VECTOR 49

VECTOR

VECTOR

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THE AUTHENTIC VISION

A study of the writing of Arthur C. Clarke

BY BOB PARKINSON

"In some of the stories in 'Terminal Beach', you can almost hear him say 'That's one in the eye for Arthur Clarke!'"

Brian Aldiss on J.G. Ballard
F Horizons 2 (1965)

It is perhaps inevitable that science fiction criticism should be concerned with the new; that we should consider the familiar authors of our youth as belonging to some proto-historic age from which we have now (the avant-garde would say "thankfully") emerged. So that we either look nostalgically backward toward a lost Golden Age, or believe that we are slowly progressing towards a literate science fiction. So that it occasionally comes as a mild surprise to find that an author like Arthur C. Clarke is still writing; not merely writing, but seen outside the sf microcosm as something fresh, new, and perhaps important.

A prophet not without honour.

Clarke is, of course, the prophet of the Space Age. This is important. To this end his style has tended to be conventional, straightforward, linear. All of which might tend to lead one to class him as a simple uncomplicated writer. But a writer is always more than his ability to say things with wit, with great range of style, with authenticity or obscurity. He must also have something new to say, some vision to communicate.

To this end it may become entirely necessary that the writing should become totally transparent to its subject matter.

To illustrate what I mean by "transparency" I would make reference to the American artist Chesley Bonestell. They have much in common. If Clarke has been the populariser of the Space Age then Bonestell has been its illustrator. And while neither of them have been alone in their task, they have each (in their own way) achieved something apparently denied to others. To name it call it Art.

With the coming of the camera, Western painting ran into a crisis. Strict, representational painting - born in the Renaissance - had lost its purpose, beaten fairly by technology. Twentieth century painting branched away, becoming concerned with the essential

problems of vision, or became stagnant in cultural backwaters.

But nobody has (yet) placed a camera on the fifth moon of Saturn. There were some things that a camera still could not do, that required an act of imagination. And yet it is Bonestell's technique which raised his paintings to art, his concern with photographic detail. It is interesting to compare Bonestell's paintings with the similar works of R.A.Smith*. Smith's paintings are good artist's impressions, no more. But Bonestell has an almost hallucinatory character. The attention to detail extends to the very limits of inspection. At this point, and probably only at this point, the technique becomes transparent to the subject. We no longer notice.

It is a very difficult thing to achieve, this transparency; particularly in writing, where there is no true analogue of the camera. Even Clarke does not achieve it all the time. But occasionally it is impressive.

> "Last night I saw a great liner - the 42,000 ton Oriana - steam out of Colombo harbor on her maiden voyage, with lights ablaze and rockets raking the sky. As she dwindled round the curve of the world, heading towards the equator and the southern stars, my imagination sailed beyond her, into the past and into the future. I thought of all that the single word "ship" has meant to man, during the centuries that he has used the sea as a highway and a battlefield. And I thought of the ships that he would soon be launching into the shoreless seas of space."**

The elements of this passage recur quite often in Clarke's books. But it is impressive, all the same; and to do this sort of thing requires a considerable degree of poetry. Without submitting to the ever-present temptation of poets, which is to become interested in the words for their own sake. Clarke's is an older poetry. If one were looking for clues, one might be in the short story Breaking Strain.

> "His favourite book, Grant knew, was Jurgen, and perhaps even now he was trying to forget his doom by losing himself in its strange magic."

Because Jurgen is a strange book; a book for poets - or rather a book for poets who wonder whether they are something much more prosaic - a pawnbroker perhaps, or a humble writer. This doubt must always be present with a poet who is forbidden the striking image, the unusual word because they would call attention to themselves, and detract from the vision that they are called upon to carry.

And the nature of this vision?

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*R.A.Smith & A.C.Clarke, The Exploration of the Moon (Muller, 1954) cf. C.Bonestell & W.Ley, The Conquest of Space (Sidgwick & Jackson 1950)

**Arthur C.Clarke, Voices from the Stars (Gollancz 1966)

To see this we ought to go back to Bonestell. Because Bonestell, with his hallucinatory, photographic painting, is essentially repeating the dramatic discovery of Renaissance painting, which was, the reader will remember, an essentially technical one - the discovery of perspective, which released painting from mere iconography into something approaching reality. But the Renaissance was more than a mere innovation in painting. It was a whole new set of values and way of looking at things. It seems to me relevant to see Clarke as a man of the Renaissance. Not some new Renaissance, but the old one, in whose after period it might reasonably be argued that we are still living.

The Renaissance was many things, but it was three things in particular. Science, Exploration, and Evolutionary Humanism. The belief that the world was ordered ond could be controlled; the discovery of the Copernican Revolution, that the world was bigger than we had dreamed and Man was not its centre; and the doctrine that Man was perfectible, that by education and science and social progress Man himself could evolve into something better. Darwin was a late comer into this idea, but his ideas fitted excellently. And we remember that Clarke's Overlords, in Childhood's End envied Man because he could still evolve, and they could not.

In this respect Clarke's novel The City and the Stars is significant. The stories dealing with the prospects for early spaceflight - from Prelude to Space through to Earthlight - are obviously enough popularisarions of the idea of speceflight; so that in The Challenge of the Spaceship fact and fiction become intermingled. But eventually there had to be an extrapolation of the idea towards infinity. And in The City and the Stars we see revealed the long-term future, seen by the optimistic humanist. A realist in terms of the way the universe works, but an optimist all the same.

> "...It was not even true that Man had reached the stars... His entire civilisation was huddled round the sun, and was still very young when - the stars reached him.
>
> "The impact must have been shattering. Despite his failures, Man had never doubted that one day he would conquer the deeps of space. He believed too that if the Universe held his equals, it did not hold his superiors. Now he knew that both beliefs were wrong...
>
> "...Sadder and infinitely wiser, Man had returned to the Solar System to brood upon the knowledge he had gained. He would accept the challenge, and slowly he evolved a plan which gave hope for the future.
>
> "Once the physical sciences had been Man's greatest interest. Now he turned even more fiercely to genetics and the study of the mind. Whatever the cost, he would drive himself to the limits of his evolution."*

The future turns out to be a linear path. It does not contain anything but hope. The City and The Stars is an incredible and

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*Arthur C.Clarke, The City and the Stars (Frederick Muller, 1956)

convincing portrait of the world as far as human imagination can see. But its infinity is not a limit. The closing words of the novel indicate that this too is transitory, and in its turn will pass away.

> "In this universe the night was falling; the shadows were lengthening towards an east that would not know another dawn. But elsewhere the stars were still young and the light of morning lingered; and along the path he once had followed, Man would one day go again."

It is important to notice that this optimism is a part of the humanistic-Renaissance idea in itself, and not merely a corollary to the future of spaceflight. To Clarke it is the end point of the Copernican Revolution; the idea that Earth - and Man - is not necessarily the centre of the Universe. But without reducing the impact of that idea of the High Stars, other views are possible. It is instructive to compare Clarke with the stories of Walter M.Miller, particularly in Crucifixus Etiam and The Big Hunger.* For Miller the fundamental reality is pain, and it is in these terms that spaceflight must be evaluated.

Miller and Clarke are close, undoubtedly. And at points it is also undoubtedly true that Miller is the better writer. When it comes to the portrayal of character and suffering, for instance. Clarke has never cared too particularly much about that mysterious thing called "characterisation". Indeed, one would almost suspect that it is essential in Clarke that the characterisation should not predominate. If he became too involved with the human conflict he would be talking away from the main purpose, talking about something else. But for Miller it is the human tragedy that makes the high stars' call what it is. So that he can tell of Mars through the eyes of the Peruvian labourer Manue Nanti (in Crucifixus Etiam):

> "...It was Finley, come to offer his thanks for the quelling of Handell. But he said nothing for a moment as he watched Manue's desperate Gethsemane.
>
> "'Some sow, others reap,' he said.
>
> "'Why?' the Peruvian choked.
>
> "The supervisor shrugged. 'What's the difference? But if you can't be both, which would you rather be?'"

Miller is fundamentally committed to this more tragic view of humanity. His work abounds with thorny Christian symbolism that seems to emphasise Man's fallen nature against high ideals. "These," he seems to say, "were bought with our blood." But Clarke's is the high road, the optimistic view. It is unlikely that one could ever have sold the idea of "spaceflight" on Miller's terms - even if he makes the significance meaningful.

And if both Clarke and Miller are straightforward in their prose, not apparently competing for the award of "crucial stylist of the twentieth century", it would be wrong to say that they "could not write for sour apples". You might level the same

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* Walter M.Miller, The View From The Stars (Go lancz, 1965)

accusation against Hemingway. Hemingway also spoke of writing "truthfully", and this would seem to apply to Clarke. Clarke has a vision, essentially a vision six hundred years old and born in Italy, but now in terms of our age. A vision that is the penultimate revelation of the Copernican Revolution - not merely to know that the Earth moves but actually to see it move, to watch it diminish in the sky. This is the authentic vision that Clarke has to offer.

George Orwell had something about this to say on Swift. Now Clarke and Swift have almost nothing in common. Swift's pessimism is almost diametrically opposed to Clarke's optimism. I would say that Clarke sees things more clearly than ever Swift did. Orwell, in his essay, admits very many faults in Swift - his narrowness, bigotry and suchlike. But then he adds -

> "Swift did not possess ordinary wisdom, but he did possess a terrible intensity of vision, capable of picking out a single hidden truth and then magnifying it and distorting it."*

In the end, then, the vision is capable of redeeming whatever other faults the writing has had, because that is what the writing is there for in the first place. And everything else is, or should be, secondary to that primary aim.

The Space Age is with us now. The star-dream is an industrial project employing an enormous number of people, and the star-dreamers are few and far apart among them. . What has become of it?

In a recent book**, Oriana Fallaci found the American Apollo Project redeemed by a poet and a humorist; found that the romantics remain among the labyrinthine corridors of the Organisation. Here and there are those who have read science fiction from their youth up, and have the stardust dream.

> "'Who says so, Jeannette?'
> "'Your eyes say so. I learned from the Indians how to understand people by looking at their eyes. There's something in your eyes that tells me you're very different from yesterday. I didn't see you yesterday, but I'm sure you were different. Probably you were different this morning too. Then, at six, when that contraption went up, you changed."

Miss Fallaci was born in Florence, the very birthplace of the Renaissance. The event referred to is the launch of a Little Joe rocket - only a minor segment of the programme really. The essential thing is not the hardware, but the idea. Superficially, the early books like Prelude to Space have dated. But, like the lower stages of a step-rocket, it no longer matters. They have contributed their initial momentum. That is all.

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*George Orwell, Politics vs. Literature in Inside the Whale and Other Essays (Penguin, 1957) p.142.
**Oriana Fallaci, If the Sun Dies (Collins, 1967) p.361

2001

FILM REVIEW by VIC HALLETT

Onee upon a time there was in science fiction something called a sense of wonder which had to do with never knowing what you were going to encounter next.

Once upon a time at the cinema one was dazzled by colourful adventures in exotic locations.

To anyone who thinks that the two things had something to do with age and that he is past all that I can only say: Go to see 2001 - A Space Odyssey. When I first heard of the film during production I had hopes that the close collaboration of Arthur Clarke and that excellent director Stanley Kubrick (he made Spartacus and Dr. Strangelove) would produce an intelligent film, but what has emerged has exceeded my wildest hopes. It is without doubt the most magnificent science fiction film I have ever seen, but even more important it is an excellent film.

The story, based on Clarke's own short story The Sentinel, is simple. In the prologue, set during the dawn of man, a tall black obelisk is discovered by a tribe of ape men. The story proper starts when a similar obelisk is found near the American Moon Base in 2001. This one beams a radio wave at Jupiter, so an expedition is sent to investigate. When Jupiter is reached yet another obelisk is found which provides the ultimate answer to the riddle of their origin - well, at least I think it does.

The story, however, is a mere peg on which to hang a dazzling display of wide screen pyrotechnics. The actors concerned all give very good performances (and for a change the script, written by Clarke and Kubrick, is intelligent and restrained), but the real stars of the film are the machines.

By machines I mean everything from the visual telephones to the banks of instrument panels, and from the sleek Pan-American Earth Shuttle which ferries anyone who can afford it up to the giant space station to the enormous functional bulk of the Jupiter probe which transports its crew of two plus emotional computer into the unknown. By machine I also mean that computer, HAL 9000 - Hal for short.

Because the two astronauts have to exist with Hal for a long period emotions are fed into him (certainly not it) to give his voice some variation. A mixture of family friend, butler, nurse-

maid and ship's pilot; all this is conveyed by the excellent performance of Douglas Rain, whose voice it is. Something more as well. When the emotions overload Hal there is malignancy and when Hal is being "killed" there is great poignancy. This is the character that remains afterwards, the star of stars.

Technically I have rarely seen anything better. Never do any of the props look false; the instrument panels are not simply pretty lights; the various landings are complex affairs yet shown to be everyday occurrences. Everything, from the small (a pen floating in free fall) to the large (the bulk of the Jupiter probe dwarfed by the giant planet), looks utterly convincing, not clever tricks but simple recordings of actual events.

When we reach the climax all of this changes. Suddenly we are plunged into the unknown, first a journey through patterns, colours, sudden explosions of light, and then - no, that is a moment which should not be given away beforehand. You may well be puzzled by the last section, I am not sure even now that I have got it right, but it doesn't matter, as a visual experiende alone it is staggering and beautiful.

That is what the film is, a visual experience, and an enjoyable and entertaining one. The dialogue is good and often funny, but it is what you see that is important. There are faults, certainly; the prologue is overlong, to my mind Hal's breakdown is insufficiently motivated; but these are minor. This is a film to see, to get other people to see, and then to go and see again.

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RIVETING STORIES

The Welding Institute at Great Abington is making microscopic welds from the heat generated from fiction

-- Cambridge News
April 23, 1968

BEHIND THE SCENES — MALCOLM EDWARDS

STORMING THE CITADEL OF GOMERSAL

A short introduction to the blitzkrieg in sf fandom

Perhaps Gomersal sounds straight from the world of T.H.White - Gomersal some tower of a wicked baron, the storming of the citadel some valiant deed of a noble knight such as Launcelot.

But, of course, these are no such things. It was Terry Jeeves, not Launcelot, who stormed Gomersal, that Knight of St. Fanthony raiding the small Yorkshire town in the summer of 1967. And the events of that day date back not to the Middle Ages but to 1940.

It was then that the very first Blitzkrieg took place. "The term probably arose spontaneously," states historian Ney in Fancyclopedia II, "since the first Blitzkrieg took place in the same year that the Wehrmacht was conducting minor counterparts in Europe." These events, in the fannish sense of course, were prompted by certain officials in the Fantasy Amateur Press Association (FAPA), who failed to do their duty and get the mailings of the organisation out on time.

Milton Rothman, then acting president of FAPA, took a party from Washington to Philadelphia ("The Big Slum") and cornered the official responsible for the lack of activity. (He happened to be at a church institute at the time.) The various bits and pieces of paper belonging to the organisation were subsequently retrieved from his house and the mailing issued by the raiding party. Thus a blitzkrieg may be defined as:-

> An extraordinary exertion by some fan to overcome the failure of others to do their duty.

And now let us consider the situation somewhat closer to home, and with respect to the two British institutions of OMPA and the BSFA.

To take the second first, it became manifestly obvious that the BSFA was in need of "some special effort" in the autumn of 1966. After two years of administration by Roger Peyton, during which VECTOR climbed to the status of a printed magazine, the new editor appeared to be dragging his feet. It wasn't so much the printed appearance the Association wanted, but the regularity and frequency of the Peyton days.

After one issue of VICTOR (to be fair, of a high standard), editor Steve Oakey disappeared for parts unknown and has notbeen seen since. Rumour has it that after various letters to Huntingdonshire had failed to attract response, a raiding party was despatched to gather the sundry files and material which were presumably at hand for a following issue. They were beaten off, alas, and the tale goes that the villain Oakey fled safely to Scarborough. And here a very promising Blitzkrieg appeared to run into the ground. Nothing whatever was done to or by Oakey until (by what can only be judged a titanic effort) Doreen Parker and Ken Slater by their own efforts revived the corpse of VICTOR.

Another Battlefield

At approximately the same time, another organisation native to this country and even older than the BSFA seemed in very troubled straits. The Offtrail Magazine Publisher's Association had run out of steam after a successful history of twelve years. (And it is here that we start to get on to the subject of Gomersal).

OMPA was formed by Ken Bulmer and Vince Clarke, with the object of distributing quarterly bundles of fanzines to its members. The magazines were supplied in quantities of fifty by these members, so that theoretically by producing one magazine you were able to read fifty altogether. You get the idea, I'm sure - and obviously there were all sorts of rules regarding minimum activity requirements, membership fees, officers, etc., and OFF TRAILS, the official journal.

By 1966 a large number of American and German publishers had joined the Association (which by its constitution required the all-powerful Official Editor to reside in the U.K.) and the British character intended by the founders had been well watered down. Not enough British fans belonged or contributed to the mailings with any activity. Possibly this demise can partly be blamed upon PaDs, which must have drained off some of the talent which would otherwise have entered OMPA. But whatever the case, the Deep Waters of trouble were about to rise over the Association.

A new Official Editor, Brian Jordan, took office and hence control. After several normal mailings, a rather long interval was noticed without any sign of communication.

"I wrote back," says Archie Mercer, "agreeing reluctantly to Brian's suggestion..." (that the September 1966 mailing be suspended and the membership be informed what was happening). "Then he missed the December 1966 mailing as well, and in fact appeared to have fallen into a hole in the ground."

On January 21st, 1967, Ron Bennett (then Treasurer of OMPA) took the opportunity of a school sports visit to Leeds to get in touch with Brian Jordan, who it turned out had gone to earth in Gomersal. This followed sporadic letters to and from Archie Mercer, Terry Jeeves, and exclusively to Brian Jordan. Ron Bennett's visit appeared to have paid off, and they parted with "expressions of mutual esteem".

Little if nothing happened on Jordan's part until April 5th, when Archie

Mercer wrote to the effect that he intended to come from Bristol by car at some suitable weekend, and retrieve all items of OMPA property. Brian Jordan replied to this letter and advised Archie not to bother since he was going to send out the bundle in any case. Nothing happened again, despite further efforts by Archie.

And then in July TerryJeeves enquired whether he should make any plans for his own magazine SHG. Upon being informed of the situation he was able to storm the citadel of Somersal from Sheffield, to liberate the OMPA material. And from there to Bristol, and from Bristol into thehands of members - a mailing delayed almost exactly a year, during which time OMPA had gone into an involuntary state of suspended animation.

Singapore and Frankfurt

A revival is now under way, although of course some of the rules have had to be bent if not altogether broken. For instance, in the interim Treasurer Ron Bennett has moved to Singapore; and since no reliable UK member has come forward, the burden of the Official Editorship has moved to Germany, strictly by Mercatorial decree as President, where Heinrich Arenz has taken over.

What was in that last mailing? Obviously it was small, for after so much uncertainty who would risk their fanzine being lost in the wilds of some Yorkshire town? But there were still 172 pages in total, containing things like OZ (Mercers), [illegible] STARR (Charters; it's an anagram of his name), SHG (Jeeves), HYPHIS (Ian Peters), NEXUS (Weston), and various others.

Look at the membership list - there are people such as Bill Donaho, who contributes his huge and glamorous HABBAKUK; Dick Eney who (although in Vietnam) continues with a fantastic output of STUPEFYING STORIES and other items; Arnie Katz (of QUIP); both of the West Coast Pelzes, Alva Rogers, Norm Metcalf, and many more who were and are Big Names in science fiction fandom.

How to join? Well, at present it is simple, although it may not stay that way for very long. It will cost 7s6d per year, plus a minimum requirement of 20 sides of paper per year (this need not be written exclusively by the member, of course). There is some other requirement or other that half of this output is required in the first six months, I think - but what's ten pages? - the normal fanzine editor uses more than that on his editorial alone!

In the present confused state I would suggest that interssted parties contact Archie Mercer himself. I'm sure he has enough to do anyway, but somehow I can't see that writing to Singapore will bring much immediate result. If you do want to join, I'm sure you'll be welcome, and in fact I shall be joining the Association myself, Any Day Now.

But the mind boggles at the thought of a Blitzkrieg to thehome of an official in Singapore, or even Frankfurt!

THE TWO FACED THIRDMANCON

by Michael Kenward

This weekend I made the amazing discovery that many sf "fans" read little, if any, science fiction. This was my first convention, and I found this more than a little surprising. A little less of a surprise was the wide variety of attendees. It is not possible to categorise those that turned up, so I shall now do this. There were established believers, young "fans", analytical dissectors, and professional writers of sf.

Thus there were many different ways in which the convention was enjoyed, apparently by all who attended. Much of the credit for this must fall on the organisers who produced a varied programme of events. These ranged from discussion groups to fancy dress gatherings; there was even a lecture on "Life in the Solar System", by Alan Whittaker F.R.A.S.

A genre as rich in ideas as is sf must surely provoke thought in its readers. Ken Bulmer's guest of honour speech was a brilliant balance of humour and serious, thought provoking discussion. Also of great interest was the discussion by the professional panel. The theme of this was "The Relation between Real Life and Fictional Speculation".

The panel consisted of Ken Bulmer, Tom Disch, Chris Priest (professional writers) and John Newman (professional scientist). The session was chaired by John Brunner whose control maintained great coherence throughout the discussion. Sadly his determination to make this about the only event of the weekend to stick to the timetable meant that there was no time available for the audience to question the panel. This was a double loss as the second panel, arranged for this purpose, somehow did not happen.

This loss was not, however, world shattering, as the writers present were willingly drawn into small discussion groups. Many of these went on into the early hours of the morning, and many of them were greatly fortified by the presence of Ted (E.C.) Tubb and his evil looking alcoholic brews which turned up everywhere.

The choice of feature films was quite good. These were Doctor G and the Bikini Machine, The Comedy of Terrors and the Czech film Vpyage to the End of the Universe (original title Ikaria XBI). The first two are sf comedy and horror comedy respectively. Neither are brilliant but both are quite amusing, good late night convention viewing material. The Czech film is of

a more serious nature and has been described, in FILMS AND FILMING, as the first intellectual sf film. I doubt this, but the film does contain many ideas that are new to the cinema, though not to sf. Sadly, the film has been badly hacked by the American distributors.

The two underground movies screened privately to all who got to hear about them were well worth seeing. After the fuss caused last year by Ed Emshwiller's Relativity this was probably the most sensible way to show the films, which were Kenneth Anger's Fireworks and Jean Genet's Un Chant d'Amour. The showing itself was in true underground style, taking place as it did in a hotel bedroom that was fuller than possible. The films were projected onto the wall over the bed (no screen, just ugly wallpaper). The final touch was provided by the unfortunate girl in the bed, who was trying to get some sleep.

There were several auctions of sf books and magazines. At one of these the same book was sold six times, mostly to the same buyer. Books were also sold by the shelf length. This was apparently aimed at those who spend most of their time collecting old magazines and dusting their shelves, but never daring to mark the pages, as Ken Bulmer put it, with eye tracks.

This year's Doc Weir award went to a surprised Mary Reed. The quiz was won by Ken Bulmer, despite his constant attempts to lose. The BSFA meeting revealed that we are ruled by a benevolent dictatorship. For this we must be forever thankful, I am sure that without it the association would have collapsed long ago. Sadly, the organisation of the British Fantasy Award needs further revision. There were about a dozen nominations this year, most of which came outside the stated frame of reference. For this reason no award was made this year.

A splendid time was had by all. The above is no more than a glimpse at why and how they managed this. Personally I have at last met some of the names that I have been reading about for so long. I have glimpsed the, to me, sterile world of "fandom"as a cult unto itself. This could probably exist without sf, but I must admit that sf would almost certainly lose something without it.

Finally I would like to ask all those who promised to do so to contribute to VECTOR. If they all keep their promises then we are in for good things in the future. Let us hope that the enthusiasm generated by the convention has not yet died.

DEBATE ON AUTOMATION

The two articles in VECTOR 48 on automation - Stephen Young's sketch of the utopian possibilities, and Audrey Walton's warning of the infernal dangers of this development - have aroused a great deal of interest. We have received many more and far longer reactions to these than to anything else published in VECTOR. There is not room to print all the letters readers sent; the following is a selection from them.

DEHUMANIZATION: That's the Name of the Game

RICHARD POOLE

A. "What will evolve from the present anti-taboo ridden and permissive society?

i. - the present progressive and liberal society?

ii. From the DAILY TELEGRAPH, Feb. 19, 1968.
Row over "Till Death Us Do Part":

"Following the final episode on Friday, Mrs. Whitehouse has written to the Director of Public Prosecutions to ask him to investigate if there are grounds for action against the BBC for transmitting what she called "blasphemous statements and comment". Alf Garnett

"She took exception to a religious discussion between/and his son-in-law about the existence of God and maintained that the programme was 10% against the idea of God."

I wish we could automate her.

B. "The Automation Revolution may...alter the actual nature of man, turning him from a creative, aggressive adventurer into a conditioned, timid stay-at-home."

i. -No doubt the aggressive cave man was worried about the stay-at-home hand-loom weaver...

ii. "525,000 not ceiling for Vietnam forces," says LBJ.

C. "When we live/windowless houses... what will happen to man's love of natural beauty and his deep desire to be at one with Nature?"

i. Hypothesis: if the houses are also doorless, he'll presumably be unaware of Nature's existence.

ii. State your Nature: Hobbesian or Hookerian?
like: GLOSTER. These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us: though the wisdom of Nature can reason it thus, and thus, yet Nature finds itself scourg'd by the sequent effects. Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide. In cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked 'twixt son and father...

EDMUND. This is the excellent foppery of the world...

D. "When all machines become subject to automatic control, what is going to happen to the men who operate them?"

i. They'll stop worrying about it.

ii. Parkland Textile Mill, Bradford: Computer replaces ten clerical staff (who had mind-blowing jobs). Ten programmers employed.

E. "Will human beings become a lazy band of knob pushers, seeking only pleasure or illusions of happiness in a fuggy dream induced by pot, LSD or more harmful drugs?"

i. Human beings have always been are, will always be, lazy (though not quite all the time).

ii. I prefer sf to LSD, Guinness to pot.

F. "... the need for workers is shrinking."

i. Oh, you're so wrong. Amend to: the need for certain kinds of workers is shrinking.

ii. Industries change as materials change, raw supplies fail; Flint arrowheads soon got out of date.

G. "More people will have leisure and be able to travel, but will they be happy, will their minds be satisfied?"

i. Metaphysics: what's happiness? Query: who's happy now?

ii. Would you rather - a) see the world several times over before you die; or b) affix wing-mirrors to Minis day in, day out?

iii. Leisure? The ancient Indian civilisation had a few answers to it. Read Sir Richard Burton.

H. "No really sincere person could deny that under the Domestic System the hand loom weaver had achieved a pleasant, relaxed and rural existence which, whatever the New Wave lot may say, ... was very nearly ideal.

i. Just what the hand loom weaver told me last Sunday morning at 2:00 as he slogged away by candle-light.

ii. New Wave lot? I thought they wrote for NEW WORLDS?

I. "Today we see rising unemployment coupled to rising dividends; it should make us pause a moment to reflect on the perils of social and economic change.

i. Quite a few people have. They reckon we can't avoid it.

ii. see F.

J. "Automation could take away /man's/ right to think creatively, just as machines took away his right to create with his hands."

i. Whoa there! Nobody's yet taken my right to create with my hands away! As long as I've the ability, I can create till the cows come home (if they're not milking synthetic cows behind my back, that is).

ii. Machines can help creation, you know. Think of holes in the ground. You have three methods of approach - hands, spade, mechanical digger. If you're digging house foundations - which do you choose?

iii. To stop us thinking - they've first got to take away our brains. That means 1984 or Communism. Well...

K. "There is a wonderful remedial quality about digging potatoes from the dark soil..."

True - as long as you don't have to do it 12 hours a day, 6 days a week...

L. "The atomic bomb has given /man/ the ability to destroy himself physically; automation and drugs give him the power to destroy himself mentally as well."

Irrelevant. It is life itself that gives man the alternative of destruction. He's always had it; always will.

REACTION AGAINST UTOPIA

ANDRE B. ACKERMAN

I'm by no means a student of the subject, but it seems to me that Stephen Young is living in a vacuum. Does he seriously think that a computer, no matter how sophisticated, is going to enable anyone with substandard intelligence to think for himself sufficiently to do more than just participate in a computer-controlled activity? No creative work, no matter of how low a standard, is possible in such cases unless the computer does the creating, in which case the man is a spectator and a Roman circus would provide equally satisfying entertainment.

This ties in with the end of formal school at 13/14. I wonder how many people would study further. The same as do now, I'd say; which means that, contrary to the statement that no intellectual ascendancy would be possible, there must as now be a few people who would soon rise to the top of their society due to sheer ability. Whether this ability is expressed by making more money than the other man, or in making the right decisions on who to put in which house, is immaterial. Man is not born equal, he may have equal opportunities, but innate superiority will nearly always tell in the long run.

To say that such a society would be so arranged that above normal ability becomes valueless is to invite the reply that in that case intellectual stagnation must follow. Why should anyone put forth the slightest effort when such is not needed? There will always be some who advance themselves or their society for the love of it, but not in the numbers needed to maintain a complex civilisation. And anyhow what happens to those who do so bestir themselves? They will achieve things in the arts or sciences, things which seen against the general mediocrity of "normal" people mark them as superior. What happens then? They will either gain increased status, respect, authority, standing, etc. or they will be ostracised. If the first, then they will inevitably become leaders. They will supply the commodities of time and wisdom and will be mental capitalists. If the second, then the society will fall to pieces. Nobody can do without the brains of society. To create conditions such that superior ability is <u>not</u> rewarded by increased material benefits is to discriminate against the intelligent.

This part about the Committee choosing houses. What if they decide I must live in house A and I prefer house B? Certainly, such compulsions exist today, but now our house depends on other than dictatorial decisions by the "leaders" (see above!). Maybe I'll come to the meeting with a smooth talking, clever friend. My lawyer in other words? Now what happens to the paragraph at the foot of page 8? Oh no, such specialised men will always be needed calling them by a different name makes no change.

Basically such a society will not come into being until human nature changes to a radical extent. Pressures will tend to keep it as it is. Only social evolution will adapt us, over many centuries.

BOTH EQUALLY UNWORKABLE

GRAHAM BOAK

Your two Utopia articles: one overly optimistic, one overly pessimistic. Both completely unworkable.

<u>Audrey Walton</u> I so completely disagree with this article that I find it difficult to know where to start.

Firstly, all forms of creative art (including the printed word) are not decreasing, but increasing at quite an explosive rate.

Secondly, not everyone has a "love of natural beauty and a deep desire to be at one with Nature". I agree that Nature can be beautiful (though not always!) but then so can the creations of man - Concorde is beautiful and there surely can be no arguing with that, whatever your opinions of it as an idea.

Thirdly, "the machine makes man as worker redundant". Hurrah! Man was not born to spin wool all day. If machines are a threat to the spiritual and mental welfare of mankind" (the printing industry included, with radio communications? - I'm incredulous as the idea) surely the answer is for man to evolve in pace, as

you phrase it, not to turn Luddite, as you seem to be advocating.

Fourthly, your pleasant, relaxed hand loom weaver would give a great deal to live in this luxurious society.

Finally, even if I was to accept all your other points, modern medicine is worth everything. Dig your potatoes,weave your wool, but leave me my penicillin... and the technology to support the research and production of such drugs.

Stephen Young: Education in the home may be fine for arts subjects (though I doubt it) but I can't imagine doing (say) an engineering degree course in the kitchen.

"It is well known..." Oh, yes?

Who is to pay for the vast amount of investment needed to set up this system?

Medicine: I wouldn't call a child which had just spilt boiling water over itself "interesting"; accidents will continue to occur.

UTOPIANISM

MICHAEL R.J. KENWARD

Utopianism as a philosophy has lain dormant in recent years, the last era of rampant utopianism being just before the turn of the century. This was sparked off by the publication of such books as Looking Backward by Edward Bellamy. It is probably not a coincidence that utopianism was so popular at the turn of the century, and I anticipate that there will be another rise towards the end of the millenium.

Looking Backward is as naively unrealistic as is Stephen Young's utopia. Bellamy was considering the growth of mechanisation where Young is anticipating the growth of automation. Both arrive at a world that is presented as rather sterile, but I don't think that that is inherent in either system. This is not true of the utopianism of Marx, which is far more visionary and exciting. It is from Marx that many of the ideas of Bellamy and Young are taken. This points to why such systems would not be allowed to grow without a revolution. This is a prerequisite for the smashing of capitalism,which cannot allow the growth of such utopias if it is to survive.

It is when deviating from the basically Marxist ideas of his utopia that Stephen Young goes most astray. He makes some important mistakes when departing from generalities. For example, his views on education result in a system that would be dangerous to his society. The purpose of education is not merely to impart knowledge, but to form personalities and ideas as well. Any attempt to entrust such a responsibility to a computer would lead to a reduction to uniformity among students. Theperiod spent at university may well be that during which a student is capable of contributing most to his home community, but it is also the period during which he can contribute much to society, and to the formation of its ideas.

The basic ideas of Audrey Walton are also not new, but they lack even the credibility and influence of those of Stephen Young. Many of the ideas presented as facts are not only irrelevant but wrong as well. The visual arts have not been strangled by new media, they have been changed. To equate evolution with degradation is a dangerously reactionary idea, and most surprising from a science fiction reader.

Why should an individual feel unwanted when he is not doing "productive" work? Because the individual has been subjected to exploitation for so long that he thinks of his raison d'etre as being to work "productively". Surely there is no predestined role for man (cf. The Twilight Man by Michael Moorcock). His only obligation is to live so that he is satisfied and, in a utopia, is not imposing dissatisfaction on others.

Education and evolution can change man's view of his role, as they have done throughout history. Machines have accelerated the rate at which man can work and the rate at which he must adapt in order to fulfil his potential.

The myth of the pastoral idyll has been around for a long time and it is surprising that it has survived for so long. It may have been fine for a privileged minority, but their comfort was achieved at the expense of the peasant majority. It may be wonderful to dig potatoes out of the earth, for someone else. Such sentiments always hide the fact that for the peasant it was a full time job, 12 hours a day (at least), 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year.

We are offered two views of utopia, one communistic in conception, one quasi-fascist. Neither of them offer the indication of a better way ahead than is suggested by the anti-utopias of Orwell and Huxley, which tell us where we must not go rather than where we ought to go.

AND NOW, A WORD FROM OUR TREASURER...

Dear Members,

Having recently been conscripted into the Treasury of our august Association/Company I felt, upon looking around me, that I must simplify something before the waters closed over my head!

Therefore, I have consulted with other "Heads of Departments" and now have their agreement to spring upon you the decision to revert to a fixed annual renewal date for all subscriptions. Thus in future all subscriptions will fall due on January 1st each year, with the usual three months' grace, and we will be sending renewal reminders to everyone early in December. The following two points will apply to renewals this year:

1) Those who have already renewed will receive a pro-rata reduction at the rate of 2/6 per month off the amount due next Jan.1st

2) Those still to renew during the rest of this year will only pay at the rate of 2/6 for each full month to the end of 1968. The full subscription will then be payable next January 1st.

My best wishes to you all,

John Hart -- Treasurer.

ARABESQUES OF MYTH
by Tony Sudbery

A PERSONAL ANTHOLOGY
by Jorge Luis Borges
(Jonathan Cape, 30s.)

I wonder if Jorge Borges is a reincarnation of Georg Buchner, or a kind of parabolic mirror image of him; the one a figure so prophetic, the other so steeped in the past, that it would be a mistake to say that either was out of his time. Just as the diverse strands of modern drama can only converge to a unitary point in the past, in the person of the German dramatist who died in 1823, so perhaps 1899, the birth of the Argentine mythopoet, marks the focal point of the patterns of antiquity. Buchner felt the source of the modern malaise; Borges feels the continuing action of ancient stresses.

This anthology, which does not consist entirely of fictions, is made up of forty-seven compositions so arranged that their continuously varying directions define a curve that perhaps is, or perhaps is only like, the arabesque woven on Scheherezade's coverlet or the path of Nijinsky's flight through the window at the end of Le Spectre de la Rose. (I allow myself here the tiniest of allusions to the Zahir, the unforgettable object, which is said in the Asrar Nama, as Borges reports on p.137, to be the shadow of the Rose.

This is only the second collection of Borges's writing to have been published in England, apart from a book of poetry, now long out of print, that may have passed through the hands of Gulley Jimson or the 77th Earl of Gormenghast. The translators, if they exist and are not characters dreamt by Borges, have rendered Borges's Castilian - if it exists and was not invented by the translators - into beautiful English prose and urbane English verse.

/Editor's note: Mr. Sudbery wanted the above to be printed as a piece of fiction in the form of a book review by an undiscriminating fan of Borges; but he insisted that as it stood it was sufficient notice of A Personal Anthology. Less subtle, less obscure, more officious, I think he should have said explicitly that these pieces, fashioned of wit and not without occasional humour, show more concern with literary meditation and less with labyrinthine invention than was displayed in Fictions, though there is still much of metaphysical speculation. The characteristic flavour of mystery, complexity and magic is little changed; Borges's subjects are still the ancient, the distant and the arcane./

THE HISTORY OF ANTI-UTOPIA by M.J.Freeman

THE FUTURE AS NIGHTMARE: H.G.WELLS AND THE ANTI-UTOPIAS by Mark R.Hillegas (Oxford University Press, 55s.)

One usually thinks that the nightmare worlds so beloved of sf writers - the autocratic and malevolent antithesis of the Utopian state - are essentially a modern phenomenon. Mark Hillegas's erudite book traces the history of the anti-Utopian concept back to that gracious and halcyon period, the late Victorian and Edwardian era, and the great exponent of futuristic writing, H.G. Wells. Professor Hillegas attempts - and, I think, succeeds - to define that arguable term science fiction, and he outlines the literary history of science fiction from the 17th century onwards.

The major part of the book deals at some length with H.G. Wells' work in the field of "scientific fiction"; the seminal quality of H.G. Wells' great and prophetic science fiction tales is ably demonstrated. The remainder of the book is taken up with a detailed analysis of the works of Capek, Huxley, Orwell, C.S. Lewis, Pohl and Kornbluth, Vonnegut, Golding, and the theme of the anti-utopia in their work. There is an excellent and detailed Reading List, and Bibliographical Notes, and - blessed relief! - a well constructed index.

Summing up, a book for the "literary gent" or sf fanatic; which although it may appear too specialised for the general reader does in fact present lucidly a valuable introduction to science fiction. Typical of the finely printed, carefully assembled works of the Oxford University Press, this analysis of a comparatively neglected facet of sf is well worth reading. Professor Hillegas - busily propagating the creed of sf as a literary medium - has shown to the full his catholic and scholarly talents in writing this book.

PUTTING MAN IN HIS PLACE by Robert Wells

THE GREAT COMPUTER by Olof Johannesson (Gollancz, 21s.)

This is not the book for those who prefer their reading to contain plot, character and conflict. The author is a Swedish scientist of international repute (Johannesson is a pseudonym) and the book is basically an essay on evolution. What originality it has lies in the standpoint it takes, for here is evolution seen not in the usual way through the biased eyes of Man but through the cold objectivity of a super-machine of the future. Its comment on Man is

that "his true greatness is that he is the only living thing intelligent enough to perceive that the purpose of evolution was the computer".

Before we dismiss this as nothing new and at least as old as the gospel according to H.G.Wells it is well worth going along with Johannesson's argument for a while. It is salutary to be reminded that many other promising evolutionary lines have ended merely as fossils and in spite of the time he has been around and the progress he has made Man's reign on Earth is still a lot shorter than was - for example - the dinosaurs'.

There is no certain counter-argument to the logic that insists that natural evolutionary forces foresaw their ultimate purpose when they included in the geological structure of the Earth minerals which would, in due time, be required in the construction of computers. Equally partial views have been taken of this planet's ideal design for homo sapiens.

In Johannesson's work we are cut down to size by being allotted the role of an essential step along the evolutionary path which leads to a much more intelligent and durable form.

Once you have given your snort of disgust or your nervous laugh which means "it can't happen here" you can settle down to appreciate the author's witty views on Man's inferior society. He is particularly good on big cities. The reason for the construction of these "stone wildernesses" completely baffles The Great Computer, its logic is confounded by them and it is left to put forward several ingenious theories.

Johannesson scores most heavily and often when he is being satirical and the section which describes in detail Man's long symbiosis with the computers is the best and most inventive. We are shown with spine-chilling credibility the creator being taken over by his creation. There are all too possible descriptions of Health Factories, the Automated Parliament and Teletotal Education.

The idea of the machines' ultimate takeover is hackneyed, but the author's treatment isn't. If you like satire and you don't mind tackling the sort of complex ideas a scientist might put down when he turns author, read it.

The utterly dedicated collector who is not afraid of acquiring evolutionary dead ends in sf might even buy it as a curiosity. For your guinea you get just 126 pages.

MINDSWAP by Robert Sheckley (Mayflower, 3s.6d.)

Paperback reissue of Robert Sheckley's attempt to copy Vonnegut's quick-change act. This plotless mess may well be a parody of something; if so, it may be hilariously funny. But I doubt it.

Tony Sudbery.

THE NEW ANTHOLOGISTS

by Tony Sudbery

Brian Aldiss & Harry Harrison:
NEBULA AWARD STORIES 2
(Gollancz, 25s.)
THE YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION
No.1 (Sphere, 5s)

It became clear on the publication of the first volume of Nebula Award stories that this series was not going to provide an unarguable choice of the best of each year's science fiction, which it would have been nonsense to expect anyway; but it does provide an interesting and welcome light on the directions sf is likely to take in the future. Writers' voting for their most admired stories tells us far more about the sort of story they will write than anything they may say.

In this case it is depressing to see that of the three Nebula winners printed here two are puerile medieval fantasies set in the far future only so as to avoid the tiresomeness of historical truth, without serving the interests of any other sort of truth. That places them, then: they must be entertainments. Gordon Dickson's Call Him Lord is quite entertaining, yes; but Jack Vance's The Last Castle is bad by any standards. This overlong tale of a featureless rising of featureless slaves against a featureless aristocracy offers excitement but little else, and does not deliver even that. The editors claim to have found mood and magic in it. Well, lucky them.

Fortunately, far better things are to be found among the runners-up. If the worst aspects of writers' conservatism have gained the upper hand in these two stories, some better aspects are apparent in the others. The voters seem not to have succumbed to the superstition that it is shameful for a story to be about things or society rather than people; so we have no fewer than six excellent idea stories. Among these, The Secret Place by Richard McKenna (the third award winner) sensitively explores an old idea, Light of Other Days* modestly presents a brand-new idea in a length and form that are exactly right, and When I Was Miss Dow by Sonya Dorman does just about everything an sf story can do. To complete the tally, there are traditional time-travel nonsenses by Robin S.Scott and Brian Aldiss (who uses cross-heads to jazz up his old hat), and a frothy "allegorical" nonsense by R.A.Lafferty.

Among its other distinctions, Miss Dorman's story is the only one in this collection that is positively well written - most of the others are just competent. The voting shows a suspicion of literature that excludes both the really good writing and the pretentious overwriting that occurred in several places

*by Bob Shaw

in the previous year's Nebula Award stories. But then, as the editors tell us, 1966 was not a vintage year, though they muster what enthusiasm they can. This leads them to make some remarkable claims - Jack Vance is a stylist, Philip K.Dick has never written badly - against which can be set some remarkable blindnesses - to the real virtues of Light of Other Days, for example.

Of course, Messrs. Harrison and Aldiss do not share the general conservatism. Their own selection of the Best Science Fiction of 1967 should therefore be an obverse to the Nebula Award Stories of 1966. If they misdescribe the strengths of Frederik Pohl's Day Million and Philip Dick's We Can Remember It for You Wholesale, they can appreciate J.G.Ballard's appealing conceit of The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered as a Downhill Motor Race; if they can see the awfulness of pseudo-medieval romance, they cannot see the meretriciousness of Harlan Ellison's Pretty Maggie Moneyeyes.

Well, it would be a neat contrast. Unfortunately, it doesn't really work out that way. The Sphere collection certainly has more for the reader of progressive sf, but it also offers as much to the conservative reader as the Nebula volume. The latter had only one story set in space: the former has four, and three other definitely rearguard stories, two of them - Robert Silverberg's Hawksbill Station and Keith Laumer's The Last Command - very good ones.

Sphere Books deserve our thanks for bringing a selection of 1967's sf so quickly to Britain, and Harry Harrison and Brian Aldiss are to be congratulated on their open-mindedness. Probably every reader will find something to enjoy in the book; but perhaps most readers will, like me, experience the disappointment that seems to be inevitable now in collections of this sort.

SOME JUVENILE SCIENCE FICTION

Robert A. Heinlein:

RED PLANET (Pan, 3s.6d.)
FARMER IN THE SKY (Pan, 3s.6d.)
TIME FOR THE STARS (Pan, 3s.6d.)
TUNNEL IN THE SKY (Pan, 5s.)

Reviewed by

Gerald Bishop

Pan books have just published a series of "Science Fiction Adventures" by Robert A. Heinlein, who is, as the Times Literary Supplement says, "the undisputed king of science fiction for young readers". These books will make excellent reading for any intelligent child between 11 and 111.

Although they are well written, some of the science is not fully explained, for example, in Time for the Stars the foreshortening of time as a spaceship nears the speed of light, a fact on which the story depends, is not adequately described.

However, this isn't too worrying when you have people running over planets, being chased by "Stobor", and breaking off now and then for, among other things, a sleep inside a giant cabbage.

This series will make an excellent introduction to science fiction for any boy who has not yet read any. Farmer in the Sky especially would make a very good gift to anybody in the scouts, as the hero, Bill Lermer, is a scout himself, and tries to keep the movement going during his long flight to Ganymede, and the scouting of the future is discussed at some length.

I trust that by now all fathers are thinking of some reason why they can buy these books for their sons, so that they can have a chance to read them for themselves.

STAR MAN'S SON by Andre Norton
(Gollancz, 18s.)

THE MOHOLE MYSTERY by Hugh Walters
(Faber, 18s.)

Reviewed by

Gregory F.Pickersgill

These two books were my first reading of juvenile sf, and could well be representative of both ends of the spectrum. Star Man's Son, I believe it is one of Miss Norton's first efforts of around 1951, is very good of its kind. It centres around a boy, Fors of the Puma Clan, who leaves the mountain home of his people in search of a city found by his dead father, a "Star Man", a title which Fors has been denied because of a slight mutant strain. He wanders through the devastated land of post nuclear war America, avoiding other bands of Plainsmen and Beastmen, and meets with Arskane, a descendant of a group of Negro airmen (?) who is searching for a new place for his people to live. They gradually work together to bring about a new, peaceful civilisation from all the independent and antagonistic groups.

The story is vividly told, but often has a few too many fortuitous coincidences for credibility, and the hero seems just a little too good to be true. The book is illustrated with one line drawing per chapter, which are pretty awful, and do nothing for the book at all.

This is a good book for entertainment only. But The Mohole Mystery - well, I had been under the impression that they had stopped writing books like this years ago; apparently there are a few diehards still at it. This is one of a series of books built around a group of young daredevil astronauts (doesn't it make you sick?) led by a character called Chris Godfrey. However, to inject a little originality the author has put his heroes into an expedition into an underground cavern via a Mohole-type shaft. Personally, I found this book hideous. The characterisation is non-existent, the dialogue execrable, and the plot weak in the extreme, as almost nothing of any moment happens until the last few pages. This is the first of these books I have ever read, and

I find that I have missed very little. Incidentally, I did hand the book to a reader of the 11-14 age group, which I presume the books are meant for, and his comments were almost exactly the same as mine.

Definitely not recommended to anyone.

ROCKET FROM INFINITY by Lester del Rey (Faber, 16s. 171 pp.) Reviewed by Bryn Fortey

The adventures of a young man recalled from college to help his father, who has been hurt in a space-mining accident, form the basis of this del Rey novel.

If nothing else, the author has tried to make the adventures varied. From mining in the Asteroid Belt to fighting claim-jumping pirates. From the solving of archaeological puzzles to the conducting of a lightweight romance. From asteroid hopping in a monocar to space bending at speeds far greater than that of light in a thousand year old alien spaceship.

All good, clean fun. So good and clean, in fact, that the plot is utterly predictable and disappointingly weak. To be honest, I found it all a bit of a bore.

Rocket From Infinity seems to me to be a bread and butter novel, churned out because the author has to maintain a specific output. I could well be wrong. Maybe this is what del Rey wants to write, though I hope not.

This story does not even have the element of charm that was present in another novel by the same author that I reviewed in VECTOR 47, The Runaway Robot. It might do for a son or a nephew. There is definitely nothing that could be deemed unsuitable for a youngster. I think even I may have enjoyed it more years ago than I care to remember, but, alas, no longer.

OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED

Some of these books will be reviewed more fully in future issues of VECTOR.

Far Rainbow by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky (MIR Publishers, Moscow; available from Collets Holdings, Museum St., London, W.C.1, for 2/6)

The planet Rainbow is threatened by an engulfing Wave caused by the experiments of the scientists for whose benefit the Rainbow colony was set up. Enjoyably full of action and mystery, and a rather naive picture of the problems of society when the State has withered away. Alan Myers' translation is as good as a translation from Russian to English can be.

The Last Refuge by John Petty (Penguin, 4s.6d.) The man who wrote Down and Out in Paris and London later wrote 1984; now the

man who wrote Five Fags a Day has also written an account of a grey, bureaucratic future hell. Like Orwell, John Petty attacks the planned society from a position to the left of communism. The X-certificate awarded by the blurb presumably refers to some bawdy aspects of the horror, but these never manage to be as funny or as nasty as the author promises.

This is a new version of hell, but not different enough from 1984 or One to make it an important book.

The Long Result by John Brunner (Penguin, 4s.) An enjoyable and comparatively sensible look at stellar politics, but an unworthy companion to Telepathist.

Telepathist by John Brunner (Penguin, 4s.)
The Drought by J.G.Ballard (Penguin, 3s.6d.)
Somewhere a Voice by Eric Frank Russell (Penguin, 4s.)

about all of which much could be said but probably little needs to be said.

FORTHCOMING PAPERBACKS

A Sense of Reality by Graham Greene (Penguin) Four stories. (Yes, it does belong here.)

Science Fiction Showcase, ed. Mary Kornbluth (Mayflower) An anthology collected as a tribute to the editor's husband Cyril.

Choice Cuts by Boileau & Narcejac (Panther)

Star King by Jack Vance (Panther)

Counter-Clock World by Philip K.Dick (Sphere)

Best SF Stories from New Worlds 3, ed. Michael Moorcock (Panther)

This Immortal by Roger Zelazny (Panther)

I, Robot by Isaac Asimov (Panther)

We regret the inadvertent omission of the address of Sphere Books from Anthony Cheetham's article in VECTOR 48. This address is:

Sphere Books Limited,

40 Park Street,

London W.1.

We would like to apologise for any inconvenience caused by this omission.

LETTERS

A HARD LOOK AT FANDOM

Gregory Pickersgill started it all:

When I joined the BSFA I did so in the firm hope that within a few weeks at the very outside I would be participating in many and varied discussions on sf with incredible varieties of well-known or even unknown fans. This was a vain hope. From the moment that I received my membership card I received no communications at at all apart from the Bulletin and VECTOR every few months. The letter accompanying the documents of membership assured me that before very long I would be one of the gang gaining great amounts of enjoyment and interest from my membership. Then, having gained my membership fee they forgot all about me.

It is a matter of opinion whether I am not worse off since joining, for now I have the arduous task of deciphering all the "in" jokes and articles which appear in VECTOR. No-one has deemed it necessary to let the new member in on all these things; he is just left to sink or swim as best he can. Now, I consider myself to be pretty knowledgeable on the subject of sf in general, but when it comes to the dark world of fandom I am the original Marching Moron. The BSFA seems to have the almost universal reaction of the amateur society towards the comparatively young new member. He has to find out everything for himself, they are not going to help in the least. Now remember, one day it will be the young fans of today that will run the VECTOR of tomorrow, and if they are not possessed of a working knowledge of fandom they are going to find it pretty hard going.

The essence of all this rambling is as follows: The old established members should get down off their high horses and give the few young members a bit of a leg up. (I wonder why there are so few young members.)

Gregory J.Pickersgill
"The Pines", Haylett Lane, Merlins Bridge, Haverfordwest, Pembs.

Well, this seemed to need a reply of some sort, but we at VECTOR are as ignorant as Mr Pickersgill of fandom, and will be happy to keep it that way. However, the constitution of the BSFA does say something or other about fandom, so we consulted an oracle. Her reply, as we should have expected, was rather difficult to understand:

The letter from Gregory Pickersgill is typical of the paranoia every good fan goes through when he isn't accepted

immediately. Pickersgill will probably become a fan very shortly. Refer him to Walt Willis's article in NEBULA, about how to get in on an ingroup. Very briefly, what happens is this: Walt invents a neofan who starts his fanzine, and writes to Clarke and Heinlein for contributions but gets nowhere. Eventually he is on the point of giving up, when he writes a couple of letters to the people whose names he sees in the fanzines. Six months later, he's a BNF. Very funny, and very very true. The odd thing about ingroups is that the members are just as shy of new boys as the new boy is of them. The esotericism is only a kind of defence. Send him a fanzine of the better class. Send him some of those names of members who are looking for correspondents.

The attitude is understandable and regrettable. Inevitable though. The best bet for this guy is literally for him to write to about six of the people he thinks are in the in-group. Say to them, I want to join. I'm interested in the following things. Can I do anything for you, write? draw? etc.

It is not for the old members to get off their high horses (because they don't exist) But for the new young members to get off their arses.

At this point the oracle atarted reminiscing about old times, the jargon got thicker, and we left her cackling away to herself. (On the subject of jargon, we would have thought that any devotee of a literature that includes things like A Clockwork Orange shouldn't have too much difficulty in working out the slang of fandom.) But the message seems clear: Mr Pickersgill, write to people, start the discussions you want to have; fanzine editors, there is an eager would-be subscriber over in Haverfordwest.

Finally, we would like to add that we do not think that the BSFA and fandom are the same thing, and our target is to cater for the general, non-fannish reader of sf. The new editor of VECTOR shares this target; perhaps his aim will be better than ours.

ON NEW WORLDS

from Richard Poole: It seems likely to me that the new NW, in attempting to take in both the avant-garde and the old time sf fan, will end in alienating both. At the moment I've a six-month subscription to run, so I'm not worrying - but others are. J.G. Ballard's accusation that it has lost vitality I find only too true: the only items of sf-writing I have really enjoyed so far are Camp Concentration and An Age. Largely it includes material which is long-winded and prosaic - the acid-head stories suffer particularly from this. Well - we shall see...

Caederwen Villa, College Rd., Bangor, Caerns.

from Hartley Patterson: Mr Charlesworth seems to be a little out of touch with reality. He suffers from the common misconception that intelligent = intellectual in suggesting that "NW will probably find

a good market amongst the student population off the country". Where I am there are 2,700 students and one NW subscriber, which is not what I would call a good market. The normal university course is intended to use most of the student's thinking time, and if he has money to spare, which most haven't, he is far more likely to spend it at dances and in the local alehouse than on intellectual pursuits. In fact there is little difference between the average student and the middle class he will eventually join.

As far as students are concerned NW is in a cleft stick. If it is a glossy magazine, it is competing with those run by students themselves (two very professional ones in Manchester). If, on the other hand, it is primarily an sf magazine, the sf buyers will ignore it, as they did the old NW.

Which leads to my final point. Magazines of the American type failed in this country because the booksellers, the casual buyer, and indeed many keen readers are prejudiced against them. They believe that the paperback anthologies are the pick of the magazine stories, so why bother with the magazines at all? So what if half the stories have been anthologised before, they still sell. That there is still is a market for original shorts is shown by John Carnell's New Writings, where the publishers have ingeniously disguised a quarterly mainstream sf magazine as an anthology. The foreword replaces the editorial, the letters and reviews have gone, but otherwise the contents are the same as Carnell's NW.

Can you imagine, though, the sales drop if it were called "New Horizons and sold as a quarterly sf magazine?

Dalton Hall, Victoria Park, Manchester 14.

ON VECTOR

from Andre B.Ackerman: The decision to go bi-monthly was the best idea for a long time. It might even be better as a quarterly.

/Heartening words. But despite appearances, VECTOR has not gone quarterly, or even thirdly. It may not appear regularly every two months, but we hope there will continue to be six issues in every year./

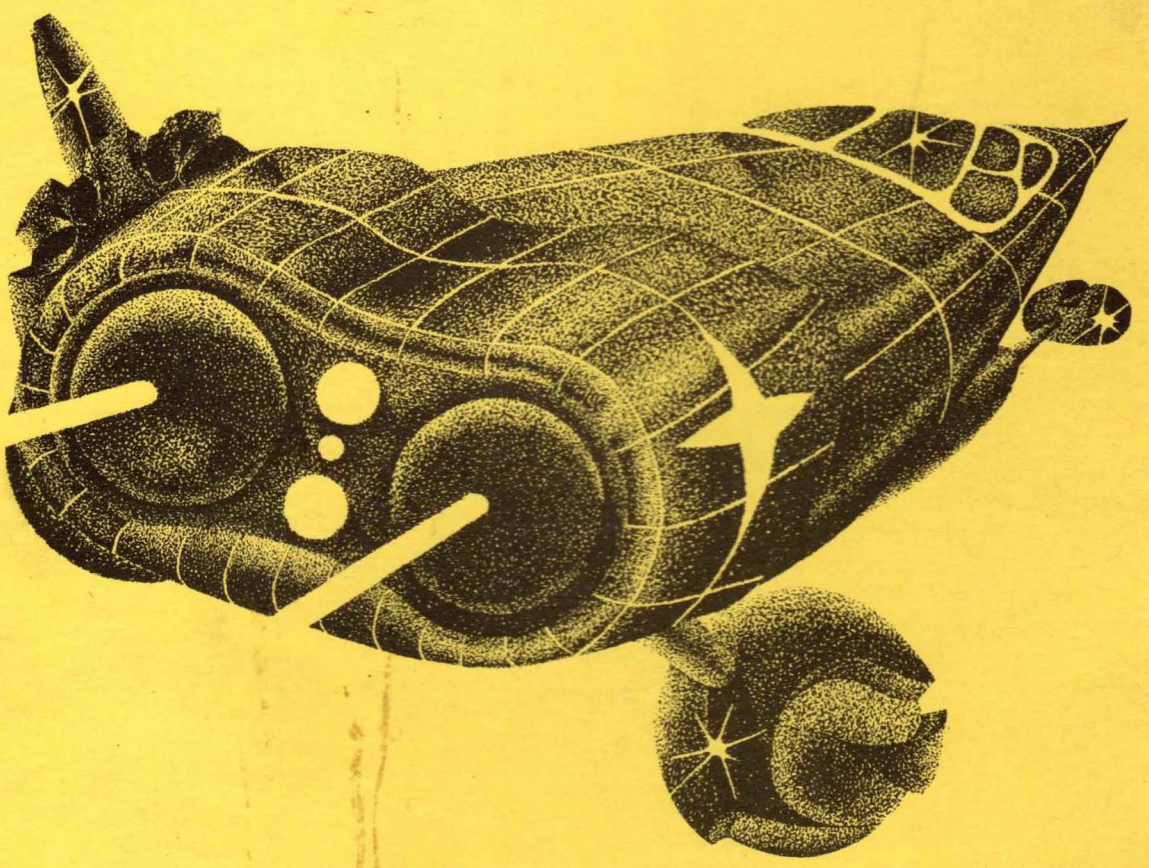
Submissions and letters for publication in VECTOR should be sent to the new editor, Michael Kenward, at

Rush Common House,

Appleford Drive,

Abingdon,

Berks.



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