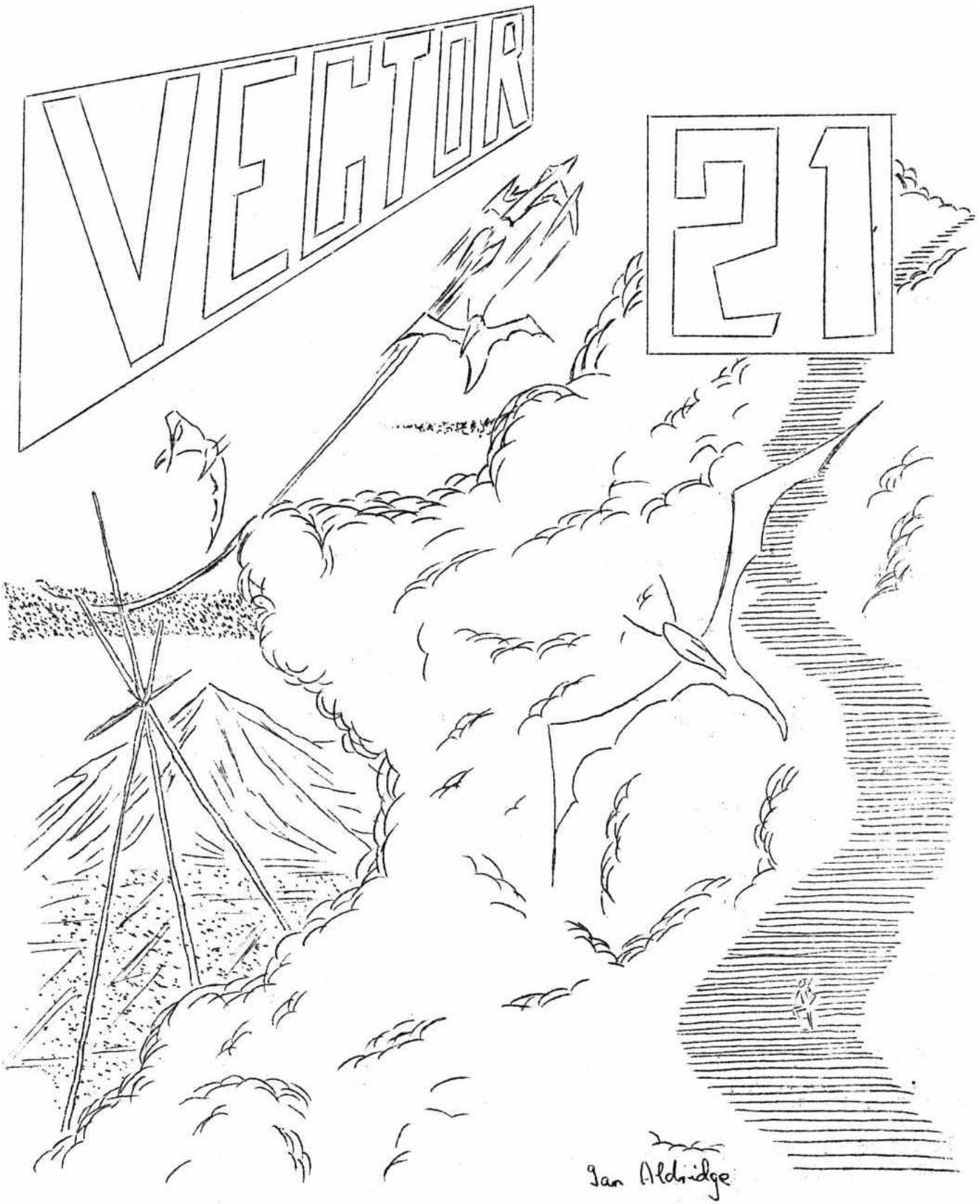
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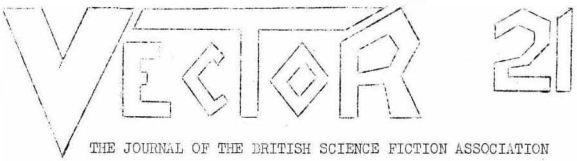

SEPT
1963

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION

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Cover by Ian Aldridge, cut on to stencil by Terry Jeeves

Interior artwork and headings (except for this page) by Terry Jeeves and "Helstar", cut on to stencil by Terry Jeeves.

VECTOR is published eight times per year by J. Michael Rosenblum, 7 Grosvenor Park, Leeds 7, Yorks. It is distributed free to members of the B.S.F.A. It is not available to the general public.

All material, artwork, letters of comment etc for or concerning VECTOR (except books for review, which should be sent c/o the Library, address above) should be addressed to the Editor, Archie Mercer, 70 Worrall Road, Bristol 8.

IT DOESN'T REALLY need a heading - it's only the

E D I T O R I A L

TOWARDS A BETTER VECTOR Judging by the mail response to VECTOR 20, two things in particular seem to have been almost universally hailed with little glad cries. One is the Bennett reprint (SF in Schools), the other is the new publishing schedule.

As you can see, however, the ideal of a twenty-page issue has yet to be attained, I'm working on it - the trouble is that big, interesting issues breed more big, interesting issues. There is presumably an optimum point somewhere, beyond which things tend to diminish again, but we're still (I hope) comfortably on the original side of it. For the future, though, reviews will have to be kept fairly short, and I'll have to be somewhat more ruthless about the extent to which letters are cut before publication. In the mean time, I hope you enjoy the 30 or 40 pages of the current issue.

VECTOR 22 will feature the second "Author's Lot" article - by Harry Harrison this time. Whatever else gets left out, that will be in. VECTOR 23 will probably feature another heavily-researched article by Philip Harbottle - unless it gets squeezed out by something urgently topical (as might well have happened to the one in this issue - it could well have served as the lead-article for some future VECTOR). That brings us to the end of 1963. As for 1964, at present I will just say this - there is already good stuff on hand that will not - cannot possibly - see publication till then, and I hope in the near future to be able to announce some particularly toothsome features for future appearance.

Questions To Be Answered In Public are coming in slowly, and I hope that a page or so of them will be able to fit into VECTOR 22, Harrison permitting. And I think that covers the VECTOR scene for the present.

LESS VICE ON THE COMMITTEE At Easter this year, you may recollect, we acquired an additional Vice Chairman (someone remembered it was supposed to be National Productivity Year or something). However, owing to the pressure of various other matters (including the 1964 B.S.F.A. Convention, for which he is the general administrator) Tony Walsh has had to tender his resignation as Joint Vice Chairman. He is still very much active on our collective behalf (behalves?), and anybody who has not yet sent his five shillings to register for the 1964 Convention to be held at the Bull Hotel, Peterborough, over Easter, can still do so at any time - the sooner the better of course. The five bob counts towards admission for those who attend, and secures the various convention publications as they are issued. The address is 167 Sydenham Road, Bridgwater, Somerset.

THERE OUGHT TO BE A NAME for the Chain or Round-robin or whatever for amateur writers and artists, that Roy Kay is presiding over. At present I can only call it the Chain or Round-robin or whatever for amateur writers and artists, that Roy Kay is presiding over - which is a bit of a mouthful, you must admit. Anyway, whatever it should be called, Roy reports that it's doing very nicely but could use some more participants. Anybody interested in submitting his (or her) creations before a panel of his (or equally, her) peers - and having theirs submitted before him (or, it always might be, her) in turn, is asked to contact Roy at 91 Craven St, Birkenhead, Che-

YOU HAVE ALREADY heard how The Day of the Triffids was to be heavily featured at the Triestival. You have also heard how Frederik Pohl was to visit London on his way home from same. VECTOR sent its star reporter, Brian Aldiss, to cover the event in full. Unfortunately he seems to have blundered on to the wrong time track, and covered some other event altogether. There is just one consolation - his report, presented herewith, is understood to be the longest English-language write-up of either Festival to appear in any publication.

REPORT ON TRIESTE

by BRIAN ALDISS

The momentous, history-making first-ever International Festival of Science Fiction Films took place in Trieste from the 6th - 14th July 1963. It was not an entire success.

I hate to say it, but it was disappointing - although many good things happened among the irritating ones, and it is very possible that if a second festival is held next year (there was some evidence that it might be), the organisers, with their hard-won experience, will put on a much better show.

For the public, the Festival consisted entirely of a programme of films every night of the week, held in the open in the Castle of San Giusto. This was supported by an exhibition of SF books and covers also at the castle. For the special guests, there was an additional event, the Round Table, which was held for three days in the main hall of the local Chamber of Commerce.

Obviously, if the selection of films was poor, then the Festival - whatever else was good and delightful about it - was poor. I'm bound to say that I thought the selection more than poor. The Festival authorities had unhappily run into trouble with the International Film Producers Association and were unable to get the films they required.

However, that first Saturday evening, all looked very well indeed. The courtyard of the Castle was fitted with wide screen, and seated a great number of people. Most of the seats were filled every evening. The night was warm and still, and the sky alive with stars, as the first film began, the moon rose full over the battlements and began to go into eclipse. That was an unforgettable bit of timing.

The film was an introduction to the Festival, made in colour, Le Origini

della Fantascienza - the only native contribution we had. I shall not bother to list all the films shown, since many of them will never be available in this country. Four of them were British, four American, three Czech, three French, two Russian, one Polish.

After the introductory film, we saw an injudicious mixture of horseplay and satire in the Czech Man of the First Century. On the second night, the Sunday, the main film was called Master of Venus, and proved to be the eight episodes, tacked together, of a British children's serial made cheaply for, presumably, Saturday morning at your local ABC. Jim and Pat outwit the bad Venusians, who have six - just imagine children, if you can, six! - fingers on each hand.

After this, I refused to sit through any more twaddle. The next evening King Kong was showing at a little cinema in town, dubbed in Italian. This was the best bit of SF I saw during the Festival. Although it was made in about 1933, it remains the sort of grand mixture of fakery and excitement that would go down well at a convention.

Many of the Festival films were not properly SF. Pierre Kast's Amour de Poche, for instance, was just a sexy Romeo and Juliet theme with a pocket-size heroine who expanded to her full size in water. Quite an engaging film, but no more SF than Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. The American entries, although they could not rival the British entry for effortless mediocrity, were pretty bad. The Attack of the Puppet People was a sort of "Dr Psyclops" theme, featuring several incredibly shrinking men and women. Made in 1947, it was entirely predictable, and would be given a great send-up at Peterborough.

Ray Milland's Man with the X-Ray Eyes had at least the merit of being a pre-release. The producers and director were present for the showing. It again was predictable and lacked logic, but at least it moved, and some of the visual effects, as Milland develops his ability to see through people, were effective.

The Czech film Icaria XB I would have been a masterpiece but for its lack of clear storyline. It was directed by Indrik Polack, and was perhaps the most adult bit of SF ever seen on any screen. The sets, the photography, and the lighting were extremely imaginative and created the sort of heightened awareness that I experienced in Last Year in Marienbad. Unfortunately this awareness then had to face up to the pointlessness of the story.

We are on a mighty interstellar vessel, and for a while are content to observe the routine of the men and women aboard (a strikingly handsome and interesting lot of people). Everything is newly designed; the clothes, the eating utensils, the dances the crew enjoys, the space ship interior. A decadent capitalist satellite is discovered and investigated; its crew lies dead over a poker game.

Then evil radiations from a bad planet attack the starship; the occupants would have died had not a good planet set up counter-acting benevolent radiations. They are about to land on this planet in optimistic mood when the film ends. This descent from a stylish ultra-modern idiom into a legend fit only for a fairy story was most disappointing, and killed a film that otherwise had more to recommend it than many SF films deservedly cherished over here. The fact that the dialogue was all Czech did not help.

An international jury of five sat in judgement on this collection of films. The five were Kingsley Amis (novelist, U.K.), Jacques Bergier (writer and scientist, France), Umberto Eco (writer and publisher, Italy), Pierre Kast (film director, France), and Gene Moskowitz (film critic, U.S.A. - and no relation to Sam).

They awarded Golden Spaceships to Icaria XB I, the Czech film, and La Jetée, a French entry. They awarded Silver Spaceships to the Russian The Amphibious Man and to The Man with the X-Ray Eyes.

I was particularly sorry that I was too late one evening to see this Russian film The Amphibious Man, since by several accounts it sounds the most pleasing film of them all. It was photographed in Sovcolour, and sounded very imaginative, with some fine underwater sequences. Let's hope it comes to England some day.

I was too late for this film because of the length of a Round Table discussion. These discussions filled the last three days of the Festival. Each day, three or four speakers delivered papers, after which - by a rather complicated form-filling procedure - additional speakers could get up and have their say. Their say sometimes lasted up to half an hour. Since everything was conducted in the three languages of the Festival, Italian, English and French, the translations took up two-thirds of the time, and made proceedings rather slow.

Owing also to the length of the sessions, and to the irrelevance of some of the speakers, this Round Table was a pretty gruelling ordeal. For all that, it was undeniably fascinating to see people groping towards common ground through a fog of different attitudes, upbringings and tongues.

During this entire session I kept a notebook, chiefly with VECTOR in mind, but in fact linguistic difficulties make it rather erratic, for which I apologise.

First speaker was Dr. Magris, the director of the Festival. He was not well translated into English, and the interpreter said that we were there to help in the "confusion of science fiction throughout the world", since it represented an "imprecation of the human sub-conscious".

Jacques Bergier spoke next, on Science Fiction in General and Soviet SF in Particular. His main point was that British and Soviet SF was best at present, since in those countries the authors showed most scientific knowledge. Since he set scientific knowledge as a main criterion, he condemned writers like Ray Bradbury. No comment.

Harry Harrison spoke next, on The Future of SF Films. He explored the theme of a parallel between the development of written SF and cinema SF, and pointed out that the latter should grow as the former had done, once it was taken out of the hands of babes and morons. When he pointed out how many SF themes have not been explored on the screen, many a fan (had they been present) would have cheered.

Third speaker was Roger Manvell, doyen film critic, who delivered a paper on English Films and Science Fiction. He said that since SF was a permanent

part of our imaginations, it should be progressive. He quoted approvingly from H.G. Wells's introduction to an edition of the film script of Things to Come, in which H.G.W. had been optimistic about progress.

The floor was now thrown open to the rabble, and the spare mike was gripped in turn by Umberto Eco, Brian Aldiss, Musa Gilda (an Italian woman writer of SF), and Giulio Raiola, all of whom quarrelled with much of what had gone before. So ended the first day's Round Table.

Before I go on to describe the other two days, it may be helpful to pinpoint some of the outstanding characters of the Festival. Pride of place must go to Kingsley Amis. Not only was he in very witty form throughout a week that had its trials, but he had two gruelling sessions from which he emerged unruffled but thirsty. The first session was when he was cornered at the Press Club and given a whole morning's grilling, alone at a table with an interpreter before a rather hostile audience (hostile because the Italians have their own ideas about SF, which we'll come to later). I missed most of this, coming in accidentally in time to hear him say that Lovecraft was dead and buried a long time ago, and it was a pity his works had not been included in the coffin.

Kingsley's second session was on the judges' panel. The judges had a very different view of what constituted an SF film from the Anglo-American idea, and the debate was lengthy and marked by the sort of orating that, we found, comes more easily to the French and Italians than to us.

Secondly, I must mention my old buddies John Carnell and Harry Harrison. These two fugitives from the SF factories of the western world need no intros from me. They've been around longer than I have - and show it. But without them and Kingsley, Trieste would have been a more formidable ordeal.

Then I must mention the magnificent Signora Roberta Rambelli. I was introduced to this splendid lady during the interval of one of the film shows. She is by Italian publisher, editor, and translator, as well as being a novelist in her own right. She is a very staunch defender of British writing in Italy, and it was from her that we gained an insight into the state of SF in Italy, as I shall describe it shortly. Signora Rambelli is a warm-hearted, fiery and impressive-looking lady whom we may see at the 1965 world con.

Pierre Kast has already been mentioned. He is a well-known avant garde film director in France, a friend of Resnais and Robbe-Grillet, all of whom are apparently SF readers. I should think that he, John and I were perhaps the only three people who sat through the whole round table. Kast chain-smoked all the while and smiled most of it. A friendly and cheerful man.

Umberto Eco was a friend of his. Like Pierre Kast, he had a good command of English and his comments during discussions were generally to the point. We went swimming with him and his German wife outside Trieste.

On the second day of the Round Table, I delivered a paper on the theme that we had reached a point where originality should lie in the handling of SF material, rather than in the material itself. It was called The Lights in the Sky are Sex-Symbols: A Word on Behalf of the Familiar Alien.

The speaker after me was Franco Valobra, editor of a film magazine, "Cinema Domani", which ran a series last year on SF in the cinema to which John, Harry and I, among others, contributed. He spoke on SF and Society Today. On the whole he showed himself against the overly scientific, stressing that sociology was the most important science. "If man is the capital of love, he must be placed in the highest place". He quoted extensively from Camus and Aldous Huxley.

The paper that followed was delivered by the handsome and urbane Andrea Canal, and was called Fondamenti Matematici della Fantascienza Sociologica. He showed, or tried to show, how differential equations could be used to create SF stories, giving an example of two species of animal, A and B, the first of which eats vegetables, while the second eats A. By putting these into equations, we would get "solutions not found in common thought". He gave another example where the animals were replaced by men and robots. I had the impression he was saying the robots would eat the men - or maybe it was vice versa. Certainly it was something not found in common thought.

The succeeding paper, by contrast, confined itself to concrete fact. Joze Dolnicar, a Jugoslav, spoke about SF in Jugoslavia. He spoke in English, and was witty. He said there are readers in Jugoslavia but no professional writers, and the bookshops didn't bother to import foreign SF. Some translations were available, and he himself - a nuclear physicist - had translated Asimov. "The other victim was Heinlein". No Bradbury, Wyndham, Aldiss, or Yefremov was available. Joze claimed he possessed the only copy of New Maps of Hell in Jugoslavia.

When the floor was opened to other speakers, only the bold John Carnell (according to my sweat-soaked notes) came forth. He gave a very good impromptu summary of what we had heard and said that speakers were divided into theorists and practical men, reminding us that SF writing was like a pyramid, a broad base of mediocrity, and fewer and fewer writers as we ascended in quality - but for the whole edifice, the bad was as important as the good.

He went on to say that the Festival itself was a portent. We stood on the edge of a vast explosion of SF. Things were changing; writers were forced to alter their manner of telling a story to meet altered markets; John Wyndham was an example of someone forced to change his style in this way.

This seemed to me the most sensible and informed talk we had heard, although I admit I am strongly influenced by the fact that John mentioned my Greybeard as a new style story built of old subject matter, when the novel is hardly likely to appear before the autumn of '64. He said that every month now saw 30 or 40 SF books published in the States, and at least half that number in England. Change was upon us, and that change would be a useful topic for discussion at succeeding festivals.

With the day's work over, we streamed from the Chamber of Commerce. Harry, Kingsley and I swept "Jo" Dolnicar into the nearest bar. John had already contrived to get to him, and had herded all Slovenia and Dalmatia into the expanding Carnell empire.

Saturday was the last day of the Round Table session, a fierce four-hour sitting. Owing to an ill-timed swim, I got in a little late, and unfortunately missed the first part of Walter Ernsting's talk on German SF. As he

was the sole German representative, Walter spoke in his very fluent English. As does every other country, Germany owes a great debt to American SF, although I had the feeling from what Walter said that one day soon it might begin to make an individual contribution to the world, in the way that British writers and editors have been able to do.

It was after Walter sat down that the storm began to gather. An Italian writer, Sandro Sandrelli, spoke mildly enough of Italian SF. But why had Mew Maps of Hell not even mentioned Italian SF ? There was so much Italian SF. The well-known series such as Cosmo and Urania both published it. The Italian edition of "Galaxy" published it.

Yet still people seemed to prefer foreign SF, and even the native writers tended to give their heroes foreign names like Joe Smith. The difficulty lay with the publishers. If Italians changed their way of writing, perhaps publishers would prefer them to foreign writers, and then things would improve.

All this was mild enough - indeed I thought parts of it rather supine, having always believed that writers should change publishers, not vice versa, writers being the creators. But in the Chamber, people scented battle and whispered in groups or went and talked outside.

The redoubtable Signora Rambelli now held the floor. Considering the partisan position she holds in SF, she spoke very uncontroversially on SF and Mythology. She drew an extended parallel between SF and the poems of chivalry, both of which consisted of heroic adventures and contacts with the unknown. Geoff Doherty would have loved this paper; it was one after his own heart and head.

Pierre Kast was the next speaker. He spoke briefly in French so lucid that I found it more comprehensible than the English translation that followed. He said we had heard many restrictive definitions of SF; we would do better to rejoice in its great variety. The old sort of fairy tale was dead; we now replaced "There was once" by "There will be once".

Signor Carnell was the next to be handed a glass of San Pellegrino water and to deliver his paper on SF, Psychology of Mankind. This was in fact a detailed history of SF, and its growth through fandom to world-wide acceptance. I hope some of its lessons sank in on the rarified intellectuals whose papers revealed an unwitting ignorance of the facts of SF.

The last paper of all was delivered by Lino Aldani, although as he was ill, a lady friend read it for him. He spoke on SF is Literature (a claim nobody had disputed until then), and this speech got a great ovation from a certain element of the audience. I am told that Aldani set himself up as a critic, and was opposed to writers from other countries; that he wrote a sort of SF himself, and had praised some of his own novels written under pseudonyms.

When the floor was thrown open to other speakers, a certain tension was apparent in the Chamber. People stalked back and forth, or leant back to whisper in supporters' ears. Signora Rambelli and her cohorts sat to one side, occasionally passing notes to their English allies, perforce drawn in to support her and the Anglo-American side. Even the hon. committee, on their seats on the podium, looked more alert.

And the situation was clear enough. Although we like to think (with justification, I believe) that SF is international, wherever it takes proper root it springs up with a national accent. This is part of the inevitable effect of acclimatisation. We know how it flourishes in Russia, and how its form there (whether we admire it or no) is very distinctive. Italy is a large and heterogenous nation, with growing national power and a great technological flair. It can fulfil much of its own needs within its own borders. Why should it turn to outsiders for the SF that will give expression to many of its fears and aspirations?

Without wishing to hurt anyone's feelings, I would say that there is an answer to this rhetorical question: because Italian SF writers are not yet experienced or articulate enough to bear the full weight of such aspirations themselves. They still need Asimov, Heinlein, Clarke, Ballard and (I hope to God) Aldiss. But the nationalist element at the Festival denied this.

The first speaker who followed was Walter Ernsting, who said it was foolish to deny the power of American writers. They were needed in Italy as they were in Germany.

A Triestino with a loud voice, Luigi Berta, spoke of SF as a means of scientific research. He wanted Italian SF to grow, and thought the Anglo-American influence was inimical to it.

The film magazine editor, Signor Valobra, spoke next. I think he supported Signora Rambelli. It was a fierce speech, equally difficult to follow in Italian and in translation - in fact on occasions the interpreters just gave up. Mention was made of Mussolini; I have his name in quotes as my solitary and bemusing note on Valobra's speech.

By now there was much jostling at the back of the hall and stormy whispering on every side. From one of the noisiest groups burst a young SF writer called Massimo Lo Jacono, who brandished like a weapon the magazine "Futuro" which he edits from Rome with Lino Aldani. He has dark cropped hair, and glasses, and looks like photographs of Alfred Bester.

Lo Jacono grasped the spare microphone and talked long and fast. He was very much against Signora Rambelli and America, and Russia. He spoke the names of "Bradbury, Harrison, Capek" - whether in terms of reverence or hate I could not tell; the interpreter thought it all too savage to translate. Signora Rambelli told me afterwards that he had said that it was a deliberate insult that Amis made no mention of Italian SF, that Italian SF was the most intellectual in the world and that Frederik Pohl was not a craftsman; he was a workman, a cabinet-maker.

It seemed time to say something on Signora Rambelli's behalf. I got to the spare microphone, and speaking mainly from a suggestion of Harry's attempted a sort of synthesis of what we had heard.

The Renaissance, the effects of which still had to play themselves out, had been Italy's gift to the world and had spread everywhere, always bringing light even when it manifested itself with different national emphases. In the same way, SF was a renaissance spreading from the U.S. (forgive me, shade of H.G. Wells, born in Bromley, Kent, England!). Admiration would help us

here more than jealousy. As English SF had grown up in the shadow of U.S. SF, so could Italian. No slight was intended in Kingsley's book - it barely mentioned even British SF, being intended for an American audience. If Italian writers were good, they should be published in the States, where they would be welcomed.

I ended by saying that the Festival was a great experiment, and we had only to keep pushing in our different ways but together to see the further advancement of SF.

The Italians liked this reference to the Renaissance. Luisero Cremaschi, who spoke next, was milder, although associated with the Aldani faction. I have him down as saying "some writers are good, some bad", a statement only the hottest blooded present could regard as partisan. Despite this, the Italians began champing at the bit again and even Pierre Kast smoked a little more heavily.

The storm centre herself, Signora Rambelli, now rose magnificently to face her enemies. With a splendid gesture, she addressed us not in Italian, as if she disdained to use it, but in her fluent, heavily-accented English.

Her eyes blazing, she said that she held no brief against Italian SF. She was herself a writer. But Italian SF tended towards a literary fashion and recognised as SF some far-out fantasy which was nothing of the kind. She admired American and British SF in particular, and had discovered several good Italian writers as well as foreign ones. It was an eloquent speech.

Pierre Kast spoke next. I was conferring with Rambelli, John, Harry and Walter, and missed what he said.

John was the next to speak. He bravely attempted a synthesis of all the foregoing, and said that obviously Italy had her problems, just as the U.K. did. Italy should attempt to work independently, at the same time accepting the best the U.S. had to offer. This was how things had happened in England, and it had paid off. England was now able to contribute to the world scene; he hoped as sincerely as everyone else present that Italy would soon be in a position to do the same.

Valobra spoke next. We had been in session in the hot chamber for well over three hours, and the interpreters had virtually gone on strike, so I have no clear idea what this obviously very shrewd man was saying.

He was followed by the last speaker, the Baxter-like young angry Lo Jacono. Although still peppery, he protested that he greatly enjoyed British and American SF. Perhaps it was a victory of sorts for Signora Rambelli.

By the reeling in the air, there remained much to be said, but Dr. Magris rose to close the proceedings. All the time we were talking, two mighty tape machines had been whirring. Dr. Magris thanked us for our passionate and serious discussion; he said that all the papers and the interventions would be collected into one publication, which would be sent to all participants.

As Harry and I pushed our way steaming towards the nearest bar, several Italians made a point of coming forward and apologising for the apparent

feeling against us. Harry, whose command of Italian served us well throughout the holiday, both in Italy and later in Jugoslavia, told them not to worry. We were used to feuds in fandom, and a spot of rancour was meat and drink to us.

In fact the last day of the Round Table had been a lot of fun, we told each other over campari sodas.

By now, the Festival was almost over. On Sunday evening, there was a showing of Pierre Kast's Amour de Poche, and then two young starlets who had appeared in La Dolce Vita delivered gold and silver spaceships to enthusiastically applauded winners. Nobody mentioned SF writers, and indeed the tendency throughout the week was to regard SF as a sort of ectoplasm that issued forth at the bidding of critics.

After the presentation, drinks on the house at the nearby Circolo de Stampa, the Press Club. The local press had been very active and helpful throughout the week. They fully reported films and Round Table in "Il Piccolo" every day. It was possible to see the evening's films in preview at the Circolo every morning, in their comfortable little theatre.

At the party we were able, really for the first time, to get to grips personally with Italian writers and fans and find out how much they got paid and how much they drank, and similar really basic questions of a writer's existence. That party was good - and should have been held on the previous Sunday, before the activities began.

I have tried here to give a fair account of what went on in Trieste. It was indeed a memorable occasion: and I hope a good omen for the future. Of the unofficial side of the festival, I have said little. I must say now that Trieste is an impressive city; once the chief port of Austria-Hungary, later a free port, it has a fine position on the Adriatic, and many points of interest. It also stands between the eastern and western blocs: the frontier with communist-controlled Jugoslavia lies only ten kilometres away. The Italians were very hospitable and we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves out of working hours, though the organisation could frequently have been better.

Also, it was a great pity that more of the guests invited did not arrive. Kazantsev, heralded from Moscow, failed to appear. Bradbury was also absent. Isaac Asimov regretted he could not make it, Frederik Pohl did not answer his invitation, Sprague de Camp was elsewhere.

Perhaps the most significant fact about the first International Festival of Science Fiction Films was that it took place on Italian soil, rather than in New York or London - or, indeed, Tokyo, Berlin, Moscow, or Chicago.

Brian W. Aldiss

hyper-space

THE IMMUTABLE CONCEPT ?

by Philip Harbottle

THE NOVELIST J.M. SCOTT once wrote a book entitled, if I remember aright, The Other Side of the Moon. It was not science fiction - the allusion was strictly metaphorical. In fact, so far as I'm aware, he's never written anything in the least scientifictional. However, in another of his novels - The Pole of Inaccessibility - he had one of the characters say something to the effect that: "The public only recognises two geographical objectives - the North Pole (sometimes known as the South Pole) and Mount Everest." And somehow I am reminded of this by contemplation of hyperspace (sometimes known as subspace) .....

Hyper-space. A concept that is probably meaningless to the ordinary reader, yet is at once identifiable to the sf initiate. Together with bems, time travel, and mutants, hyper-space can take its place as a fixture in the genre.

Hyper-space goes back a very long way in the annals of sf, back into the '20s at least. Today, though it be known variously as nulspace, overspace, or subspace, it is still the same old hyper-space that is employed by our modern authors. The treatment may be new and sophisticated, but the idea is still the same. And in the new school of writing, hyper-space is today a mere backdrop, a plot device that is dismissed in a few glib lines.

That hyper-space has lasted, whereas other old-time concepts have languished and fallen into disrepute, is due largely to one fact: it remains the best device our authors have to negate Einstein's speed-of-light laws. Oddly enough, the first stories to override the speed limitation did not employ hyper-space at all. Skylark of Space probably saw the first manifestation of this, wherein famed author Edward Elmer Smith simply said, in effect, that the Theory of Relativity which embodied it was after all only a theory. And that the theory was demonstrably untrue. His famous characters, Seaton and DuQuesne, roamed the universe at whatever velocities Smith's epic plots demanded. This device still has its advocates. But it is the magical realm of hyper-space, where natural laws no longer apply, that holds sway.

Surprisingly, it is old favourite Murray Leinster who best typifies the modern treatment. If we take his recent novel Talents, Incorporated, we find this:

"Actually, each ship of the Makinese fleet was in overdrive, which meant that each had stressed the space immediately around it so that it

> was like a cocoon of other space; as if it were out of this cosmos altogether and in another. In sober fact, of course, nothing of the sort had happened. An overdrive field changed the physical constants of space. The capacity of a condenser in an overdrive field was different from that of a condenser out of it....The speed of light was different. Inertia was different. In short, a ship could drive at many hundreds of times the velocity of light and the laws of Einstein did not apply, because his laws referred to a space that men had not tampered with."

Little or nothing is ever said of hyper-space itself; at best it is a 'swirling grey mist'. Spacemen may take a jaunt through hyper-space much the same as we take a drive in a car. Sometimes there is an attempt to describe a momentary nausea whilst entering hyper-space, but once within the field all is well again. That such an amazing phenomenon as hyper-space should be dealt with so casually is a strange thing indeed, but stranger still is the fact that this was the case even in old-time sf, in the Age of Wonder.

In 1935, Jack Williamson wrote his revered The Legion of Space, first of a trilogy. In it, terrestrial spaceships were enabled to break the light barrier with their mysterious 'geodyne' engines:

> "...geodynes, whose fields of force reacted against the curvature of space itself, so that they drove the ship not through space, but to put it crudely, around it, and so made possible terrific accelerations without any discomfort to passengers, and speeds far beyond even the speed of winged light. Apparent speeds, a mathematician would hasten to add, as measured in the ordinary space that the vessel went around; for both acceleration and velocity were quite moderate in the hyper-space it really went through."

Although Leinster's and Williamson's stories are many decades apart, there is little to distinguish them. And if the method of entry into hyper-space has changed but little, then the method of its navigation has changed even less. The classic method is that of 'jumps', expertly summarised in Isaac Asimov's Second Foundation:

> "The ship bounded through the Galaxy, its path a wide-spaced dotted line through the stars. The dots referred to were the scant stretches of ten to sixty light-seconds spent in normal space and between them stretched the hundred-and-up light-year gaps that represented the 'hops' through hyperspace."

The Target Star system remains the standard method of interstellar navigation. It is a very precarious one, however, and several stories have been written around the idea of a ship being lost far out in interstellar space after an unchecked jump through hyper-space. Frederik Pohl posed this problem in The Mapmakers ("Galaxy", 1955). Here, seemingly, was a story which dealt extensively and realistically with problems of hyper-space. But alas, it turns out to be just another gimmick story, wherein it is discovered that a blind man can 'see' in hyper-space and act as navigator.

British author E.C. Tubb has probably written more about hyper-space than any other author. As the original Volsted Gridban, then as Charles Grey, and through several lesser known pseudonyms such as Carl Maddox, and house names King Long (Saturn Patrol) and Roy Sheldon (The Metal Eater), he wrote - or

rather rewrote - blood-stirring space operas with hyper-space as their central theme. He added to this his stock characters: the young ship's captain, invariably "a tall adventurer", the big engineer, forever struggling against terrible odds to tune his sub-tensor coils to their seven-place decimal similarity (necessary for breaking into hyper-space), and the old professor who alone knew the spacial coordinates to some priceless alien artifacts and/or priceless 'urillium'. If a happy ending was called for, the professor had a beautiful daughter. A melodramatic plot, bombastic writing, and fast sadistic action made up the rest of the story.

Incredibly, the finished product emerged as fascinating, and was certainly well able to keep the relatively-uninitiated British readership of the early '50s in rigid thrall. To them, hyper-space was something new and wonderful. It can be said that Tubb, together with the even more prolific Fearn, helped pioneer sf in this country. By the end of 1954 they had produced something in the region of a hundred novels in the space of four years. In two years, Tubb proceeded to make hyper-space his own, for Fearn, as Vargo Statten, and even when he carried on the Gridban pseudonym for a dozen novels, wisely left hyper-space to his vigorous contemporary. And make no mistake. Tubb, despite his boobast and lack of originality, had thought long and hard on the subject of hyper-space.

Tubb came up with several new slants, and created a precedent in sf circles by taking hyper-space as a central pivot instead of a mere plot device. In Alien Universe (Scion, 1952) he spotlighted a flaw in hyper-travel, and one so obvious that it was surprising no one had thought of it. This alone clearly indicates my contention of the shallowness of thought given to hyper-space. He pointed out the impossibility of using rockets in travelling through hyper-space:

> "...because we're in a closed field. The exhaust wouldn't be able to escape."

And even ionic rockets would be deadly, because:

> "...ions travelling at almost the speed of light would be reflected from the field, collide against the hull, penetrate it, and derange all electrical equipment within."

Tubb also presented a new analogy on the effect of hyper-space on velocity. Imagining our universe as being the surface of a sphere, his spaceship, entering deep within that sphere, would travel a short distance, and then return to the surface. The distance travelled would be greater than thought. It operated much like a wheel - the nearer to the centre you are, the less distance you need travel to reach a corresponding point on the circumference.

In his Charles Grey thriller Dynasty of Doom (Milestone, 1953) Tubb reached the peak of his hyper-space imaginings. Unfortunately, he was only compromising on its nature. In the story, his fantastic concepts were chiefly centred in another dimension, another universe beyond hyper-space. This could be entered by the 'simple' method of "alteration in our atomic vibratory frequency". An old idea, and one indeed which parallels the instance of hyper-space in its treatment over the decades. Tubb concluded that hyper-space isn't a region at all in the normal sense of the word; it is more a place between dimensions, a strain in the sub-ether, and somehow we are able to move in

it at relative speeds far greater than that of light. Readers of "Astounding" knew this way back in 1935.

World at Bay (Panther, 1954) saw Tubb employing hyper-space as a source of power. But the suggestion was a shallow one, and was merely a device to set in motion a chain of events resulting in atomic disintegration threatening the world. Eando Binder had done the same thing in his two stories The Time Contractor ("Astounding", Dec. 1937) and The Flame From Nowhere ("Amazing", April 1939). They weren't new then, either!

John Russell Fearn took the whole thing a stage further. He had it so that hyper-space was another dimension - the fourth - with time at right angles to it, forming the fifth. In the fourth dimension, time relative to our own universe was accelerated. An emerging ship would find itself many light years from its starting point, as usual, but it would also have advanced in time. This time-dilation effect in hyper-space is fairly logical, if the speed of light has been flouted. The many complications which arose in Fearn's plots were taken care of in his typical super-scientific manner, an example being his novel World in Duplicate ("Star Weekly", 1959). Other authors, not so adept as he, have preferred their hyper-space without any time effects.

Nor was Fearn afraid to populate hyper-space. As Mark Denholm in Waters of Eternity ("Worlds of the Universe", 1953), he gives us a picture of his fourth dimension wherein the worlds of normal space are also visible. Not for him the convenient grey mist, wherein our own universe vanishes.

> "Why should they? Every solid object has four dimensions, but in the ordinary way we are capable of seeing only three. If we went home we'd see our world four-dimensionally as long as we stayed within the influence of this spacemachine. These two new planets, though, must be genuine creations of this hyper-space otherwise we'd have seen them long ago in the normal cosmos."

The story's protagonists - male and female martians! - proceed to land on one of the hyper-worlds, and meet up with its inhabitants:

> "Rapidly approaching, about fifty feet from the ground, were curiously glowing triangles. At least they were triangles to begin with. As they came nearer their outlines changed miraculously. They became circles, paraboloids, oblongs, straight lines, cubes, - everything geometrically conceivable.
>
> ""Living geometrical symbols, or I'm crazy," Rad gasped. "Is it possible that life here assumes an arithmetical form?""

Astute readers will recognise the premise that all life is mathematical at root as coming from the same author's "Mathematica" stories (1936), so that they cannot quite qualify as genuine creations of hyper-space, after all.

Apart from a few isolated stories by such authors as Fearn, and also Frank Belknap Long, hyper-space has been much of a muchness, a nether region, merely a device to permit speeds greater than that of light. At times other methods have been employed by various sf writers, but none of these have been especially successful.

Famed veteran Edmond Hamilton, in particular, declines to use the hyper-space idea. Instead he has sometimes employed mechanical devices, but few of these can stand up under scrutiny. For instance, in The Star Kings, he proposed an interstellar drive which would get around the speed-of-light limitation by storing mass as it accumulates, in the form of energy which would be useful later. James Blish pointed out the faulty deduction. The mistake is in thinking of infinity as a number; infinity minus one, Hamilton would have us believe, is a figure less than infinity. But you can't get something from nothing, or add anything to everything. Infinity minus one is still infinity, as zero minus one is still zero.

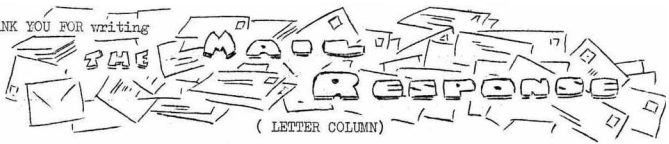
The greatest rival to hyper-space for bridging light years has developed comparatively recently, arising out of new discoveries in physics. Observational evidence of particles moving at near light speeds shows that time - for the speeding particles - is retarded, slowed down. Whereas, to the traveller, only a few seconds elapse, whole minutes, or even hours, may have gone by in the "stationary" universe. L. Ron Hubbard created a memorable tale some years ago (Return to Tomorrow) wherein a space traveller returns to find that centuries have elapsed on earth, whereas he himself has aged only a few years. At present, the idea would appear to be feasible than hyper-space. It is still with us, a recent example being Keith Laumer's A Trace of Memory ("Amazing", June-Aug.). But because of the plot complications arising out of the time variations - unless they be the story itself - it is not being used extensively. It remains complementary to hyper-space, and is unlikely to replace it.

For myself, I have long since grown exasperated with the conventional blase treatment of hyper-space. The time is ripe for a major novel on the theme. Perhaps the now mature Tubb will come out of semi-retirement. Heinlein would perhaps alone be able to do the task, only he seems to have forsaken hyper-space. Early in his career, he advocated the generation-ship for crossing interstellar distances, beginning with his near-classic Universe in 1941. This also has gone on to become a fixture in sf, even being used to good effect by E.C. Tubb himself in Star Ship ("New Worlds", 1955). For years Heinlein was committed to his Future History series, based on logical possibilities, so that he has never dealt with hyper-space. Seemingly, he never will - and he can hardly be blamed for that.

To create a hyper-space concept at once gripping and tangible, with real situations and memorable locale, may prove impossible. The subject itself is seemingly intractable. It will take an author with the imagination of a Pearn, the facility of a Leinster, the story-telling of a Williamson, and the treatment of a Heinlein to approach it. And such an author would then have created the most important sf story for decades. For make no mistake: with science fact now crowding fictioneers beyond the solar system, hyper-space is here to stay.

Practical scientists have called hyper-space a dream. I contend that to be of little consequence, for when the Dream dies, then so must science fiction.

Philip Harbottle



TERRY JEEVES (Sheffield) Naturally, I liked the cover, but I'm prejudiced.. even so it does get a bit saddening at times to see every bit of written material pored over and commented on (with a fine tooth comb), and ALL the art work in the issue, by umpteen different bods, dismissed by .."The art work was poor"..or.."The art work was good". Anyway..artwork first. I liked.. the contents page layout (yes, this is art-work) and I thought the heading for your Editorial was good too. The Gibson illo was an ideal match for Ron's piece..good I hasten to add. Aldridge on page 22 suffered a trifle from the hill and the smoke distracting from the balance of the drawing, otherwise I liked that too.

Ron Bennett's piece..I liked it then...I still do. C. Clarke's piece has some interesting points, but I'm more concerned with two things taken for granted..almost as laws of the Medes and Persians...viz. 1. The tacit assumption that the novels of Lawrence or Eliot's poems may be taken as examples of 'works of art', or 'the greatest achievements of modern literature'. 2. That modern (say the last 50 years) science fiction has not yet produced anything in this class.

Point 1. This is first of all Mr Clarke's yardstick..not mine, and a lot depends on just what is a 'masterpiece' to shorten that previous couple of titles. Is it based on story appeal, literary style, range of vocabulary, originality, taste, or mass sales? I Don't Know...and I venture to say that Mr. Clarke would not be able to define it any better. I asked our English Department Head (Brian Ball, who has appeared in "New Worlds") this recently, and the best he could come up with was...."Great literature is literature that has stood the test of time", and admitted that this was only a rule of thumb and that he couldn't define it any better. Obviously that test of time rules out modern s-f...unless you shorten the time period, whereupon the people who chase copies of Tom Swift and Billy Bunter can claim these stories as great...(and they may be). If literary merit rests on mass sales, I venture Eliot and Lawrence wouldn't fare too well either..the latter probably took an upward surge after the lawsuit publicity gave it the tag of a 'dirty book' in many quarters. Then again, the Highway Code, "The Radio Times" and the Instruction Holine on how to operate the Communication Cord on British Railways must all have huge reading publics. If the yardstick be quality, then all the people who belier that the Bible is the most beautiful book ever written (and point to its sales to prove it) must wonder which version they have in mind...the original Scrolls, King James, The New Queens edition..what is quality anyway?

I venture to suggest that a dozen different people would automatically supply a dozen definitions of "great literature"...and you could find some piece of hack work which would qualify under each heading...a dozen bits of hackwork, I hasten to add. Right then, my Point Number 1. is that literary merit is all things to all men...which leads us to Point 2. Obviously, to Mr. Clarke, no works of s-f have yet qualified...but that doesn't mean that other people hold the same views..ergo, there may be extant works of s-f literature..I just don't know. However, I do know there are works of s-f which continue to give me pleasure each time I read them..to me, these are the gems. Literature? Probably not...but they please me, and that means a lot. Alice

in Wonderland is one...I always thought this was a classic in the fantasy field..not s-f I'll admit...but fantasy, and far superior to Through the Looking Glass. Then "Galaxy" had a little gem in the yarn...The Gentlest Unpeople...very delicate..very lovely, and probably not Mr. Clarke's literature ....but very much mine.

Yes, I liked the article...but I take leave to argue with it, before going back to Who Goes There? and The Moon is Hell or even A.C. Clarke's Rescue Party.

Turning to McKenzie's piece..this was fun, but no more. Fandom is NOT the s-f reading (or viewing) public..it is just a fraction of it..the fraction which enjoys (and often confuses with s-f itself) Conventions, Fanzines and Societies. Let's be brutal, s-f to publishers is something to sell..if it does well, they produce more..if it lags, they fight shy...as with detective stories and westerns...both of which have proved their marketability. S-f has so far proved that its market value is rather unpredictable..so why gamble. The BSFA floating population is composed of people who are not particularly interested in fanzines, Cons etc..if they were, they'd just stop floating and hitch up.

(Where you started talking about Brian Hall, Terry, I was going to break in and explain that you were another of fandom's schoolteachers - but I found myself unable to push your dots wide enough apart to get through. AM)

N.F. MORTON (Great Crosby) Ron Bennett seems to have tried to get something which is not yet in existance. The thirteen to fourteen year olds may be expected to have a certain science-fictional potential by virtue of their still childlike, and therefore still strong, imaginations and their slowly developing intelligence. But nine year olds! Granted they have very good, usually uninhibited, imaginations but they have no co-ordination or control of any kind. Science-fiction is a result of a powerful, well-managed mind and a certain clear-sightedness we call perception. I know of only one nine year old with such mental ability and she was a genius who died at eleven.

Surely it would be more rewarding to experiment with fantasy. It is an imaginative and allied medium which requires, dare I say it?, less control and management, the essential skill being the ability to conceive things that are impossible or near impossible. No one class of people is so capable of doing this as kids are. They are unhampered by such mundane considerations as the feasible and the physical ability to do something. After all, who believes in fairies besides children, fantasy-writers, nuts and -- funny, I distinctly thought my VECTOR was on the table...

FOOTNOTE - Why is Ron surprised by the fact that boys are most impressed by a rocket countdown? All the worst shilling horribles and tuppenny ghastlies contain the spaceship ready to begin its journey to Spale 5. The one thing with any science-fictional connections at all that they can see in real life is Glenn about to blast-off or the latest weather satellite leaving Cape C. .Oh, you know where I mean!

Surely the only thing (consolation?) to be had from this is that S.F. is an adult form of literature and that fantasy is... It's that damn fairy again

.....

Mr. C. Clarke has an absurdly low opinion of the works of A.C. Clarke. Childhood's End is as stirring and as powerful as any piece of literature I know. This is a work of art about a future which is as possible as any other I can think of. The superb ending affects and transforms with all the power of Lawrence or Eliot or anyone else for that matter.

It can transform the thinking of mankind and will have repercussions everywhere but it is most definitely not a "source of thriller excitement and intellectual provocation for the few". Slan by A.E. van Vogt may not be the

magnificent art-form that Mr. Clarke would like S.F. to be but neither is every sample of "orthodox" literature up to the standard of Lawrence.

Do I detect cynicism in the Pub. Off.'s bonus editorial? The hovercraft came in for a bit of a bashing from our noble man's pen. The first aircraft were supposed to be superior to every other form of travel before they had a little trouble keeping them in the air. Mind you, they have not done so badly since then!

Opinions wanted! --- Why are there far more men in the B.S.F.A. than there are members of the Opposition: women that is? And why more men reading S.F. at all? With apols and such to Ella. Less love of adventure; less love of the unknown; less time (as my mother would have me believe)?

((I wouldn't call aircraft exactly perfect though, by any means. If they were, for a start there'd be presumably no need for hovercraft. As for your other query - if any of our much-cherished lady members are looking for an excuse to bear a hand (or show a leg) in the Mail Response, perhaps they'd like to take it and participate. Girls - why are you so few and far between? AM))

ROY KAY (Birkenhead) The Future of Science Fiction. All this about SF being an art form. What the heck is an "art-form" anyway? I read science-fiction because, for me, it has a high entertainment value. I don't pore over every comma to find out if it is an "art-form" or not. I appreciate good writing, but there's something very wrong in saying SF should strive to be recognised as an art-form. And as for "transforming the thinking of mankind"!!

New Roads-Ways to Chaos. (CHAOS?) Well, it could happen, I suppose. A well-written, entertaining article this, the sort of thing I could read more of. I'm not sure I agree with it though. More popularity would also mean higher rates of pay for writers and this would produce better stories more often. And the greater number of readers would still demand good stories. Anyway, I'm in danger here of taking the article too seriously.

A very meagre Book Review section this time, but a fascinating lettercol, one of the most enjoyable for a long time. In answer to Donald Franson's question: "What is educational or scientific or literary about Burroughs?" - nothing. Of course, he never claimed to be any of those. He was just a damn good teller of tales, uncomplicated straightforward tales which somehow have great personality and colour. The time is ripe for an ERB article in VECTOR.

By the way, did you know there is a new Rock group out calling themselves "The Triffids" ? My sister read it out to me from one of her magazines. I wonder if they're soluble in sea-water? I expect we'll soon be hearing from "The Banths" and the "Quatermass Sextet". not to mention "The Lichens".

Next time please give the Writer/Artist Chain a long loud plug. We are now in function.

((As I said before - ban the banths! Oddly enough though, VECTOR has an ERB article awaiting publication. But you know what these twenty-page issues are... AM))

PAUL LAIDLET (London) My views being what they are, I thoroughly enjoyed the latest VECTOR under Archie Mercer's keen editorship. For, this time, the fannish aspect was only to be seen in the letter column, and that is just the place for it. The rest of the journal is interesting and serious-looking.

This is the ideal solution: serious material in the main core of the magazine, and entertainment and such in the last section belonging to the readers i.e. mostly fans. For are we not a serious body: "The Aim of the Association is to encourage the writing, reading and publishing of good literature ..."

So reads the BSFA leaflet I received upon my joining the Association and I haven't stopped wondering ever since ...

Pity there isn't a printed cover yet; it would add much to VECTOR. A cover should be pleasing to the eye and in this respect I would very much like a simple design from issue to issue.

SF in Schools was very interesting and funny at times. But intelligent laughter, not mere rib-tickling; I very much suspect Mr. Bennett having had a personal hand at some of the items.

Seriously though, it was fascinating to see what sort of image young kids have of good SF, merely by reading some of today's comics and seeing a few horror or assimilated films taken at random. It may seem funny in the case of kids, but we must keep in mind that these kids will grow up and become adults. Once they're older, they will realise (or most of them will, I hope) how silly this particular SF was ... And from there on, they have got an image of SF that will only do us, writers and readers of the genre, discredit. Great pity, 'tis.

(Don't look now, but have I perchance solved the secret of pleasing everybody simultaneously? AM)

DONALD MALCOLM (Paisley) ("A Haggis in Orbit") I found VECTOR 20 the best issue I've read since I joined the ranks. The previous issues were a bit too fannish for my taste. With the latest Journal, the Editor seems to have hit on a happy formula. (Good, aren't I? AM)

Ron Bennett's article, Science Fiction in Schools, was exceptionally good. When I read some of those juvenile efforts, I felt like doing some writing again. Talk about a sense of wonder - !

Regarding the writing of literary science fiction, as mentioned in C. Clarke's thoughtful article The Future of Science Fiction, I have always contended, in Postmortem, and elsewhere, that the most important requirement is the use of good English. It's not enough to have a great and moving theme, memorable characters, meaningful dialogue and so on. The quality of language used must be on a par. This isn't easy. The writer must give thought to the construction and variety of sentences. He must do so with an eye on the story as a whole, ensuring that each sentence blends into and contributes to the even flow of the narrative. It should be second nature to the writer to avoid basic errors such as split infinitives and slang. Try and imagine any of literature's great characters using the phrase "is all", a common one in science fiction. The raising of the standards of science fiction is everyone's concern, not only that of the writers. By criticism and comment, editors and readers can encourage the writers to do better.

I think it will be agreed generally that none of us wants science fiction to become just as popular as C.P. McKenzie outlines in his article, New Road-Maps to Chaos. My Guest Editorial in "New Worlds" made this very point: science fiction can never become popular in the accepted sense of the word. The consequences would be fatal. Do we want a sudden, mass influx of new readers? I say no. Many people have, as Mr. McKenzie says, a latent interest in sf. They also have a latent interest in many other things. Very little new blood will be attracted by drum-beating. We're trying to interest people in our favourite literature, not sell them patent medicine. The approach should be one of encouragement and guidance in reading and discussion, rather than a thump with a big stick and the impression that they're boors if they haven't read a lot of sf. One final comment here: who wants to define an sf reader, anyways...?

Oops! I meant to echo C.P.'s surprise at the small membership of the B.S.F.A. I thought I was joining an organisation that was fully supported by

all the pro. writers and the bulk of the readership. In fact, I think this is what kept me out for so long, the feeling that I was just about the last man in. How wrong I was! It would be interesting to find out why the support isn't what it should be.

Maybe the answer lies in Dennis Tucker's contention that the B.S.F.A. is "a serious-type body with serious objectives", as quoted in the letter by Roy Kay. Roy seems to have the right idea. Too much these days is serious and dignified. Science fiction itself is lacking in humour, hope and philosophy. More of this anon in an article.

My wife has been wondering for years just exactly what I am. I see that Roy calls pro. authors "mystical creatures". I must let her know at once... That's a good idea, getting the writers to air their motivations (sounds filthy, put that way!). I've always wondered what makes other writers tick. Jim White and I had an interesting session on the origin of ideas, methods of working and so on, during my recent visit to the Emerald Isle. Over to the Editor.

A quick flip back to Philip Harbottle's letter and his remark about "present-day English writers"... (claymore sharpened, kilt hitched at fighting level)... by English do you mean "British"? Or do you really mean "English"? If the latter, what about Scottish writers such as Jim McIntosh, Robert Presslie, Jim Inglis and me, and Ireland's pride and joy, Jim White? National pride apart, this confusion of "British" and "English" irks me. History, of course, is full of the misuse of the terms, including Nelson's famous signal in 1805. England and Scotland had been under the one crown since 1603 - a Scottish crown, peasants! - and the countries' parliaments had been unified since 1707. The last word goes to Willy Ley, with whom I had a verbal punch-up on this re. his article on the Denny monorail, built at Rutherglen, just outside Glasgow. He used "England", meaning "Britain", and his quite logical rejoinder was that, for this geological era - no messing about with mere centuries! - Britain would always be known as England. Ah, well, I suppose we could always call it something worse.

Doreen Parker's letter raises an interesting point. Bestsellerititis seems to me to be a wasting disease, reaching its peak when the victim has an insatiable urge to read every best seller as it appears. I don't read any book unless it appeals to me, and this applies to sf as well as to astronomy, archaeology, history, general fiction and my other pursuits. As with Archie, I don't derive any value from a book unless I want to read it. And I can't see how anyone can want to read every best seller. This would mean a complete lack of selectivity. Somewhere in between Doreen's attitude and mine there's probably a happy medium, although there's no reason why there should be any hard and fast rule. The individual's taste ultimately decides.

Returning to this question of satire (C. Smith's letter), I was unaware that people, as a body, view any of the aspects of their society with awe; resentment, maybe. Change is the result of various factors working within the framework of society, past or contemporary, and it is only when these factors merge that a particular change takes place. For this reason, surely we can't be fully aware of any coming changes. We might have hints, forebodings, anticipations, but little else. And why single out politics for special attention? Change takes place in every stratum of society, of which politics is only a special case.

Now, finally (who said "Thank goodness!"?), to the letter by Jim Britain. Tut, tut. This is carrying patriotism too far. Jim England. The fixed design for the cover might be a good idea - depending on the design. I'd like to see the interior artwork, such as appeared on page 22, scrubbed and replaced by letters or an article.

Writers certainly do write because of a lack of something in their envir-

comment: money.

Jim's remarks about writers and readers require a longer, serious reply. Right... claymore back in hock... kilt stealthily returned to the dog's basket... sporran hung back on the companion set... block-up-the-hole-in-the-Wall till next time -

(With great difficulty I restrain myself from replying at equal length. Just a point or two though: (a) from the tenor of the generality of VECTOR's correspondence, 'twould appear that it's required neither to be over-serious nor yet over-fannish in tone. Also, 'twould appear that, provisionally at least, I seem to have solved the problem of achieving this desirable state of affairs. This is not precisely deliberate - I'm looking mainly for quality, whether the item be heavy or frothy, and said quality has so far been most obliging in appearing as and when wanted. So thanks, mates in question. (b) speaking as an Englishman, I've always had a fondness for the wartime story about an English and a Scottish soldier. The English soldier says that things are bad, that there's a rumour going round that England may have to surrender. "Then," says the Scot, "it will be a long and weary fight for Scotland." On the other hand, it's bad enough when I use my editorial prerogative to make puns on members' names, without everybody else joining in. Better get your longbow re-horsed, Jim - yon claymoron dwells thataway ... AM)

DON R. SMITH (Nuneaton) Once more I take my typewriter on my knee - wishing it was a typist instead - to comment on the latest VECTOR.

In the editorial comment I take umbrage at the admittedly hypothetical question "People say the Conan stories are bad; is there any objective way of proving that they're bad?" Of course there isn't. Because they're not. Howard's Hyborian Age may be an impossible pot-pourri of anachronisms, Conan himself may be a fantastically indestructible over muscled thug with an unfashionable lack of concern over other people's lives and property, and the effects of severe wounds described with grisly relish, but in his chosen vein Howard was a real craftsman of the art of story telling. I cannot think, off hand, of a present day fantasy writer who can evoke a strange exotic scene with such economy of word and phrase, nor of one who can set the stage so forcibly in the very first sentence of his story. Howard's stories are, of course, very variable in quality, as are those of all other authors, but the best are very well constructed indeed.

Can't say I'm much interested in whether or not the children of today can or cannot write science fiction. What I am interested in is the odd metamorphosis which seems to have happened to the word "essay". Though my own youth is beginning to get lost in the mists of antiquity I feel sure that if I had responded to an instruction to write an essay or a composition on any subject by writing a short story I would have been subjected to either scornful reproof or, at an earlier stage, to the less demoralising and more humane couple of cuts with a cane on the hands. An even worse fate might have been mine if I'd persistently written "it's" when I meant "its", but this crime seems to be common practice these degenerate days.

I sympathetically encore Mr. Clarke in his plea for improved standards in science fiction writing. I am not so sure that I encore his examples of the highest outside the field - D.H. Lawrence and T.S. Eliot. I prefer Lawrence's verse to his prose, and only really admire brief passages of Eliot. For a matter of that, I'm not so madly devoted to Bradbury either, finding the affectations of his style sometimes profoundly irritating. Which all goes to show how different we are in our tastes. Vive la difference, as the French say about a more interesting subject.

I can't understand why McKenzie thinks he's talking about the future. Surely this state of over-production of fifth-rate science fiction is exactly what exists today? I know there's a helluva lot more written than I ever read - or want to read.

I find nothing to fight about in the Readers' section, though I must give vent to a contented purr on reading Mr. Harbottle's flattery.

(Talk about speaking of the devil ... AM)

PHILIP HARBOTTLE (Wallsend on Tyne) Ron Bennett's article should have satisfied both the fans and sf purists. Definitely an inspired piece, which served to transport me back to my schooldays. I regret to say that none of my English teachers were as enterprising as Ron - but that never stopped me from writing a sf story for every blessed essay they gave me! I only wish I could lay hands on my old exercise books; I reckon I could use them to crush "New Worlds" as Britain's answer to Ron Coulart.

One "masterpiece", I recall, was The Future of the Railways. 16 pages of esoteric fiction, set in 1975. It told of the aftermath of the great meteorite shower of that year. The meteorites - those fragments of which had not disintegrated - had the unusual property of acting as transmitters for the cosmic rays they had "stored up" whilst in space. The entire earth became soaked with this "cosmoid radiation". This radiation served to prevent the operation of any form of steam or diesel engine. Parallel with this was the intensely human angle of a scientist who had perfected the world's first matter-transmitter.

The unfolding of the plot had the commercial exploitation of it for freight and human travel. The revengeful machinations of the "Head of the Railways" (run by private enterprise in this time;) who was now a ruined man, provided for a garish denouement. Locked in combat, they were shunted through the transmitter with "faulty co-ordinates" to reform in a remote bog, as "glistening, hairy tentaculate monstrosities, like fried eggs with writhing appendages." Chief inspirations in this saga of a 13-year old were indubitably The Goon Show and "Vargo Statten". The teacher gave me 9/10.

C. Clarke's article was well-done and interesting, but I didn't agree with it. Frankly, I'm fed up with all this blabbing about how only the injection of mainstream backgrounds and characterisation can save sf from stagnation. It's rubbish. I think H.P. Lovecraft had the right idea when he wrote: "... It must be remembered that any violation of what we know as natural law is in itself a far more tremendous thing than any other event or feeling which could possibly affect a human being. Therefore in a story dealing with such a thing we can not expect to create any sense of life or illusion of reality if we treat the wonder casually and have the characters moving about under ordinary motivations. The characters, though they must be natural, should be subordinated to the central marvel around which they are grouped. The true "hero" of a marvel tale is not any human being, but simply a set of phenomena." Anyone agree, apart from Sam Moskowitz?

C.P. McKenzie's piece was as ominous as it was excellent, because the conditions he describes could well happen. In fact they did happen, in the early fifties.

(In my schooldays, which I think were rather nearer to Don A. Smith's than to yours, I was given to understand that the "narrative essay" was a legitimate form of essay. Most of my "essays" in those days consisted of wishful-thinking adventures involving myself and friends. By the way, I suppose everybody appreciates that the Wall whose end is adjacent to your home is the same one referred to by Donald Malcolm overleaf? AM)

CPL E.R. HEDGER (Cyprus) I enjoyed the Letter Col in No.20, as I always do; I find I get very set in my opinions on SF books, characters and occurrences and reading other folks' comments often has a bomb-shell effect on me. I read a letter such as Donald Franson's, saying he doesn't like ERB and retire to the toilet where I brood for long hours and finally emerge having come to the decision that he must have been pulling our collective legs. But seriously, I can understand someone not liking Burroughs, but then to say he likes Haggard who always seems like a more staid, south african version of ERB leaves me baffled! Comments?

I love Philip Harbottle's defence of Fearn; I'd never thought of him as one of the 'greats' till the article in '', but Herr Harbottle's case seems strong to me the more I think about it. I remember the impact that Liners of Time had on me - it was definitely the story that brought me to SF: after that I allocated [illegible] of my then pocket money to a mobile library to keep me primed with such material, and then I read my first SF magazine with And Then There Were None by Russell in ASF - Ah, those were the days! I don't think that many present day writers could learn much of worth from a study of Fearn's work, but I do agree that destructive, biased criticism such as Brian Aldiss's reflects little credit on them and does not alter the point that Phil made! I'm all for the suggestion made by Brian Rolls that members should submit short details of books in order to compile a comprehensive 'buy-list' for readers/collectors; possibly the scheme could include some of the old titles that members feel may have been overlooked and are worth reading?

Roy Kay's letter draws attention to this attitude that I was horrified to see pushed in the article The Future of Science-Fiction by C. Clarke, namely that SF is a dedicated, serious art form (or should be). Man, this adds fuel to my earlier comments in my last couple of letters. Why this introspective semi-religious cant? I am very keen on SF and Fantasy and Weird fiction - I am serious about it to the extent that I'm trying to compile an Index - but I don't see why we should regard SF as an 'artform' in its own right, nor that all the writers in the field should be trying to evolve their writings into higher planes! SF is not merely another aspect of mainline literature in the sense that Westerns are, for instance. For a start SF caters to a very small minority - I would guess the smallest minority group of all, excluding 'cultish' literature which generally comes under the fact heading anyway! Now, mainline literature has been around for quite a while, but SF is a very new phenomenon (I know there are one or two pioneer efforts in the field), and for all the time that authors have been writing fiction of a general nature, there are very few real classics, especially if one considers the actual works and not the current view that there are 'classic' authors - which seems sheer nonsense; the same author who writes a classic churns out many hack efforts. Now, if mainline literature can only produce a few really good works in such a long timespan, how can anyone expect to see SF 'classics' spring up overnight? There just is not a sufficient body of writing in the genre to produce a masterwork yet and it's no good bleating about it, because the general public is not going to clamour for SF for some years. There have been some very good books in the science fantasy field and that's all we can ask for - classics are an end product, not a 'hothouse' flower that can be forced from authors by clamour (note the subtle dig?)

By the way, don't think that I'm organising a poison comment campaign on Brian Aldiss even if it does look like it from the tenor of my letter - I think he's a good, interesting author, but I can't stand his pronunciamentos on others' work in VECTOR ! One final point, first stressing that I'm not a Commie - I doubt very much if the Americans could have sent a woman into orbit; they just don't have the trained females, whilst the Russians have thousands

of women in aviation and science in general. No-one should ever believe the Russian claim that women have equal rights and equal employment in the USSR; it ain't true, but the Russians see no harm in women doing anything dangerous or dirty, so flying and parachuting are amongst regular sports over there - this gives them a large reserve of trained femmes.

(We haven't, I think, any American women in the audience - perhaps some American man would care to comment on the above? AM)

TERRY PRATCHETT (Beaconsfield) The article SF in Schools in No. 20 interested me mainly because

(a) I'm a schoolboy, and
(b) I'm very interested in S.F.

First of all, I think Ron Bennett's pupils are dead-lucky in having a Master who is interested in Science Fiction. All we get at my school are the same old dreary titles; My Pets or A Day at a Railway Station. However charming they are the first time round, they begin to pall after five or six laps. (I exaggerate only slightly, I assure you.)

Of course, the cry goes up: "Not everyone is interested in Science (ugh!) Fiction". So what? A Day at a Railway Station isn't everyone's cup of tea either. Besides, most of the blokes in my form copy the stories out of various magazines; it might interest them to crib out of 'New Worlds', etc., or 'Science Fantasy'.

(The two composition titles you mention are easily adaptable to sf themes though, surely? My Pets - a little Fuzzy and a small thoat (I had a banth but they banned it). A Day at a Railway Station - digging among the ancient ruins in some future time when teleportation is universal. AM)

TERENCE BULL (Northampton) wishes VECTOR could go monthly. Not without a larger editorial and production staff, let alone the expense, I'm afraid. R.A. BORHILL (also Northampton - are we Taking Over?) agrees with Paul Lambert "that VECTOR must cater more for the S.F. minded fan". Which makes 96 pages out of 20, and there's the reviews to do yet.

REVIEWED ANY GOOD books lately?

BOOK REVIEWS

Edmund Crispin (ed.): BEST SF 5 (Faber & Faber 256 pages, 18/-)

When the Editor asked me to review for VECTOR, I immediately thought of the definition of a censor: one who sticks his nose into other people's business. To a certain extent, the reviewer is in much the same position. He impresses, unwittingly or by design, his opinions on a group of people. (I suspect that the latter is an easy first past the post.) They in turn, although they realise the function of a reviewer, are nevertheless influenced along the suggested lines. Such is the power of the printed word.

However, in reviewing for VECTOR I know that I am writing for people whose intelligence, individual and collective, is parsecs ahead of that of most main-stream peddlers.

Further, in reviewing an anthology - Archie shot me into the reviewers' most difficult orbit - it's obvious that the majority of readers are already acquainted with a large proportion of the stories and are unlikely to be influenced anyway.

Having jettisoned that lot, I can now get on with the review of the anthology, a collection of a foreword and eleven stories, varying greatly in length and theme.

One gripe I had against "Galaxy" was that it seldom had an editorial. It always struck me as having no head to its body. Best SF 5 is well served with a very perceptive foreword by Edmund Crispin, which enhances the value of the book. Now to the stories.

On Handling the Dates. This is one of those scientific correspondence column stories and, in my opinion, a bad opener for the anthology. I must admit honestly that this one passed me right by and didn't even make a dent. (What an inspiring admission!) I didn't have the knowledge to follow the ramifications of the story and it's small consolation to know that most of you won't, either. All I can say is that I don't like this type of story. It doesn't lend itself to a pleasant style or significant characterisation and seems a lazy method of writing peculiar to sf. For me, it died of a polysyllabic overload.

Noise Level (Raymond F. Jones). An excellent oldie from "Astounding". The perpetuation of a fraud upon a group of high-powered egg heads in order to force them to solve the problem of anti-gravity forms the surface theme. The important, underlying theme of this thoughtful, well-written story is this: why do people think at less than maximum efficiency? Try Mr. Jones's answer on for size. This, for me, is vintage sf and all that an sf story should be; entertaining, based on sound science, logically extrapolated, provocative and stimulating.

Green Thumb (Clifford Simak). I always think of Clifford Simak as the H.E. Bates of sf, with his love of human beings and the soil. This pastoral tale of the consequences of the meeting of man and plant, both intelligent, has all the ingredients missing, partly or wholly, from the bulk of current sf: warmth, humanity, humour, philosophy, compassion. All dirty words these days... This story brought a lump to my throat. Another thing I liked about this story is its sheer craftsmanship. Like Bates, Simak has the happy knack of making writing look simple. As a writer, I know how deceptive that is!

The Quest for Saint Aquin (Anthony Boucher). Religion in general always seems to be in one of three states: persecuting someone, being persecuted, or about to get involved in one or other of these diverting activities. Anthony

Boucher's tale comes under the second heading and his picture of a persecuted Roman Catholic Church (I guess the rest of the religions went thataway) is very convincing. Thomas, reunted on a robass - an electronic goo-gee with a nose-bag of logic, Biblical text, a sense of humour and a magnificent disregard for punctuation - sets out to find the mysterious Aquin. En route, he becomes involved with the Christian underground (run by a Jew), anti-religious fanatics and that future time's version of Miss Keeler. Finally, the robass leads him to the body of Saint Aquin. Things don't turn out quite as Thomas conceived them, but I'll leave you to find out for yourselves when you read this excellent story.

The Monsters (Robert Sheckley). I found nothing exciting in this trifle. He has done much better. We are given a look at the customs of an alien race and an alien's-eye view of the human animal. The aliens have an overwhelming surplus of females and the males casually dispose of their spouses every twenty-five days by indulging in a spot of messy wifecide (I did make that word up). Then they nip down to the pen and pick another filly. Flashpoint comes when one of the Earthmen seems a bit coy about disposing of his lady friend and an alien obligos. The story is entertainingly written, but -

Who Can Replace a Man? (Brian W. Aldiss). Brian Aldiss gives us a meticulous story of an age of machines in the service of man. The machines are graded into various classes of brain, Class One being a computer in control of a city, while a bull-dozer gets by with a Grade Four brain. Man, since his birth, has seemed to carry the seeds of his own destruction within him, and in the story, he has at last managed to bring them to full flower. The tale centres around the actions of a group of assorted machines thrown on their own resources when the chain of command breaks down. Aldiss gives us some sharp insights into the peck order of human society and a few of the less endearing traits. He holds up man and asks you to judge for yourselves. What is man? Something insignificant? Something meaningful?

The Prisoner (Christopher Anvil). This Anvil story comes under the hammer because it's another scientific correspondence column effort. I was disappointed to find two such items in one anthology and I doubt if this story form will attract many new readers. The story is clever, with a good plot, mounting tension and a twist ending. It concerns the strange influence of a certain Colonel Gorley on the conduct of the war against an alien race called the Outs. It's evident, fairly early on, just who - or what - the enigmatic officer is, but this adds to, rather than detracts from, the suspense. Worth reading, however, I'd have liked to see it written in a straight-forward style.

The Star (Arthur C. Clarke). A beautiful and moving story, masterfully told. It alone makes the book worth buying. Once again, the theme is religious, but with a much deeper significance than the Boucher story. A Jesuit is chief astrophysicist aboard a ship going to investigate the Phoenix Nebula, 5000 light-years distant. Religion is one of those things we are either "for or agin". Here, Clarke poses a dilemma that, fictional as it is, will give many people cause to re-examine their faith, or lack of it. Few of you will have failed to read The Star before and I'm sure you'll come to it again with pleasurable anticipation.

Consider Her Ways (John Wyndham). John Wyndham's story (the longest in the anthology) has twanging through it like a taut bow-string a sustained undercurrent of barely controlled, sophisticated fear, reminiscent of Richard Matheson at his spine-tingling best. Being the product of a British writer, it's a wee bit Boulder-battish and rolled-umbrella, but nonetheless effective for that. Rather, the fear is accentuated. A doctor, Jane Waterleigh, has returned to her job in an effort to lessen the shock of her husband's death. In an uncaring mood, she agrees to act as a guinea-pig for the testing of a new

drug, chainjuctin, discovered and used by Southern Venezuelan Indians to induce zombie-like trances, during which the spirit could leave the body and wander in the after-world. She finds herself transported to a future in which only women exist, the men having fallen prey to a disease intended by a biologist to wipe out rats. In this time, she is Mother Orchis, a human incubator producing, for the greater good of the rigid caste society, babies, in fours, and with maternal regularity. Eventually she regains her own era and sets out to kill the biologist before he can biologise. Unfortunately, she overlooks one important fact. The passage dealing with Mother Orchis's visit to an historian is brilliant and brutal. Again, as with the majority of stories in this anthology, the hallmark of craftsmanship is evident.

The Martyr (Poul Anderson). This story, on the face of it a straightforward case of man meeting an alien and vastly superior race - "super Buddhists" - also has strong religious implications. As with the other two similar themes, it hits, eventually, at one of the basic tenets of Christian and other religious beliefs. Anderson blasts, very effectively I'd say, the classic sf concept that psionic phenomena are accomplished by individual mental power, and substitutes his own logical idea of a source of energy in the universe that can, if the method is known, be modulated by a mind. (Rosicrucians of the world, unite! Ed.) Anderson (my favourite American writer - Clarke is my British No. 1) writes with compassion and insight. Unlike most of writers, his pen doesn't have an emotional straight-jacket. The story is thoroughly enjoyable.

Later Than You Think (Fritz Leiber). This is a suitably ironic tale to end a varied and provocative collection. It takes the form of an elaborate dialogue between two characters with the charming Wellsian-type titles of Archaeologist and Explorer, concerning the discovery, while the Explorer was away in space, of a cache left by an extinct species on Earth. Hastily written, with a very large tongue in a very small cheek. The twist ending creeps up on you like a mouse...

D.L.

John Lymington: A SWORD ABOVE THE NIGHT (Corgi Books, 2/6d)

Before reading A Sword Above the Night my only contact with John Lymington's work was the T.V. production of Night of the Big Heat, which, with its monsters and its anti-scientific bias, prejudiced me against the author. This book has strengthened my resolve to leave Lymington's work alone.

Like Night of the Big Heat, and (according to the reviews I've read) most of Lymington's other books, A Sword Above the Night concerns an invasion of Earth. The anti-scientific bias is still there, although in a more subtle form. Mysterious spaceships land, surrounding themselves with protective electric screens which are impervious to matter and radio waves. An assorted set of characters, including a police sergeant and a group of criminals, are trapped inside one of these screens. The story is developed in such a way that, for the purposes of the book, the characters might just as well be isolated by some natural disaster; a flood for example. This, to me, seems that the book is not science fiction. The book ends with an explanation of the origin of the invaders, as if the author had just remembered he was writing sf.

John Lymington seems to be trying to bring science fiction to a wider audience by employing deeper characterisation than is normally found in the field, and familiar plots, rather watered down, so that his readers don't get out of their depth. In A Sword Above the Night these tendencies have been magnified to such an extent that the minutiae of characterisation subdue the science fictional element so much that it becomes unnecessary to the story.

E.J.W.B.

Ward Moore: GREENER THAN YOU THINK (Ballantine Books 2/6d, imported by Thorpe & Porter. Revised and abridged by the author)

This is satire - I guess. As a general rule I don't like satirical sf, and this is no exception. The story concerns a female scientist, ugly and somewhat mad, who is fired with a desire to feed the world's starving millions. To this end she invents a substance, the Metamorphizer, which grows several blades of grass where none grew before. Finding money running short she hires the narrator, Albert Weener, to sell it and provide the necessary finance. Weener is the prototype Average Man, a resemblance the author runs home in a short foreword, and naturally thinks of the trivial use of the Metamorphizer, as a lawn reviver. Unfortunately he anoints a lawn composed of devilgrass, a noted weed. The devilgrass responds to this treatment by running wild. It continues to run wild for the rest of the book right up to the end when it corners what are presumably the last remnants of mankind.

In the 180 odd pages between these two events Moore slashes at numerous targets - at scientists, in the person of our lady inventor, for their lack of responsibility for their inventions, at politicians for their lack of imagination and commonsense, at newspapers and the military, and at the Average Man, our Albert, who, in the face of the advancing menace, can only think of how to come out one jump (and dollar) ahead of the next man.

The extent of the abridgment and revision I can only guess at. I have read it before but it has all gone from my mind. This edition comprises 185 pages, the two previous hardcover editions had respectively 358 and 320.

I didn't like it.

J.A.G.

Brian W. Aldiss: THE AIRS OF EARTH (Faber & Faber, 18/-)

A new book by Mr. Aldiss is best approached with mixed feelings: pleasurable anticipation of some extremely fine writing and gloomy forebodings that extreme liberties are going to be taken with any of the sciences that cross the author's path. This attitude is justified completely by the eight stories making up The Airs of Earth.

The two longest stories in the collection are also by far the best. Basis for Negotiation is concerned with politics in Britain in the near future, following the start of a World War in which Britain has declared her neutrality. There are plenty of trenchant comments on contemporary mores, some of which gave rise to argument in "New Worlds" where the story first appeared in a slightly different form.

The Game of God deals with an investigation of the life forms on an alien planet and brings in some quite plausible xeno-ichthyology. This is excellent science fiction and Mr. Aldiss's usual meticulous characterisation is a very pleasant bonus.

Two other stories are quite readable run-of-the-mill science fiction, How to be a Soldier being a chilling but not particularly convincing picture of the life of a soldier in the army of the future, and The International Smile an amusing but trivial entertainment concerning the administration of a happiness drug to politicians. Regrettably, the latter is the only new story in the book.

The remaining four stories occupy about one third of the book and three of them can be dismissed fairly rapidly. Old Hundredth is strictly for the fantasy lovers. A Kind of Artistry has a confusing over-emphasis on characterisation and a meaningless ending. Shards is a mish-mash of good and bad puns, free association writing and literary pyrotechnics. Unredeemed by attempted tying up of loose ends on the last page, it reads like nothing more

than a striving for Literary Significance. With emphasis on the capitals.

"Moon of My Delight" is enough to send anyone who likes accurate science in their science fiction screaming into the night. Not since Hothouse, also by Mr. Aldiss, has there been such a downright distortion of the physical sciences in a story. Tandy Two, the moon of the title, is stated to be the second satellite of a giant planet and is used as a braking station for the FTL ships that ply the Galaxy. When a ship lands the planet is spun through 109 degrees in about 200 milliseconds. Immediately one wonders how the inhabitants avoid being spread over the nearest solid object in the form of a thin paste. So far as Mr. Aldiss is concerned, one can wonder.

The planet is alleged to retain its normal rotational rate after the 'inertial jolt', so long goes the Conservation of Angular Momentum. Half of the planet is in a vacuum, so that the ships won't strike any molecules of atmosphere when they land, yet Cerenkov radiation is emitted. And so on, and on, and on.

There is also a plot about a discontented farmer and his discontented wife who employ a poor but honest poet as their farmhand on Tandy Two. The farmer has a six year old daughter who gets fatally shocked by a most inefficiently guarded electric fence near the end of the story just when she was coming to appreciate this remarkable satellite. The poet also loves, with heavy Freudian connotations, the satellite and spends set on spanking the rest of his life there, so far as can be judged by anyone who wades through the gibberish and reaches the end of the story. And serve him right too.

Mr. Aldiss seems to feel that literary merit in science fiction can outweigh a lack of science. It is, one would have thought, fairly obvious that good writing can be found in any genre, but good science fiction must have good science otherwise it is not worth considering. Usually the reader is prepared to allow an author one tacit assumption, such as that FTL travel is possible, but this traditional indulgence should not be construed as the right to ride roughshod over well established principles of science without replacing them by an equally consistent set of principles.

When Mr. Aldiss is prepared to give a nod in the direction of science, his stories are superb. It is to be hoped he will allow his neck to become more flexible in future.

Two thirds of the material in the book is average or better, so it can be recommended as worth reading. But priced at eighteen shillings, even the completist collector would be well advised to wait for the paperback edition before buying a copy.

For the record, five of the stories first appeared in "New Worlds" and two in "The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction".

I.M.Mac.

HOT-REVIEWS

THE FOLLOWING LIST of new paperbacks, British and American, has been supplied by Terence Bull. His descriptions, however, have been very much condensed.

Mayflower

DOORWAYS, Gordon R. Dickson. 190 pages, 3/6d. Van Vogtian mystery: Psi versus technology.

UNLIKE OTHER, Randall Garrett. 192 pages, 3/6d. The lighter side of cybernetics.

OF ALL POSSIBLE WORLDS, William Tenn. 190 pages, 3/6d. More or less humorous short stories plus lengthy introduction.

Panther

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOON, ed. August Derleth. 144 pages, 2/6d. Half a previous Derleth anthology with big name authors.

Penguin

A CASE OF CONSCIENCE, James Blish. 3/-. Theological and social sf.

DRAGON IN THE SEA, Frank Herbert. 3/6d. Psychological thriller set in the future.

MISSION OF GRAVITY, Hal Clement. 3/6d. Adventure in carefully worked-out "possible" alien environment.

Panton

LORDS OF THE PSYCHON, Daniel F. Galouye. 153 pages, 3/-. Psi humans versus alien invaders.

THE IMMORTALS, James Gunn. 154 pages, 3/-. Social sf (from four magazine-stories).

Pyramid

THE WALL AROUND THE WORLD, T.R. Cogswell. 160 pages, 2/6d. Short stories, mainly of science fantasy, plus two introductions.

Berkley

[illegible] STARMAKER, Olaf Stapledon. 222 pages, 50¢. Future history on a cosmic scale.

Lancer

[illegible], Jack Vance. 160 pages, 75¢. Short stories with a common background - borderline sf/fantasy.

Ballantine

STAR SF STORIES NO. 3, ed. Frederik Pohl. 186 pages, 3/6d. Big name anthology reprinted from 1955.

CITIZEN IN SPACE, Robert Sheckley. 200 pages, 3/6d. Short stories a la Sheckley, reprinted from 1955.

Ace

THE FIVE GOLD BANDS and THE DRAGON MASTERS, Jack Vance. 122 and 102 pages respectively. Bands (otherwise The Space Pirate) is intelligent space opera, Dragon Masters crosses genetics with well-swashed buckles.

THE DEFIANT AGENTS, Andre Norton. 192 pages, 40¢. Juvenile adventure, third of the "Time Traders" series (Galactic Derelict).

Finally, a title contributed by AM:

Fontana

OUT OF THIS WORLD, Ben Barzman. 255 pages, 3/6d. The science-fantasy gimmick of not-quite-twin Earths used to point a mainstream moral.

SMALL-ADS FREE TO MEMBERS, AND MISCELLANEOUS NOTICES. SMALL-ADS FREE TO MEMBERS

HAVING NOW OBTAINED every sf story ever written by John Russell Fearn, I'm searching for all his fan-writings too. Vast rewards in trade or cash await anyone who can supply me with copies of the following. Alternately, I can make it worth your while if you can merely loan me copies for a short while.

U.S. FANZINES:- FANTASY MAGAZINE 1934-1937; HELIOS 1937-1938; SCIENCE FANTASY CORRESPONDENT No. 2, 1937; and any others there may be.
BRITISH FANZINES:- NOVAE TERRAE 1936-1930; THE FUTURIAN and TOMORROW 1938; SCIENTIFICTION, THE BRITISH FANTASY REVIEW Nos. 1 & 2 1937; SCIENCE FANTASY REVIEW 1948 - 1950 excepting Nos. 16 & 17.

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THE FOLLOWING MAGAZINES are wanted on behalf of an American friend, and I will pay keen collector's prices for items in good condition.
"Weird Tales" and "Astounding" prior to 1937; "Doc Savage"; "Spider"; "Horror"; "Terror"; American "Unknown"; "Strange Tales"; "Startling Mystery"; "Dime Mystery"; "Thrilling Mystery"; "Strange Stories"; "Bluebook"1930s; "Adventure" 1920-1935; "Thrilling Adventures" 1930s; "Amazing Stories Annual" 1927.
Philip Harbottle, 27 Cheshire Gardens, Wallsend on Tyne, Northumberland.

TERRY JEEVES'S ANALOG Checklist (Part 1) is now ready. It covers the years 1930-1939, has stiff covers (Gestetner 'B' Board), and is divided into four sections:

- A ... a complete listing by issue
- B ... a complete listing by author
- C ... a complete listing by story
- D ... a complete listing of all fact articles

There is some cross-referencing of well-established authors' pseudonyms, and the spine is bound in plastic. All this, 54 pages of it, is obtainable from Terry at 30 Thompson Road, Ecclesall, Sheffield 11, Yorks, at 4/6d. (Er - well, to be strictly accurate the magazine had some other title in those days. It is treated as a continuing entity or something.)

IF YOU JOINED the B.S.F.A. recently, you probably received a letter of welcome from some other member - apart from the Treasurer's greeting-circular. If you appreciated the gesture (or if you were a member before the system was inaugurated), possibly you too would like to help. Anybody interested should get in touch with the Treasurer, Jill Adams, 54 Cobden Avenue, Bitterne Park, Southampton. There's nothing particularly onerous about it - it just helps newly-joined members to become acclimatised.

IF YOU LIVE in or near London, and have never attended the weekly meeting at Ella Parker's, then it's high time you did. It takes place every Friday evening, at Flat 43, William Dunbar House, Albert Road, London NW.6. Queens Park station is only a stone's throw away on the horizontal plane (though a fairish distance on the vertical). If you're a member of the B.S.F.A. and happen to be in London on a Friday evening, there is a standing cordial invitation for you to come along - Ella and the gang will be very glad to meet you.

DON'T BELIEVE WHAT it says in the geography-book. BASRA is not in Iraq. And England, believe it or not, is in BASRA. Specifically, Jim England is the Secretary of the British Amateur Scientific Research Association (BASRA). Enquiries should be addressed to him at 64 Ridge Road, Kingswinford, Staffs.

THE B.S.F.A. "NEBULA" INDEX is now ready. This is a complete index to the late lamented Scottish (you were saying, Mr. Malcolm?) sf magazine, both by issue and by author. 20 pages, compiled and edited by Maxim Jakubowski, with a preface by Brian Aldiss and an introduction by E.C. Tubb. Price 1/6d to B.S.F.A. members (one copy each), otherwise 2/6d, post free in both cases. Obtainable from Mrs Jill Adams, 54 Cobden Avenue, Bitterne Park, Southampton.

NEW MEMBERS

M.384 I.W. Campbell, 45A High Street, Wimbledon, London SW.19
M.385 N.C. Gourlay, 48 Coquet Terrace, Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne 6
M.386 R.F. Allum, 19 Feltham Road, Lower Earlswood, Redhill, Surrey
M.387 I.R.S. Latto, 16 Merryton Avenue, Glasgow W.5
A.388 M.S. Read (Miss), The Bungalows, Colleton, Chulmleigh, N. Devon
M.389 R.J.F. Hewsey, Dingle Bank, 149 Abergele Road, Colwyn Bay
A.390 J. Barfoot, 212 Scroggs Road, Newcastle upon Tyne 6
M.391 M. Reed (Miss), 71 The Fairway, Ruscote Estate, Banbury, Oxon
M.392 M. Sheild, 37 Couch Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne 6
O.393 G. Rix, 727 West 66th Avenue, Vancouver 14, B.C., Canada
M.394 A. Davies, Det 261 F.U.R.E., B.F.P.O. 63
A.395 P. Godin, 3 Nursery Close, Enfield, Middlesex

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

A.375 N.P. Morton, 34 Princes Avenue, Great Crosby, Liverpool 23
M.203 H.M. Bennett, 17 Newcastle Road, Penny Lane, Liverpool 15
M.268 J.H. Scott, "Hazelhurst", Barske Mill Lane, Saltburn by the Sea, Yorks

CORRECTION

[redacted] T.R. McAuley, "Illyria", Sandyford, Co. Dublin, Eire
(not "Sandyford Road" - that comes under the next village or something)

BONUS EDITORIAL

EXPERIMENTS [redacted] MONKEYS

There is a folk-saying that if a million monkeys were to sit for an indefinite time tapping away at a million typewriters, sooner or later they'd produce the whole works of Shakespeare. So far as I'm aware, only one scientist has ever tried this particular experiment - his name was Francis Bacon, and it was a complete success.

However, it is possible to use monkeys on a much more modest scale and still obtain worthwhile results. In Heinlein's Stranger in a Strange Land, mention is made of the painted monkey syndrome - if, it is suggested, a monkey is painted pink and then placed among ordinary unpainted specimens of his kind, they will promptly tear him to pieces. Some years ago, Theodore Sturgeon made precisely the same point - only in his case, the lone monkey was painted green.

I'm not going to make an issue here of the proper colour to paint monkeys that one wishes to have torn to pieces - the subject is brought up in each case by way of analogy with human behaviour towards someone who's noticeably different from the norm in some way. Only, I'm wondering - how far is the analogy actually correct? Has anybody (entirely in a disinterested spirit of scientific experiment of course) ever taken a monkey, painted it either green or pink or some equally inappropriate colour, then released it amongst its erstwhile companions and watched them tear it to pieces? And if so, I further wonder, do they object to it because it's the wrong colour, or because it smells

of paint, or both, or what?

Still further, the original experiment - to observe the behaviour of a group of untreated monkeys towards one of their number who has been painted - seems to suggest a companion experiment - to observe the behaviour of a group of similarly painted monkeys towards each other. Supposing two or more monkeys of a colony are taken aside, painted in some unsimian colour and then put into a cage together. Would they accept each other as fellow-sufferers? Or would they all start merrily tearing each other to pieces on general principles? Or what?

Such an experiment, if performed under laboratory conditions, would not only increase our knowledge of the psychology of the lower primates. It would also encourage top-flight sf authors to look around for some other analogy to which man's proverbial inhumanity towards others of his kind might be compared.

AM

AND A BONUS article:

ONE FOOT IN THE GRAVE by Donald Malcolm

For some time now, I have been increasingly concerned about the trend in sf. This is nothing new in our fraternity, I hasten to say before everyone else does. However, my concern is with one aspect: humour. Or, rather, the lack of it.

As I see it, most of my fellow writers are falling over themselves to see who can produce stories with the least humour, hope, humanity and philosophy. The trouble is, they're succeeding only too well, so that most "New Worlds" stories are falling into a predictable and dangerous pattern. I don't know whether this is a reflection of personal beliefs, or the influence of trend. No one need look too far for the High Priest of Doom: Mr. J.G. Ballard. More of him later.

Now I see that sf's graveyard role has been publicly proclaimed in the press by Mr. Kingsley Amis. The article, Mr. Amis and the Space Monsters, a write-up of the Convention at Peterborough, appeared beside, if not actually in, the William Hickey society column of the Scottish Daily Express dated 15th April. It begins: "Britain's science fiction authors, who nowadays take themselves very seriously, went on an outer space jag over the week-end." The italics are mine. This opening sentence makes sf adherents sound like a bunch of cranky dope addicts.

Then came a mention of B.E.Ms. which Kingsley Amis explained apologetically by saying: "This is a low-brow image of science fiction. Actually, S.F. is deadly serious. Its task is to propound questions about our society."

I have a number of strong objections to make. Firstly, while I, no doubt in common with the rest of the members of the B.S.F.A., am pleased to have a personality of the calibre of Mr. Amis associated with us, I don't see him propounding much about anything in the sf field as far as actual writing goes. So why should he be the spokesman for British sf? No prizes for guessing why the reporter didn't choose to quote, say, John Carnell, Bruce Montgomery or Brian Aldiss, all present at the Convention. I am not for one moment casting aspersions on Mr. Amis's knowledge, dedication or anything else. But he has

society appeal, which probably accounts for the proximity of the article to the coronet column. This is the rub. We're in danger of having Lord Luvaduck and his lady (Lady Luvadrake? Er - excuse me. Ah) reading sf because it is fashionable, not because it's entertaining. Because Kingsley Amis has pronounced, then it must be worth reading - for the wrong reason.

Mr. Amis then goes on to say: "But we are not against monsters. We are all for a bit of fun." However true this may be, it certainly isn't showing up in the current writing, except occasionally.

"S.F. is deadly serious". Correction: sf is fatally serious.

All that business about propounding questions about our society is secondary and not particularly true. The prime consideration of sf is to entertain, not to tell people why they're in such a helluva mess. Most people tend to rationalise their troubles, anyway, or do the next worst thing and go round the bend. A lot of current sf just doesn't entertain. The writers, almost without exception, seem to be incurable pessimists. In their hands, through the medium of sf, there's no hope for humanity.

The phrase "this vale of tears" is invariably interpreted gloomily. Hasn't it occurred to anyone that the tears might be of laughter? This is how I choose to look at it. The reality of human life is an exquisite mixture of tragedy and comedy, and history is full of people who triumphed against adversity. If they'd been a bunch of Dismal Johnnies, the world would be in a much worse state than it is today.

Read authors such as O. Henry, Somerset Maugham, H.E. Bates and see how their stories vibrate with life, with the uplifting message that humanity will endure and survive. Read the work of Dismal Johnny No. 1, Mr. Ballard, and you'll find stories that are brilliant in plot, technique and other basic requirements, but deadly dull in their total lack of humanity, philosophy or humour. Devoid, in fact, of any human emotion except a burning hopelessness for mankind. He must be a sorely troubled boy, that one!

Science fiction's latest excursion into the film world seems to bear out the general trend. I quote John Carnell's review of The Day of the Triffids, in "New Worlds" for January. He says: "The secret of its success, however, lies in the fact that there is no light relief, no romance, no laugh lines (intended or otherwise), no let up from the main premise of the story - that this is a direct threat to mankind's existence." Believe me, the Triffids have nothing on the gloom brigade! As for there being no laugh lines, I saw the film in Aberdeen and the audience found quite a lot to laugh at, in all the wrong places, naturally. We've come to expect that. Anyway, I can't believe that people, individually or collectively, live their lives in a state of perpetual seriousness, even in the direst situation.

Perhaps, when we deplore the lack of a sense of wonder in sf, we mean that the stories no longer have any hope or humour, no indication that man will triumph, as I'm sure he will. To underline this, that to me is sf's role.

I'm not asking that sf be turned into a laughter parade. All I ask is that some humour and gentle irony of theme, situation and presentation be introduced before they start shovelling in the dirt...

Donald Malcolm