scenery because it plays a very important part. Thus, of course, in NON-STOP and HOTHOUSE the scenery is all in a way but its also true of PROBABILITY A, AN AGE with the panoramas of the cryptozoic, and of course in practice they have'nt died, certainly in my next book. ....The scenery is very important to me, I mean GREYBEARD, of course, the other great scenery novel, and EARTHWORKS too I suppose.

The other great interest of mine is all the mind games that go on, like spatchti((?)) or ego((?)) and all that sort of stuff....which I love doing. I mean there were times when I was a bit shagged out and then I'd go to the pot pschology again.

STRICK: Can I just pause at that point and ask you, by comparison with NON-STOP, how do you write novels now. I mean do you in fact have a scheme, a wordage or is it just something you can't hold down, it just comes out and you write it as it comes? You don't write it longhand presumably, you type now. How is it done?

ALDISS: Have you in fact written any symphonies in the sheds at all. ((mimicking Monty Fyhton)) No its just an ordinary shed. ....

Well when I'd done that ((NON-STOP)) Christ, one bound and I was free. I could do anything. I went away and wrote 3 awful novels, just like that. Not half as good, I think as NON-STOP now.

STRICK: Which were those?

ALDISS: ((answer, curse it, drowned by laughter.)).....but the one good thing about it is I spent a year in Sumatra and again what's good about EQUATOR, one has a certain political sense of a naive order in there, but there is also the scenery in that novel, thats OK but I don't think that's quite enough to excuse it entirely. But when that must have been.....I forget, it happened a good while ago, I did it in the evening but then I packed in my job and decided that I would have a year to make good as a writer and, its just like a holiday, Chris ((Priest)) will tell you this sort of thing. Instead of sitting down and getting on in earnest you go banannas. I sat down in a nice sunny bedroom, I had'nt even a table. I worked off a big oak chest and again I wrote in longhand so that was no trouble. I wrote, not necessarily in that order, what turned out to be THE PRIMAL URGE and what turned out to be THE MALE RESPONSE and I was really having fun, enjoying myself with those, and of course they fell absolutely. They just did'nt find a market and so I was rather up a gum tree by the end of the year and I ((found a deal?)). It fell off a christmas tree or something I suppose, but something else came along. Oh, I suppose then I wrote EQUATOR, because there was always NEW WORLDS to fall back on. There was good old Ted ((Carnell)), two guineas a thousand and desperate for material and so I put together EQUATOR, in order to get the money, and he got it, and did'nt think it was very good. And indeed there's something to be said for that point of view. The money sort of tided me over and then I started selling a few stories to the States. Britain



was undergoing one of her perpetual crises and, then God, the pound was being devalued at that time and 10 dollars was worth 50 quid, or something stupid, it was'nt too bad. Pride would'nt let me go back to work and I started another novel, which would be .... oh lets not think what it would be. But then finally the other two novels PRIMAL URGE and MALE RESPONSE suddenly sold, to the most awful market imaginable. Which was it? MALE RESPONSE came out for somebody called Beaver Books....."EVERY WOMAN IN THE CITY WAS HIS!".

PRIEST: Yes it had such a good blurb on the back. "Adult Science Fiction". Underlined

ALDISS: Yes, that's right. "Snigger, Snigger"

But you know, by Christ, they gave it a thousand dollars and that was it. Things were very much better then and, I mean, a lot of fun really this was turning up printed. But since my first book, which was a fictitious diary.....it was published by Faber. They then said "Well what are you going to do for an encore" and so I said to them "Well I also write Science Fiction" and instead of them saying "Whats that?" they said "Oh good!". They knew what Science Fiction was, which was a miracle in those days, to find a publisher who actually knew what it was and read it. That was Charles Monteith.....a hell of a reader.

PRIEST: I wish someone would tell them what it is nowadays.

ALDISS: So that was OK and they said "Right, go ahead and do it.". So I had actually got a publisher and that was really very crucial. Then they published the collection of short stories. Well NON-STOP could not find a paperback publisher. Its the reverse now, any fool can get a science fiction novel published in paperback, or he could until 2 or 3 years ago. Its a bit more dodgy now. But in those days there was absolutely no market for them unless your name was Van Vogt. I did toy with changing my name. Well it finally got accepted, I suppose a couple of years later. As for the collection of stories, SPACE TIME AND NATHANIEL, it did'nt get accepted until 5 years later. It was just impossible to sell these things. ((To Chris Priest)) You've got the old original ((pointing to cover)) the scene outdoors, the scene outdoors that never happened. You know they bought the cover cheap from Ballantine, oh no from Ace that's right. It was a flip over, Leigh Brackett and Ken Bulmer. But digit gave me seventy five quid, one third on reception, one third on publication, and one third on litigation. But it sold out very quickly, so they reprinted it and I got another seventy five quid, and that was alright.

By then I'd got another volume of short stories out called CANOPY OF TIME, which they published. By that time there were more wide awake chaps coming on the scene, for instance Four Square, the most extraordinary chap who was born in Wigan, affected an Oxford accent which was marred by his years in Australia..... I can't think what his name was but he was very good to me. They started buying my books.... From then on things started to change.

STRICK: Did your SPACE TIME AND NATHANIEL stories all get into the Carnell collection. Did they publish most of those.

ALDISS: Well it was a bit odd really because I think almost all those in that first collection were published in Ted's magazine except that .....Oh maybe one or two in NEBULA.....Yes that's right but Faber came along and said "Well, what about this short story collection?". It was before NON-STOP because at that time I'd only had twelve stories published, so I had to write two more quickly to get a collection together. Never has a writer been more favoured with a collection of short stories, the first stories I ever wrote. They're all in the book.



There were one or two others.....They weer accepted straight away. That really is off the subject as it were.

PRIEST: ....One of the most intriguing things is the idea of the whole thing being a laboratory study, with the giants watching through the windows, and you've done this over and over again, obviously in PROBABILITY A but more .... in stories like OUTSIDE and one of your stories which I don't think anyone in this room has read except me which I think is one of your best yet.

ALDISS: TOTAL ENVIRONMENT.

PRIEST: Which is NON-STOP from the outside.....

ALDISS: Well you see I've never reprinted it because I always hope to make a novel out of it. What it is actually, it takes place in India and what you have got, instead of a starship, is a big environment built by the UN and through various aid coercions they manage to get a lot of Indian families to go in there. They don't give them enough water and food and they see what happens to the breeding, in other words its a big rat experiment with human beings. At that time I actually wanted to talk about India and about Indians, and about the Hindu philosophy of accepting Karma and your role in life, this sort of thing. It seemed to me that in fact Hindus would respond very positively to this sort of situation, in a way that would destroy westerners. .... You go somewhere like Hong Kong and you see the chinese manage to survive and prosper, even spiritually, in an environment that would result in chaos if you put westerners in there, because of the expansionist western philosophy. So this was quite a difficult thing to do and I was always interested , having written this.....which by some miracle was published in GALAXY, I don't know why. I wanted to expand it into a novel but there was something I had against it at the time. So I didn't do anything with it. There's some flaw in the reasoning somewhere, which I forget at the moment, which didn't encourage me to do anything.

Actually that was about 21,000 words long and I then had an agent in America called Scott Meredith, who sent it first of all to John.W. Campbell at ASTOUNDING/ANALOG despite the fact that I had said to him please don't send anything to John.W.Campbell. So I got Campbell's letter back which says "Aldiss has got it all wrong. People wouldn't react like this in this sort of environment, they'd get guns and break out".....Oh God! It tells you so much about all that jazz, and it also tells you a lot about Campbell. He knew bugger all about life in India. He had'nt been nearer to India than the Kings court Hotel in London but he nevertheless felt himself quite free to pontificate about it. Typical!

STRICK: Why did'nt you want the story to go to Campbell.....

ALDISS: Well because I grew up reading and admiring the magazine and then gradually realising that, I mean, Campbell changed. He changed several times during the course of that long editorship and I really felt that he involved all sorts of things that I very much disliked. I think now I dislike them less but I reacted against this sort of Gernbackian idea that "OK, things are'nt so good. So 'a great big dose of technology' and blast through and you'll be OK." It seems to me that the history of the world doesn't prove that theory. Campbell would'nt look at the opposite thesis. He just would'nt consider it and so what he was publishing was not Science Fiction, it was only one side of the coin. I think that all my books are anti-technology, shaped by Campbell in a way, because I reacted against that. I mean Campbell would'nt have liked NON-STOP either because there is the



metaphor of imprisoning technology.

STRICK: Yes it is an anarchic novel, going on Campbell's standards.

ALDISS: I loved his magazine but when I felt I knew about Campbell I didn't like that..... and I still feel very much against this idea of an overwhelming technology. Although since, we've seen so many reactions against it, I think its true to say I find these even more loathsome in a way. But nevertheless that was the position.

Having said that against Campbell I must say that he was in many respects the most agreeable and gentlemanly man that you could meet. He was an extraordinarily good.....I sent him a crappy old story, and I was in the army, ages before I began to write. Absolutely drivel, full of illustrations of mine, absolutely terrible. If I blushed still I'd blush to think of it. I got such a nice letter back from Campbell in that characteristic big scrawl. You know, "Swowing great promise. Write again in 50 years time.". No, terribly nice actually.

There was a potentially embarrassing situation when I was guest of honour at a Worldcon in London. Campbell was co-guest and so there we were, lumped together, and all the old Campbell fiends over here. Can I name them? No! .....

He knew that he'd never accept one of my stories and I knew that I'd never offer him one and yet ..... all sorts of friendly feelings for England. All the rest of the world was wogs, loathed the rest of the world, but England was OK because it'd got Scotland at the top.  
.....

STRICK: who did you sell your stories to first, in the States.

ALDISS: Pohl. Good old Fred Pohl. Is that actually so? I believe it is. At least my first story published when Fred was starting up something called STAR SCIENCE FICTION for Ballantine. ....

(( A short discussion follows between Aldiss and Priest on the topic of writing a story and then discovering that the plot has been used previously. Aldiss suggests throwing the story away. Unfortunately this section of tape has a very bad case of the Watergate disease and is mainly unintelligible))

STRICK: do you throw away 35,000 words.

ALDISS: I threw away a whole novel last year. Chris ((Priest)) knows this. I actually deliberately wanted to write a Wells novel, having done it with some success with Mary Shelley. I got the bit between my teeth and I thought "Right then. I'll take my second favourite SF novel and bring MOREAU up to date.". I think it was very ill judged because its something I never do. I always try to do something different and here I was, I was trying to do something the same. I finished it but I didn't like it. So thats it. Its lying around. I'm never going to publish it, unless I'm absolutely skint. I'll publish it under a pen name, John Brunner or something.

(( Thanks are due to Brian Aldiss for allowing the discussion to be recorded and used in our magazine. There is another side of the tape which has so far not been transcribed. This is because, on side two, the batteries have really given up and as the tape slows up and the recording level goes down the three participants take on a resemblance to gabbling dwarves, receding over the hillside. It contains details of Aldiss' next book, so we may try to get hold of a better quality tape recorder to transcribe it for a future issue.

MARTIN EASTERBROOK))



OTHER SF GROUPS

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(reprinted from SFANG 1 - published by Graham Poole)

Just in case you horrible lot think you can get away from SF for a holiday here is a list of local SF groups, one of which may be near your home.

- WOKING SF CLUB - Sonya Porter, 6 Robln Hood Close, St Johns, Woking, Surrey.
- NOTTINGHAM SF GROUP - Alan Robson, 36 Leslie Rd, Nottingham.
- CHELTENHAM SF GROUP - Graham.R.Poole, 23 Russet Rd, Cheltenham, Glos.
- LONDON - Regular meeting at "One Tun", Saffron Hill on the first Thursday of every month.
- MANCHESTER - Meetings take place on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays of every month at "The Crown and Anchor" on the corner of Port St and Hilton St.
- NEWCASTLE - NESFIG. Harry Ball, 9 Lincoln St, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE8 4EE.
- BIRMINGHAM SF GROUP - Vernon Brown, Pharmacy Dept, Aston University, Gosta Green, Birmingham B4 7ET.
- KINGSTON UPON THAMES - Meeting on last Saturday of the month at Bernie Peake's, 6 Hawks Rd, Kingston-upon-Thames
- READING SF CLUB - Keith Freeman, 128 Fairford Rd, Tilehurst, Reading, RG3 6QP.
- STOCKPORT AND DISTRICT - Paul Skelton, 25 Bowland Close, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire, SK2 5NW.
- NORTH DOWN SFG - David Patterson, 4 Copeland Drive, Comber, Co Down, Northern Ireland.
- WALLINGTON - Evening class in SF given by Dai (one of our artists) Walters and Philip Strick. Contact Mrs Butler, 23 Heathdene Rd, Wallington, Surrey. (Tel 01-647-7689)

BOOKSHOPS

LONDON - S.F.&COMIC BOOK CO. at 26 Hillgate St, London W8 are planning to import a fairly complete range of American editions. They also have a comprehensive selection of American comics.

Mail order - ANDROMEDA Books, 57 Summer Row, Birmingham B3 1JJ.  
- FANTAST (MEDWAY) Ltd, 39 West Street, Wisbech, Cambridge.

CONVENTIONS

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(Reprinted from THE SPANG BLAH vol III no 3 - published, in Italy by Jan Howard Finder)

- MANCON 5 - 16-19 April 1976. Robert Silverberg Guest of Honour. registration £2.50 to Brian Robinson, 9 Linwood Grove, Manchester M12 4QH. (only 75p registration for program details).
- BENELUXCON 4 - 15-16 May 1976. Supporting Membership (entitles you to all further information £1) to be held at De Leewenhorst, Noordwijkerhout. Write to Paul.V.Oven, Rietgors 62, EEMNES - 2670, Nederlands.
- SCANCON 76 - 4-7 June 76, Stockholm Sweden. GOH Jack Vance. Supporting membership £1 (beware most info will be in Swedish. Contact PO Box 3273 (SCANCON 76), S-103 65 Stockholm, SWEDEN. (Or write to OUR FAIR CITY for full details so far).



## THE SEEDLING STARS - James Blish

== =====

Arrow 50p

Written in 1957, this book is a collection of four stories with a common theme: Adapted Men. The AM are produced by 'Panotropy', genetically changing the germ cells before conception. In the first story this has been outlawed by the Earth authorities, since although it is cheap they can't make a profit out of it. Terraforming, the other method of colonising a planet is extremely expensive but high profits can be obtained. The conflict between these two methods has been the subject of much SF (notably Roger Zelazny's THE KEYS TO DECEMBER).

An illegal AM colony has been set up on Ganymede, and the authorities have to prove this a failure in order to justify Terraforming. They make another Adapted Man, 'Sweeny', and having conned him into believing that the colony is evil and once its members are recaptured they can return him to human form, they land him on Ganymede as a spy. There he discovers that the AM are still working on Panotropy in order to colonise the stars using the suppressed interstellar drive. However he becomes friendly with the colonists and learns the truth about the authorities, whereupon he reveals his spying. The colonists then fake a civil war over their proposed return to Earth, which covers the launching of the starship. The seeding program has begun.

The emotional conflicts of Sweeney are well explored in this story, as he tries to decide whether to believe the authorities' version of events, which he has been indoctrinated with from birth, or the colonists' story, which he has just learned for himself; a conflict which is often seen in children. In fact, although physically 'grown-up' Sweeney has many of the attitudes of a child, having been raised in total isolation from anyone except psychologists.

The second story concerns an AM colony living in 'The Attic', a vine network 250 feet above the ground (or 'Hell') on the planet Tellura. Five rebels have questioned the 'Book of Laws' left by the 'Giants'; as punishment for this they are lowered into 'Hell', from which no-one has ever returned. Having landed they start to explore Hell. A nice touch is that they all suffer from 'motionless sickness', since they are used to living in an environment where the 'ground' moves constantly under their feet with the wind. They find Hell inhabited by huge reptiles, and on climbing a mountain discover a spaceship and the 'Giants' (one of them commits suicide when faced with the fact that the Giants are real). The Giants explain that they are not Gods but men of the race which originally seeded Tellura. They will now command the rest of the AM to colonise the surface of the planet, since the rebels have proved that they can survive there.

There is a clever irony in the fact that the rebels doubt the existence of the Giants except as symbols, dislike the idea that they have to rely on the Giants to return and teach them, and think that the 'Book of Laws' contradicts itself; and yet logical though their disbelief is, the mythology is literally true.

The third story is in my opinion the best of the lot. The scene is set by a seed-ship crashing on the planet Hydrot, a world covered by water in anything from seas to puddles. Life exists only as crayfish, metzoa, protozoa, algae, plankton and other microscopic creatures. The survivors of the crash use their own cells for Panotropy, and the planned Adaptations are described with a wealth of interesting physiological detail, which as far as I know is correct; Blish was always very concerned about getting his facts right, a change from the pseudo-science of some other authors (and yet the science does not override any of these stories; it is simply an integral part of them). Men are adapted to live underwater in puddles as microscopic creatures the size of rotifers, and

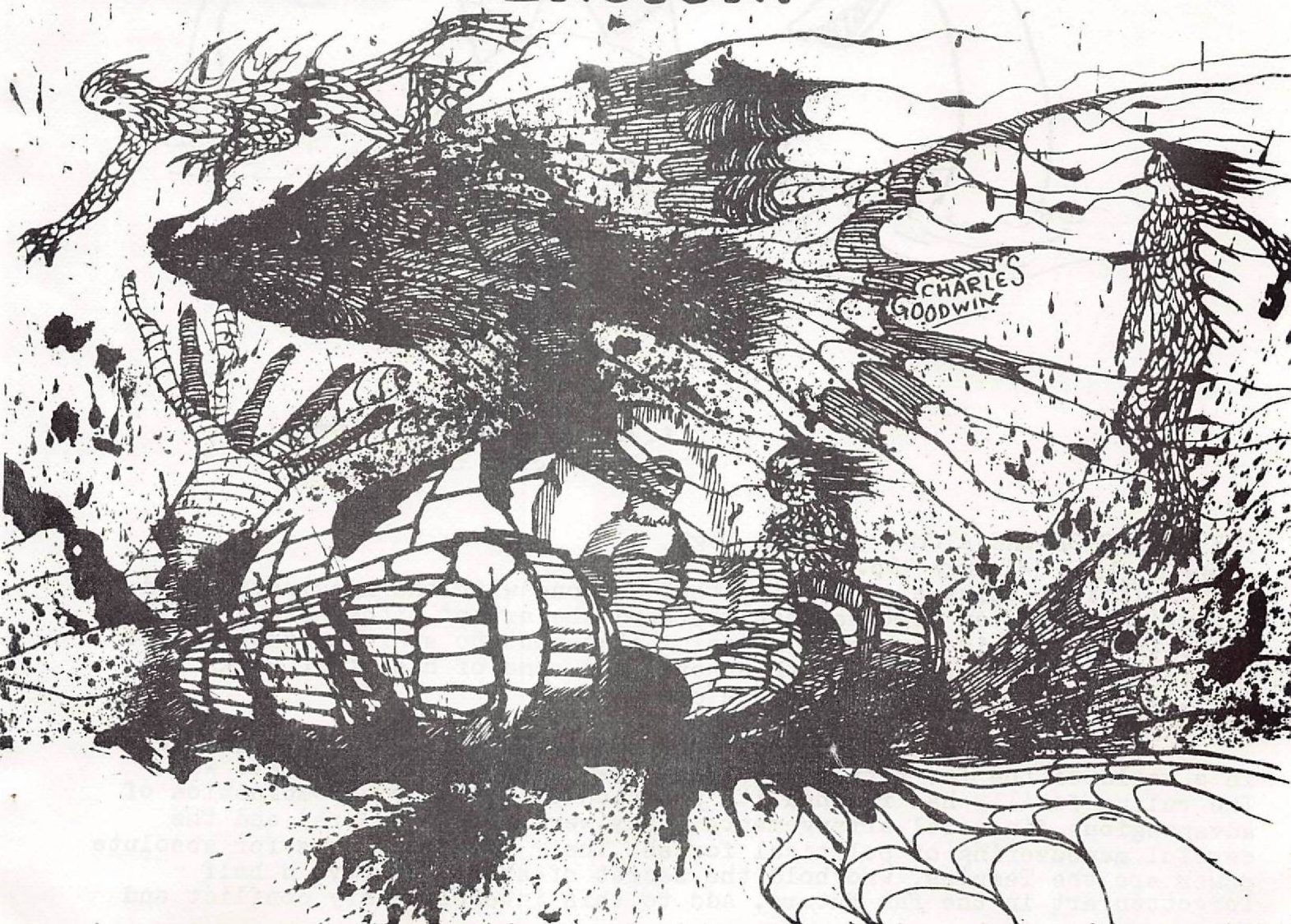


a record of the seeding program's history is left for them on metal sheets.

The second part of the story concerns the Adapted Men themselves. Their world is bounded by the bottom of the puddle, the thermocline (a boundary between different densities and temperatures of water, which forms a penetrable barrier), and the 'sky' (air/water interface). The AM have allied themselves with the protozoa, which are intelligent and communicate telepathically, against the rotifers ('Eaters'). Their wise man keeps the two history plates left by the seeding team, and is gradually translating them. An army of AM and protos is formed, and a marvellous battle fought against the rotifers in their 'castles', with AM and light-emitting, stinging and net-throwing protos versus the Eaters with their whirling coronas of cilia (it would make a great film, much better than 'FANTASTIC VOYAGE'). During the battle one of the plates is lost, and falls to the bottom.

Many generations later the rotifers are almost extinct, and the remaining plate has been translated. The AM now know that they were made, that they are not really suited to their world, and that there are 'other universes'; but they decide such information is useless, and throw away the plate. However one curious man decides to explore the 'sky'; on breaking through the surface tension he finds he cannot breath and falls back. After slowly recovering from third-degree sunburn and dessication, he passes on his new knowledge to the other AM and they decide to 'journey to the stars' in a diatom-powered spaceship. Crewed by AM and a paramecium, the ship crawls up through the 'sky' and out into 'space'.

## **SURFACE TENSION.**





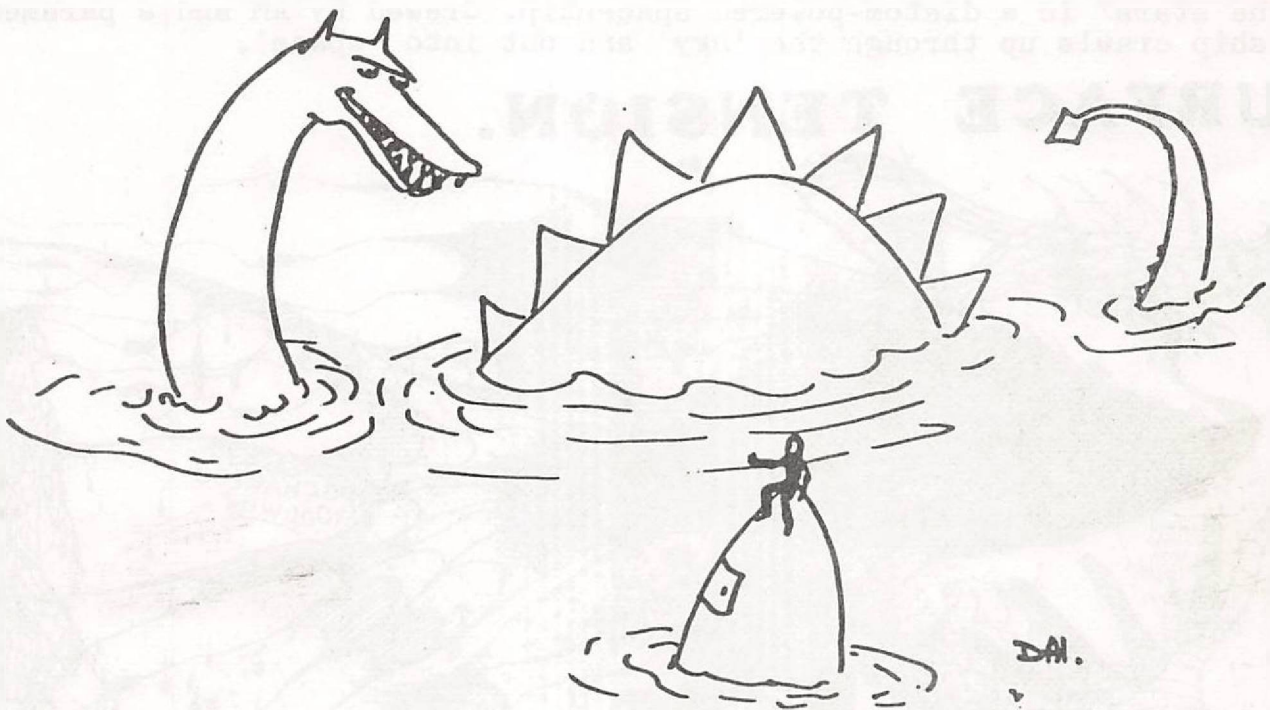
They discover that 'space' has a sky of its own, with a Sun, and when this sets they finally see real stars. Reaching another 'world' they find it also inhabited by AM, but the 'Eaters' are still around in force. The dying para tells them that their history plate is on the ship, and instructs his fellows to give help to the AM. Men have at last crossed space - or have they?

The main philosophical point made by Blish in this story is the importance of co-operation and 'thinking in webs' (organisation). Without these (which the AM in the second world did not employ), man cannot become superior to other species.

In the last story AM in a spaceship crewed by unadapted ('basic') humans are travelling to Earth to colonise it. There is bad feeling between the AM and the crew, since the former are always pushing for equality with the basic humans. These true humans don't even know that Earth was their home planet, and their prejudice against the AM is equivalent to colour prejudice today. In fact the basic humans are now a very small minority, and since Earth has become nothing but a vast desert due to environmental abuse they can't even survive on it any more; only Adapted Men can. An appropriate ending.

In all this is an enjoyable and interesting book. Recommended.

HUGH HERDON



THE EMPIRE OF THE ATOM - A.E. Van Vogt

New English Library 40p.

It is I think a great pity that someone with the imagination and inventiveness of Van Vogt has not mastered the art of either story telling or writing. This is perhaps a sweeping statement to start an article but after great consideration of this novel and some of his other works it is, I am sorry to say, the obvious comment.

The basic plot of the Empire of the Atom is one of court intrigue in a world of the far future, that has been devastated by atomic war. The ruling family has reached its position of power by a combination of advantageous financial arrangements (they were money lenders) and the careful manoeuvring of political forces. Their main opponents for absolute power are the Temples, who hold the secret of atomic energy, a half forgotten art in the far future. Add to this interplanetary conflict and



the fact that the central character is an heir to the throne and a mutant, a role that gives him both a powerful position and a sense of isolation from his fellow man. All this gives a great deal of potential to the book, the possibility of interplays between the characters and the social stresses set up between the ruling family and the temples. And all this is there, in a fashion, the temples and the royal family are in conflict and there is personal rivalry between members of the ruling elite. However the intrigues lack a certain zeal, it is as if they were far removed from reality, it was rather like reading of the exploits of the Borgias in a rather bad history book that has filtered out all of the personal conflict. The social conflict is there also, but again there is so much missing, there is no sense of drama of great moments of people involved in the conflict of passions of a fight for a cause. Again it is like reading a history book that is entirely involved with the majors and generals and forgets the other 10,000 people involved.

Van Vogt has a first class imagination, the scope of THE EMPIRE OF THE ATOM proves that, but the realisation of the idea is a disappointment, he has'nt the writing ability of, for instance, Bester. Not many people have but even the native story telling talent of Heinlein would have been welcome. Nowhere in any of Van Vogt's works can it be said that there is a character of the power of a Gulliver Foyle or even a Jubal Harshaw. Nowhere do the personal relationships attain a level of conviction that is necessary for a novel concerned with individual ambition and political manouvering.

On the whole a disappointing book because it promises so much and delivers a fairly average book. This is perhaps the main fault of Van Vogt, his imagination spans the universe and thinks up many a wonderful situation to entertain his reader, but his writing style has never left the 30's and what is most disappointing is that he never seems to have tried.

MALCOLM DAVIES

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THE AIRS OF EARTH - Brian Aldiss

=== === = =====

New English Library 35p

This is a collection of Aldiss' stories first published as an anthology in the early 1960's. Unfortunately the dates of magazine publication of the individual stories are not included so that we are not able to see the order in which Aldiss experimented with the various different approaches to SF represented in this collection. Regardless of your particular preferences in SF you will find here stories to admire and others to detest, each varying from person to person.

My own favourite from the collection is OLD HUNDREDTH which, together with A KIND OF ARTISTRY, demonstrates Aldiss' talent for creating surrealistic yet understandable worlds which haunt you with the feeling that they were taken from your own dreams. This is the style that Aldiss has used most notably in his HOTHOUSE stories.

In two of the stories aspects of Aldiss are revealed which I would like to see him enlarge upon. In BASIS FOR NEGOTIATION he produces, albeit with an underlying satirical bite, a chilling political thriller of Britain on the eve of world war III. This has similarities to THE PRIMAL URGE but I would like to see more stories examined from the point of view of the 'detached' men at the top rather than the 'men of action' in the front line.

The second of the two stories THE INTERNATIONAL SMILE is, in Aldiss' words an "echo" to the first. Here he supplies a riotous Whitehall farce

The Drunken Duplicator strikes again!



and I feel that if he continued in this vein he might rival his drinking companion Harry Harrison as the current jester of SF.

Also from the anthology I must pick two personal 'pet hates'. In THE GAME OF GOD Aldiss attempts to produce a standard pulp SF story. Sadly it does'nt come off. Though Aldiss may have been hooked on this sort of thing as a reader I felt that he cannot really bring himself to respect it as a writer and without a great deal of love and enthusiasm this breed of offspring cannot survive. The stories 'trick ending' was painfully obvious throughout and the 'pulp' characters have been produced from the grey centre pages rather than the garish and fantastic covers of the old magazines.

Finally in SHARDS I saw Aldiss setting out along the 'descriptive writing and devil take any plot' road that led ultimately to the incredible self indulgence of REPORT ON PROBABILITY A. In this case he attempts to write from the viewpoint of a subject driven insane by brain surgery. This would have been an interesting exercise but the victim merely babbles incoherently and the reader can feel no contact with him or form any interpretation of his delusions.

The other two stories HOW TO BE A SOLDIER and O' MOON OF MY DELIGHT fell, for me, into the area of 'good varied SF' neither as good as the four mos notable stories nor as irritating as the other two.

Generally the collection is remarkable in that it provides such varied material from a single author and is as fresh today as when published in 1963.

MARTIN EASTERBROOK

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THE DURDANE TRILOGY - Jack Vance

=== =====

Coronet 50p each

Book 1 - THE ANOME      Book 2 - THE BRAVE FREE MEN      Book 3 - THE ASUTRA

When I first read the trilogy I quite liked it, but having reread it a couple of times it now tends to bore me. Its certainly not one of Vance's better efforts; there can be no comparison with THE DYING EARTH, THE LAST CASTLE or THE DRAGON MASTERS.

The most interesting element in the story is the planet Durdane itself. The main continent, Shant, is divided up into 62 Cantons. Canton societies range from religious fanatics to vegetarian pacifist, each with their own set of laws, many of which are grotesque and meaningless outside the Canton; this makes law enforcement somewhat difficult. The enforcer is the Anome, an anonymous ruler who has the power to detonate the explosive-containing colour-coded torc worn by each person, thus neatly (well rather messily actually) removing their heads. Colour has a very important symbolism in the books, subtly different shades carrying quite different meanings. A novel transport system is used: captive balloons blown along above rails.

The plot of the trilogy is pretty ordinary. Crastel Etwane, the hero of the story, gets worried about the Roguskhoi, humanoid B.E.M's who are raiding the Cantons and abducting women for their own foul purposes. The Anome won't listen to his warnings, so Etwane captures him, takes his place, and sets up an army of 'Brave Free Men', whose torcs are removed. 100 pages later they finally thrash the B.E.Ms, though (as usual) the leaders escape by spaceship. We now learn that the B.E.M's and the Anome were cotrolled by intelligent parasites, the Asutra, who may be threatening Earth ('only one man can save....' no, no, that's another story). Etwane and his friends capture a spaceship, but are themselves captured and trained in a slave army on another planet. After many fantastic adventures they eventually escape and return to



Durdane. There it is revealed that all the various aliens were fighting amongst themselves; a war which Earth has stopped. All Etzwan's heroic struggles have been in vain (sob!).

Perhaps I am being a little hard on this trilogy. It does have its intelligent and sensitive moments - Etzwan's meetings with his father, some scenes of the slave camp. Some of the ideas described are also interesting: the development of weapons without metals, using waxes which expand forcefully under electric current; and especially the descriptions of the music and instruments of Shant, where Vance details a whole new musical terminology, involving khitans with scratch boxes, grastings with damping boxes and other goodies.

Well if you like all of Vance's books you've probably bought these already; if you prefer to pick and choose then I'd advise you to pick something else.

HUGH HERDON

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THE FLYING SORCERERS - Larry Niven and David Gerrold

=== =====  
Corgi 65p

To say that this is an unusual piece of SF would be a profound injustice to the rest of the field. To say that it is a bad book would be to do the authors a similar injustice. It is an abominable book. If you can't understand the many irregularities inconsistencies and puns scattered liberally throughout the text. Unfortunately few of the readers of this magazine will have the necessary background knowledge to appreciate the humour.

Many readers will have heard of Fandom, (those who have just exclaimed "Not again!" may now leave the page.). Some may not have. This is not the time or place to explain fandom but amongst the activities common in fandom is the publishing of fanzines, amateur publications invariably published at a loss.

Not uncommon in these is a variety of fiction (normally of an abysmal standard.) known as fan-fiction. Often written in an appalling imitation of a well known professional writer. Fan-fiction attempts with varying degrees of success to humorously depict the affairs of fandom.

A notable exception to the usual standard of fan-fiction was the ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR by Bob Shaw and Walt Willis. A piece of fan-fiction which was actually a good piece of fiction - if a little incomprehensible to the uninitiated. THE FLYING SORCERERS by David Gerrold and Larry Niven is also far above average for fan-fiction. It is merely mediocre.

For those who would like to sample this amazing piece of work I will endeavour to give some explanations. A brief summary of the plot....

Picture a planet orbiting a star in a binary system, a small intensely luminous blue star and a larger closer red giant. The illumination and irradiation from these stars are approximately equal. The whole system being in a globular cluster far away from the nearest galaxy and separated from it by a dust cloud which screens off all the other stars from view. (And diffracts the light from the further sun making its light almost monochromatic blue screening out much of the yellow-green part of the spectrum.) In orbit around the planet are a number of moons.

The complex gravitational effects in this system make the weather unpredictable in the extreme. The whole atmosphere of unpredictability leads of course to a strong belief in magic. A pantheon of Gods is



invoked to explain the vagaries of wind and wateramongst other things. Musk-watz the wind god and Poup the god of fertility and many more.

To placate the pantheon each village/tribe has a magician who knows all the local gods. The whole area around the village is that magicians territory.

One not so fine day a survey craft from another solar system lands and out of it comes a single man, a scientist who proceeds to examine the local rocks by firing a laser at them. Unfortunately the rocks he fires at are sacred to Musk-watz.

Shoogar the local magician is somewhat displeased by this strange new upstart flinging fire at consecrated rocks in his territory. The tradition is that any magician practicing in another's territory should offer a gift of a magical secret to the resident mage. The upstart completely ignores the tradition and blithely ignores Shoogar until, when confronted treats Shoogar the finest (well almost) magician in the world as an ignorant savage.

Enraged Shoogar prepares to start a magicians duel against the new magician who has foolishly given his real name, translated by the "sneakerspell" to "As-A-Colour-of-purplish-grey". Lant is the village speaker who after witnessing the proceedings attempts to stop the duel or at least arrange a truce. In this he succeeds - for a while. Shoogars spells sometimes have devastating side-effects. The spells he eventually uses result in great damage to the frog-grading ponds, with negligible effect on the newcomer.

After a while the entire village gets worried about the possible side-effects of further spells and decamps with all haste. As-A-Colour-of-purple-grey follows in his miraculous flying egg, Lant and Shoogar follow on bicycles manufactured by two of Lant's nephews, the Wright brothers. Wilville and Orbur Wright.

Shoogar wrecks his rival's flying egg and As-A-Colour-of-purplish-grey flies off tracing an erratic flight path through the sky to end in a great explosion and a strange mushroom shaped cloud above the horizon.

The expedition, now no longer hindred by the prescence of two magicians carries on to avoid the high tides due soon. They come to an area of higher land and camp, not realising that another village already has a claim to the land. The other village has a strange magician who apparently fell out of the sky recently. The two tribes meet but the tide has risen and there is no turning back. An uneasy truce is agreed. As-A-Colour-of-puplish-grey explains that he is marooned because his mother egg is on the other side of the sky, his own small egg has been destroyed so he cannot get back to where his calling device can reach it. Shoogar agrees to help him get back, not because he really wants to be helpful but simply because there the truce will no longer be binding and the upstart can be killed.

Getting back to the original village site from where the mother egg can be called is not possible by sea because of the treacherous currents and so air travel seems necessary. As-A-Colour-of-purplish-grey has the idea of building an airship with the help of the Wright brothers. He fills the gasbags with hydrogen made from water with the help of his magical Electrissy.

In building the airship he accidentally invents; the production line, trade unions, money, drug addiction, rape, blueprints, theft, women's liberation amongst other things.



Only at the end of the story do we find that perhaps the reason why all of Shoogar's assassination attempts failed was that he did not have correct information about the name of his opponent. As-A-Colour-of-purplish-grey was not a good translation. The purple grey should have been Mauve.

BERNIE PEAKE

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 THE INVINCIBLE - Stanislaus Lem  
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Sidgwick and Jackson £1.95

A writer must look on the translation of his book into another language with some trepidation. Though the bare bones of the story, the plot, will remain the original author's the style, lucidity and readability are at the mercy of the translator.

The result can make or break a book. It is usually the "breaking" that concerns us, though there are indications that some books, perhaps even some authors, can benefit from the process. Edgar Allen Poe is a case in point. His reputation in France is of a master craftsman of the writing art, though he is surely a poor stylist in his own language. Of course Poe had the benefit of such literati as Baudelaire directing the translation and the praise and interpretation of Rimbaud, Mallarme and Valery to help his reputation. (Chris Priest's INVERTED WORLD is a more recent example).

All this makes problems for the reviewer of a book translated from a foreign language since it is difficult to know who to blame or for it. Unfortunately in the case of the INVINCIBLE it is mostly blame that has to be apportioned.

Lem's reputation rests mainly on the strength of "Solaris" and that only in the wake of Tarkovsky's brilliant film of the book. SOLARIS' reputation is in many ways deserved but even there some detailed descriptions are marred by a sloppiness and confusion. Though the ambitious concept raises it above minor stylistic faults. Sadly this is not true of THE INVINCIBLE. There are flashes of the majesty of SOLARIS, but the overall scope is not grand enough to compensate for the poor clarity of expression and the confusion (as opposed to enigma, which can be an advantage) that the descriptions especially leave in the readers mind.

How much is this the translator and how much Lem? It is hard to say if one is not oneself a linguist. Certainly though, even if poorly written in Polish it is the translator's job to render it into readable English. The only obvious mistake - the use of "Natrium" in chapter 1 instead of Sodium, is a minor thing to pick on, but perhaps symptomatic of the feeling throughout that perhaps someones heart was not in it.

A lot of the dialogue, for instance, is clumsy and poor in chosen idiom. Lem must be to blame, too, where whole passages are ill thought out and confusing.

Looking at the story in more detail we find a mixture of a Solaris like concept and a standard SF idea. The standard SF idea, which takes up the first half of the book, is that one spaceship (the Invincible of the title) goes to a planet looking for its sister ship which disappeared there. The build up, through encounters with various weird phenomena, to the discovery of the other vessel, ransacked in peculiar fashion and its crew dead of starvation despite plentiful food supplies, would perhaps have succeeded if it did not have to cope with such garbled prose. (And what do you make of a book, the



first chapter of which is entitled: "This is not an ordinary planet".  
Boom, boom)

Once the phenomena causing this is encountered and explained the story manages to achieve both its best and its worst. It achieves its best where it approaches SOLARIS. The description of a vast mobile cloud of minature robots, like an extrapolated locust horde, that is part of the explanation, approaches the artistry of SOLARIS' sentient ocean. Yet even here some of the descriptions are off hand and the reader is not involved as he is in the other work.

And the bad points? Well the storyline is not really strong enough to hang such poor writing on. This planet we are told, once had a population of developed robots which then 'took over'. The robots then split into warring factions and, as they were self altering and capable of propogation they underwent a process of selection for survival. (I would tend to doubt his idea that because these are robots their development would differ from the natural selection of animals). The idea is not new, which is not to condemn the story out of hand, since very few of even the best works are original in concept but here the 'trimmings' of the story are also a little dated. The way the ship physicist is able to make a quantum jump on the slenderest of evidence, from ignorance to their being able to explain the whole thing, is verging on embarasing.

The reader is also left somewhat uncertain on details important for conjuring up a mental picture of the expedition - such as the configuration of the ship and its equipment (especially the robots). Lem drops in; fictional names, pieces of equipment, unexplained as if assuming the reader were totally familliar with the Invincible's plan and equipment manifest.

One is left with a feeling of questions left unanswered for all the detail of the plot. It is a pity that the book does not manage to maintain the level briefly reached near the end. There Rohan, the hero, struggling on the surface to find lost crewmen in a scarred, radiation soaked area, encounters the cloud of insect-machines. Though still confused and ambiguous in parts the description here begins to leave an impression of a strange, alien, perhaps even beautiful phenomenon. Here is SOLARIS-Lem involving us in the mystic otherness of alien life. And just as the hero seems about to be zapped or go completely undetected (which of these depending on his keeping his mind ticking over in random, unthinking fashion - not a novel idea, but as I said before that does not matter if the 'clothing' is strong enough) the cloud forms into a shape mimicking his own, and then flies off .

If the book had given the impression it was a build up to this moment with hints at deeper questions to be raised, or analogies to be drawn, it might yet have been saved. But the scene is thrown away - a little poetic insert to round of the book, perhaps an attempt at a trick ending. A pity, there are the germs of some good ideas here. The structure and execution fail them though I'm afraid.

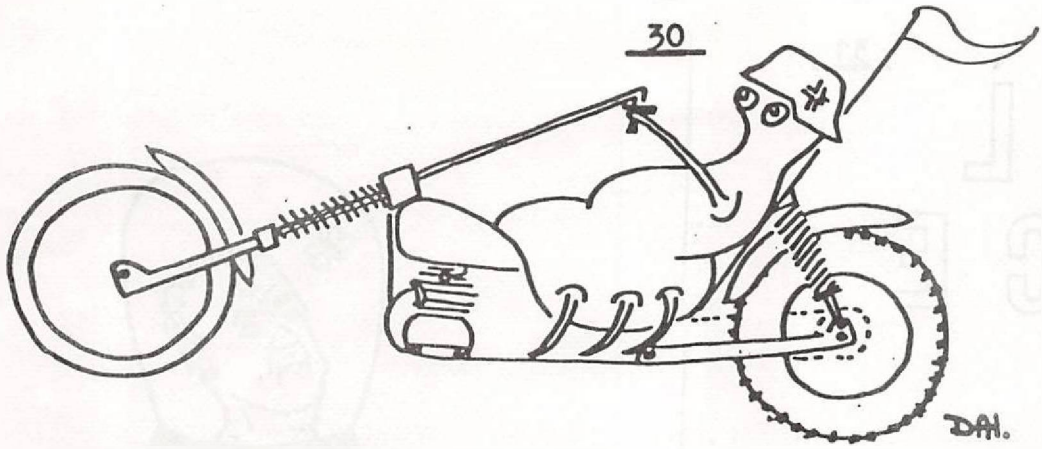
ALAN FARMER

STOP PRESS: The TOLKEIN SOCIETY meets on the first Saturday of each month at around 7 p.m. at the 'Carpenters Arms', Whitfield Street (west of and parallel to Tottenham Court Road). Nearest Tubes Warren Street/Goodge Street.

Duplicating credit for this issue to Hugh Herdon, the Drunken Duplicator, who can do a better job than Pete Roberts any day.



O U  
S F G



A letter from the Oxford University SF Group.

The OUSFG centres on its library of books. We use our membership fees to

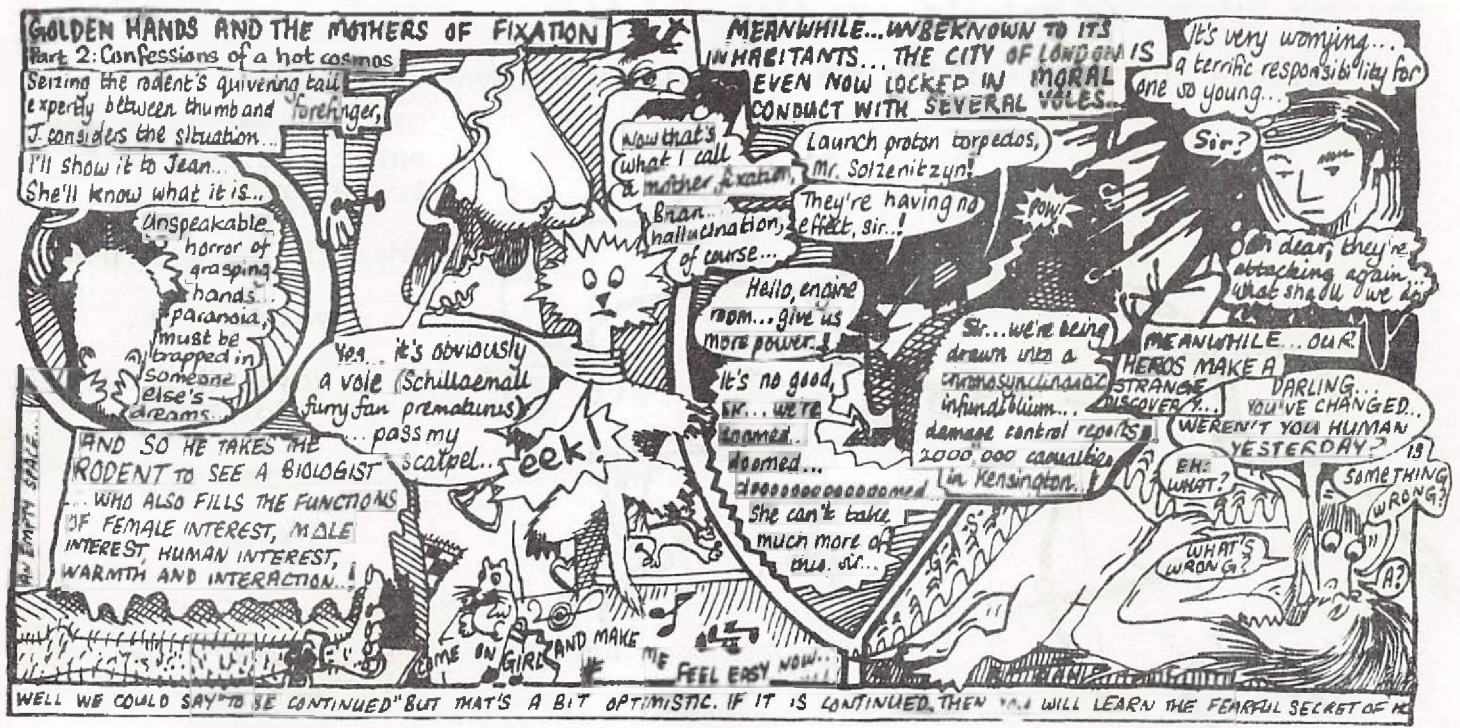
buy paperbacks and have a library now of around 1,500 books. As Oxford is quite compact it is no trouble to meet regularly every Sunday to borrow books and talk SF. Our membership has somewhere around the 100 mark.

In addition to our regular meetings we held a party before Christmas, a banquet next term and a punt party in the last term. We also try to get as many speakers as possible. In the last two years we have had Chris Priest, Ken Bulmer, Bob Shaw, Brian Aldiss and Harry Harrison. I must say though that I have'nt a clue what Harry Harrison spoke about due to our wining and dining him before his talk - the emphasis being on winning.

After a certain speakers visit, those of us who had sufficient bad taste to buy Hook books got them signed Tully Zetford, while he recieved the latest copy of SPINX (SPINX 10) with a Hook parody, Lynan Sinker, in it. Now those of us who read Hook 4, THE VIRILITY GENE, found that in chapter 9 the eczema-sniffing spirochacte had appropriated a chunk of our magazine.

I hope that you succeed in organising your society and if ever you do hope that a bit of intersociety contact can be arranged.

Best Wishes  
Andrew Chapman (Editor SFIINX)





# TAIL PIECE

And so as the mebership sinks slowly in the west we once again come to put the zine to bed.

This has been issue 3 of the fanzine in search of an identity, with the mixture of articles a little different from before. In our next thrilling instalement we have; a report on our expedition to NOVACON as well as reviews of THE CONTINUOUS CATHERINE MORTENHOE, THE RUINS OF EARTH and ANTIGRAV.

Things still run depressingly slowly, especially due to the forced cancellation of a planned party at QEC. However we are still working on it. Next term we will definitely have Bob Shaw and possibly one or two other speakers. Also an attempt will be made to resuscitate the QEC party.

On a more regular basis we can still be found on the first Thursday of every month in "The One Tun" in Saffron Hill, near Farringdon Tube station. To supplement this we will be nosing around for a meeting place to hold our own monthly meetings. To try to improve the amount of artwork in the magazine we are planning to mount a poster campaign in the London art colleges as well as trying to get publicity in SENNET. However please don't wait to be asked send us along samples of your work, written or drawn and spread the word amongst your friends.

In the chaos of the last issue I forgot to give writing credits for the BIS article to ALAN FARMER and for the EXPENDABLES review to MALCOLM DAVIES (OK Malcolm, was that alright).

Editors for this edition Martin Easterbrook and Hugh Herdon

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