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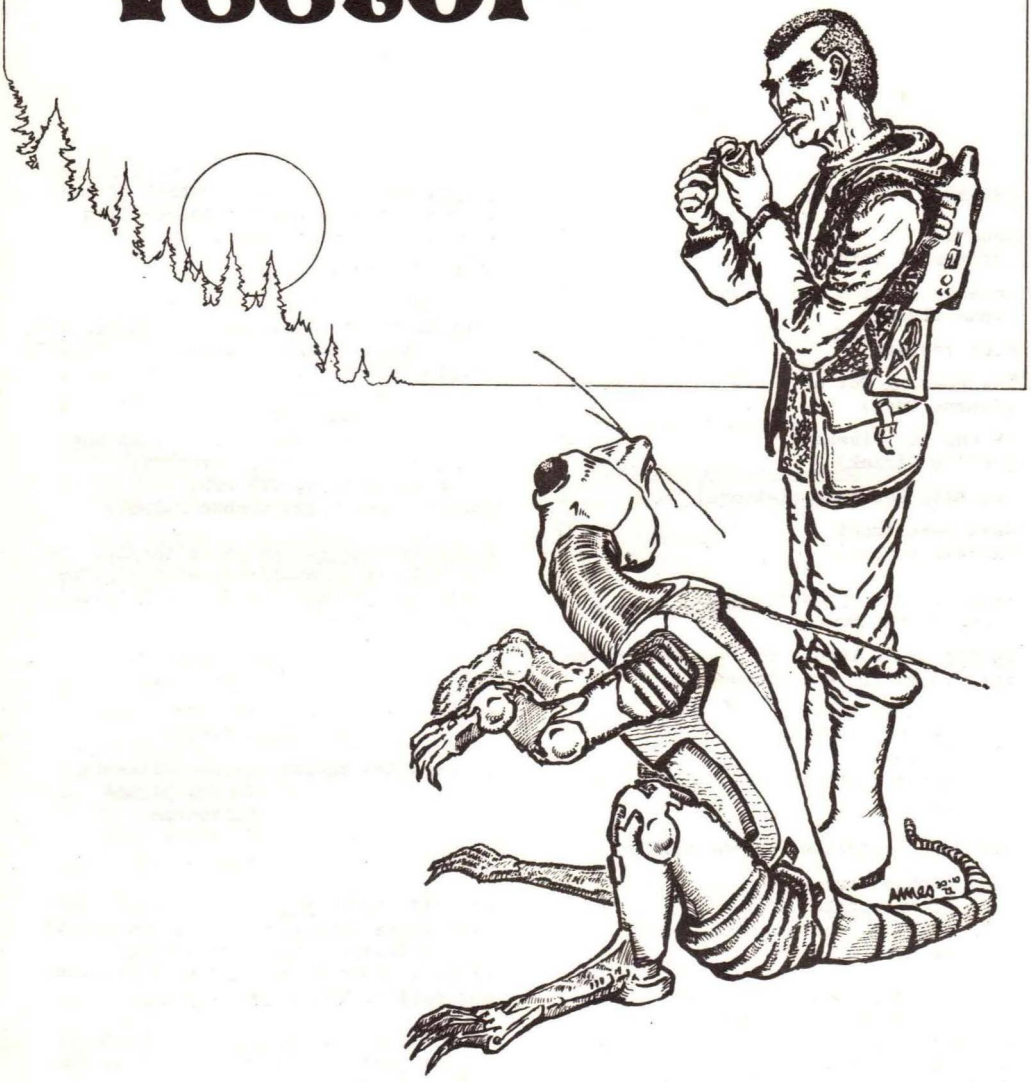

62

VECTOR 62

Contents

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Barring Acts of God, Vector 63 should be out just in time to be lost in the Christmas rush.

...oh God help me — it is too late — the door is giving way — the hand, the hideous clawed hand! — Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn!

LEAD-IN

Nothing quite like a good long announcement to save me having to think of something to say; and what could be better (or longer) than this year's Hugo Awards?

Best Novel

1. TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO, by Philip Jose Farmer
2. THE LATHE OF HEAVEN (Le Guin)
3. DRAGONQUEST (McCaffrey)
4. JACK OF SHADOWS (Zelazny)
5. A TIME OF CHANGES (Silverberg)

Best Novella

1. THE QUEEN OF AIR AND DARKNESS, by Poul Anderson
2. "A Meeting With Medusa" (Clarke)
3. "The Fourth Profession" (Niven)
4. "Dread Empire" (Brunner)
5. "A Special Kind of Morning" (Dozois)

Best Short Story

1. INCONSTANT MOON, by Larry Niven
2. "Vaster Than Empires and More Slow" (Le Guin)
3. "The Autumn Land" (Simak)
4. "The Bear With a Knot in His Tail" (Tall)
5. "Sky" (Lafferty)
6. "All the Last Wars at Once" (Effinger)

Best Dramatic Presentation

1. A CLOCKWORK ORANGE
2. "The Andromeda Strain"
3. "THX 1138"

Best Professional Artist

1. FRANK KELLY FREAS
2. Jeff Jones
3. John Schoenherr

Best Professional Magazine

1. FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION
2. "Analog"
3. "Amazing"

Best Fanzine

1. LOCUS
2. "Energumen"
3. "Granfalloon"
4. "SF Commentary"

Best Fan Artist

1. Tim Kirk
2. Bill Rotsler
3. Alicia Austin

Best Fan Writer

1. HARRY WARNER, JR.
2. Terry Carr
3. Susan Glicksohn

As with the Nebula Awards, many of the winners and runners-up will probably be unfamiliar to British readers. The Lathe of Heaven is the only one of the five novels to have been published in this country, although there will be British editions of Jack of Shadows (Faber) and A Time of Changes (Gollancz)

in the next few months. Many of the short stories appeared in original anthologies like New Dimensions, Quark, Orbit, and Universe. "A Meeting With Medusa" appeared in Arthur Clarke's recent collection, The Wind From The Sun, while by a not-entirely-fortuitous circumstance the short story winner, "Inconstant Moon" is the title story of a collection of the best of Larry Niven's stories which Gollancz are bringing out at the beginning of next year.

Award votes are calculated by a system known as an Australian ballot, presumably so-called because it's so cock-eyed. Under this system in each category one awards a first-place vote to one's chosen story, a second-place vote to the next favourite, and so on (although you may only vote for one story and may award as few or as many place votes as seems appropriate). On the first ballot, first place votes are tabulated and if no story achieves an overall majority the story in last place drops out, and its second-place votes are distributed among the remainder. This goes on until there is an overall winner. To get the second place story, you drop the winner and distribute its second-place votes among the others, and so on again. This all means that the story getting most first place votes may not necessarily win; that the story placing second when the winner is decided may not necessarily win second place; and that anyone reading this is thoroughly confused by now. Since the L.A.Con has released the actual voting figures, perhaps the system can best be explained by giving the actual voting figures in one category. Let's take the novel; since the figures are quite interesting.

	ballots				
First place	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
TYSBG	123	126	138	168	217
TLOH	98	98	107	136	
DQ	127	129	143	164	210
JOS	59	59			
ATOC	96	97	105		
No Award	26				
Second place					
TLOH	126	128	147	214	
DQ	152	155	178	212	
JOS	81	81			
ATOC	115	118	137		
N.A.	32				
Third place					
DQ	183	190	235		
JOS	114	116			
ATOC	150	153	194		
N.A.	37				

As you will see from these, Dragonquest was edged out of first and second place, having led initially in both cases. The vote in the Novella class was fairly clear-cut: "Queen of Air and Darkness" gained 174 first-place votes, to 107 for "A Meeting With Medusa" and 105 for "The Fourth Profession"; succeeding ballots simply confirmed this ranking. "Inconstant Moon" was an emphatic winner in its category, but it is interesting here to note that the eventual second-place winner, "Vaster Than Empires and More Slow" in fact gained least first-place votes of any of the five finallists. Otherwise, the most noteworthy feature of voting was in the Fan Writer category, where Terry Carr was eventually edged out of first place on the sixth ballot, having led for the first five (and in first-place votes he gained 130 to Harry Warner's 91). Congratulations to the winner, but a special hard luck award to Mr Carr.

And that is quite enough of that.

All this information comes, it almost goes without saying, from the newszine Locus, which picked up its second consecutive Hugo. I think it's safe to say that Locus is the single most indispensable publication for anyone interested in what's happening in the sf world. I used to be agent until quite recently, but have had to give it up because of other commitments (most of which begin with the letter 'V'). So if you're interested don't write to me, write to Pete Weston (31 Pinewall Ave, King's Norton, Birmingham 30). However I am still agent for another of the Hugo finallists, and the only one which actually concentrates on discussing sf, Bruce Gillespie's SF Commentary, which comes out with mind-boggling frequency (especially when you consider that the maniac now produces no less than three other fanzines!). SFC costs £1.50 for 9 issues, which is pretty cheap for a fanzine averaging 50 pages or more.

Not much room left, so let's rush through a few things. Lord Longford has done his bit to curb the boom in porn in sf, I see. As chairman of Sidgwick & Jackson,

Continued on p.28

SCIENCE FICTION & PSEUDO-SCIENCE

JOHN SLADEK

Some of you may have seen Jonathan Miller's recent television talk on science fiction. I think I can summarize his conclusions in one equation: science fiction equals pseudo-science plus bad writing. (I might add that the only science fiction Dr Miller ever read was in preparing for his talk. We might similarly summarize Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" as pseudo-history plus good writing, but it doesn't say anything about the play. Instead, I'd like to unravel science fiction from pseudoscience, and compare the two.

First of all, science fiction writers don't claim to be "doing science", they claim to be writing stories. Whereas pseudo-scientists, as we'll see, think they <u>are</u> scientists. Pseudoscience can be defined very loosely as any enterprise which looks like science to the layman, but which lacks rigor. That lets out religions, since they seldom claim to be sciences -- except for Christian Science and Scientology. It also leaves a fringe area containing the social sciences perhaps, and psychoanalysis, which <u>sometimes</u> behave like pseudosciences and sometimes, well, behave themselves. Finally we have the hard-core shams: whenever we find a chiropractor curing cancer by rubbing his patient's spine, or Rosemary Brown playing the latest works transmitted to her by Chopin and Liszt, or an astrologer claiming to have predicted the death of Kennedy, we are in the presence of genuinely false science.

The main problem of the pseudo-scientist seems to be that he doesn't know what science is, or how a scientist works. The genuine scientist, according to P.B. Medawar, does four things:

1) He understands that a hypothesis is just a guess. Until some testing is done, it is on probation.

2) He uses a hypothesis to start his inquiry and to give it direction.

This article is a slightly different version of John Sladek's speech at the 1972 Speculation Conference. It's mostly copied from Mr Sladek's written version, supplemented from a tape recorded by Gerald Bishop for the B.S.F.A. Tape Bureau.

3) He realizes that he can never "prove" his hypothesis (without an infinite number of experiments of an infinite type) but he can disprove it.

4) He knows he must test his hypothesis.

Of course in reality this isn't so neat. Hypotheses are broken down, reshaped, patched up, and regretfully abandoned. Scientists are probably a lot more zestful about attacking other people's hypotheses than they are their own. Medawar mentions scientists who operate like philosophers, detectives, artists and even metaphysicians. I would venture to say that science and its false counterpart do actually overlap in spots. An example, I think, is the work of Professor Gerald Hawkins on Stonehenge. Hawkins' hypothesis, that Stonehenge is an astronomical computer, is perfectly respectable science in one sense — that is, he seems to have shown that Stonehenge bears certain mathematical relationships to movements of the sun and moon. On the other hand, he, or someone else, has yet to show how the people who built it, even if they were as astronomically sophisticated as the Egyptians, could have kept the kind of records they would have needed to build such a computer. I have an idea that in order to build Stonehenge they would have had to keep records over several thousand years. Personally, I'm still inclined to believe him, mainly because I don't know anything about astronomy.

A good definition of a pseudo-science as opposed to a science can be found in Martin Gardner's Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science. It's probably the best book on pseudo-science that has been published. He says there are five ways in which the serious pseudo-scientist's paranoid tendencies are likely to be exhibited:

1. He considers himself a genius.

2. He regards his colleagues without exception as ignorant blockheads. Everyone is out of step except himself. Frequently he insults his colleagues by accusing them of stupidity, dishonesty or other base motives. If they ignore him he takes this to mean that his arguments are unanswerable. If they retaliate in kind it strengthens his delusion that he is battling scoundrels. Consider the following quotation: "To me, truth is precious. I should rather be right and stand alone than to run with the multitude and be wrong. The holding of the views herein set forth has already won for me the scorn and contempt and ridicule of some of my fellow men. I am looked upon as being odd, strange, peculiar, but truth is truth and though all the world reject it and turn against me I will cling to truth still." These sentences are from a booklet published in 1931 by Charles Silvester de Ford of Fairfield, Washington, in which he proves that the Earth is flat. Sooner or later almost every pseudo-scientist has expressed similar sentiments.

3. He believes himself unjustly persecuted and discriminated against. The recognised societies refuse to let him lecture; the journals reject his papers and either ignore his books or assign them to enemies for review. It is all part of a dastardly plot. It never occurs to the crank that this opposition may be due to errors in his work. It springs solely, he is convinced, from blind prejudice on the part of the established hierarchy — the high priests of science who fear to have their orthodoxy overthrown. Vicious slanders and unprovoked attacks, he usually insists, are constantly being made against him. He likens himself to Galileo, Copernicus, Pasteur and other great scientists who were unjustly persecuted for their heresy. (I know this is so. I've been reading quite a bit of pseudo-science for my book and I think I've found at least ten people, in completely different fields of pseudo-science, all of whom likened themselves to Galileo.) If he has no formal training in the science in which he works, he will attribute this persecution to the scientific masonry, unwilling to admit into its inner sanctums anyone who has not gone through the proper initiation rituals. He repeatedly calls you attention to the important scientific discoveries made by laymen.

4. He has strong compulsions to focus his attacks on the greatest scientists and the best-established theories.

When Newton was the outstanding name in physics, eccentric works in that science were violently anti-Newton. Today, with Einstein the father symbol of authority, a crank theory is likely to attack Einstein in the name of Newton! (We'll see some of these later.) Mathematics proves that an angle cannot be trisected, so the crank trisects it. The perpetual motion machine cannot be built — he builds one. There are many eccentric theories in which the pull of gravity is replaced by a push. Germs do not cause disease, some modern cranks insist, disease produces germs. Glasses do not help the eyes, says Dr Bates, they make them worse.

5. He also has a tendency to write in a complex jargon, in many cases using terms he himself has coined. (That is probably a minor point, but I think one of the main points about the crank, or pseudo-scientist, is that he does work absolutely alone. He never has any recourse to check his work against anyone else's.)

One of the reasons people have often supported pseudo-sciences is that their arguments really are unanswerable. They have seen them put down their questioners and win every debate on the subject. There's a very good example in Shaw's Everybody's Political What's What, in which he talks of a flat earth man completely holding a meeting at bay while he expounds his theories. Every question they could possibly have thought of, he has already answered himself. An example: one man asked him, "Well, surely you've seen a ship sinking over the horizon, seeing the sails disappear last and so on?" And he said, "Have you ever actually seen this?" And of course the man hadn't; in fact no one in the room had but the flat earth man!

The first possible link I'd like to talk about between pseudo-science and science fiction is historical. They both began in the nineteenth century, and probably for similar reasons. Science robbed us of our gods. Man was no longer a specially-created son of God, halfway between angels and animals; he was just another animal. Comets turned out not to be portents after all; instead they were locked into the solar system just like the planets. The mysterious vapors and spirits of earlier ages turned out to be just gases, mindless matter. Even the Bible began to look like fiction.

But if science had taken away religion, it had become a kind of religion itself, and scientists certainly weren't coy about taking over a priestly role. They still are perfectly glad to make pronouncements about things they are completely unsure of themselves, in order to get themselves in the newspapers. It does happen. I think one of the best examples of this is Life in The Test-Tube. How many times have you seen a newpaper headline about life in the test-tube? It still hasn't come about, but every step along the way the newspapers -- often, I think, with the cooperation of the scientists involved — jump the gun on it. Another example is heart transplants, where the press of the heart transplants seemed to be much more important than the actual science involved -- the study of immunology and the surgical techniques.

I think it was very natural that pseudo-sciences should try to imitate, that homemade religions should begin to look like sciences. When the galvanists found electricity in living tissues, electricity became known as a Life Force. This led to things like Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, and it encouraged the sale of a wide range of galvanic remedies. You can still go into a chemist and buy a copper bracelet — and sometimes you can get one set with magnets to preserve your life force.

The lid was off, and we soon had Christian Science, Theosophy, Anthroposophy and so on. Almost no science was left alone: each one developed its own dwarfish twin, its mockery. Pseudo-archaeologists got busy on the Great Pyramids and Atlantis. Pseudo-physicists began disproving Newton, and of course later Einstein. Pseudo-astronomers proved that the Earth was flat, that it was concave, and one group that it was made up of a congeries of concentric spheres, with various kinds of life on each level, open at the poles. They kept trying to get money to sail to the poles and enter the inner spheres of the Earth. And, of course, pseudo-geologists went right to work disproving Darwin almost as soon as he had said anything.

It took longer for science fiction to get rolling. The earlier stories were like Mary Shelley's, horror fiction. Poe did mesmerism in "The Case of M. Valdemar". Hawthorne did what I think is a very good robot story in "The Dancing Partner". It's very funny and very horrifying, and I think it has all the elements you will find in the personality of HAL, the Arthur C.Clarke computer. It's not only an automaton trained to dance, it also makes good dance conversation. It asks the young lady how long she's been in town, and does she come dancing often, and so on and so on. Of course, it goes wrong and she dies a horrible death, but even while it's crushing her to death it's asking her all these inane questions! He also did what I like to think of as the first anti-matter story, "Rappaccini's Daughter". Of course it isn't really anti-matter. In this case it is a girl and her father living in a world of poisons, where they finally become so saturated in them that they are poisonous to anything outside their house and garden; and anything outside their house and garden is poisonous to them, of course. There's mutual annihilation when the hero falls in love with the daughter. Then came Wells, who seems to have invented everything. If this was pseudo-science, it was of a different order. I don't think any Victorian ever understood the implications of science, technology and scientific philosophy the way Wells did. It's very difficult to see how this could be summed up as pseudo-science plus bad writing.

The next connection between pseudo-science and science fiction is the obvious one: the subjects they cover. Pseudo-science has been working on a number of ideas which are really science fiction: telepathy, alien invasion, teleportation and so on. Here are a few of them.

Firstly, telepathy or ESP. Many people take it for granted that ESP is a proven fact in some sense or another. They assume that Dr Rhine at Duke University, or his British counterparts Dr Soal and Mr Bateman, have ironclad evidence of telepathic communication. They are wrong. It is true that some phenomenal results were obtained in the Twenties and Thirties using the Zener ESP cards, but in no case could the card-guessing success of the subject be positively tied to ESP. Sometimes success could be traced to cheating, either deliberate or accidental. For instance, Rhine used for a considerable time a deck of cards which were translucent enough to be read from the back if held in a decent light. Often the person handling the cards could have cued the subject by his facial expression, gestures etc. In some cases there were recording errors, and oddly enough these were always in favour of ESP! This is natural; I'm certainly not implying that any of the people doing these experiments were themselves being pseudo-scientists. I just think they were very careless scientists. They obviously believed that what they were looking for was there to be found, and I think it has been shown in other sciences as well that when people start off to look for something, it gets found, whether or not it is actually there. When people began suspecting the existence of Pluto they found it several times before it was found, in various sizes and orbits and at various speeds. It's just too easy to see what you want to see, and it's certainly no discredit to Dr Rhine. Only very feeble efforts were made to randomize the cards, and it is curious that whenever the experimental conditions were really foolproof, the elusive ESP seemed to fade away. Professor C.E.M.Hansel has shown that all the "classic" ESP experiments can be adequately explained by normal events, without recourse to paranormal activity. Telepathy has yet to be demonstrated under experimental conditions.

Time travel is claimed to be a fact be several mystics, but they usually use astral bodies rather than fleshly bodies, so this obviously cannot be tested. The notable thing about astral bodies is that they are notoriously bad at bringing back evidence about their journey. They don't seem to remember things very well, and they obviously can't bring back any material evidence. J.W.Dunne, in his book An Experiment with Time, suggests that we time travel in our dreams. It is a very serious attempt to try to explain prophetic dreams. I haven't had any prophetic dreams myself, but I know people who claim to have. There are two problems really. First of all, the dreams are almost never recorded before they come

true, so there's no evidence of what actually happened in the dream, and second, even when a dream actually matched reality there might be other, more mundane explanations than pre-cognition or time travel.

Another system of prophecy, probably more well-known, involves studying the Great Pyramid. The pyramids have a system of internal passages — not too complicated really, but they have several bends in them. By measuring the distances between these bends and deciding arbitrarily that these corresponded to years in the history of the world, various people have found that the entire history of the world's past and future is recorded there. By this means, the world has been made to end in 1881... they then decided it was really 1914... then 1925... and for sure on August 20, 1953. You can't be right all the time. For the last thirty years the very-impressively financed Foundation for the Study of Cycles in Pittsburgh has been looking for and finding cyclic behavior in absolutely anything, from marriage rates to war, human "creativity" to steel prices. They claim to have so far isolated 37 cycles in the stock market, but their information has not so far enabled anyone to make a killing. With their failures they begin by saying, well, this is really cyclic but it also has a trend, so we'll remove this trend. So they make a suitable alteration and then they say, well, actually the reason it doesn't look like pure cycles is because there's more than one cycle operating here, and they tend to amplify each other (or subtract themselves). So they then find a number of suitable cycles which will fit — something which I think you can do to almost any curve. For instance, let's face it, something like the stock market isn't going to just disappear. The line has to be somewhere on the graph; it has to go up, or go down, or stay the same. You just find a suitable cycle to fit the system. If nothing else works they can always blame "random" factors, by which I think they mean that the future is uncertain...

An interesting tie-in between various types of organization is that they get glowing praise from Roger Babson, head of the Gravity Research Foundation in Boston. Babson has been looking for a "gravity screen" (another of Wells's inventions) for 20 or 30 years now. He also used to sell anti-gravity pills to people to help their circulation.

Pseudo-sciences overlap, all the time. In the field of alien invasion, or UFO-logy, we find Alfred K.Bender contacting flying saucers by telepathy. The message he and his flying saucer club sent was a combination of psalm and office memo:

> "Calling all occupants of interplanetary craft! Please come in peace and help us with our Earthly problems. Give us some sign that you have received our message. Be responsible for creating a miracle here on our planet. Wake up the ignorant ones to reality. Let us hear from you. We are your friends."

The reply, unfortunately, was a terrifying religious experience. After lying down, closing his eues and repeating the message a magical three times, Bender got what I think epileptics and migraine sufferers know as an aura: he experienced a powerful sulphurous odor and blue flashing lights. And then a voice came, of course. Speaking in a dry, office-memo style, it warned him:

> "We have been watching you and your activities. Please be advised to discontinue delving into the mysteries of the universe. We will make an appearance if you disobey."

I believe that poor Mr Bender was so advised.

Among the UFOlogists the craze of the last 3 or 4 years has been combining UFOlogy with pseudo-archaeology, proving that since it obviously doesn't look as if we're having alien visitors now we've had them some time in the distant past. I think you've probably all seen the popular books on the subject, by Erich von Daniken, for instance (Chariots of the Gods) and Peter Kolosimo (Not of This World). Kolosimo, interestingly enough, uses great chunks of quotes from Van Vogt. He obviously has very little to work on in the way of actual data, so he dresses it up with long quotes from science fiction stories. Implying that we're just around the corner from finding out that this was really the case; that there really were space visitors who put up the stone faces of Easter Island and built the pyramids (it all ties in with the rest of the pseudo-archaeology...).

One problem with UFOs is where they

come from. The number that have been seem would imply a pretty heavy traffic between here and wherever. Another UFOlogist suggests the fourth dimension as the obvious place — it is a good place to park them. The vanishing of saucers when chased, the location of their mother ship — anything like this can be explained by allowing them to pop in and out of the fourth dimension, or else parallel universes. They don't seem to realise that it doesn't explain anything to say that they disappeared into the fourth dimension; that just means they disappeared. To quote Lobsang Rampa (an Englishman who claims to be possessed by the spirit of a Tibetan monk):

> "It is always amazing that people can readily believe that the heart can pump ten tons of blood in an hour, or that there are 60,000 miles of capillary tubing in the body, and yet a simple thing like parallel worlds causes them to raise their eyebrows in disbelief."

Rampa has also travelled faster than the speed of light, he says. (He claims, incidentally, that you can still see at the speed of light. You can't see objects behind you — he's clear about that — but you can see them in front of you!) Indeed, he invokes the 9th dimension, antimatter, teleportation, telepathy, reincarnation and our old friend time travel.

The classic teleportation case is something called the Allende letters, which consist of two letters and marginal notes in a popular UFO book. The notes are supposed to be done by three aliens, who obligingly used three colors of ink so you could tell who was speaking. A good thing too, since they all have the same voice — they've probably all been reading the same space comics. Not only do they favor space-comic-slimy-alien chortles, always going "Ha-ha!", but their superior extraterrestrial science seems to borrow heavily from the science fiction of earlier days. Telepathy, force-fields, scout ships, mother ship, antigravity and so on are combined with dark references to Charles Fort, secret Gypsy tongues and Lemuria. And of course they mention the U.S.Navy's famous teleportation experiments of 1943.

Using Einstein's Unified Field Theory, the Navy made a destroyed invisible while at sea. They then shifted a ship from its berth in Philadelphia to another in Virgina, and back again, in a few minutes (why not instantly?). Crewmen were said to have gone mad from the experience. Well, who wouldn't? Some of them suffered from annoying after-effects, such as freezing solid or suddenly fading from view.

World catastrophes have always been about as valuable to pseudo-scientists as to science fiction writers — although the pseudo-scientists tend to use them as warnings as well; there's a distinct Jeremiah touch. The chief theories are those of, for example, Immanuel Velikovsky and Hans Horbiger.

Horbiger was an Austrian engineer in the 1920's, and his World Ice Theory takes some beating. He believed that the moon was about to crash down upon us. That is, it was not just orbiting the Earth but slowly spiralling inwards. In fact, all the planets are doing so. Basic to the World Ice Theory is the idea that space isn't really empty, but filled with sticky fluid. This is slowing down all the planets: any body moving through it naturally loses energy through friction, so all orbits are spirals. The Earth and planets are falling into the sun, the moon is falling into the Earth, and so on. Horbiger also decided that the moon and all the planets (except ours, oddly enough) are thickly coated with ice. More ice falls into the sun all the time, and that causes sunspots. Finally, the Milky Way is nothing more or less than an enormous aggregate of ice cubes. The Horbiger theory went over well in Nazi Germany where, with several other crank theories, it was welcomed as a refreshing alternative to "Jewish science". The Nazis tried at one time replacing practically anything done by any scientist who could possibly have been Jewish with something else. They had to start by wiping out Einstein and going back to an ether theory... this would fit in very well with Horbiger's sticky fluid, I suppose. By the way, we now know that the moon is spiralling outwards at three centimeters per year. So relax.

Velikovsky is probably the catastrophe king. Others have imagined worlds colliding. Others have explained the Deluge with the help of a cooperative comet or two. But it took Velikovsky to make the Earth the punching bag of the solar system. His theory is that Earth was visited in Biblical times by a series of

comet-caused disasters. Here's a brief choreography:

1. Jupiter and Saturn nearly collide. This knocks a comet out of Jupiter.

2. The comet swoops past Earth, causing earthquakes, floods, meteor showers etc., several times.

3. The comet knocks Mars out of its orbit, and Mars then bears down upon the Earth. More quakes, etc. This repeats every 15 years.

4. Mars and the comet collide very near Earth. Small comets are pulled off the comet's tail and become the asteroid belt.

5. Mars is finally knocked back into orbit, and the comet itself settles into a planetary orbit to become the planet Venus.

Velikovsky's heaviest evidence for all this is mythology; he feels that by a very close reading of all the catastrophe stories in all the mythologies you can deduce what they were actually talking about. The ten plagues of Egypt were all stuff falling from the comet's tail, for example; and so was the manna which fed 600,000 Israelites for 40 years in the desert. Damon Knight goes to great lengths to defend Velikovsky in his book on Charles Fort, but he seems to be defending not so much what he says as his right to say it. I suppose no defence of Velikovsky is possible — but no real attack is possible either. A lot of scientists have tried to attack him, with very little success. They assumed that he was much more ignorant than he was. After all, he spent about 9 years writing this book, researching daily into astronomy and so on. Like Horbiger, Velikovsky warns us of future catastrophe, another flaming collision which will vindicate all his theories, and no doubt punish unbelievers.

I'll just say a word about Scientology. Since L.Ron Hubbard was once a science fiction writer, and then invented his own science-cum-religion, we would imagine that this is a very close link indeed. Unfortunately I haven't investigated Scientology very thoroughly, so I'm not qualified to analyze it. On first glance it seems to be an amalgam of psychoanalysis, religion and bullshit, but it's very tightly organised in such a way as to maximise profit. When it suits the promoters, it can choose to be a revealed religion — given to the founder from Above — and thus not open to questioning. At other times it masquerades as an exact science, based on common sense. Common sense, I might point out, was the great rallying cry of the Nazi sciences, too, who wanted to do away with all those messy Jewish equations and get down to having a direct chat with Nature.

To illustrate what I mean by the common sense idea, here are some of the axioms of Scientology:

"Life is basically a static. Definition: a life static has no mass, no motion, no wave length, no location in time or space. It has the ability to postulate and to perceive.

"The static is capable of considerations, postulates and opinions.

"Space is a viewpoint of dimension.

"Energy consists of postulated particles in space.

"Time is basically a postulate that space and particles will persist."

There are about ten of them. The last one is:

"The highest purpose in the Universe is the creation of an effect."

Somehow that strikes me as very applicable to Scientology.

Scientology seems to share one feature with Nazi enterprise, and that is paranoia. Fear is probably a saleable commodity anywhere. One of the elements of Scientology is the engram, which is supposed to be a permanent record, grooved into your mind in some way, of everything you have ever heard, including what you heard in the womb. I think this must be the ultimate in paranoia: you have to watch what you say in front of the foetus because, like one of Orwell's child spies, it may be listening. The only other feature I have seen in Scientology which distinguishes it from competing pseudo-sciences is its policy of literally enslaving its followers. The idea is to sell them a treatment they can't afford, then make them work it off as indentured helpers in the cause. I understand that Ed Sanders' book The Family sheds quite a bit of light on Scientology in relation to Charles Manson, another of whose influences was evidently Heinlein's Stranger

Continued on p.39

BOOKS

Five Fates

by Keith Laumer, Poul Anderson, Harlan Ellison, Frank Herbert, and Gordon R. Dickson
Berkley; 1972; 75¢

Reviewed by Cy Chauvin

Five authors were asked to write a novella beginning with a common prologue devised by Keith Laumer — and this book, Five Fates, is the result. Obviously the prologue is a gimmick used to bind five very different stories together into a sort of "theme" anthology; but it has apparently inspired a couple of noteworthy, or at least controversial, pieces of science fiction.

If this book has a true serious intent or "theme" behind it, then Poul Anderson's novella "The Fatal Fulfillment" (from "F&SF", March 1970) has run away with it and left the other four authors way back there on the starting line. Yes, it is that good. In a microcosm, Anderson's story explores the possibilities suggested both by the book's title and Laumer's prologue. What would be the best kind of world, if we could choose from all those possible? That's the question Anderson poses, and answers, in his story; his conclusion is that all societies, philosophies, worldviews, etc., have their faults. None is perfect. The pasture really isn't any greener on the other side of the hill so much as it is a different shade of green — you exchange one set of faults and virtues for another. It seems a very valid conclusion.

Probably Anderson's most consistent fault (both in this story and others I've read by him) is that his characters have a tendency to lecture one another about various aspects of the story's background. He is admittedly very skilful at blending this in with the conversations of his characters, and I don't object to the technique if it is used sparingly. But Anderson really uses it much too often, and once the reader catches on to it he starts seeing it everywhere. This can make the dialogue seem very artifical. But on the other hand, Anderson has a certain dry wit, a good trait (I think) in an sf writer.

Harlan Ellison's "The Region Between" is the other story in this anthology which has received a lot of attention, and it has been nominated for both a Nebula (as was "The Fatal Fulfillment") and a Hugo. This novella probably presents Ellison at his stylistic best — and he can wield some pretty effective and dazzling imagery when he wants to. But it's a sad fact that nearly all the attention this novella has received has been due to the typographical experiments (read: tricks) and the extensive graphics used in the "Galaxy" version. In the afterword to his story "The Prowler in the City at the Edge of the World" (in Dangerous Visions), Ellison mentioned that he used various typographical experiments in that story to give it a sort of "cinematic" effect. This is also the goal Ellison seems to

be groping towards in "The Region Between", and he has come much closer to success in this story — at least in the magazine version. For without the graphics, the story is a flop, and the typographical experiments failures. Actually, I should qualify that: the typographical tricks are failures in both versions, since while they may make the story more interesting visually, they don't enhance the actual readability or content of the story at all. In fact, they impede it. What Ellison is actually doing is throwing roadblocks in the reader's way. How will turning the book sideways, upside down, and twirling it around make the story "better" and more enjoyable to read? It only serves to irritate and destroy the reader's concentration. Ellison said in the introduction to one of his short story collections, "I expect a bit more eruditiom and concentration and cooperation from my readers". And the readers in turn, I might add, expect a little more than the average half-baked story handed to them. Which they don't get here. Take away all the controversy caused by the typographical experiments, and the story left doesn't cause much comment. It seems like one of Ellison's 1950's short stories, rewritten and polished up in a superficial sense (i.e., there's a lot of vivid and poetic passages), but left in a crude and rough form as far as plot development and characterisation are concerned. Ellison's latest collection, Alone Against Tomorrow, is chock full of stories like this one. It seems rather a sad fall for a writer of Harlan Ellison's calibre.

Gordon Dickson is a writer whose work I now approach with a keen eye. Why? Well, I think Leon Taylor has expressed it best: "...Because he is a schizophrenic writer ... There are two faces to this coin, and you never know which one will survive the toss ... Dickson the Hack (grinding out 3 or 4 novels a year, adding countless links to his already-lengthy chain of space operas), ... or Dickson the Writer, who digs deep into the human soul and unearths some enduring stories." Dickson the Writer has produced some good stories like "Call Him Lord" and "Jean Dupres", but I'm afraid his offering here ("Maverick") is an example of that side of Dickson we most often see (and wish he would hide!).

Keith Laumer, originator of the book, contributes "Of Death What Dreams". This is an odd sort of novella, and seems like a fusion of three separate short stories — for three times the direction of plot changes drastically. By the time you get to the end of the story you find that it has little or no relation to the beginning; it changes direction completely. "Death" is a simple adventure story, and if you can take it on that level you'll find it somewhat worthwhile.

Frank Herbert contributes "Murder Will In", but I don't think he really has his heart in it. He doesn't seem to be trying anymore. As others have remarked, I don't think Herbert (or Laumer or Dickson) is so much a bad writer most of the time as a bad thinker. There's nothing to get excited about when you read a new story by any of these writers; all the ideas in them are old hat.

Not that "Murder Will In" is completely without worth; Herbert describes a fairly interesting composite alien creature, called Tegas/Bacit. It's two aliens joined together, and captures the minds of people; this done, it lives with the person until their body is about to die. To "migrate" from one human body to another (and thus achieve virtual immortality) it must have a strong emotion centre to focus on, and thus generally tries to get someone to murder the body it inhabits (hence the title). This is quite a hodgepodge of old sf cliches, but Herbert manages to inject some new life into them through this mixture.

Before concluding, let me make clear that this is not an original anthology (as Pete Weston, for example, said it was in Speculation 28). All the stories have appeared before, in "F&SF", "Galaxy" or "Worlds of Tomorrow", so if you've read them before don't go out and waste your money.

Night of the Robots

by Brian Ball
Sidgwick & Jackson; 235pp; £1.75

Clone

by Richard Cowper
Gollancz; 190pp; £1.90

Reviewed by Vic Hallett

At first glance there does not seem to be much similarity between these two books; even on further inspection the

correspondences are superficial — both author's are British, both were formerly published by another house, and, most importantly, both books show a marked improvement over earlier ones by the two.

Brian Ball used to have a mannered style which always got between me and his narrative. Here the style is plain and strong, which throws everything onto the plot and settings. I will not pretend that there is anything wildly original in either — a group of tourists and a vendetta fugitive are stranded in an ancient fortress which comes to life once more at their presence — but the book is fast and exciting, and there is enough imagination at work to make it well worthwhile. The human attempts to outwit the fort, and its efforts to come to some understanding of these puzzling intruders make for a battle of wits which bears some resemblance to Silverberg's Man In The Maze, although there is none of the subtlety of that book. However the action is not simple-minded, there is enough characterisation to make one care about individual fates, and the robots have a tangibility which evokes real menace. The book is written with a great deal of verve and it is good entertainment.

Clone is even better. I have found Richard Cowper far too light in the past, and he has a tendency to create characters with funny names which detract from the story. There is a little of that here, but in general his sour future is presented with a great deal of skill and wit. We all know the one about the idiot who is shown how his world works and then leads the revolution that puts it right — well, that is the story Cowper hasn't written. Alvin certainly remembers nothing of his life before the age of 15, and has to be shown the overpopulated Britain where Samaritans do not try to stop suicides, and where the minorities problem is caused by intelligent apes. The reason for his idiocy is an overdose of an amnesiac, and he is really one part of a clone whose four members will be a force to be reckoned with when they combine. What happens when Alvin recovers his memory and searches out his brothers does not follow the usual course and, although the ape theme is a familiar one and there is nothing of startling originality, there is a freshness of feeling and a light tone which makes this a delightful and relaxing book.

In retrospect, the only reason for lumping these two together is that they do demonstrate that intelligent entertainment is still being produced by writers who can invest the old themes with the magic that makes them work all over again

Books received and briefly noted. Comments in double brackets ((...)) are from Vic Hallett; others are perpetrated by the editor.

From Gollancz: Clone, by Richard Cowper (£1.90 — reviewed this issue); Pstalemate, by Lester del Rey (£1.80 — a thorough, if a trifle humdrum, telepathy novel: the first sf novel in many years from an author with a large reputation based on remarkably few stories); The Space Merchants, by Frederik Pohl and C.M.Kornbluth (£1.75 — at last, the first hard-cover publication of this famous book. Kingsley Amis, overstating the case wildly, said it had "many claims to being the best science-fiction novel so far". It's nowhere near that good, of course; but neither is it as lacking as some later critics, no doubt over-reacting against Amis, have suggested. I'd rank it third in the Pohl/Kornbluth pantheon, below Gladiator-at-Law (and why, incidentally, hasn't that book ever appeared in paperback here, discounting the long-forgotten Digit edition?) and Wolfbane — but if you haven't read it do get hold of a copy and judge for yourself.); The 1972 Annual World's Best SF, edited by Donald A.Wollheim (£2.25 — far heavier bias toward 'mainstream' sf than the rival Harrison-Aldiss selection. To be reviewed.); The Book of Strangers, by Ian Dallas (£1.75 — more Sufism than sf in this parable of the technological near future. Looks very interesting, this; to be reviewed in a future issue by D.G.Compton.)

From Faber & Faber: Rx for Tomorrow, by Alan E.Nourse (£1.70 — "tales of science fiction, fantasy and medicine". One of Faber's juvenile series, but apart from two original stories, all of these first appeared in regular sf magazines.)

From Neville Spearman: Genius Loci, The Abominations of Yondo, both by Clark Ashton Smith (£1.75 each. Yondo seems the more restrained of the two, though the first story, "The Nameless Offspring", is the real stuff. Superficially similar to Jane Eyre, in that it features a country house wherein one member of the family is kept locked away, this soon works up the full range of charnel

odours, evil scratching in the woodwork, and corpses with their features locked in an expression of hideous revulsion. The scion of the Tremoth family, you see, is a little ghoul. The narrator never tells us what it looks like because, true to form, "I have never been able to recall with any degree of distinctness the hellish thing that issued from the panel" -- but believe me, it wasn't Lady Isobel Barnett. The stories in the other collection have titles like "Vulthoom", "The Colossus of Ylourgne" and "The Black Abbot of Puthuum". If you manage to pronounce all these names right, I expect you turn into a bat.)

From MacGibbon & Kee: An Alien Heat, by Michael Moorcock (£1.75 — first of the (would you believe?) trilogy, "The Dancers at the End of Time", this features a hero called (would you believe?) Jherek Carnelian. Looks good, though. To be reviewed, certainly.)

From The Library Association: The Tale of the Future, by I.F.Clarke (£3.75, unless you're an L.A. member, in which case £3.00 — second edition of this bibliography. I found this very disappointing, and will be explaining why, at numbing length, in a future issue of Foundation. Cancel your subscription now!)

From Sidgwick and Jackson: The Lost Worlds of 2001, by Arthur C.Clarke (hardback £2.25; paperback 40p — did we really need another rehash of how-I-met-Stanley-Kubrick? If this weren't enough, there are also millions of words of discarded versions of the novel, unfortunately never destroyed.); Tales From the White Hart, by Arthur C. Clarke (hardback £1.60; paperback 40p — at last, a British edition of this collection of slight, but very entertaining Clarke anecdotes, centring round a thinly disguised version of the "White Horse", predecessor of the "Globe" as London's sf stamping ground.)

From Sphere: The Jupiter Legacy, by Harry Harrison (35p — otherwise known as Plague from Space. A well-received Harrison thriller. Don't judge it by the unfortunate opening sentence, which features the most acrobatic set of eyebrows since the days of George Woodcock.); Science Fiction Hall of Fame, two vols., edited by Robert Silverberg (40p each — must be the standard sf anthology with which to convert your friends. But compare and contrast these two editorial statements: 1. "No editorial discretion whatever was invoked on the fifteen most popular stories as shown by the vote tally; their (?)* inclusion ... was regarded as obligatory"; 2. "Arthur C. Clarke's 'The Star' would have been the fifteenth story on this list if it had not been disqualified by the presence of another Clarke story in eleventh place". Question: when is editorial discretion not editorial discretion?); New Writings in Horror and the Supernatural, 2, edited by David Sutton (30p -- not really my scene, as they say, despite the presence of such famous writers as Robert P.Holdstock. I've read the intro. and the editor's own story, and I'm tempted to quote from them — but no, let's be kind.)

From Pan: Galactic Pot-Healer, by Philip K.Dick (25p — not to be missed, it goes, or should go, without saying. Some wonderfully funny sequences, mixed oddly with some rather dark and serious passages. But it reads as if Dick was really enjoying himself writing it.); The Preserving Machine, by Philip K. Dick ((35p — simply magic. Among the stories which are every bit as good as their titles suggest are "We Can Remember it For You Wholesale", "Oh, To Be A Blobel", "If There Were No Benny Cemoli", "Top Stand-By Job" and the short but highly inventive title story. Not to be missed.)); The Witchcraft Reader, edited by Peter Haining ((30p — a book of fantasy stories written by science fiction writers, which have a down to earth atmosphere that makes them very effective.))

From Panther: The Haunter of the Dark, by H.P.Lovecraft (35p — a new edition of this well-known collection. You can say what you like about Lovecraft's hang-ups, and many do, but he's a darned sight better than Clark Ashton Smith, or any of his other contemporaries. For all the many virtues of Brian Aldiss's article in the next Vector, it's rather unfair to Lovecraft, to my mind. There are some poor stories in this book, notably "The Call of Cthulhu", with its hilarious sequence where the awful deity, roused from its millenia-long sleep, plunges in the sea and swims off in pursuit of the ship whose crew disturbed it (presumably doing some version of the god-paddle). But, Lovecraft's ponderousness aside, I think there's a lot to be said in favour of "Pickman's Model", "The Rats in the Walls", "The Thing on

* I assume it's 'their'. The book actually says 'thid', which sounds wrong.

Continued on p.36

THE WEARING OUT OF GENRE MATERIALS

JOANNA RUSS

GENRE FICTION, like all fiction, is a compromise.

Narrative fiction—unlike lyrical verse—cannot produce the big scene, or the rush of emotion, or the spectacular situation, or the emotional high point, or the *frisson* in a chronological vacuum. Part of the story must be given over to rationalization, to chronological and/or dramatic development, to the background and explanation that make the emotional high point possible, let alone plausible, let alone reasonable, let alone humanly interesting.

That is, fiction is *a wish made plausible*. (I have developed this formula out of my own experience in writing and personal acquaintance with some two dozen living writers.) The written story is a compromise between the germinal wished-for situation, action, or scene and the surrounding fictional circumstances which make the original X possible in a connected, chronological narrative. (Without a connected and chronological narrative, you have a lyrical treatment, not a story.) In good writing, the compromise between the wish and the forces of reason or conscience is in itself interesting and moving because it is *in itself* representative of human life. Our feelings, our actions, our perceptions, and our decisions are a series of just such compromises between what we want, what we want to want, what we think we ought to want, and what we know (or believe) we can get. The process I have called making the wish plausible may in fact take over the work and itself become the work: then you have a story of disillusionment or self-deception. Bad writing is often called undisguised fantasy, but I would prefer to call it the wish insufficiently worked on by reason and conscience—good fantasy is often quite bald, and certainly no one could say of Sophocles' *Oedipus* that it is a "carefully disguised" fantasy. On the contrary, the Oedipal content of *Oedipus* (!) is hardly disguised at all, except by the denial that he knew what he was doing; what has been added to the wish

This article first appeared in the October 1971 issue of the magazine College English. Reprinted with the permission of the National Council of Teachers of English (U.S.A.) and Joanna Russ.

(following Freud's notion of it) is the corollary: *What if this really happened?* That is, the original fantasy, again following Freud's idea of it, is combined with reason and conscience. I would add that to my mind the obligatory scene of Sophocles' play is the act of finding out about the past incest, not the act of incest itself, and that the finding-out scene is the emotional and dramatic high point of the play.

George Bernard Shaw has called great art the triumph of a great mind over a great imagination.[1] He has also described the process of producing a bad popular play as doing the most daring thing you can and then running away from the consequences.[2] To produce a good play, presumably, one does the most daring thing one can and then does *not* run away from consequences. Both descriptions seem to me very like mine.

My thesis in this paper is: when writers work in the same genre, i.e. use the same big scenes or "gimmicks" or "elements" or "ideas" or "worlds" (similar locales and kinds of plots lead to similar high points), they are using the same fantasy. Once used in art, once brought to light as it were, the effect of the fantasy begins to wane, and the scene embodying it begins to wear out. The question immediately arises: Which wears out? Does the underlying wish wear out or does the literary construct lose its power of embodying the wish, and do the two become disconnected fom each other? There seems to be evidence for both hypotheses.

That art changes when society changes is one of the commonplaces of the history of art. That is, the old forms (as well as the old styles) do in fact disappear only when social conditions change, and a static society is apparently content to represent the same things over and over in the same way—at least in the plastic arts. It would be reasonable to assume that new forms are sought for new content, i.e. new embodiments of new wishes. As long as social conditions —and hence, presumably, what people want—remain the same, art remains the same and keeps its power over the reader or spectator. Moreover, old and forgotten artistic devices or obsessions do seem to reappear—they are either recreated or rediscovered when the wish behind them manifests itself again. For example, it has been suggested that modern ideas about drugs and the drug culture parallel early Romantic ideas about insanity—we are and they were looking for some kind of insight or vision beyond ordinary perception. The fact that this obsession has reappeared does not mean, however, that the wish was genuinely in abeyance in the intervening period; perhaps there was no means, or no ready artistic means, for embodying the wish. There is evidence in individual readers' and writers' careers that what really happens is that the wish persists but the artistic construct loses its connection with the wish—Auden has said that readers go from bad to good literature *looking for the same thing.* That is, in one person's lifetime the desire for a certain kind of fantasy persists, but the person is driven to a higher and higher quality of literary work. The bad work wears out.

Also suggestive of the idea that the wish and the construct become disconnected in the history of a genre is the surprising freshness and vitality of the best work within specific genres. A reader going back to H. G. Wells finds versions of many things now used in science fiction, but Wells's work isn't stale on that account. Often his imitators pall more quickly than he does.

Perhaps some motifs die a natural death over long periods—due to the effects of social change on the wish—while others are prematurely aged, especially in the last couple of centuries, by being used too much too fast by too many writers. (The Tristan myth seems to have really lost its power *as a wish*—the forbidden love/death theme repeated so often in Western literature. Some critics suggest that *Lolita* is the last Tristanesque novel and that Nabokov could only stay in the Tristan line by parodying it.)

Practically speaking and in the short run, motifs do wear out. Bela Lugosi, once the horrifier of thousands, now excites something much closer to derision. It is not only the quaintness of the old *Dracula*, but its predictability, that amuses people. As a film genre the vampire movie has been done to death, perhaps even prematurely.

What does a writer do then?

The continuing success of what's old and good is heartening but although old work can please readers, this doesn't

[1] Bernard Shaw, *Our Theatres in the Nineties* (London: Constable and Co., 1954) III, p. 16.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

much help a writer. Most difficult of all is to be still interested in the buried wish but unable to use the scene or high point or action that embodies the wish because that scene or action has become ever more taken for granted, known, and expected, not only by the reader but (this is what really counts) *by the writer himself*. You are suspended like Mahomet's coffin: you can't give up the wish, and yet you can't realize it.

I would like to suggest that there is a way out of this dilemma, that writers take it, and that their taking it accounts for the phenomenon of genre material wearing out (maybe all fictional narrative eventually wearing out). Not only that, the way out of the dilemma accounts for *the way* scenes or plots do in fact wear out; that is, not all at once but in three distinct stages. I have named these Innocence, Plausibility, and Decadence; they might just as well be called Primitivism, Realism, and Decadence (though "Realism" here has nothing to do with realism as a style or historical period).

In science fiction these three stages are usually very distinct, as science fiction themes or big scenes tend to more than usual visibility. Their intellectual and novelty content is high. There is, for example, the Revolt of the Robots. If you look into Damon Knight's collection *A Century of Science Fiction*, you will find three robot stories: "Moxon's Master" by Ambrose Bierce, "Reason" by Isaac Asimov, and "But Who Can Replace a Man?" by Brian W. Aldiss.[3] Mr. Knight has arranged them in chronological order, which turns out to be the order of degeneration as I've already described it: Bierce's story is at the stage of Innocence, Asimov's at the stage of Plausibility, and Aldiss's at the stage of Decadance—though I will have to qualify that last term.

Innocence is the simple and naive stage in the evolution of a genre construct. The progress of the story is merely that of drawing closer and closer to a marvel and the story's climax consists in a brief glimpse of the marvel, rather like pulling a rabbit out of a hat. I call the story innocent because the marvel in question here is—or rather was—a genuine novelty. "Moxon's Master" resembles those plays that G.B.S. could not stand because they were merely dramatic padding for some spectacular situation. (Bernhardt's *Gismonda* ended with the Divine Sarah being burnt in the last act; the rest of the play was a clumsy and quite implausible leading-up-to the final debacle.)[4] From the moment Bierce's story finds its feet, it toddles toward the big scene—Machine Bites Man. The rest of the story is merely a set of devices to delay that final revelation and the creation of a sketchy world *into which* the final revelation can erupt. After explanations and preparations that now strike us as unnecessary, after a moody storm borrowed from the older genre of Gothic romance, the narrator finally witnesses the heart of the story—the invention turning on the inventor. And that is that. Bierce writes *as if* his readers had to be cajoled into accepting that last scene—one we can see coming from the fourth page of the story, if not before—although I would think (not upon any evidence, I admit) the Bierce's readers enjoyed the scene as much as he did. Multiplying the delays increases the anticipation; the scene itself, the idea itself, is still novel, that is, it is enough all by itself. We are still Innocent. "Moxon's Master" was written in 1893.

Isaac Asimov's "Reason" was written in 1941. The situation is the same as that of "Moxon's Master"—the Rebelling Robot—although the outcome is happier. But with "Reason" we enter the stage of Plausibility; Asimov's story does a great deal more than pull a rabbit out of a hat.

Once you have managed to embody a wish (and I won't pretend yet to even know what wish that is) in the idea of a thinking machine that turns against its creators, and once the idea itself stops enrapturing you, the next step is to make it plausible. The wish (or situation) here is making more concessions to logic. What we think of now as typically science-fictional questions are being asked: How would such a machine be constructed? At what level would technology have to be to make such a machine possible? What would such machines be used for? What would people's attitude be towards such machines? And – most important – *what would such machines be like*? The question that's being asked in this second stage is "What, *if really*?" and the author isn't satisfied until he has constructed a whole society, a whole technology, and

[3] Damon Knight, *A Century of Science Fiction*, (London: Pan Books, Ltd., 1966).

[4] Bernard Shaw, *Our Theatres in the Nineties*, (London: Constable and Co., 1954) III, p. 175.

a set of rules for the operation of rebelling robots. You do not, as in the first story, see a marvel once and without any explanation. The treatment becomes complicated, plausible and (in that sense) realistic—I don't mean realism in style, as I said before, but realistic in the sense of making concessions to sense, actuality, and logic. It is at this stage, I think, that a great author may decide to treat the motif seriously—if it has unserious origins or pulp origins—as Henry James did with ladies' magazine fiction and Dickens with all sorts of melodrama. Shaw's dictum about great artists exhausting their material begins to apply here. I suggest that Asimov's "Reason" grew out of stories like "Moxon's Master"—this is a fine idea but we must treat it as if it were real and we must treat it in detail. In "Reason" (as in all of Asimov's robot stories) the focus of attention is on how robots would have to work—thus you have the Laws of Robotics and the explanation of malfunctions in terms of those laws. This is a far cry from the glimpse of the enraged machine in Bierce's story.

At the stage of Plausibility, the original inventor-writers' simplicity having gone stale, material can be used by good writers.

With the third stage, that of Decadence, we bifurcate or trifurcate; there are several ways in which a genre construct may become decadent.

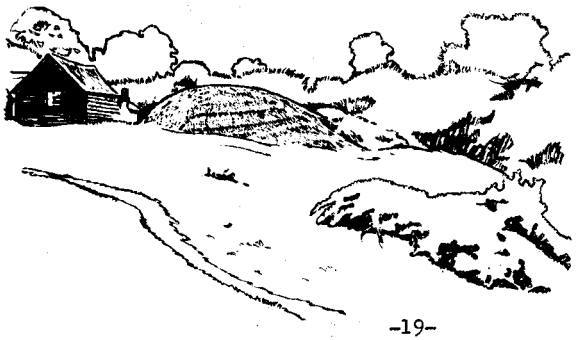
(1) Stories may become petrified into collections of rituals, with all freshness and conviction gone. Television Westerns are at this stage. This is the stage of foregone conclusions.

(2) Stories may become part of a stylized convention—not to be confused with complete petrifaction. In a petrified genre, *the details are more important than the whole*, e.g. the cowboys' tight pants, while stylized fiction retains the sense of an aesthetic whole and a subordination of parts to some sort of aesthetic order. Thus ballet is sometimes stylized and sometimes petrified; but vampire movies now seem to be petrified for good. Possibly stylization is just a way-station on the journey toward petrifaction. It's also possible that stylization agrees better with dance and music (the "purer" media) than with drama or fiction (the more impure media).

(3) What were the big scenes or *frissons* of whole stories may be shrunk, elided, compressed, or added to—that is, until only the original wish/scene is left as a metaphoric element among other metaphoric elements. For example, there are New York poets who make collages of their favorite scenes from science fiction stories. This is not science fiction; this is using what originally was the point of some story or stories for a totally different artistic whole.

The motif or scene or thrilling action for whose sake whole stories were once written becomes a metaphorical or lyrical element *in something else*.

On the way towards this third kind of decadence is Brian Aldiss's "But Who Can Replace a Man?" which was written in 1958. Again robots turn on their creators—or try to—but the story is not about Revolting Robots; it is about something else. The situation that ends "Moxon's Master" and that informs "Reason" is here *assumed*, and the story does not go on to explore the supporting circumstances and consequences of the situation, as "Reason" does. The robots' capitulation at the end is not victorious, because the human race has won; nor is it interesting, because you are told *how* the human race has won (as Asimov does in "Instinct"). The end is strangely moving and very complex: the animalism of the man, the eerie childishness of the robots, the homeliness of Aldiss's



comparisons ("like a pincushion," "like a dull man at a bar," "no bigger than a toaster"), the exhaustion of the land, the oddly parodied journey in which one traveler after another falls by the wayside and is left keening among the barren rocks—all these compose a kind of lyrical image. The story is really about what it is to be human—it shows you this by creating the oddly human incompleteness of the machines. "Who Can Replace a Man?" makes us experience some of the less attractive qualities of humanity by reproducing old adventure-story incidents for its own purposes and by dwelling on apparently irrelevant detail. The story is not about robots rebelling, or why robots rebel, or what robots are; it uses these common science fiction elements for another purpose: showing us what *we* are. In fact, many of the explanations which would make up the bulk of a second-stage story are completely missing: for example, how has humanity survived long enough to wear trace elements out of the soil? Why didn't we blow ourselves up first? And so on. Other details, like the classes of brains, are noly referred to obliquely and fleetingly.

"But Who Can Replace a Man?" shows us a science-fictional element on the verge of death—i.e. on the way to continued existence *only* as a metaphor. A "straight" story about Revolting Robots written this late in the day can only be a stylized story—for example, a parody—or a petrified story. The Revolting Robots must be there for some other reason besides themselves. We've come a long way from "Moxon's Master." One might even argue that in "But Who Can Replace a Man?" we witness the emergence of a new big scene—the last scene. The emotional weight of the story is in that scene. But perhaps the process can only go one way.

The three stages of Innocence, Plausibility, and Decadence may present a paradigm of the history of every aesthetic element in art—if you look at the prelude to the big scene in Bierce's story, you will see that it is a potpourri of once-fresh, then-decadent materials: the stormy night, the glimpse of horror, and so on. Old fiction provides the leaf-drift out of which rises the new. And I wonder if metaphor is not the ultimate destination of every narrative element. At first it is the wish itself, the big scene, the fascinating part presented almost bare; then it becomes plausible, complicated and an occasion for realistic thought; finally it dies as narrative and, entering the general culture, becomes matter for lyric poetry or metaphoric material for new fiction.

Of course this process has been very much hastened in the last few centuries by the increase of social change and in the last few decades by the instant dissemination of every novelty through television, radio, and movies. Motifs begin to rot before they have got out of the first stage. The mass media seem to have got stuck at a level of ritual repetition, what passes for "new ideas" on TV being mostly a desperate addiction to quirks and the trimming with cheap gimmickry of very stale stuff indeed. Maybe the real process then goes underground.

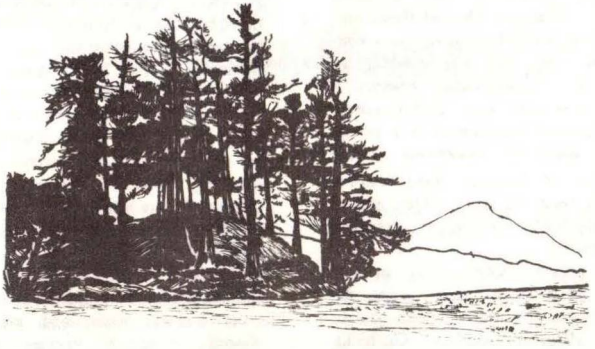
Can the process be reversed? May someone, noticing a glancing allusion, a figure of speech, a metaphor, all that's left of a once-sprawling empire of fiction, be inspired to flesh out that hint and make it fiction once again? I think not, but I cannot substantiate my suspicion. Self-conscious reconstructions of the old can lead to something new but not usually what the imitator thinks he's after. Renaissance Italy wished to copy Greek drama; it ended up inventing opera. But this is not reversing the process; it's happenstance.

Where do the new elements come from? I really don't know. I suspect that genuine novelty is usually crude and/or silly, and that it occurs in bad or undistinguished work. Far from being original or truly revolutionary, great work—even good work—is apt to be the last or next-to-last of something, the use of collective creations as a sort of jumping-off place. Critics are apt to hail second or third-stage work as "new"—Dickens's novels, for example, or Ibsen's plays, although in retrospect it is clear that nobody could imitate either of them without being instantly smothered by the example.

Of course, different parts of one author's work will be on different levels of evolution (so will elements within one story) and the whole process is usually quite complex. Tracing origins is a tricky business.

Let me use vampire stories and films as an example. Where is the real origin of our modern genre—in Gothic romance? Did writers like Monk Lewis and Mrs. Radcliffe get the vampire from real folk-tales? How much was invented

and by whom? Did the reporters or translators of the folk-tales color and change them (as Andrew Lang is supposed to have done)? Sheridan LeFanu's "Carmilla" is clearly already at the stage of Plausibility; yet much of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is back in the rabbit-out-of-the-hat stage. Not only that, but their vampirish conventions are different. Did Stoker not read *Carmilla*? That hardly seems likely. Why, then, didn't he adopt LeFanu's convention that vampires can live in daylight? Did he draw his ideas from some other source? It seems to have been Dracula that stuck for the genre; why? "Carmilla" is a much better story. Did subsequent writers avoid imitating "Carmilla" *because* it was a better story? Even if you assume that the modern genre comes from Bram Stoker, is it via the book or the film? And which film—the 1931 film with Bela Lugosi or Hammer's reincarnation of the early 1960's which makes explicit the sexuality only implicit in the former? By the time you get to *Blood and Roses* you are in the period of decadence in both the bad and the good sense; *haute couture*, incest, neurosis, Lesbianism, and high society are icing on a pretty stale cake. These frills, however, resonate very interestingly with the basic story, and the film's hallucinatory sequences are pure third-stage: vampirism for the sake of something else. *Hour of the Wolf* goes further still, into the purely metaphoric stage; it appropriates the whole tradition in one or two glancing incidents (e.g. the gentleman who walks up the wall and the last scene). Certainly there is no future for the genre except as a metaphor within some other work. By now the whole complex of ideas has passed so into the general culture that it is conceivable in art only as lyric imagery or as affectionate reminiscence. In fact, the vampire tradition has hardly been used in lyric verse—I can only remember one poem in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*. I always thought Italian directors would do very well with vampires as cultural symbols for the rotten rich—many of the traditions about the vampire are close to the atmosphere of films like *La Notte* or *La Dolce Vita*.



Lyric writing (verse or other) is *a graveyard of dead narrative*—events, dramas, personages once used in narrative in their own right. Certainly lyric verse is generally in advance of prose fiction, both in style and matter. It is the first to adapt to shifts of sensibility because it has already digested everything the general cultural context has to offer, while fiction and drama lag behind, their sources being everything that is produced as reportage, chronicle, history, sociological analysis, etc. The lyric mode must, I think, work with well-digested material, since the central organizing impulse of the lyric is a collecting of imagery around some emotional or other center. The combination is therefore what counts—fresh material would prove too centrifugal, too distracting.

The emotional or other center of the lyric, however, may very well turn out to be new itself—thus the stage gets to Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* long after the publication of Eliot's *Waste Land*. The emotional center of the poem be-

comes the big scene/high point/emotional weight of the play. But the poem can produce the *X* without surrounding material, without chronology, without explanation, without plausibility, without leading-up-to. The play—even Beckett's play—must wait until the central image can somehow be set in chronology, in dramatic progression, in some kind of plausibility, in some kind of explanation.

As theatre and fiction become more and more lyrical, one would expect the time-lag to become narrower and perhaps to disappear. This is happening. Brian Aldiss is now no more a writer of narrative fiction than Donald Barthelme.

Of course, when I speak of genre constructs wearing out, I'm speaking of writers, not readers—what matters is what *writers* find stale. Unfortunately the commercial possibilities of a totally petrified genre are enormous, as the eternal life of Western films testifies. But even here the very oldest genres sink to the bottom and finally drop out of existence.

Some genres tucked away in odd corners: nurse novels, spy stories, detective stories (a: sordid French, and b: English village), modern Gothicks, Westerns, much science fiction, pornography, avant-garde fiction, etc.

We do seem to insist on specialization in our fiction.

Some genres have hardly been touched —pornography, for example, seems never to have passed the first stage. Some are dead: Westerns, detective stories, spy stories. Some are beginning to lose their bloom: avant-garde novels. Some, like science fiction, are entering the third stage.

Now a writer can do much worse than rummage among trash, that is genres like the nurse novel. Trash is one of the sources of art. The crude, stupid, obvious novelties can begin a whole cycle.

In fact artists usually pay a great deal of attention to "low" culture, and when they find low culture that interests them they pay it the supreme compliment of stealing it. The demand for originality from good writers is a rather late development in the history of literature. Everyone knows that Chaucer's plots were not his, nor were Shakespeare's, but even in the recent past many great artists can be shown to have stolen all sorts of things from bad art. Ibsen, for example, owes a considerable debt to Scribe, Shaw to all sorts of melodrama (see his preface to "The Devil's Disciple," for example, or that to "Captain Brassbound's Conversion"), Henry James to ladies'-magazine fiction.

One of the reasons science fiction is reaching a wider audience now than ever before may be that many of its concepts have reached the stage of being digested (if I can call it that)—they can be picked up by writers outside the field. That is, science fiction is becoming decadent in both the good and the bad sense. I find that my students read and admire Asimov and Clarke in greater numbers than students ever have before, but when they write they steal fantasies from A. E. Van Vogt, who is unmistakably in the first stage, that of pure invention. They don't write A. E. Van Vogt stories; they use him for poems or for strange works that aren't, properly speaking, science fiction at all, or for science fiction which owes nothing directly to Van Vogt but an eerie kind of glamor. When artists are given a choice between imitating crude originals and second-hand, polished literary versions thereof, most bad artists will choose the literary version and most good artists the bad original. My good writing students don't imitate Asimov because one can't imitate Asimov; he is good enough to have exhausted his subject matter. A. E. Van Vogt (to put the matter as politely as I can) is a very inventive and very bad artist—in Shaw's words, the victory of an enormously fertile imagination over a very commonplace mind. (He said this about Marie Corelli.)[5]

Of course not all new science fiction writers are third-stage writers. Larry Niven, for example, is a second-stage writer and a very good one. But "new wave" science fiction is third-stage science fiction, or rather it exists on the border between the second and third stage. I think the time of petrifaction and ritual is still far away; it may never come or may not come until our while Western idea of science and our Western idea of change themselves go the way of all social constructs. Science fiction is the only genre I know that is theoretically open-ended: that is, new science fiction is possible as long as there

[5]Bernard Shaw, *Our Theatres in the Nineties* (London: Constable and Co., 1954) III, p. 16.

is new science. Not only are there new sciences—mostly life sciences like neurobiology—there are a multitude of infant sciences like ethology and psychology. More important than that, all of science —indeed, all philosophical (or "descriptive") disciplines—are beginning to be thought of as part of one over-arching discipline. Thus physics is continuous with chemistry, chemistry with biology, biology with ecology, ecology with sociology, sociology with psychology, psychology with philosophy, and philosophy with the arts. And so on. This opens the whole world and every single extant discipline to science fiction.

Science fiction, therefore, need not limit itself to certain kinds of characters, certain locales, certain emotions, or certain plot devices. Whoever writes fiction about how things might be if they were not as they are; writes this seriously; and does not offend against what is known to be known (as Samuel Delany puts it) is writing science fiction.

Even now much science fiction is not genre writing—the only thing that makes many stories science-fiction is that they are not about things as they are. We may end up dividing writing into two parts: fiction about things as they characteristically are or were (contemporary fiction and historical fiction) and fiction about things as they may be or might have been (science fiction).

No particular artistic element in fiction can survive forever, but the speculation, the free-wheeling free thinking we prize in science fiction may turn out to be too general a principle to be tied to particular scenes or particular emotional high points or particular plot devices. Only a change in the most basic of our social assumptions will make science fiction non-viable, as only a change in extremely basic assumptions can cause people to stop writing satire or fantasy—both of which assume that the status quo is not all there is, and that things might be different. Put "things might be different" together with any kind of scientific method and you have science fiction. Surely such a compound will survive mere changes in fashion.

It may—and I think it will—become as widely read and as important as fantasy, the tradition of which is several thousand years old.

I will be very glad to see that happen.

SF AND THE CINEMA

a column by **PHILIP STRICK**

We all thought we were into something good with Silent Running, didn't we? The posters were a little untidy (I still can't work out what that white frame right of centre is all about), but the spacecraft looked tempting and all the stuff about the last flower in existence seemed, well, topical. Direction by one of the special effects men from 2001, leading part played by Bruce Dern, whose career has been shaping up nicely since the days he got murdered in Hitchcock's Marnie (he was particularly endearing in Wild Angels, reassuring in The Trip, and creepy in Bloody Mama), it did seem that this could be one of those really memorable sf movies, of which there might be around half-a-dozen.

As it turns out, Silent Running is one of those instantly forgettable sf movies, of which there are scores. The spacecraft are indeed tempting, but very little is done with them other than a repeated orbital shot that looks after a while about as convincing as the one in Star Trek; apart from the first moment you see them there's nothing to match the charisma of the space wheel in 2001. Their interiors are somehow bed-sit, seedily furnished, unappetisingly lit. But reasons could be found for this (the freighters are, after all, an unpopular drain on the Earth Government's resources, and are unlikely to be particularly well maintained), if everything else were enthralling. The trouble is that for those of us who've read Greybeard, say, or Death of Grass, or you name it, the story of Silent Running is so slight as to be diaphonous. Bruce Dern, playing a goggle-eyed nut as to the manner born, is for some reason the only astronaut in the group who cares about the survival of the botanical specimens being preserved in geodesic domes on the spacecraft. These are all that remain of the green hills of Earth, and rather than keep them conveniently and economically to hand on the surface of the planet in greenhouses and the like, Earth has packed them all of into space, where their upkeep must be costing a sizable fortune. Assigned to attend to the welfare of these rare plants are not, as you would have expected, botanical experts obsessively devoting their lives to a sacred cause, but young and fidgety recruits all too anxious to get back home again and apparently so unconscious of the importance of their mission that they even drive their space-type go-karts over

the flowerbeds.

Dern, however, is different. Where others greet with joy the instructions from Earth to forget the whole thing, blow up the domes, and come on home, he takes a decidedly dog-in-the-manger attitude. He is even prepared to sacrifice the lives of his companions in order to protect the domes that have been under their care; and this is the action he is eventually forced to take, after which he steers off through the rings of Saturn and some brief psychedelics in an unformulated attempt to avoid being noticed by the authorities. During his long flight (and long it certainly is), he entertains himself with the help of little robots resembling mobile cocktail-cabinets, which shamble around doing minor tasks in an unco-ordinated manner seemingly guaranteed to bring about blown fuses in no time at all. They sew up a gash in his leg, attempt to master the subtleties of card-playing, and shuffle with embarrassment or tug shyly at sleeves in moments of affection. It's with their help that the final dome, containing all that's left of Earth's flora, goes sailing off to the stars at the end of the film; where Man has Failed, maybe the Machine will Succeed.

The far-sighted scientist versus the short-sighted politician — how long the theme has been with us! Yet Silent Running could have turned it up again, all bright and new, if instead of trying to impress us with gadgets (and I'll admit that the robots are intriguingly done, presumably with the aid of dwarfs), it had concentrated a little more on its protagonists. More contact was needed with the men behind the scenes, it seemed to me; the Earth authorities may have been ogres, but at least they should have had the chance to explain their extraordinary change of heart. Existing quite literally in a vacuum, the Dern figure seems inexplicable; are we really meant to believe that he is the sole remaining ecologist? I can't help feeling that it would have made a better tale if he and his colleagues had been played straight — a team of reasonable diehards, horrified by the instructions they have been given, which run counter to all their training, and consequently determined to avoid catastrophe by some means or other. They could have gone flitting off to the moons of Jupiter, or a spare satellite, or the Himalayas, or anywhere, and attempted to set up a survival colony with all its attendant and traditional dangers. There's have had to have been a few girls around, of course (which would certainly have jollied up Silent Running somewhat); but I suppose that would have been so entirely different a story that it's inadmissible evidence in the present case. I know I'd have enjoyed it rather more, even so; after all, a botanist who fails to notice that his plants are all dying off for lack of sunlight (not that they look too good at the best of times; surely a 'loaded' story like this should be crammed with exotic blooms of all kinds?) does stretch both credulity and patience well past breaking point.

And so to another major disappointment, Slaughterhouse-Five, which we've all all been looking forward to since Vonnegut's novel (not, in fact, his best, but you can't expect the non-sf people to notice that) went careering up the best-sellers list. It's a book that lends itself logically to the screen and to celluloid, on which events — like Vonnegut time — re-run themselves endlessly on the same strip of film. In it, the two Vonnegut territories — factual and fantastic — are merged into one extraordinary landscape: Billy Pilgrim, floating in bewilderment through his life as if it belonged to someone else, is present at the destruction of Dresden in 1945, and simultaeneously the occupant of a glass show-case on the planet Tralfamadore where he lives with the voluptuous actress Montana Wildhack and entertains the natives with performances of such traditional Earth rituals as eating, sleeping, and sex. The two extremes are equally incredible, of course; if one has to accept the fact of the Dresden fire-storm (as Vonnegut had to, as he was there at the time), one might as well accept, too, the Tralfamadorians, whose view of time is that whatever happens is always unalterably happening whether one is conscious of it or not. Through the juxtaposition of Billy's 'normal' and Tralfamadorian experiences, Vonnegut suggests that what we do is always with us, that there will always be a Second World War, and that Dresden will always burn.

Not so much a science fiction novel, then, as an anti-war subject. And not so much an ordinary production either;

Slaughterhouse-Five had a budget of over three million dollars and was entrusted to George Roy Hill, fresh from the commercial success of that highly enjoyable and totally phony cop-out movie, Butch Cassidy. Hill's problem was not so much the reconstruction of Dresden (he used Prague), or of the surface of Tralfamadore (he used wobbly special effects), as the visualisation of Vonnegut's humour — that stream of sly and elusive jabs and abruptly hilarious incongruities. The attempt is honourable but unsuccessful — indeed, Vonnegut is probably untranslatable. He deals not with real people but with moods, attitudes, situations (how could a screen version of "Harrison Bergeron", for example, in any way extend or illuminate what Vonnegut has already put on paper?). Billy Pilgrim's function, like a ball in a slot machine, is to trigger the lights and sounds of the memory (ours and Vonnegut's), throwing a light at random across the unchanging surface of his existence.

Hill industriously edits the film to conform with this fortuitous pattern, but all he gets is a war movie in which the central character is given to wilder hallucinations than those suffered by Yossarian in Catch-22. Whereas Vonnegut made all levels of Pilgrim's journey look equally crazy, Hill makes the war scenes only as surrealistic as war itself, not more so. And whereas the book gives no sign that the circle will be broken, the film falls straight into the trap of a happy and escapist conclusion that would have delighted the Tralfamadorians, with their scorn for the narrow vision of Earthmen. Billy and Montana sit contentedly in their insulated globe at though the nightmare, once past, is also past renewing. The film does best what Hill did best in Butch Cassidy. The camera keeps in close-up as much as it dares, to get the most from the performances, to heighten tension, and to suggest a larger-than-life interplay of emotions. The backgrounds are painstakingly done, with the Dresden set-piece an impressive wasteland of rubble and smoke, casually littered with desultory figures. The Tralfamadore interior is garishly in keeping with the alien view of human living standards, and the exteriors are, I suppose, plausible if you don't look to closely (except for the first Tralfamadorian visit, done with a wobbling circle of light which suggests only that Billy has been overdoing things).

When given the chance of action, Hill grabs it gratefully: the dash to the hospital by Billy's wife, who tears her car spectacularly to pieces in the process, is given full screen measure of easy thrills and goes on far longer than the book's account. But the difficult stuff is solved by avoidance — like the Tralfamadorians, which Vonnegut gleefully describes as two feet high, green, and shaped like plumber's friends (visions worthy of Kilgore Trout), but which Hill (and one can't altogether blame him) simply renders invisible. As Billy Pilgrim, Michael Sacks tries nobly to be all ages at once and not surprisingly in unconvincing in any of them, although you can't help but like him for having a go. But for those who have never encountered Vonnegut, I'd think that Slaughterhouse-Five will be a mystery, while for those who have it can only seem a charade. Where Vonnegut attempts, as he puts it, "to reinvent the universe" in order to see if it works better in any other context, the film reinvents nothing, gives no idea how science fiction can help in the reconstruction work, and defeats the Vonnegut purpose instead of supporting it. Like Silent Running, it could all have been much more fun, and made much more sense. But we must be grateful, at least, for the fact that somebody had a try. There'll be another good sf movie along eventually.

— Philip Strick

Continued from p.4

he has vetoed the publication by his firm of Alph, by Charles Eric Maine, a novel dealing with a future bereft of men, with parthenogenetically-reproducing lesbian females inhabiting the Earth. Said the bawd Lord: "I have not read the whole book..." /// Very handsome new edition of Oxford U.'s fiction fanzine Sfinx. Haven't had time to read it yet, but I think their ambition merits your support. No price quoted, but contact Allan Scott, New College, Oxford. /// Vector 63 will contain the Brian Aldiss article promised for this issue plus many other goodies. See you then.

— Malcolm Edwards

THE MAIL RESPONSE

DAN MORGAN

ALMERIA

Dear Malcolm There you go again! I didn't say that I wasn't interested in reviews — merely that they are pointless as far as the book in question is concerned. I read reviews of my work with a kind of dreadful fascination because of course I'm interested in obtaining some kind of feedback reaction to what I'm trying to do. The trouble is that if one takes critics and what they say seriously it is the destructive reviews that really get under the skin. With the favourable ones — well, there's always the feeling that they may be too kind, whereas the others...

The awful truth is that even after all these years I'm still the world's biggest softie. A really destructive review can render me creatively impotent, which is a bad thing, not because it stops me "selling enough wordage to make a living" to quote your phrase — but because for a certain time it can rob me of the ability to pursue what I personally consider to be the most worthwhile occupation there is — the writing of fiction. Sooner or later the old ego bounces back again, but the interim period, be it a few hours or a few days, can be pretty miserable. Surely anybody who has ever engaged in any kind of creative activity whatever must have experience of the sort of knife-edge balance between self-confidence and despair involved?

I'm surprised that you should trot out the old myth about reviews selling books. This just isn't so, as I explained at last year's Novacon. Many best-selling authors are studiously ignored by reviewers, or treated with smart-arsed contempt. Take the treatment given to Maclean, whom you mention, or Harold Robbins — if either of these two ever gets reviewed he is usually panned. As you say, they should worry, because people who like their writing — and there are a hell of a lot, obviously — go on buying their books.

The other side of the coin I can quote from personal experience. A friend of mine is a very good writer (not sf) and he invariably gets marvellous notices in the posh Sunday papers, apart from upwards of thirty reviews in national and provincial papers. The fact remains that his books don't sell worth a row of beans, and if it weren't for his American Rights he wouldn't make a living.

I leave you with this thought: Critics are like eunuchs — they know how to, but they can't...

++ I think I can detect areas of common ground between us becoming apparent, which can't be bad.

Nevertheless, there are four things I'd like to reply to.

1. I still can't work out just what your attitude to critics and review is. You've called criticism a sterile occupation and pointless, and the way you've said it suggests that you think critics would be more gainfully employed writing books of their own, or sweeping roads, or anything. And yet you admit to being interested in the feedback reaction you get from reviews. So do you think there should be reviews, or what?

2. I missed what you said at Novacon about reviews not selling books (as indeed I missed practically the entire formal programme), but would love to hear your reasoning. I wouldn't claim, of course, that a review will send the readers flocking to their local bookshop to buy up barrowloads of the book in question... in fact I can't comment on sales to the public as such, having no bookselling experience; however I do work in a library, and it is clear to me that in this market (and it is obviously the major market for the vast majority of hard-cover books) reviews can, through a slightly indirect process, affect sales. Somebody whose interest is aroused by a review may not, these days, trot off and buy it — but they are quite likely to go into their library and reserve it. And (in the authority I work for anyway) there is a quite simple mechanism whereby the number of reservations determines the number of copies purchased. This is clearly noticeable with crime novels reviewed in The Sunday Times and The Observer; it is often noticeable with any general novel widely and favourably reviewed; it is never noticeable to the slightest degree with any sf novel reviewed anywhere. But libraries aside, let me bring on in support the Editorial Director of Corgi Books, Mr Michael Legat, who in his fascinating book Dear Author (which I strongly recommend if you haven't come across it) says quite clearly (p.115) "reviews do sell books". No?

3. It's rather hard to comment on the specific case of your non-best-selling friend, since I don't know who he is, but I'd have thought that his financial situation was more indicative of the general situation in British publishing than of any deficiency in selling-power of his reviews. Surely nobody, apart from your Alistair Macleans, Mary Stewarts, Harold Robbinses, and Victoria Holt/Jean Plaidys can make a living without their American Rights?

4. As for critics who know how to but can't: I suggest you tell that to the best critics in the sf field, Brian Aldiss, James Blish, and (I'd better include him or Bruce Gillespie and Franz Rottensteiner will write wanting to know the reason why — not that I don't want to hear from you, fellas) Stanislaw Lem.

Hey, this is the second time my reply has been longer than your letter. This can't be right...

PETER LINNETT

WEST WICKHAM

Dear Malcolm The small skirmish over Pamela Bulmer's article ... does illustrate one curious phenomenon of today (and yesterday?) — the glorification of the critic, not least by the critics themselves. All critics live at second hand — without artists, they have nothing to say. Of course it can be argued that without an audience artists stagnate; and the best critics can be read and enjoyed quite apart from the work they write about. But an audience is not made up entirely of critics, and the critics shouldn't delude themselves that they are important in any way.

I think Mrs Bulmer's concern over the "lack of a body of scholarly sf criticism" is quite misplaced. No doubt in a hundred years we'll be snowed under with academia, and there'll be an sf industry, just like today scholars and critics have established a Shakespeare industry, a Donne industry and so on. We can well do without that sort of thing.

Finally allow me to register agreement with your review of Wollheim's Universe Makers. The book makes interesting reading ... but there were serious "things wrong". Besides exhibiting

a kind of snobbishness over "outsiders" who have entered the field, Wollheim has a way of rejecting all writers whose work doesn't correspond with his optimistic viewpoint, and who don't write in the old pattern of "Man against the galaxy", which he seems to demand of an sf writer. Thus, for instance, his dismissal of J.G.Ballard in about two lines: I think that whatever your reaction to Ballard's work, you can't deny that he's one of the most important sf writers to emerge over the last decade, and any study of sf which ignores him is flawed for a start.

Wollheim also dismisses (as a group, rarely individually) the "new wave writers" in a couple of pages, ignoring whatever they have to offer. For him, Anderson, Heinlein, Asimov etc. constitute the entire spectrum. In short, Wollheim typifies the narrow-minded attitudes so much in evidence in many sf circles today, and this is something we can also do without.

++ Right. To ignore authors of the calibre of Ballard, Dick, Disch and so on seems odd in an overall survey of sf (particularly Dick, so many of whose novels have been published by Wollheim). But allow the man his likes and dislikes. I don't think he's as narrow-minded as you imply. At least he doesn't ram his dislike of the "new wave" down your throat the way some people do. ++

CHARLES D. WINSTONE

BIRMINGHAM

Dear Mr Editor Having read through your article anent the B.S.F.A. Fanzine Foundation, please may I be allowed to lay out my side of the situation; for I get the feeling that I am somehow being made out to be one of the villains of the piece — one of the main persons responsible for the apparent disappearance of the Fanzine Foundation.

First of all, I disclaim the epithet "gallant efforts" when it is applied to me, in association with the F.F. I was just on the edge of Gafiation at the time. I developed a feeling of ennui, when I looked at that pile of Fanzines. I admit to the minor offence of culpability, in not taking care of the thing longer.

The old Birmingham Science Fiction Group had just organised and run the 'Brumcon 2' with some mediocre success. The B.S.F.G. was also very active in running the B.S.F.A. — not very well, alas, but it must be remembered that the Association was a most Fannish organisation then. One of the meetings at my home (the then headquarters of the B.S.F.G.) came up with the idea of a 'Fanzine Foundation' — the B.S.F.A. officials at the meeting(s) agreed, and plans were made to collect and catalogue the thing. We knew that there was a pile of B.S.F.A. Fanzines in Liverpool — so Pete Weston and I went up and collected them. It was a large pile, and the Group had some quiet enjoyment in sorting through it. As time went by, more 'zines were gathered... I had already agreed to keep the Fanzine Foundation at my place.

Then, suddenly, it seemed that I was left on my own to cope with it! It may have had something to do with the fact that I had to stop holding the meetings in my home. There was no-one apparently willing to do what I had been doing for some four years — to hold a once-a-month meeting of Fans at their home. I was left with the job of sorting out some 3000 Fanzines, from many countries, and dating from c.1932 to date. True, the occasional fan turned up to 'help me', notable Pete Weston, who more often than not got immersed in the reading matter of the stuff he was sorting — apparently, he was looking for material for his then not-so-sophisticated Zenith-Speculation.

Anyway, I got the Fanzines into the different countries and started cataloguing them. I got as far as the letter 'G' in the English section, when I cried quits. I started to ask around for help and housing for the Foundation. I had two offers. One who seemed to be a tru-fan (name now forgotten), the other a group from (he said) the University of Manchester. I believe this latter group was led by John Muir — but I cannot be sure. The tru-fan asked often, but had no transport. The Manchester Group had transport, and so I decided to let them have it (I had already found out that one person could not handle it). There were, I recall, nearly two-hundredweights of genius,

gathered in some seven or eight large cardboard boxes.

So these seven bright young students turned up and carted the Fanzine Foundation away. And that's the last I saw of it. I did find a box of duplicate 'zines in the back bedroom, and these I turned over to the Novacon '72 authorities for auction — the proceeds from them (I supposed) would go to the B.S.F.A.

I regret now, having let the collection go, although I do not blame myself for its disappearance. I said it before, it was an unofficial department of a Fannish Association, and there seemed no keen interest in its continued existence, apart from the two parties I've mentioned.

Finally, I must state:-

I did not sell any of these Fanzines -- I've sold only my own.

I do not know where the Fanzine Foundation is now — the last I saw of it was a van travelling north.

I do think that a lot of acrimony is flying about over a situation that was created by the B.S.F.A. itself, in its lack of sustained interest in the early idea of a Fanzine Foundation. The F.F. was created by a group of fans who went to a great deal of time and expense, to collect quite a comprehensive collection of 'zines (mainly British). I suggest that all of you who now seek to affix blame for the disappearance of the old Fanzine Foundation, should now start campaigning for the creation of a new collection. It was done before — it can be done again.

Please remember though, what I said before — one person cannot keep it, it must somehow be kept, catalogued and spread among the members of a Group somewhere.

++ I agree that we should start collecting again, but I'm not yet prepared to give up the old collection, whatever has happened to it. Other news on the F.F. front: Keith Freeman's latest letter says "Latest news ... is that John Muir is complaining he wrote to a BSFA officer (who?) saying he could no longer store the F.F. Also Mike Meara is (once again?) going to collect the F.F. from John Muir. Are we back to stage one??" I also heard from Keith A.Walker, who also thinks we should now forget the old F.F. and start again. He offers to donate the science fiction and fannish part of his own fanzine collection (which amounts, he says, to at least a couple of thousand items) to the BSFA, on condition that he be allowed to run the section. This seems a very generous offer, and I'd be interested to know what response Keith has had from the BSFA. As I said in the last issue, my own view is that the Foundation would be safest deposited with the SF Foundation, like the BSFA library. I know the Foundation is already collecting fanzines, but only sf fanzines, which is perhaps a little short-sighted. Maybe the two organisations could work something out (are you there, George?). As a compromise between this idea and Keith Walker's offer, I suggested that if the BSFA concur with his suggestion it might be on condition that when he no longer wants to keep the collection it should then go to the Foundation. However, all these ideas are still largely hypothetical, as we still don't know the true state of affairs regarding the old collection. Perhaps by the next issue...?

CHRISTOPHER EVANS

TREDEGAR

Dear Malcolm I was most interested in Blish's comments concerning the way in which contemporary sf authors are now adopting the techniques of the Modernists. This implies, quite rightly, that as far as technique is concerned, sf has lagged behind mainstream literature by thirty or forty years. But has the gap always been so large?

Considering sf from 1926, which Blish does in his article (and with some justification), the answer is yes. But we must remember that Wells and Verne were pioneering sf novels at the turn of the century; it's their baby, even if Gernsback and Campbell raised the child. And don't forget, their novels

were fairly widely read and, more importantly, respected by the general reading public of the day. Now I'm not suggesting that Wells was as good a writer as, say, Conrad, but I'm sure that the stylistic gap between them was less than that between a typical pulp writer of the thirties and Joyce.

The implication is, I think, clear: the development of sf novels retrogressed with the coming of the pulps. The (albeit imperfect) tradition which Wells and Verne had established was discarded or forgotten in the flood of magazines which required material on short notice. There was no longer any time for experimentation or refinement of the techniques which were being employed; readers required a new escape each month, and who cared if an infinitive was split here or an overworked cliche used there. The formula had been tried and tested, and no-one was going to get the wily magazine editors of the day to risk publishing an experimental piece. And who could blame them?

By now the pulps had deservedly acquired an image as purveyors of fast buck literature, and sf became equated with cowboy and romantic fiction — decorative but essentially non-functional. And so, when the pulp writers of the day took to writing novels, these were treated as extensions of the magazines and could not hope to command any critical respect, whatever value they had. Eventually, I believe, in the field itself, writers and editors on the whole became convinced that, indeed, sf was for sub-literates.

It is only comparatively recently that sf has begun to believe in itself, and this change of attitude is being reflected in the increased variety of sf now being published. Stories are no longer constructed on a nuts-and-bolts basis, and better writers are appearing. Internally, things look promising — better novels are being written today than ever (unfortunately the amount of rubbish presently being published is also higher than ever, but let's look on the bright side of things). The problem is that outside its confines sf still has almost as bad a public image as ever. Works such as Camp Concentration and The Left Hand of Darkness demand a wider readership; in fact, I'd go further and suggest that they should be on sale as Penguin Modern Classics. Instead, the other extreme is true: Penguins do not even have a regular sf line at present.

This is not merely bickering over paperback labels. It is important that sf should shed its pulp image and its coterie aspect. Neither serves any practical use. If we want the stuff to be taken seriously (I certainly do), we must strive to put it into a position where it can receive the best possible attention.

++ Oddly, there is one field where sf authors can work and be accorded full critical respect, and that is writing children's books. The anti-sf snobbery just doesn't exist among good critics of children's literature — people like Margery Fisher and John Rowe Townsend. Look at the reputation John Christopher enjoys, for example; or Ursula Le Guin, whose A Wizard of Earthsea is well on the way to becoming an authentic children's classic, in this country anyway (has it fared as well, I wonder, in the States, where it was published in paperback in the Ace SF Specials?). Even Andre Norton gets a fair share of appreciative critical attention. Perhaps there is some connection between this fair-mindedness and the exceptionally healthy state of children's writing.

JAMES BLISH

HARPSDEN

Dear Malcolm I want to testify that your two transcriptions of my talks before the Cambridge group seem to me to be almost miraculously accurate. ((I think I forgot to mention that "The Arts in Science Fiction" was a talk given to the Cambridge SF Society. The other talk referred to is its companion "The Science in Science Fiction" which appeared in my old fanzine Quicksilver — sorry, none left. ME)) You've modestly foreborne to note that you had no text to go from, and that in both instances I was

working ad lib from nothing but a small set of cards which would have been no good to any transcriber — they were only shorthand to me. In your text there are a number of tiny errors, but the only one that matters is at the bottom of column 2, p.6, where "a considerable swatch of the static theory" ought to read "a considerable swatch of the aesthetic theory". Mostly, though, I think I ought to tell your readers that you were working from a tape recording of an unprepared speech by a very mumbly speaker, and that the faults in it as printed are mine. (But no apostrophe in Finnegans Wake, dammit; Finnegan is the overall name for a single character who wakes again and again, but at the same time a culture hero who takes on many other names — it's a wake for all the Finnegans, not just one.)

I'm stunned to find Franz Rottensteiner citing my approval of Solaris as of any importance at all. Up to now, FR has expressed nothing but the utmost contempt for everything I've ever written, whether fiction or criticism, and either in print or in letters to me. I do admire Solaris, but why should FR care suddenly whether I do or don't? His favorite word for the rest of us is "dishonesty"; what would be his word for this?

++ Well, um, er, shuffle, modesty forbids... But really, generous though you are, I must differ. What is miraculous is that a speech based on such minimal notes (Mr Blish sent along the set of cards for the talk on the arts, and they are scracely more than mental cues) should be so clear and concise, requiring practically no editing before appearing in printed form.

ROGER PILE

REDRUTH

Dear Malcolm I was somewhat rankled by James Blish referring to the comic strip as a "minor art" and "of no consequence". I beg to differ.

The comic strip is one of the world's oldest art forms and has often played an important part in reflecting the attitudes of its time. All of the great early civilisations, the Greeks, Romans, Sumerians, Egyptian had their own form of narrative art. One classic example is the Bayeux tapestry.

More recently we have the work of Hogarth. "The Rake's Progress" may be viewed as a sort of glorified 'story without words'; also, Hogarth's caricatures were an important precursor to the political cartoons of today, which few daily newspapers are without.

There are obvious limitations upon art of this nature, time being not the least of them. Few cartoonists have the time (nor, I concede, the skill) to produce an "Execution of Spanish Guerillas". Obviously cartoons of a political nature must be topical or they lose all relevance.

It has gone out of fashion for people to 'discover' Marvel comics, once hailed as 'creators of the new mythology of the twentieth century', but they too, in their way, are important. Avoiding most of the more commercial comic book cliches they have tackled such subjects as pollution, race-prejudice and (at the cost of losing the Comics Code Authority stamp) drug-addiction. Their most popular character, Spider Man, is representative of most of today's frustrated, bewildered and neurotic youth.

More familiar, perhaps, Moorcock's 'Jerry Cornelius' is the inspiration of an underground comic (though possibly I am mistaken in taking "a comic-strip hero" in the literal sense).

Please understand, I am not claiming that every cartoon or comic strip is automatically a major work of art. I do hold that as today, perhaps more than ever before, it is an integral part of the world in which we live, it should be accorded at least as much respect as, say, the cinema.

If Mr Blish needs further persuasion (as I suspect he will), might I recommend that he reads The Penguin Book of Comics by George Perry and Alan Aldridge.

++ I believe you, I believe you. I'm sure that the shades of the Bayeux tapestry, Hogarth etc. hang over the work of Stan Lee and co. at least as heavily as those of Lucian of Samostrata and Cyrano de Bergerac did over Ray Cummings and Doc Smith. Of course I wouldn't know if James Blish will be wooed by your arguments, but something — I don't know what, some vague, indefinable feeling — suggests to me that ringing in Jerry

Cornelius on your side will not help to convince him.

Late arrivals...

Logically these two letters would have been included earlier in the column, since one refers to Dan Morgan and the other to my reply to him. But they're both late arrivals, only included because I'm extending the lettercolumn to cover the non-appearance of Peter Roberts' column (more insights into the working of the editorial process...) they both manage to creep in.

TONY SUDBERY

YORK

Dear Malcolm So many people have been sneering at Pam Bulmer's article in Vector 59 that I think it's worth saying that I personally found it interesting and worthwhile; that is, I agreed with most of what she said and thought she said it much better than I could have done.

But it's a pity she chose to illustrate her ideas with a review of a bad book, since it gave Dan Morgan the opportunity to launch into his paranoid attack on criticism in general. (That's not the only reason Pam's choice was a pity: adverse criticism is all too easy to write, and though it's necessary it's not what criticism is for.) In his first letter Dan Morgan makes his attitude plain: "Criticism is a sterile occupation. Might I suggest that Pam would be better employed in the production of her own novel..." Since criticism consists of reading followed by thinking about what one has read, reading without criticising must be an even more sterile occupation; so if Dan really means what he says he must think that the ideal world would be one in which nobody read his novels because they were to busy writing their own. Or would it be truer to say that his ideal world has lots of readers but no critics — a police state in which it is forbidden to voice an opinion on what you read?

It's important to remember that a critic is a reader talking to other readers. In Vector 61 all the letter-writers seem to think that a critic ought to be a writer and that his audience consists solely of other writers. Thus Dan Morgan: "Criticism of a book after it has been published is pointless. Pointless to the writer, he means, but who cares? It wasn't written for him. This assumption that a review is addressed personally to the writer of the book seems to me a form of arrogance which is very common among writers; there is another example in James Blish's introduction to More Issues at Hand, where he expatiates at great length on the value of good criticism to the writer and mentions as an afterthought that it might also be interesting and useful to the reader. He gives the impression that this is an unexpected bonus.

Graham Charnock, whose letter I found so incoherent as to be largely unintelligible, seems to recognise that a critic is a reader, and immediately proceeds to query Pam's credentials as a critic on the grounds that she's not a writer.

I don't think you needed to apologise for your phrase "accurate criticism". I know it's generally assumed in sf circles, where ideas on aesthetics tend to the primitive, that criticism must be entirely subjective; nevertheless, it's not true, and there is such a thing as accurate criticism. (There's something pretty close to objective criticism too, I believe, but maybe that's too much to swallow all at one go.) There are no right answers in the writing of fiction, says Dan Morgan. Maybe not, but there are wrong answers (and it is the reader, not the writer, who is entitles to judge them).

VIC HALLETT

PRESTATYN

Dear Malcolm Re Dan Morgan. You ask for my comments on book reviews and their effect on sales. There is no simple answer to this: some authors sell well even though ignored by the reviewers (Alistair MacLean); some sell well when the reviews are

hostile (Dennis Wheatley); and some don't seel although the reviews are wildly pro (David Storey or Colin Watson). I would certainly not say that reviews do not sell books. People do come into the shop waving clippings: I sold a copy of Fugue for a Darkening Island just that way in Cambridge, and it is even more true of this part of the world where readers depend on the papers to know what is new. I think that a review can sometimes just act as an information desk to notify someone that a book is now published, and the contents of that review are irrelevant.

It is true that original paperbacks suffer from being ignored, and it is only a very few which get mentioned. Those that do in fact are more inclined to be asked for with review in hand than a hardcover. If one includes a mention on the radio or television, even a critical one, then one is on safer ground. Those certainly sell books: get it mentioned on "Woman's Hour" and you're made (and I am not joking).

Other factors include the review source — those papers that do not pretend to literary reviews are better; time of year — Christmas is obviously a good time when people need help with presents; and outside events to back up the review -- a TV programme, for instance. The other things that help are those 'Best of the Year' lists the heavies run just when people have tokens to spend.

Just because a book is reviewed does not mean it will sell; but I think that authors in general would notice a great difference if no reviews appeared for six months. So would I as a bookseller.

++ Vic, as you may or may not know is indeed a bookseller: formerly with Heffer's of Cambridge, he has just acquired his own business in sunny Prestatyn, of all places. When I received Dan Morgan's latest letter I wrote to Vic asking his opinion on the matter. Now I think it's Dan Morgan's turn again...

WAHF time. WAHF: Graham R.Poole, who thought that my moan at Locus's complaint about Vector's layout (are you still following this?) was rather amusing, coming as it did in the middle of an incredibly badly laid-out editorial, which wandered all over the magazine. This may be true, but you don't think I'm going to print letters like that do you? I have my pride... Graham is interested in forming a postal fan group, which might be a good idea, particularly if you live in a remote area. If you're interested contact him at 23 Russet Rd., Cheltenham, Glos., GL51 7LN. Roger Waddington, who approved generally. Anthony Triggs, to whom I should reply personally, and will soon, I promise. Chris Priest who made the very same remark about the layout as did Graham Poole, and attempted to sow a rumour or two. Peter Colley, someone else I owe a letter, wasn't terribly keen on Andrew Stephenson's artwork, particularly the stars on the cover which "looked just like white blotches caused by bad printing". Well, Peter, they were white blotches caused by bad printing, those which weren't omitted altogether; unfortunately our printers aren't up to reproducing the fine detail of Andrew's work. In the original I assure you they looked just like stars. And Archie Mercer, who shed some light on the Fanzine Foundation's chequered history. Keep writing.

Continued from p.15

the Doorstep" and some of the other stories here present. Incidentally, why, whenever Lovecraft's characters lapse into some forgotten and nameless language (as they often do), does it always sound like Welsh?); The Space-Time Journal, edited by Judith Merril ((30p — takes us back to the nostalgic days of English New Wave sf. The selection is a good one, and it is valuable to be able to read some of the better stories now that we can see them as individual items and not as part of a 'movement'.))

From Arrow: The Seedling Stars, by James Blish ((35p — at last, Blish's good books are starting to appear in paperback. This latest contains the stories about the Adapted Men, those who have been engineered for life in an alien environment. "Surface Tension" is one of the episodes, and it is still one of the very best things Blish has written. This edition has a beautiful cover.))(I wouldn't want to contradict Vic, but I must differ over the cover — it's awful.)

NEWS DEPARTMENT

edited by **ARCHIE MERCER**

DOREEN WHO ??? At Scunthorpe on 16th September 1972, the marriage of Doreen Parker (nee Fenton) to Phil Rogers was fittingly celebrated in the company of so many sf fans that it was almost like a minicon. Among the B.S.F.A. stalwarts present were Jill Adams, Michael Rosenblum and Audrey Walton. It is understood that an enjoyable time was had by all.

The Association tenders its heartiest congratulations and best wishes to bride and groom, not to mention to Trish, the bride's daughter. The trio is to live at 69 Brumby Wood Lane, Scunthorpe, Lincs.

EUROCON TAILPIECE From "News from Bree" No. 8, "Checkpoint" No. 20 and "Heckmeck" No. 26, one gleans that the programme was too dry for the general taste - deliberately pitched that way by the organisers in the hope of impressing the mundane newsmedia, apparently - and that the simultaneous-translation facilities were overtaxed. Socially, too, it could have been better managed - its being spread about all over the town was a big handicap, for instance. On the credit side was the presence of a sizable contingent from Eastern Europe, besides the fact that with all its faults EUROCON-1 did take place, did attract an international attendance, and represents a beginning on which to build for the future.

OMPACON 73 The location of next Easter's British national sf convention has been confirmed as the Grand Hotel, Broad Street, Bristol, and the booking form has now been issued. Full board is understood to be about £7 per person per night. Over 150 names are listed in the latest progress report as having registered. Send 50p to Fred Hemmings, 20 Beech Rd., Slough, Bucks, SL3 7DQ, for progress reports and hotel booking forms.

Subsidiary to the above, Dave Rowe writes: "Each Con sees its share of blank faces wandering round aimlessly (even before the bar is open). These, of course, are the non-fen and neos, trying to work out what 'all-this' has to do with SF. In an attempt to eliminate such stragglers next Easter, an informal adopt-a-neo campaign has been started (at the request of the Ompacon Committee). Basically, a first-timer at the Con will be directed to the BSFA desk from whence he (or she

even !) will be whisked to wherever a volunteer 'foster-fan' may be. (Preferably the bar.) It'll be left to the fan to introduce the newcomer to the delights of the con and of his fellows. Anyone who wishes to participate as a volunteer foster-fan should send a short list of favourite authors and other interests (well, we don't want to introduce a 'Doc' Smith fan to a newly-arrived Ballard fan at his first Con) to Dave Rowe, 8 Park Drive, Wickford, Essex."

ANOTHER CON OF SORTS "Comic Media & Fantasy Domain present Fantasy Con & the Christmas Comic Mart". This takes place on 2nd December 1972 at Lyndhurst Hall, Warden Rd, Kentish Town, London, from noon onwards. Admission is free.

This is apparently basically a "Comix" occasion, but they are trying to attract sf/fantasy attendees and stalls as well. £1 to hire table and chair. Contact Rob Barrow, 212 Grange Rd., Plaistow, London, E13 0AB, if interested.

STAFFORD GROUP Stafford now has a Science Fiction Group, mainly college students, but some out-of-term activities. Enquiries etc. to Stephen Pitt at 15 Silkmore Lane, Stafford. The Group would be glad to receive book catalogues, fanzines and similar ephemera.

NOTTINGHAM GROUP Nottingham University Science Fiction Discussion Group is primarily a society for students at Nottingham University, but any fan in the area will be made extremely welcome. Provisional agenda includes weekly meetings - on and off the campus - annual dinner and a brewery visit. (=(AM: truly a Group with noble aims !)=) Membership only 25p for the entire academic year. Contact Pete Wilde at Hugh Stewart Hall, University Park, Nottingham, NG7 2QX.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED Tony Dodson (29) 37 Stow Rd., Spaldwick, Huntingdon. "Other" interests: Conservation, Black Arts (but not actively). Favoured area: any English-speaking.

Harvey M. Jackman (27): 6 Sherington Av., Allesley Pk., Coventry, CV5 9HU. Records, films, TV, comics, football, yoga, wife & daughter. UK or USA.

John Hawthorne (21): 23 Iver Lane, Cowley, Mx. Electronic music, logic, electronics, astronomy. USA, Canada.

Rachel M. Dhonau (63): 9 Cromer Rd., Sheringham, Norfolk. Occultism (esp. Tarot), Esperanto. Germany, USA or anyone who will write in Esperanto.

Douglas Wilchowy (37): 1021 Talbot Av., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R2L 0T3. Collects stamps & some coins, psychical research, UFOs, history, Egyptology, space flight, recent scientific advances. Anywhere.

A BIT OF INTERNATIONAL FANZINE SCENE

"Tellus International SFCD-News" No. 3 for August 22 1972 is produced by Gerd Hallenberger and others for the S.F. Club Deutschland. DM6 or 80p or equivalent for 10 issues "or exchange". Published irregularly in English, this issue has 14 pages. Gerd Hallenberger, D-3550, Marburg, Alter Kirchhainer Weg 58, West Germany.

"L'Aube Enclavee" is a French semi-prozine with stories by Zelazny, Benford and Eric Frank Russell etc., also (=(It Says Here: I haven't seen any of these French zines myself. AM)=) a high standard of illustration. Edited by Henry-Luc Planchet, 11 rue Bel-Air, 57000-Metz, France. Price Fr5. No. 5 should be out Oct/Nov.

SMALL-ADS (FREE SERVICE FOR MEMBERS)

WANTED in good, clean condition if pos.: Ray Cummings "Brigands of the Moon" (U.S. edition)

"Captain Future" series (U.S. 'Popular Library' edition); Edmond Hamilton & associated authors; "Calling Captain Future", "Planets in Peril", "Quest Beyond the Stars", "Outlaw World"

I ALSO HAVE FOR DISPOSAL a copy of the first (and only) issue of "Famous Fantastic Films" (1965) at 75¢ U.S. This is in mint condition and I would consider any reasonable offer, or in relation to my request for the above pbs. This is a must for most enthusiasts of S.F. and fantasy films.

- Bert Lewis, A.F.B.I.S., Carthoris, 150 Lytham Rd., Ashton on Ribble, Preston, PR2 2EP.

WANTED I am willing to pay cost price for the following anthologies in good condition: "Best S.F. from New Worlds" Nos. 1 & 2, ed. M. Moorcock; "Orbit One" ed. Damon Knight; "Nebula Award Stories 1". Any information to

- Frank Smith, 33 Lea Farm Rd., Leeds, LS5 3PU.

FOR SALE Fanzines: Apporrheta Nos. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 13 (good to very good cond.) All 6 for 70p (incl. pstg) Orion Nos. 17, 25, 27 (good). All 3 25p (incl. postage.)

Cry Nos. 158, 160 & Retribution No. 3 All 3 30p (incl. postage).

Books: Paperback - The Hobbit (Tolkien-Unwin 71) 30p, New Writings 3 & 16 (Carnell-Corgi 70) 2 for 25p, Cradle of the Sun (Brian Stableford-Sphere) 15p.

Hardback - The Time Hoppers (Silverberg-S&J 68) 25p, Past Master (lafferty-SFBC 70) 20p. (All incl. postage.) (POSTAL ORDERS OR CASH ONLY)

- Peter Colley, 2 Bristol Av., Levenshulme, Manchester, M19 3NU.

I DENY BEING implicated in VIEWPOINT, having seen the error of my ways and allowed Fred Hemmings to toil, sweat and edit his own weary way (how kind of me). Further explanations in VIEWPOINT 9, and as if it needed more readership value than that, there are also no less than four conreps on Chessmancon and a long LoC by Pete Weston suggesting what the BSFA can do with itself. Copies for 16p (post inc.) from Fred Hemmings, 20 Beech Rd., Slough, Bucks, SL3 7DQ. (That was Dave Rowe speaking.)

NEW AND REJOINED MEMBERS

1192 Cameron, John R.L.: Briery Hill Farm, Kilcot, Newent, Glos
1045 Cockburn, Norman J. (Dr.): 30 Selwyn Rd., New Malden, Sy
1266 Davies, Malcolm J.: 12 Hatfield Rd., Dagenham, Essex
288 Dhonau, Rachel M.: 9 Cromer Rd., Sheringham, Norfolk
1263 Dodson, Tony: 37 Stow Rd., Spaldwick, Huntingdon
1267 Hawthorne, John: 23 Iver Lane, Cowley, Middlesex
1264 Jackman, Harvey M.: 6 Sherington Av., Allesley Pk., Coventry, CV5 9HU
1205 Keeling, Ralph: 312 Mather Av., Liverpool 18
1159 Oxford University S.F. Group: New College, Oxford
1265 West, Alexander R.: 1 Greyfriars, Box Lane, Wrexham, LL12 7PY
1268 Reid, Robert B.: 6 Second Av., Moonah West, Tasmania 7009, Australia
1262 Wilchowy, Douglas: 1021 Talbot Av. Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R2L 0T3

CHANGE OF ADDRESS etc.

1058 Blair, M.J. (F/Lt): should read 8 Aeroville etc.
1225 Cosnett, A.: now Mount View, Wrekin Rd., Wellington, Telford, Salop, TF1 1RL
347 Hallett, Victor: now Books Unlimited, 210 High St., Prestatyn, Flints
1222 Meara, Mike: now 61 Borrowash Rd., Spondon, Derby, DE2 7QH
1086 Morgan, C.J.K.: now 18 Knightsdale Rd., Westham, Weymouth, Dorset
376 Rogers, Doreen: now 69 Brumby Wood Lane, Scunthorpe Lincs (previously Parker)

STATISTICS

Members with inland addresses (incl. B.F.P.O. & Ireland)	249
Members with overseas addresses	24
Total membership	273

Continued from p.11

in a Strange Land -- so here we are back in science fiction again.

In his book on science fiction, Sam Lundwall says:

> "Science fiction has always been somewhat unorthodox... Being based mainly on the question what if...? it often has no use for the standard literary tools of mainstream fiction, and is, consequently, hard to judge by the gauges used for fiction describing familiar and predictable situations. It presents an equation that consists of nothing but unknowns."

This sounds oddly like the kind of special pleading pseudo-scientists use to show why they are really scientific, if "unorthodox". I dislike it. I don't think science fiction needs or deserves special consideration: like any other form of fiction, it has to tell a good story.

The question "What if...?" is asked by both sf and pseudo-science. The main difference is, the pseudo-scientist doesn't know when to admit it's all a game.

--- John Sladek