We're nearly into the New Year so this issue includes two articles on a couple of the big sf-orientated events of 1975: The Apollo-Soyuz space launch and the Trieste SF Film Festival.

Apparently NASA has been inviting artists along to watch rocket launches since 1963, in the hope that they will be able to record something that the camera misses. Sandra Miesel, an American artist who specialises in abstract needlework, was present at the Apollo-Soyuz launch in July and she has provided us with a behind-the-scenes account of the happenings at the Kennedy Space Centre. The author's name may be familiar to you as she is a prominent member of American sf fandom and has been nominated three years running for the Hugo Award for best fan writer.

Meanwhile, over in Italy SFM's ace film reporter, John Brosnan, was sweating it out at the Thirteenth Annual SF Film Festival, held this year in Trieste. The British entry, The Land That Time Forgot, failed to gain the Festival's grand prize which, in fact, went to one of the three American entries, Phase IV.

Of further delight in this issue you'll find fiction from Ian Watson and Keith Roberts, whose story 'The Worlds That Were' has been rescued from obscurity; it's been published before in Frederik Pohl's ill-fated magazine Worlds of Tomorrow, but since then it's evaded anthologists and editors alike. The story accompanies Mike Ashley's introduction to the works of Keith Roberts, an author perhaps best-known for his parallel-world novel, Pavane.

Next issue, next volume, next month, next year, we'll be publishing Part Three of Peter Weston's mammoth investigation into the theme of space travel in science fiction. There's been a break of two months since the first two parts of the article, but its plain sailing now until the final part which will appear in SFM Vol 3 No 2. The February issue will also feature an interview with Frank Kelly Freas, the great American illustrator, and we'll be using as much of his artwork as possible. But before we get to SFM 3:2, make sure you don't miss the January issue which brings you an illustrated article on Space 1999 and a new story from Jack Williamson.

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SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY
Within the science fiction field Keith Roberts is a figure of some importance. He has mastered the art of writing enthralling short stories and captivating novels; he has edited a regular sf magazine almost single-handed, which included not only selecting the contents but also selling advertising space and preparing the artwork; he is also a talented artist and many of his drawings and paintings have appeared as covers on "New Worlds" and "Science Fantasy." In this article Mike Ashley describes the man he has dubbed "the patient craftsman" and introduces us to his work.

Without a doubt Britain today has a greater wealth of science fiction and fantasy writers than at any other time in its literary history. Names like Ben Bova, Brian Aldiss, John Brunner, JG Ballard, EC Tubb, Kenneth Bulmer roll unprompted off the tongue, and they are considered among the novelists most visible in the genre. Yet strangely, and unforgettably, one name often omitted from such a list is a British great in the field of short stories, Keith Roberts. Even though a more literary and painstaking writer would be hard to find, it is only just recently, a decade after his first appearance, that a paperback collection of his fiction has been published, and most of his earlier novels are at last in print again.

"EXPERIENCE CULLED FROM HIS CAREER IS ONLY TOO EVIDENT IN HIS FICTION; HOWEVER IT WRITES THROUGH THE EYES OF AN ARTIST"

Consequently it's about time due recognition was accorded this author, of whom American author and lecturer Joanna Russ said: "(he) is a real writer, it dwells on things for their own sake." (F & SF, April 1969)

Keith John Kingston Roberts was born on Friday 5th March 1935 at Kettering. After leaving. Northamptonshire, he remained an only child. Educated at Kettering Grammar School and Northampton School of Art, Roberts artist's training was brought about his training as a book illustrator. He later spent some years as a background artist in an animation studio. Later still he entered the advertising business, first as a finisher and general dogsbody, but then moving on to be a freelance visualiser and copywriter. Experience culled from his career is only too evident in his fiction; moreover he writes through the eyes of an artist. The attention to detail that characterises every one of his stories brings characters and events right out from the printed page into the third dimension. Take for example the following extract from 'The Lady Margaret' episode in his novel "Pavane":

'Jesse reached down to twist the control of the injector valve. Water, preheated by its passage through an extension of the smokebox, swept into the boiler. He allowed the engine to build up speed. Durnovaria vanished, lost in the gloom of the distant hills. The light was almost gone. To right and left the land was featureless, dark; in front of him was the half-seen whirling of the crankshaft. The big thunder of the other engine, the hailer grained, still exhilarated by the physical action of driving. Flamelight striking through windows. The door to doors showed the wide, hard jaw, the deepset eyes under brows that were level and thickly black, just let old beards, and sneeze in a last trip. The lady Margaret would take his Fowler, up hill or down; and Eli would churn with glee in his fresh-made grave . . .'

Not a word wasted, yet in that paragraph Roberts achieves a level of tension and atmosphere binding together all the sub-plots, yet not the story is simply narrative drive but because in a Roberts story everything is important. As Joanna Russ said: "(he) dwells on things for their own sake.

Keith Roberts discovered sf in the traditional manner of reading HG Wells at school, but he did not construe himself to science fiction. His favours encompass Lytton, Tennyson, Kipling and Golding. Finding he enjoyed writing, and, as in his short stories, he decided to try his hand at a longer form. Roberts discovered sf in the traditional manner of reading HG Wells at school, but he did not construe himself to science fiction. His favours encompass Lytton, Tennyson, Kipling and Golding. Finding he enjoyed writing, and, as in his short stories, he decided to try his hand at a longer form. Roberts discovered sf in the traditional manner of reading HG Wells at school, but he did not construe himself to science fiction. His favours encompass Lytton, Tennyson, Kipling and Golding. Finding he enjoyed writing, and, as in his short stories, he decided to try his hand at a longer form. 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way, to 'Deterrent' (June 1965), which depicted the life of a primitive tribe on an alien world. His most striking contribution was 'Susan' (April 1966), a brilliant portrayal of a schoolgirl with latent powers of which she is fully aware. Always the question is raised, 'Susan, who are you?'

Meanwhile New Writings was presenting Keith Roberts' more technical side. 'Sub-Lim' drew upon his experience in the advertising world and dwelt on the consequences of using subliminal techniques. Another contribution was 'High Eight', published under the alias of David Stringer. Nearly 10,000 words, it was Roberts' longest story to date and also one of his earliest. It is set in North America, in a remote community, and follows the engineers who service a generating station and its line of high power pylons that stretch up into the mountains. A series of industrial events begin, centred around 'High Eight', the name given to the most remote sub-station. Despite their logical minds, these individuals are forced to the conclusion that something alien has taken over the station and is feeding upon the electricity. A very powerful story. It demonstrated Roberts' predilection for the power of machines.

A second David Stringer story appeared in New Writings 5 (Autumn 1966), 'Accumulation', dealing with the effects of space travel on the personal lives of the spacemen. This was followed by the next issue by 'The Inner Wheel' and Roberts pulled out all the stops for his ultimate sci-fi story. The narrator, after receiving a substantial inheritance, finds himself in the small village of Warnell where everything appears to be running perfectly. However, he finally realizes that the entire town is controlled by a gestalt brain, the combined psychic powers of a group of espers. Later Roberts would rework this idea into a full length novel.

His first novel, however, was not until that time just being serialised in Science Fantasy. The Furies began in the July 1965 issue and immediately put Roberts in the forefront of the genre. The novel is an emulsion, not imitation, of Wells and Wyndham, Roberts' novel told of an England ravaged by the forces of rationality, and moral reasoning, wasp-like beings that devastate the country in the confusion that follows the Neptune Project, which was designed to rid the world of the Pacific bedpans open the Earth and causes widespread destruction. Before long the Furies take full control, and Britain splits into factions: those opposing the Furies and those accepting them.

The Furies along with a cracking, almost breathtaking pace, but Roberts at no time sacrifices action for characterisation. The relationship between the narrator Bill Sampson, his girlfriend Jane and a cockney girl called Pete forms a key part of the novel.

Trying for the next issue, The Furies, Bonfiglioli met Roberts, and as a result Roberts was employed to do artwork for Science Fantasy, and this later spread to the rest of the New Worlds and Vinter publications. His art had first appeared in the January 1965 issue illustrating 'The Jnifnifer' (which actually appeared in the next issue) and then again in the May 1965 issue depicting Anita. The June 1965 cover was particularly effective, and he was more or less a mainstay. Soon his covers would also be found on New Worlds, and whilst they were not exceptionally brilliant in execution, they nevertheless had an atmosphere about them that was just right for the magazine.

A deluge of fiction was still appearing, and Carnell, as his agent, had also succeeded in selling some to the United States. His first appearance outside Britain was however with a rather mediocre story, 'Survey of the Third Planet' in the January 1966 Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction. Dealing with an alien life form in Roman Britain, it contained little of his usual sparkle. More to the mark was the 'The Worlds That Were' which appeared in the May 1966 issue of that much maligned magazine Worlds of Tomorrow, Frederik Pohl's companion title to If and Galaxy. Another psi story, it had two brothers capable of creating tangible dream worlds, each trying to catch and overwhelm the other. A fascinating short, it had been completely overlooked by editors and anthropologists alike, a sad remisson. Happily you will find a revised version of the story this month.

Damon Knight was at this time preparing to launch his own original anthology series, and Keith Roberts was honoured with appearing in its initial volume with a brilliant story, 'The Deep'. It tells of a future where the population explosion has forced people to live underground. The hypnosis of the sea, however, breeds its own strange generation of humans.

humour Roberts unearths a fine case, both for and against.

Towards the end of 1965 Kyril Bonfiglioli set the cogs turning to alter Science Fantasy. It was to be born as an American publication, the old title appeared in February 1966 with Keith Roberts' name on the masthead as associate editor. With the first four issues, devoted were presented with a superlative story by Roberts, the first of a series about an alternative England, under the pen-name of Pavane.

The background stems from the assumption that Queen Elizabeth I was assassinated in 1666. Britain is immediately invaded by a force of brotherly soldiers which enabled Philip II of Spain to invade with his Armada, and Britain found itself under the misrule of Robert Bruce. Social and technical progress is decelerated, and comes only with painful slowness. Thus, the alternative Britain is a million miles away from the Britain of today, and the story shows the steady growth by an army of anarchotons. Petrol engines are restricted, thereby making the steam traction engine supreme. The public is engaged in a mighty series of semaphore stations manned by a bodily crowd of Signallers. Britain itself, once a Dark Age fantasy, where fairies and large wildcats still abound.

The opening story, 'The Signaller', is poignant and memorable. It follows the life of a young boy, fascinated by the semaphore stations, who wants to be a signalman. Rejected by the sergeant of a nearby station his dreams are realised and eventually he sets up at his first solo post in charge of a small station in the bleak hills of Dorset. Throughout the story Roberts shows meticulous attention to detail, both mechanical and human, and with art's eye traces vivid images of this alternative England.

The atmosphere continues into the second episode, 'The Last Quarter' (April 1966), which was retitled 'The Lady Margaret' for book publication. This time Roberts traces an incident in which 'Jesse' and his father's, is left in charge of a road haulage company. The Lady Margaret of the title is a passenger 'en route to France and her name, by Jesse, we learn, after a girl with whom he was enamoured. The cunningly plotted and well-written story proves how good a storyteller Roberts really is.

Strange and another Margaret, daughter of the second episode, 'The Last Quarter' is the 'Margaret of Ladies'. Strange has, by this time, built his company to great heights and virtually has a monopoly of the press. The story intrinsically revolves around Margaret and how she becomes involved with the local nobility.

The concluding story, 'Brother John', is a brilliant example of characters and action merging into one. John, a simple monk, is a talented artist and is requested to depict scenes in the Inquisition torture chambers at Dubris. Disgraced by what he sees, he rebells and soon has a new following, many locking upon him as a new Messiah. The ending is both poignant and devastating.

These episodes point to a final cataclysmic event; total revolution. 'Corfe Gate' supplied the answer in the July 1968 Impulse. A later episode, 'The White Boat', would turn up in the December 1968 New Worlds.

Slightly reworked, the Pavane stories were coverted as a linked novel in book form later the following year and received ecstatic reviews, both in Britain and later in the United States where it appeared in 1969. It still stands as a single most brilliant piece of fantasy work Roberts has achieved, equal in standing to any of the great names in the bleak hills of Dorset. It was achieved by a writer of less than two years experience.

In the summer of 1966 Kyril Bonfiglioli, satisfiing what he had achieved (and rightly so) and also having come into possession of a fair amount of money, left the magazine. Harry Neyland, who had been the chief, but he spent most of his time in Italy and his only real involvement was in capturing the big cats for the movie, it was the frontpage work fell on the shoulders of Keith Roberts, now elevated to managing editor. His tasks were legion. He had to deal with the galley; pay the authors; place others whose stories had been lost in the gigantic backlog; read the proofs; see to the best selling; write the blurb; double on the editorials and do all the artwork. All this left little time for writing and the only story that appeared that year was a little before this period. Nevertheless they were good stories. Anita reappeared in three more adventures, of which 'Timothy' (September 1966) — where she brings a scarecrow to life only to find he falls in love with her — was perhaps the best.
Alistair Bevan also returned, initially with a somewhat unconvincing story, "The Face That Kells", set in a future where the power of traffic wardens has grown out of all proportion. Rigid Traffic Acts have made motoring a near impossible and inevitably trevail breaks out against the wardens.

Robert’s writing, as Bevan, then produced a real gem, a near perfect horror story, "The Scarlet Lady". Keith Roberts reveals in many stories an involvement with the mechanics of motoring, "Manipulation" had involved a telekineic attempt to cause an accident in a speeding car. In "Wheel" Bevan had involved a car. Then there was the traction engine in "The Lady Margareth". "The Scarlet Lady" fitted neatly into this trend. The car of the title was a 1938 saloon, purchased by Jackie, the brother of the narrator Bill Fredericks who owned a garage. After a nasty accident involving a cow, it is discovered that the Scarlet Lady has had a history of killings: cows, dogs, cats—and humans. Moreover, the car is a fatal attraction making it impossible for its owner to part with it. The power of the car increases, if Jackie’s sanity is threatened, as well as the lives of all others concerned.

"FOLLOWERS OF "IMPULSE", LOOKING BACK NOSTALGICALLY OVER THE ISSUES WHICH SINCE 1964 FOUND THAT KIETH ROBERTS WAS INTRINSICALLY ENTWINED WITH THE MAGAZINE."

Two issues later in the October 1966 Impulse, Roberts followed Robert’s story with another story about Bill Fredericks, "Breakdown". A lesser story, it concerns a clapped-out old banger that suddenly zooms around at a hundred miles an hour, and a small man who visits the garage seeking assistance to repair his flying saucer.

At this time impuse was serialising Michael Moorcock’s fine novel of a future ice-bound Earth, The Ice Schooner, set in the region of the South Pole, roughly by the same ground—and with Moorcock’s permission—Roberts set out to write ‘Coranda’, his own story, The Ice Schooner, roughly. It would suit the mood by publishing it in the January 1967 New Worlds. With an atmosphere of haunting possibilities, Roberts tells all about a man who sells his life on the ice-bound seas to capture a prize to make them worthy of Coranda. Several years later, the man is tracking a fearful Wreck of the Kissing Bitch, especially for Douglass Hill’s heroic fantasy anthology Warlocks and Warriors (Mayflower, 1971). It would also appear in the December 1971 F & SF. Dealing centrally with the hunt for an ice-whale, it also deals with the effect and aura of its predecessor.

At the end of 1966 the publishers Roberts and Vinter suffered a financial setback, and found it impossible to continue all their publications. After exactly a year Impulse died, and as far as I can understand, without a moment’s notice, with the brilliant influence of Keith Roberts. Followers of the magazine, looking back nostalgically over the issues since 1964, felt that Keith Roberts’ name was intrinsically entwined with the magazine as were the ‘Anita’ series with Science Fiction and Pavana with Science Fantasy. The Alistair Bevan stories were no less a highlight, particularly the motoring fantasies. Yet, from February to April, the suddenly appeared from sight. Only the solitary appearance of ‘Therapy 2000’ in New Writings nearly two years later gave any substance to the belief that he was still around.

As a full-time freelance commercial artist Roberts had no compulsion to write for a living. Nevertheless, his superlative output of the previous three years was evidence enough that he was delighting in writing. The newly transformed New Worlds was hardly the ideal outlet for his talents, but there was the British market. There was silence. Of all the names mourned for by devotees of the dead Impulse, the loss of Keith Roberts was the most regretted.

A slight clue as to his whereabouts however, could have been gleaned from the very last issue of Impulse, in which Roberts wrote, found presenting a lengthy summary of the early science fantasy of Lucian of Samosata, True History. What was Roberts doing with the writings of that questioning Syrian-Greek?

He was, in fact, deeply engaged in research for an historical novel, set at the time of the rise of the Roman Empire. Two and a half years of meticulous research and preparation eventually produced The Boat of Feta, a historical work published by Hutchinson in 1971. It follows the life of one Sergius Paulus from his birth in AD 374 in Spain, through his adolescence in Rome to his destiny in Britain, trying to help the resistance against the invading barbarians. Written with the same poignancy clairvoyance as Pavana, Roberts showed clearly that he was capable of tackling an historical theme as a science-fictional one. He has since expressed his desire to write a second historical novel, this time set in the Middle Ages. For one hope he finds the time to pursue this desire, since, the outcome is bound to be nothing short of spectacular.

With that novel complete, fans discovered Roberts back in the fantasy field with the return of the lovable Anita, this time in F & SF. It was fascinating to discover that Edward Permenter, editor of that superlative publication, left the Anita stories complete, including Granny Thompson’s ramblings and colloquialisms.

Many Americans must have been puzzled. The November 1970 F & SF carried what I consider the best adventure of them all, ‘The Mayday’, wherein Anita sets out illegally to rescue a captured mermaid. All together twelve Anita adventures appeared in magazine format and another three were added to produce an Ace Special collection for Terry Carr. Considering that the adventures are totally British in inspiration, it is criminal that the book has not been a British edition.

During 1970 the circulation of New Worlds had continued to fall and the magazine finally collapsed. Negotiations however were underway with Berkeley Books of New York and England’s Sphere Books to produce a paperback original—New Worlds Quarterly. The first name appearing on the table of contents was Keith Roberts, Men, including ten of his most brilliant sf pieces. Roberts was certainly out to prove he was not finished.

He was writing at his best, and compared with the fine quality of his earlier works that shows the measure of his achievement. The God House in ‘Eye for the World’ Quarterly 1, sets the reader into a post-nuclear world where humanity has returned to primitive tribal communities. These have merged into the Corn Lord, and every year a maiden is pre-selected to the Lord. When the Lord falls the heroine of the piece, Mata, discovers the truth behind the God House and ultimately leads her own rebellion. Using the villains with a barbarian invasion and leads to calamitous results.

As far as Anita, is a young girl suddenly wakened up to the peril of the world. Like Rafe in ‘The Signal’. Roberts shows her coming of age with a young man named Blake. This is particularly evident in the second story about this future world, ‘The Beautiful One’. (New Worlds 6, Summer 1971) and an earlier tale also appeared in the January 1974 F & SF.

Taking advantage of New Worlds’ taste for the macabre, Roberts wrote in his typical style horror stories. ‘Monkey and Pru and Sal’ (New Worlds Quarterly 2, Autumn 1971) is a mysterious yet entertaining tale. ‘The Ice Witch’ (New Worlds 4, Winter 1970) appeared under his Bevan alias, and is a mysterious mixture of fantasy and reality. His major appearance however was in that same volume with ‘The Train Kings’.

Roberts’ stories are full of vivid images; the sentient standing stone, the flowery ground and the crow mobile of ‘Manscarrer’, the sentient car ‘The Scarlet Lady’, the mighty machines of ‘The Machine’ and ‘Mephisticon’ in ‘The Ice-Ships Incursion’.

Now he conjures up scenes of huge combine harvesters, necessary to reap the vast grain fields of the future needed to feed the massive population. These machines trundle along at just over six miles an hour cutting a swath nearly three feet wide. They are complete in themselves, with living quarters, restaurants, shops and cinemas—a community in itself. complete with the tensions of any community. Several of these stories have been reworked by Roberts for his later book, The Gonga and the Impulse.

His collection, Machines and Men was dedicated to John Carnell. Ironically, the last New Worlds story, a collaboration with Robert E. Howard included a new Roberts story, ‘The Passing of the Dragons’, his first to be set on another planet. In this case Epsilon Cygni VI. The dragons are a native fauna, once covering the planet, now, following man’s plundering of the planet’s resources, reduced to a fanatical band, one a behemoth, try unsuccessfully to learn why the animals are dying. The ending, whilst cryptic, underlines the point. Roberts’ most recent story in New Worlds 9 is ‘The Ministry of Children’ and is without doubt his most compelling work. Based on a story disinterested by the case of the Southampton schoolgirl a couple of years ago who committed suicide rather than face continual bullying, Roberts set out to write a vivid account of a future where the dodo children of the future, the masters and children live in fear of their very lives. With this terrifying story Roberts has produced a masterpiece, one that has appeared once and for all that he is one of the major talents writing in British science fiction today.

The heritage of science fiction remains firmly set in the literary world. Roberts now has a great future ahead of him. One can only hope that the future prospect there is for the sf readers of this country from an author who can produce masterpiece pieces from a collected volume. A literary career just over ten years old. One can only guess at the wonders the next ten should bring...
‘The Worlds that Were’ originally appeared in the May 1966 issue of the American magazine ‘Worlds of Tomorrow’. The editor at that time, Frederik Pohl, commissioned Keith Roberts to write a story around an illustration which was to appear on the cover. As it happened, the artwork was extraordinarily bad and discouraged the author from accepting a similar commission a second time, nevertheless the story turned out to be surprisingly good. Since its first publication the story has eluded anthologists and editors alike but Keith Roberts has now prepared a revised and updated version especially for publication in ‘SFM’.
I want you to see what I can see. I want you to see it very clearly.

It's the evening of an iron-grey day. The light is streaming out of the sky like dirty water leaving a dead void, upside-down and bottomless. From the void a drizzle falls, endless and soaking. The drizzle has been going on all day. Not even enough to
call myself rain.

I'm standing in a little park. It'll be more than a quarter mile square, bounded on two sides by railed and grooving lines of trees, on the others by walls of dull brick with buttresses set at ten foot intervals all the way along. Above the farther wall, hump
together under their glittering lines of roof. Paint-peeling, brown and eye-sickley, shrews-pumping, outside/inside-crevice, a dust
of rusty little houses, tall and me-souled-shouldered, wet-footed. Bath
tubs hang on lavatory walls, bills rust in their shelves among heaps of coal, seats and underwear hang depersonified as they
were the day's fall of water and smuts. I can't see it all from where I stand.

Out not at all. But I know it here.

Behind me the grass bolts up against the side wall of a foundry.
The brickwork has been extended with corrugated iron; the doors hang any old way, fagging and patch, patting, patting. The weathered paint on them has the brown-maroon pastel color of dried blood, except where water runs across the iron.
The wet streaks show black. A little asphalt path stretches diagonally across the park. At each end of it, patterns of posts are set in the way to keep weasels from riding their bikes through. I start to walk around the park, and once I've gone beyond the hedges, slide the lights of cars. There's a chemist's shop with lights on, a hoarding with a half-seen poster for Guinness.

I reach the railing and turn back. There's a little playground in one corner of the park. The swings and iron roundabouts are set in squares of concrete, just right for the kids to crawl on. They're heads open on. There's a slide with a ladder at the high end. Under the swings are wet kites. Worms tie-love-knots in the grass.

*I GET MY KEY OUT, PUSH IT IN THE LOCK AND TURN. HOUSES LIKE MINE DON'T HAVE HANDLES ON THEIR DOORS. I SHOVE THE DOOR, SQUATTING A BIT IN READINESS, AND WALK INTO THE PARK.*

Twice it all can manage. Once along the path, once back. I try to take it all in; the sooty-darker of tree foliage, the way it hangs there quiet and deep against the sky, the shadow-draining
through it throwing rail shadow on the pavements, the wet drift and movement of the air. I can see now in my mind's eye miles of houses and streets crowding in round the little park. The pubs and shuttered shops, the closed-down factories, gardeners, and druggists and drapers, the bedraggled tops
and tip-trims for tyres and batteries and BMC cars and toilets. I feel I'm now

right up to chocking. I can't take any more. The last fifty yards is home.

I get my key out, push it in the lock and turn. Houses like mine don't have handles on their doors. I shove the door, squating a bit in readiness, and walk into the Sahara.

I stand quite still, soaking in sensations. The smells first; an ancient sweetness and dryness, the mummy-wind of breath coming in over baking miles of sand, the nearer deep-green evanescence of water. It's evening. Way off the sun is dropping over the rim of the horizon. The shadows it throws are moving
and miles long. Ahead of me is an oasis. Firelight glimmers through the trunks of trees; their tall fronds hang still, reflecting in the quiet mirror of a pool. Round the edges the grass breaks out into the parallel of the sand like mould across bread. There are purple and black tents and canes. Of the camel-behdes; a long, opulent noise. Another rest, restless and there is the momentary choking of a harness bell.

I reach the fire and sit down. The people bring me food. Their faces are shadowy in the dusk. The sun vanishes in a silent flash of power and the stars leap into being winking and shimmering. I pull my robe around me. Desert nights are cold; in the morning there'll be a skim of ice on the water pots. The stars seem to crowd in with their ancient magic names; Rigil, Hertogens, Aldubaran. I don't know which is which. I don't much care. I get it to my rest well content. Tonight I've lived with the Bedouins; tomorrow I'll be living in Neo's golden house in Rome.

The factorywhose wakes me. The desert outlasts it a little time.

I work in the factory, when I can remember to work at all. I'm in the clicking shop. It's a good life. Steady. They play us music twice a day to keep us cheerful. Pretty good, they do. My brother Dicky though he doesn't work. Well, not like that at
least. Dicky's... different. So I suppose I can't blame this Talent. If we don't like a thing we change it. We don't like.

Not much.

Sometimes I think if we tried we could change the whole damn world. But we never have. We're happy. It's a world, if it's anything the same, though. They're not, not any more. But I'd like to tell you about the old times. How it used to be. I don't know how we got to be or how we got the Talent, but it was a wonderful thing. I often wouldn't know till it was in the home door where I was going to be, what world Dicky had made inside the walls while I was away at work. I stepped into South America, the long lagoons, and you can just picture the crazy buildings with stone combs instead of roofs and priests dressed all in feathers and jackets met the conquistadores, and helped them crack the rubies up with hammer to see if they were real, and brought home skits of knotted string and quills of gold. Other times I was in Tangaid and Petra and Ur of the Chaldeans and Tyrens of the Great Walls and Khuosas when the pirates burned it down, and Hum-Hussid when each Helen was too thick not to tell you half the things I saw.

That was why I used to go out walking. Autumn was best, with the street lamps dingy and yellow, and the puddles everywhere and the rain pouring down on our little Midland town, on the libraries and cattle market gardens and gasworks. I'd stand outside fried fish shops and look in at the people crowded through smoking and feeling their hands and watching the flybrown walls and dirty electric fans and mirrors covered with grease spots and the little clocks set in the yellow imitation marble above the pans and the staring fat, which had always stopped twenty years ago and nobody bothered to mend. I'd think about all the little people trapped in iron
shafts of mud and I'd laugh to think I could get away and they couldn't. Then I'd run home gogging and be in Athens or Baalbek or the Valley of the Tombs, and the water was there but the door was closed. But I was only a kid then, I suppose.

Daytimes I'd work in the factory, in the noise of wheels and shanks and the whanger and the chopping up of the new leather, with the loudspeakers tearing music into shriaplay and splitting it at my ears. When I was finished I'd hurry down past the stumps that was never cut and the place that sold cutmeat Fridays and Mondays and the pub where the landlord kept him with his 'Oz and his What's New and his Play-Ground

Mill Road Park they called our little bit of grass, because the road ran alongside it and left the pressure build up till I couldn't take any more and I had to run home and blow all the squarer, away in one big filthy splurge of colour. Nobody else ever came near it after dark.

But I was all the time just passing under the lamps, walk-

ing with her head down in the rain and scuffing at the path with her shoes. She hadn't shoes until then, in fact she hadn't shoes till then, and in front of her and behind me. Was mad till I realised two people walking in a park are loneliness than one. Then it didn't matter any more that she was alone. In fact, it made it easier.

I got to the gate and went back like I always did and it was funny she did exactly the same way we met in the middle of the park and I saw her face. And now it's going to be difficult to say what she was like. I've read a lot of books, Dicky and me both used to read them to find fresh spice to make, but every time I saw a description of a girl or woman I couldn't help feeling dismally. I know if I was just sort of to run into her in the street she'd look more like everybody else. Everybody looks like everybody else when you really think about it, in spite of what all the writers say. Andy was different. I mean really different.

If you ever only see somebody once or twice in your life, somebody that's so different you can't ever forget them afterwards. Only thing was there wasn't anything so different about her face. I mean, you wouldn't call her beautiful. She had big eyes, big dark brown eyes with black lines to the edges that weren't just just tracing on with some sort of Salvador Dali stuff, with big brown eyes. I think it was her profile that got me, as she went by.

I've just realised that I can tell you what that was like because I've seen it before and you have. Tutankhamen's death mask; the first one, the golden mask where all the coffins right. I had one in poor old ambulance, the long, long jaw and the delicate little noise making a sort of panzine fuss pushing under with the great striped headress. That was what Andy was like.

I don't mean catlike. Everybody says a girl that's anywhere near Tutankhamen's got to have catlike eyes. Andy didn't mean a thing and it makes me wild because it gives half of 'em the idea of behaving like a pack of cats and that doesn't do anybody any good. Andy's face was... well-designed, is all I can say. Like the mask, or the bonnet of an XKEI or the head of a soldier. If you saw her face it was like the shape of a statue and the motor and the bound, you'd see what I mean. A sort of... something that doesn't know anything going on for ever. I remember thinking as she went by, I've seen a woman. A woman just gone past. That was how she affected me. You see so many of them.

I watched her going out of the park. She was wearing a dirty old checked dress, the shoshim was too wet for her to wear so far and her skirt because you could see the back of her knees. She had fringed legs, sort of strong-looking, the mustache at the back flat. Flat, having a curve to that kind of little, low, dark-red shoes that were soaked with water. Her face was wet from the cold. The weather was so cold and it looked like that in the rain with her feet wet and in a dirty old mac, she looked much more, more serious than if she'd been sitting on some throne or other with peacock round her feet, swelling pearls and mustache that melted in wine.

*I SHOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN HER HOME, CRIMINIZED HER INSTEAD. BUT I HAD A TRIVIAL THEORY OF HISTOR. I'D GOT IT WORKED OUT THERE'D BE TROUBLE BUT SHE SAID SHE DIDN'T CARE.*

That sound cry and it's the way it was, I can't put it down any other way because if I did it wouldn't be right. I just felt about her in a different way than I'd felt about anybody else. I could still see her face, the whole of it. Her eyes and the eyes watching out from under a cloud of white hair. I felt I could have, well, live with her and not worrying about her pull the chain. I went back to Rome. Dicky was having one hell of a ball.

After that things started after pretty fast, mainly because Andy was always in the habit of demanding that I have one more image of her I'd get down. There was
I walked down the stairs, the ordinary stairs now, grayly and grubby painted, and out of the house. I left the door swinging behind me. Andy was beside me. Her hand was tucked in my arm and my hand rested on her back, and I didn’t know what to do or say. The streetlights were glowing and the rain was still coming down and the factories and all the city lights were reflecting it. I didn’t mind that. There was the park and the houses went on for miles.

Finally, I drove around to an empty car some kid or other had thrown down and I went bonging and clanking away between the houses, trunking in the gutter till it stopped, hugging fairly close to the wall. Andy said, "I used to have a dog once. People like us shouldn’t see anybody else. So I can’t see you any more. It’s not good for you. You know what I mean?"

I said, "You belong in the park. Then I won’t see you again. People like us shouldn’t ever see anybody again."

I was thinking about Andy glistening on the asphalt walk and the rusty swings and the foundry wall made of rusting metal, and all that stuff. Andy had been standing in the rain and I had walked and I kept my head down because I’d never felt so bad in my life. It was sort of like being crucified.

I’d gone twenty years before she called me. Hot wires tightened through my body. They had a tricky look about them. There was a look back because I didn’t trust what I would do afterwards. If I turned round I should have to go back with her again and then the rain was coming down so I just drove on. Andy had been killed. You could get killed every mixing up you’re in a mess. And you never knew when you’d see your last raindrop. I went up anyway because the rain and dark vanished like somebody had turned a switch and a wonderful golden-pink light flashed like confetti. I shaded my face. The light softened after a moment and steadied and when I could see I again I couldn’t believe what I was seeing. I was standing at the head of a grassy valley and all the grass was golden, and as far as I could see there were other valleys all the way to the top of the ridge. There was a crowned with a castle, rosy and faint like the ghost of a flower, and banners of scarlet and saffron-white rolled and thundered over the green slopes with horns and people stirring in bright flume-coloured clothes; and ladies and ladies they looked like, and pages and minstrels with lyres.


I’d never seen anything like it. Dick was never had the slightest bit of anything like it. I turned back and all the colours rolled into a tight saw. I did, as the saying goes, like the flapping of a wine-red flag round Andy’s head as she sat there screaming. I didn’t know what to think and I certainly didn’t know what to do. I just drove on and I tucked the wheel and I thought I was hollow and warm, ‘Aien’, I said, ‘you are a bloody fool. What did you do?’

She put her hand in my arm again. Now I thought about it I realised nobody ever had done a thing like that before. She had to be killed. I kept on to her, and I was kind of her friend along, looking down at the ground then back up to me when she spoke. I thought, I’ll remember the words she used. I’ve had to make the sense of them to get up out of my head. This was something like what she said. I’ve got to know all the little hints and curiosities, through the windows to the people there. Think what the people think. They’re human beings. They’re ha’, they’re ha’!"

‘No,’ said Or. ‘I think I said, ‘No, I don’t think’.

‘They’re dreaming, all of them. Gosh, dreaming so hard you can see. They’re dreaming, they’re dreaming. They’re all crying like webbling currents in the air. The whole town dreams. Just think of the 10 years of dreaming every twelve months. Everybody dreams in this town. What’s it all...? How do you think they stay alive?’"

‘But...’

‘Look close,’ she said. ‘Good heavens above, kings and ghosts and white squalls and mermaids! Such a flapping about. See the one. I thought it was just a sort of place for his master. Can’t you hear him bark? And there’s barber just right after that. And old Stefan in the corner there, with grey woolenies and a head. And...’

‘And I said, ‘I’ve got to get back. My brother...’

She stopped and did a sort of little skip on the path. ‘Your brother. Your brother, you must get back to your brother. Are you all that sure? Perhaps he is your Id. You know, all dark and selling and getting up the most I didn’t like that. But you know the more I thought about it the more I wasn’t sure whether she was right."

She was still laughing at me. ‘You thought him up as well,’ she said. ‘You’ll find she isn’t there any more. You’ve just got a little...’

That got me mad. I was really upset, I could tell you. ‘Don’t!’ I said. ‘That’s the last time. We get it out from under him, bro’! That’s the last time."

The Time was pulsing like the gut of a snake, trying to flick us out of its Dimension. I hung on and landed on the tattered liner outside and let the car fall. The car was still swinging but it was easier to hold it now he was gone. I didn’t think he was right that I had to do it... well, I wasn’t exactly sure for him some time. About twenty years. I used to leave him bread and milk outside the door but he never took it and I thought he didn’t like it and I couldn’t seem to touch it."

I looked at Andy still swallowing and trying to get her breath. Then I went in. I knew he wouldn’t stop now, not on his own. I had to stop him because of it. He didn’t take long, he wasn’t... I couldn’t... I didn’t... I thought... I was... I thought... I was..."

She was still swallowing and trying to get her breath.

I stood up, the vista had changed. Above me was a dark-crimson sky dominated by Stefan’s light. I ground and held my head. I worked my brother thoroughly into the ground. I didn’t want to stay and I wouldn’t stay. I wouldn’t. I stood up, stared round for Andy.

I used to think it would get it but it didn’t. I was... I didn’t... I had to... I hadn’t... I didn’t... I had to... I didn’t... I had to... I didn’t... I hadn’t... I didn’t... I couldn’t...
That Frozen Feeling

Ice and Iron by William Tucker, Gollancz £2.50
Winter's Children by Michael Convy, Gollancz £2.30
The Winter by Patrick Dougherty, Gollancz £2.50

Of the many catastrophes which of authors have visited upon our long-suffering planet, the prospect of another Ice Age is proving to be altogether the most compelling.

There are any number of stories on this theme, ranging from Arthur C. Clarke's 'The Forgotten Enemy', through the semi-comey of the author's 'History Lesson', to The Ice Schooner by H.G. Wells. The present day is the most modern rendering of the idea. Taking Ice and Iron first, we plunge straight into the future. In the year 1964, in America at least, the glaciers are on the march once again. The hero of this tale is a team charged with delivering the only one piece of a region of Saskatchewan, as the advancing ice rolls mercilessly south.

By an odd coincidence I received a fan-magazine from Susan Wood Glickman on the day I read Ice and Iron for the first time. Susan has recently moved to Regina, capital of Saskatchewam and anecdotally her manuscript bears the description of the province where Tucker's action takes place.

Already it is a decidedly cold part of the world from her account, and for me this adds to the near-futuristic atmosphere of the encroaching ice-shaft preparing to overwhelm the desert city, one hundred years from now.

The comforting thought remained, however, that one had always pointed out that Ice Ages just don't happen that quickly. Children were apprised of the 'Ice Age' for Greenland, and who knows anything and everything to keep the story moving for the required number of pages.

Even his most devoted admirer could hardly discern the thread of narrative in the rather heavy-handed dialogue, or the way, rather, Convy groups with a begin group of people living in an old church tower in what is now called a 'lightning'.

Winter's Children makes a striking contrast, Michael Convey is an entering newcomer to the sf scene and he has already turned out a number of ghosted and variously themed tales. He seems to regard himself, perhaps unfairly, as rather a 'kitchen sink' writer. The style is a bit highfalutin', yet it shows in anything and everything to keep the story moving for the required number of pages.

Even his most devoted admirer could hardly discern the thread of narrative in the rather heavy-handed dialogue, or the way, rather, Convy groups with a begin group of people living in an old church tower in what is now called a 'lightning'.

A romance appears delightfully with each chapter; various members of the cast hysteric or do silly things—fall down holes, get drunk and become involved with flesh-workers, etc. With a strong and energetic, Longman, another, ill-described character who apparently attracts two of the writers. The writer knows about his 'lightening' and to talk on the set of a film in preparation. They are cardboard-cutouts, jutting vaguely through hoops held up by the author.

After the metamorphoses have been played out in the tower, additional items of interest are the shock of new life in the old church and a Dumb Companion-Protector. Then the Tricky Newspaperman. And then—yes, you guessed, teleportic ice-creatures controlled by an Evil Man who wishes to destroy them all! He has a black eye and there are some effects of writing, but never for more than a few moments can the book be taken seriously. It's such a lach in some of the worst-written and no book in the book ever seems to observe a sensibly, constructive thought to help them get out of their predicament.

If Michael Convey were a little more pre-enlightened he could almost compete in the same league as JG Ballard's various novels of world disaster. But he fails between two stools; neither a fast-moving, purposeful adventure, nor a philosophically ambitious work of some intellectual content.

If this is kitchen-sink writing, then the ending consists of no more than a hurried straightening of some of the more preposterous and obvious mistakes. After all their trials and tribulations the cast finally decide to leave the snow behind and go somewhere else. And they do, and that's the end.

Winter's Children says nothing interesting about ice, but it is a very engaging and entertaining telepic-ice-moles. Let this one pass unless you really are a completist.

**In response to much criticism from the fans, Wilson Tucker has rewritten the ending of Ice and Iron for the paperback edition.

I suppose we shall never know how Brian Aldiss, and in the same time, I cannot see how it could possibly be published as anything else. Pulled to a definition, I might say that he is a hard, professional writer who always has stories in a present day or future context emerging from the flesh-workers/sillyness of the present. Arguments about what is and what isn't tedious and futile, in my opinion, and it would be hard to get involved here; my point is that he has no obvious forerunners in the genre, but seems to follow a tradition which until now—until RA Lafferty—has not joined with sf. I guess that makes him an anomaly.

In his more recent work, Lafferty has moved towards a rather hermetic approach to his storytelling, which has tended to diminish his accessibility. In the twenty-one stories contained in this substantial book (first published in the USA in 1970) the outlook is much more light-hearted (though there are a number of subplots throughout). Lafferty is able to describe the stories without losing their unique flavour; but perhaps a snob story from one of them can do that, and read with many pitfalls. Now, in varying stages of middle age, rather uncomfortable and por- perous; but, for the most part, they seem to have had free while they struggled, and they would not be the same without their eccentrics. None of these localities is a necessary evil. —[* Harper and Row are to publish an American edition.*]

Nine Hundred Grandmothers by RA Lafferty

Goldjohn, 246pp, £3.50
Reviewed by Malcolm Edwards

It is difficult to be indifferent towards Lafferty's work: either you like it, or you can't finish it. It's as if he were deliberately hermetic, a really sophisticated way of not being properly labelled science fiction, although it is, in a sense, the same time, I cannot see how it could possibly be published as anything else. Pulled to a definition, I might say that he is a hard, professional writer who always has stories in a present day or future context emerging from the flesh-workers/sillyness of the present. Arguments about what is and what isn't tedious and futile, in my opinion, and it would be hard to get involved here; my point is that he has no obvious forerunners in the genre, but seems to follow a tradition which until now—until RA Lafferty—has not joined with sf. I guess that makes him an anomaly.

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Reviewed by Malcolm Edwards
CONDUCTED BY THOMAS SHERIDAN

Readers' questions on any aspect of science fiction are dealt with in this regular feature by Thomas Sheridan, who is internationally known as one of the foremost experts on the medium. Address your questions to THE QUOBY, 'Science Fiction Monthly', New English Library Ltd, Barnard's Inn, Holborn, London EC1N 2JR. They will be answered as soon as possible.

Bester's Best?

Do I have any chance of getting a copy of Alfred Bester's 'The Star Maker' nowadays? I've also searched in vain for 'Nightmare' and 'Gone' by Philip Jose Farmer. Tony Roberts, Pontevedra, Yorks.

Bester's answer was first published in The Science Fiction Book Club series (No. 31). It also included in An All-Butter Omnibus (Sidgwick 1967), when it was first called The Pergamon Press. In a book entitled The Best (Garnstone 1974), giving their views on various examples of modern excellence, two very well known authors, Peter Cavendish and Leonard Ross, voted The Stars My Destination their Seventh Best book. They found it 'exceedingly nonsensical' with an 'immensely complicated plot and a moral—several in fact.' In one scene the hero, Tiffani, says, 'I got a bad break up the story.' Analysing it in The Search for Wonder (Advent 1969),zcritic Don E Israeli claimed: 'Tiffani's work is an extraordinary piece of work out of joint.'

In his autobiography, The Wealden Days (Weidenfeld 1975), Bester reveals that he got the idea for his second novel based on the techniques employed in a disabled spaceship after reading an article about shipwrecked sailors in the National Geographic. He started to write it in a hotel in Surrey before returning to England by plane on his way to Rome, where he finished the novel and then shot in Spain. In an early draft the character Tiffani was completely false. Rockerary-writer Willy Ley helped him with the third draft.

Nightmares and Dreamscapes is a collection of a number of his short stories, some no more than vignettes, that clearly demonstrate his skill and theme. It was first published by Bantam, New York, in 1961, appeared here as a Corin paperback in 1968, and later was done in the Electricity supply these books in one edition of 2500.

CONTRASTING CLASSICS

It was a blow to my ego to hear for the first time of A Voyage to Arcturus, by David Lindsay, first published in 1905, in an allegorical fantasy which tells of a journey of space to the outer regions of our solar system. The life-forms are encountered. But it's no advertisement. It's no simple, straightforward, metaphorical, metaphysical exercise over-trimmed in this form. But Bester's style has influenced many of the later writers such as Brian W Aldiss and Robert A Heinlein, whose books you have published here as far as I can discover, none have done so much to be superior to it. Only Earth Abides...'

MISSING PERSON

I am interested in a short story about an admiral of Colderidge's poem Kubla Khan who goes back in time to stop the "visitor from another planet" only to be killed by the survivor himself. Can you help?

KC 1X. Fillingham, Kent

The only story I recall which fits this description was, in fact, called The Poem From Forlorn. The author was Raymond F Jones and it appeared in Amazing, August 1957, being included in A Treasury of Science Fiction, edited by Groff Conklin (Crown, New York, 1949).

KIRK'S DUEL

Is there a connection between the Star Trek episode Arena, by Gene L Coon, and the short story of the same title by Frederic Brown?

BE 36 Windmill Crescent, Barnet

The episode, in which Captain Kirk engaged in a duel to the death with a French aristocrat, was written by the same author, who first published in Amazing for June 1944 and in Brown's pulp collection Honeymoon in Fall (Ballantine 1959).

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SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY

To John Campbell as my god, and that’s why I took the whole idea of a memorial so very, very seriously. My real conclusion was not that the stories were less than good (though, I stand by what I said) but that the whole idea of a memorial was suspect, something impossible to be done properly because Astounding had become more than a magazine, it was an attitude of mind that once gone, could never be recaptured. As I said, it’s impossible to go back.’

That’s not quite true. To SF readers who are interested I’d like to recommend a book entitled Requiem for Astounding. Published in 1961, it recaptures better than anything else those exciting years when John Campbell was changing the world. My review wasn’t intended as a ‘killed’ and certainly wasn’t intended to be read (as ‘more than nine years ago’) I’ve learned a lot more about editing. My apologies if it caused offence.

Peter Weston (Edingtion, Birmingham)

To Peter Weston

Just see your article in SFM Vol 2 No 9 whilst on my way through the UK to Colombo. Thanks for the nice remarks.

I’d like to point out, however, that Bob Heinlein wasn’t the first to suggest the lunar launch. I worked out its basic characteristics in a JBS paper, Electromagnetic Launching as a Major Contribution to Space-flight (1959) and used it in Islands in the Sky (1954).

And I don’t claim to have invented the communications satellite. I merely cough modestly and let the facts speak for themselves.

Arthur C Clarke (London N22)

Ed: Peter Weston prepared a footnote to this effect to accompany the article but unfortunately reproduction difficulties necessitated its removal. I apologise to Mr Clarke and SFM readers for this occurrence.

I am a newcomer to the field of SF and I have only recently come across your magazine. I wondered if I could use your letters column to appeal for penpals of about my own age (16), male or female. I enjoy reading SF and I am also interested in writing. I am due to have completed a short story and a novella and am sending them off to various publishers. Also I have some short stories, including the following, which I hope you will publish:

Tim Gillott (8 Harford Road, Sheffield, S6 0BB)

Ed: Please write direct to Tim and not via the editorial office.
They seized one of their own number out of the crowd, slung him over the cooking spit and wrapped him around it flexibly, binding his feet and head together. One Clayman stuck long, thin clay pipes into the victim’s mouth, nostrils and rectum. Another kindled a fire beneath the spit. A third began cranking the handle to turn it. Others slapped wet clay onto the victim’s body.

ON COOKING
THE FIRST HERO
IN SPRING

BY IAN WATSON

Now even I, a mere pilot, and no linguist or social scientist, very soon realised that if the noises they were making were speech, it was a very queer form of it. All the time, that same slopbery glutinous bark; it never varied! After five minutes of it Rhoda switched her squawk box off in disgust. A language composed of one single word? Preposterous.

Yet as we wandered round their village, it was impossible to avoid the impression of civilization. Cone and cupola clay huts formed a perfect double circle around a central plaza dominated by a large hearth, with a roasting spit. The one break in this circle led out along a straight avenue lined by rows of circular clay statues (seemingly of Clayfolk bending over to touch their toes) disappearing into the mists. And the cooking spit itself—made from stalactites bound together by strong fibres! I was amazed at how they managed to fashion such a piece of equipment on this soft, wet world, in the absence of metals or firm wood or even apparently of hard bones. No charred ribs or femurs lay near the hearth, and their own floppy, rubbery bodies seemed to have nothing stiffer than gristle in them. There was, too, their miraculous mastery of fire, on a world visibly bereft of flints or striking stones, without two dry sticks to rub together!

‘If I hear that word once more!’ growled Rhoda, as the Clayfolk gestured at their spit, their pots, the roots and fungi and giant snails cooking in them, and named them all urgently for us, all with the same name . . .

‘One word contains all words,’ remarked Lobang mystically. ‘All words dissolve into one.’

Naturally he was happy that we were going to have to rely on his trance technique for a cultural pattern, rather than on Rhoda’s squawk box; that is, her GCSU (General Culture Structures Unit)—which doesn’t translate anything as such, but sets up algebraic maps based on whatever communication system inhabitants use, whether sounds, or light patterns as with the Giant Squids of the Sigma Drac-onis ocean-world, or gestures as with the Mutes of the thunderous Aldebanar planet.

‘What’s that mean?’ she grumbled.

‘Well, if you repeat the same word over and over enough times, you start hearing different words don’t you? Maybe these folk actually hear a whole set of different words? But there’s consensus on the meanings, because they’re linked in some way, empathy, telepathy? It’s an idea.’

‘A very foggy one!’
'Foggly place,' retorted Lob.  
'Their gestures,' I suggested diplomatically. 'Like Aldaract, maybe? They're continually pointing and fingering.'  
Rhoda shook her head dismissively.  
'They point at the same object with any number of fingers—or none at all. I've been watching, it's all random.'  
'Then I shall prepare my mind for the trance,' Lob concluded glumly. 'My privilege, when your methods fail. In my contract, no? We don't have long here. These beings shall become phantasms and projections of my own mind. I shall become mad and incorporate them.'  
Rhoda had little time to feel chagrined, though, for it was just then that the landscape began to change around us . . .

Well, we weren't exactly taken by surprise! In orbit, we'd spent long enough surveying the respective motions of star, gasgiant, and moon, to foresee some pretty weird days for the latter so far as 'daylight' went.

The gasgiant itself, a dazzling blue, had only failed by a few percent mass to become a second partner star to the bright orange primary. The giant moon was perched precariously just a few thousand miles beyond the Roche limit, that should have broken it into a billion pieces and spread it out like Saturn's rings had it been any closer. Yet it was unbroken by tidal forces. Every hundred years or so the further planet of this system rushed in on a cometary ellipse that took it inside the gasgiant's orbit and out again—whipping the moon like a top, just enough to compensate for the braking effect.

Vegetation underwent a rapid change. Fungi wilted and dissolved. Ferns we hadn't seen before unfurled, fast as a time-lapse movie. Dragonflies hatched and took wing. Worms writhed out of the mud and leapt to catch them in tiny piranha mouths.

We foresaw phases of orange sunlight, phases of blue planetlight, phases of bright purple combinedlight, and finally nights black as pitch whenever the moon faced neither luminary. Phases could be prolonged, annulled, repeated, however, in a quasi-random tic-tac-toe fashion, on account of the way the moon both spun, and tumbled, at once. An overall pattern only really emerged in terms of decades according to our computer's calculations. That life had arisen, and persisted, on such a world seemed fairly remarkable; that it was apparently intelligent and astonishingly useful. Yet slave-drones had sent back a film's footage of the Clayfolk village (easily spottable by the infra-red from the heat of the fires). We had to accept their existence, illegal as it was! Naturally, they couldn't have any real understanding of the true circumstances of their world, astronomically, buried away beneath that persistent cloud veil. Things must seem highly mutable to them. 'Seasons' and 'years' would be meaningless terms. Even 'days' must be highly flexible and unpredictable. Rhoda expected a novel and interesting language to emerge to cope with this confusion (but never, poor lady, a language of one word!).

So, as I say, the landscape shifted.

From the blue planetlight phase, to the bright purple of sun and gasgiant in the sky together; and if you think of purple as a dark colour, think again. It positively ached at us, till we had to lower the shades in our helmets.

This light change wrought new shapes and contours in the landscape, and erased the old. The blurred shadows we cast now were twin ones; yet each separate shadow seemed to project a cone of light instead of letting light. Red and blue splotches accompanied us that seemed somehow more genuine than the prevalent violet purple.

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The Clayfolk speeded up too, to scoop these worms into pots, all the while chattering animatedly, our by now least favourite word.

'My God,' groaned Rhoda, 'it might as well be a different world now, just look at it! And still they go on saying: "That's", "That's", "That's", to it.' She mimicked the Clayfolk 'word' venomously, giving it an interpretation that it may (or may not) have had.

'In sameness, is difference,' chuckled Lobsang.

The Clayfolk took no more interest in us now. We might as well have been invisible, though none of them actually collided with us, I noticed.

'Enough for one day,' Rhoda said decisively. 'Let's look round the village separately, then get some sleep. Try your luck tomorrow, Lob.'

'Day?' chuckled Lob later, as we made our way back to the ship together, through worms and ferns and dragonflies, accompanied by our brighter, more real double shadows, or 'seasons'? Tomorrow, or next year?
Lobsang was an adept in the Tibetan chid ritual, where the celebrant offers himself up body and soul as a banquet for alien demons and imagines himself devoured by them, and a great quake, the trembling of whose limbs caused the very world-paradise-worlds of the Bardo Thidol, The Book of the Dead. So very remote from earthly reality, Lobsang could shortcut time and mind to the core of things and beyond the delusions that resisted Rhoda's science; seeing all forms of being from his Tibetan heights, as mere fluxes in the same universal current. Lobsang knew, however, that it was a risky business; he feared it, fearlessly, with peace of mind. The Tibetan chid banquet was a more grueling, gruesome business than this cooking up of fluxes, a winter's worth of nightly bowel movements, and one's bowels being torn out, one's veins sucked dry, the marrow spunned from one's bones by demons! To experience all this—and be expected to literally get away with it, yet observe all it with perfect composure... Lobsang was well prepared psychologically.

So, when the Clayfolk flocked back to the village to resume their peaceful, softly-flowing tasks, Lobsang went out there with us, right to the patch of ground before the hearth, and drew an arc. Here, in our world, the gods fly in aerol spraycan—he called the shape a kylikhor in his native Tibetan. Entering this magic diagram, he squatted down cross-legged.

The Clayfolk flowed around the lines of the kylikhor touching gently, murmuring that word of theirs. Lobsang began chanting to himself in Tibetan, a monotonous single song refrain.

"Zab-chhi shi-hito gong-rang-dol lay-ber-doi-tho chen-chi-choi-ber-doi ngod-zhu-so..." he sang, with superlative control, his eyes staring wide behind his faceplate, not seeing us at all though we knew he would return briefly, between waves of peaks of the trance, to report the situation. The shapes flow, the colours change, the world walks backwards..." sang Lobsang after a while in English, starting at right.

Yet we are thinking beings. We make, we build. Yet this world flows to and fro in madness. All we can say is that a world has been built, to bring us comfort, since it will be built no longer. A hand, a shadow, a colour. We must put a thing into itself and see how it fits. Then it is, and other things are built. Yet we are all too happy to be living in a shape of our own agreement. The putting of oneself onto oneself is the Making, at the dawn...

"That's the way the pebbles are tortured." We feel astonished by our agreement, Lobsang chanted on.

The sheer possibility of agreement on anything. But should anything else get in the way of our agreement? Shall we make gods? Is that what this is, this putting of oneself into oneself? No, it is the prevention of a god. And in the same way one might say that one's self is the image of the dead—purely subjective demons of the mind, that couldn't ever trap the man who realised this. Quite an attraction: to try and be a self, or to fall a self, or to be made a self... if they sacrifice to the dawn every day like this!

"Sacrifice? Oh, they are doing something, certainly, the demons are."

What are those pipes for? she whimpered. "In his face and his head."

"Sound exploring as they heat him up," I said, over the practical engineer. "Let the hot air manage. Out to sound tough, but easily appalled, to tell the truth."

They had already spread the slab, slopping on fresh clay as the first coat hardened.

And we watched what had once been a living alien being transform itself into something else. Sometimes more alien and hideous—something we, in our rashness, had gibbly classified among 'works of art' not so long ago. We had once been pacified by the pain of the poor, tortured being inside that clay case ceased to be alive, I do not know. I only hoped it was so, but I feared not, given the first elements of the situation. When Lobsang had now saw those pipes also to be. At least we were spared, by the ship's solid hull, from hearing the being's screams.

The cooking went on for half an hour, till the clay slab was completed to their satisfaction; then they doused the fire, and let the thing cool.

When it had cooled enough, a triumphal procession of the Clayfolk spread out across the Road of Statues.

I suppose we have a history of human sacrifice ourselves, muttering Rhoda as she pulled tight in a bright bulb burnt at stakes... I guess if dawn is the only fixed point in their world it's only predictable they'd worship it perfectly.

"Worship?" You do leas to conclude, Rhoda.

"Do you have a better explanation? It certainly isn't a fertility rite, surely?"

"I shall apply my fertile imagination to what it is. Lamas may slip in, where squawk boxes fear to tread, eh?"

Which was perfectly true. As the human race rapidly found out in its explorations among the stars, the alien beings may have a lot of shapes, not just one or two forms of consciousness. Two disciplines, the discipline of Rhoda's, couldn't necessarily always penetrate. Usually she did well enough—and Lobsang found his time taken up supervising the Clayfolk in his lab, as was his nature, knitting in a world of alien world views (being a trained ethnotheoretician, as well as a lamasist magician)—and only occasionally asked Lobsang what was in store for us in the greatness of the world beyond. What was in store for us in the greatness of the world beyond. But this time she had run into a stone wall right at the very start, with a vengeance: a stone wall with precisely one stone in it.

An intelligent species must use language of some sort to be classified intelligent! What are these, then? Automata? If this is just an illusion of culture out there? The pots. The huts. You say they're logical beings?

"I've known just what they are called logical beings, as logical personified. Rhoda. They're propositions, essences. They can't afford language here, it's too destructive."

These, too, are a logic. We seem like nothing to them, Rhoda. They are really perpetually reasserting itself in the midst of the ocean of the world!

They're zombies and ghouls. You'll let your imagination run riot this time, Lobsang.

"We need it's in imagination. It's because I have internalised them, envisioned them in my trance, that's why it's true. They have group sensitivity, you see. Empathy. That's the reason we can communicate with them so simply. We really have to communicate urgently, to stop it, you don't see? Only in this way can a name arise, of necessity, with which we can safely apply its truth to everything. But they can't name this world any other way, except by fitting themselves into their own shape; the shape of the world can only come to the world outside the universe at large. Only we never dare acknowledge it. What is a universe? I ask myself. One thing, by definition. 'A universe is all the stuff it's made of,'..." And I'll do it with you. All you can do is put the thing into itself and see that it fits. They've got the right idea. We must attend the next heaven...."

"Too tricky," warned Rhoda. "They may want to bake at this time."

Lobsang took his head.

"We're quite safe, we're invisible now. Only Clayfolk make heroes. Only they can fit into themselves. We failed."

So, despite Rhoda's qualms, we were present at the village hearth during the next dawn when the Clayfolk swarmed out of the room, to find a world where the sun was rising in the north-west, and gasifiant in the south-east. Amid purple mists and binary shadows we invisibly traversed, we waited. As we waited, the fire kindled, the clay slapped on by many fingers, the pipes stuck in his mouth and nostrils and his rectum. I held my breath and waited.

That cry of pain came again and again through the clay pipes stuck in the being's mouth, as he turned, and baked, inside the clay suit: and we heard that selfsame glottal slumbering sound that we had assailed our ears since we first set foot on the Clayworld.

"I name this reality, Pain," sang Lobsang. "We stand at the place where one world gives way to another. It is the compact of agreement. It affirms What-Is."

Then in a more conversational tone, jerking his thumb at the avenue of bent-over statues, he added: 'That isn't right at all if all the wrongs don't lead anywhere; it just leads.'

"A road to go some place?"

"No, a road to somewhere else. Rhoda? That's not a highway, it's a rule, a series. And its statues aren't statues, they're definitions. Each is a fitting-into-itself. But I don't advise we pursue the Clayfolk out along it, we mightn't find our way back so easy."

After a time the cry died away into a sight that might have been simply the natural passage of air through that thing on the corner. In the Clayworld it was the beginning of the word, and were repeating it over and over, gesturing at everything in their world.

"Admit it Lobsang, it's a nonsense interpretation," insisted Rhoda while I piloted us up through the clouds towards the clay. "Shocking! Shattering! Without all that, it's nothing. As though he was guilty of a crime. He only bowed his head and meditated.

"The system was around us once again, obeying sensible laws; and stars in their constellations and clusters; and the far smudges of galaxies. Ahead lay the mother ship; silver as a pocketknife, as a world's image a quarter, long slim tail terminating in the knob of the plasma drive, and wings spread to harvest the interstellar harvest."

Later, we classified the aberrant moon as UJ—Uninhabited by an Intelligent Species; dominant native life-form a human, without the man, instinctively programmed. By general consent Lobsang's version was vetoed. I think even Lobsang was happy to be overthrown on that score. And his was a science of the natural worlds, where his insights served us well enough, subsequently.

"I think it's time to tell him about the breakthrough with the fire beings of Acheron IV or the slime moulds of Denob VII..."

But it must have been an off-day for him, that time on the Clayworld. We could see he'd almost fainted, and... as Rhoda had hers. After all, she had been joint-first on the summit of Everest on Earth. And the universe was our natural eau-de-vie.
By Julie Davis

It's Kind to Bind!

If you're a regular reader of SFM you're probably having trouble keeping all your back issues neat and tidy. So why not buy a binder? You'll be able to order your copies together for easy reference and the hard-back purple binder with silver lettering will preserve a complete volume of SFM (six issues) for eternity.

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Rising Prices

We are sorry to announce that, as from this issue, the price of Science Fiction Monthly has increased by 40p. This is due to an unavoidable rise in paper and production costs, over which we have no control.

SF Master Series

Spring 1976 will see the launching of a new series of sf classics edited by Harry Harrison and Brian Aldiss and published by Hodder & Stoughton. The books in the SF Master series three will appear in hardcover and three in paperback. The hardcover titles are Memoirs of a Spacecowboy by Naomi Mitchison, with an introduction by Hilary Rubenstein, Martian Time-Slip by Philip K Dick, with an introduction by Algis Budrys, and The Jade of LI by Ward Moore, with an introduction by Kingsley Amis. The paperback titles are Mission of Gravity by Hal Clement, with an introduction by Robert Conquest; Other Worlds by Cynaro de Bergerac, with an introduction by Geoffrey Strachan; and The Paradox Men by Charles Harness, with an introduction by Brian Aldiss.

An Evening for James Blish

James Blish, author of A Case of Conscience, Black Easter and the 'Cities in Flight' series, died on 30 July 1975. He was a distinguished contributor to the development of science fiction both in this country and abroad. His work included poetry, music, ironic fantasies and horizons.

A memorial evening has been arranged for him at the Institute of Contemporary Arts on 19 February 1976 at 8 pm. Details of the programme will be published in the next issue of SFM.

DEATH RACE 2000 (see review below)

Star Trek Paraphernalia

The American publishers, Balantine Books, recently published a set of twelve Star Trek holograms of the starship Enterprise neatly packaged in a simulated leather wallet. Aficionados may be interested to learn that the ship has its own five bowling alley blueprints. The blueprints are available in America at a price of $5 plus 50 cents handling charge, from Ballantine Books, Box 505, 700 West 43rd Street, New York 21, N.Y. However, it is not yet known if this applies to anywhere outside the USA. Watch this page for further news of availability in England, or write to Ballantine and ask if they intend to publish over here.

The Roger Dean Book

As readers of The Artist in Science Fiction interview in SFM Vol 1 No 11 will know, Roger Dean is one of the most successful record-sleeve designers on the present music scene. He has produced over fifty album sleeves for various groups including Oasis, Paladin, Greenslade, Wizard, and Yes. When he was interviewed for SFM he was full of the plans for a book of his artwork and architectural designs and now, a judiciously selected book has finally appeared. It's simply called Views and is published by Dragon's Dream Ltd at £3.95; an illustrated review of the book will appear in SFM Vol 3 No 3.

Yet Another SF Study Group

If you're one of the people who were disappointed by the move which began in September, you may be interested to know of a twelve-week course beginning on Tuesday, 6 December which will be held at the main branch of the Addison Institute, in Addison Gardens, London, W12, and Mike Mitchell will be guiding the discussion. He plans to talk about the following of novels: Childhood's End by Arthur C Clarke; The Dark Tower by Ursula K Le Guin; Tiger! Tiger! by Alfred Bester; Dangerous Visions edited by Harlan Ellison; The Time Machine by HG Wells; and possibly Dune by Frank Herbert. Alchemists are invited to the course will be some discussion of four sf themes: Space, Time, Reality; and Robots.

Further information can be obtained from Mike Mitchell at his home; telephone 01-542 8003 after office hours.

Two New British SF Awards

Orbit Books, the science fiction side of Futura Publications, are introducing two annual awards. The British Science Fiction Award is open to all British publishers and is to be voted on by readers. The author of the best sf work of 1975 will be awarded £500. The Orbit Award is open to all unpublished works of book length (50,000 words minimum). Submissions must reach the judges by 31 January 1976. All manuscripts must be available for publication. The author of the manuscript considered the best original work of 1975 will receive £500 and the manuscript will be published by Orbit.

The panel of judges consists of Martin Amis, author, sf reviewer and assistant literary editor of The New Statesman; Philip Strick, lecturer in sf at London University's Polytechnic of Central London; and by now, will be very well-known to SFM readers. The Awards will be announced at the British sf convention at Easter. Manuscripts should be sent to: Orbit/SF Awards, Futura Publications, 110 Warner Road, Camberwell, London, SE5 7HQ. A stamped addressed envelope must be enclosed if the manuscript is to be returned.

Film Review

Death Race 2000 and The Paradise Murders

Reviewed by Robin McKie

Science fiction's steadily improving quality has rarely been reflected on the cinema screen where sf films are still seen as synonymous with horror movies. In many ways the film trade have been responsible for much of a maligned public's derision of science fiction and only recently has there been a desire to produce films of quality. Examples include Kubrick's 2001, Tarkovsky's Solaris and John Carpenter's Dark Star which had its first British screening at the 1974 Edinburgh Film Festival.

The festival's produced two premieres of new science fiction films, Death Race 2000 from the US and The Paradise Murders from Canada. Both films, through a world of difference lies between the respective products.

First the good news, Death Race 2000, a tale of multi-class society in a future where the people of America offer plenty of entertaining action and tightly satirises the growing ruthlessness of professions. The_ncer's story is quick and sharp as a quick needle to exploit the market created by Rollerball but director Paul Bartel, with his tongue firmly in cheek, has injected it with wit and comedy to greatly widen the film's initially limited scope.

Oppressed by a totalitarian regime of the world, the people of the United Provinces of America have only one entertainment left to them, the Annual Transcontinental Death Race. Five contestants set out in cars to cross the US from east to west. The winner is not the fastest but the driver who can keep all passengers alive. Any person on foot is an eligible target, with bodies and genitals scoring most points.

David Carradine gives a delightfully cool performance as the black-clad Frankenstein, hero of the crowds and favourite of the President, as he battles with his arch-enemy, Machine Gun Joe Viterbo, played with as much uncoth nastiness and venom as actor Sylvester Stallone can muster. The other contestants have equally ridiculous titles: Calamity Jane Kilty in her Stud Bull Cab; Mathilda the Hun in her racer The Buzz Bomb; and Nero 'The Hero' Lonigan in The Lion.

The issue is complicated by the activities of a group of American separatist rebels, led by the improbably-named Thomasina Paines, who have taken over the race to highlight their struggle against Mr President's world regime. The plot will involve none of it, however, and each ambush is blunted, for some ludicrously amusing reason, on the Gehenna-to-Xaness highway. However, everyone knows, have wrecked our world economy and damaged our telecommunication systems.

The film moves along merrily with each black joke quickly following the next. Calamity Jane's navigator, as befits her attempts repairs; Machine Gun Joe barks into his own service crew for giving cheek; and Frankenstein runs over the organiser of the race. Two particularly revolting personalities come on the activities. A synpys young DJ-type trips over himself in attempts to top his own ridiculous superlatives and a leetle vol sister interviews victims' relatives while claiming that each rape is 'a very dear friend of mine'.

Death Race 2000 succeeds because it does not take itself seriously. Its only aim is to entertain, leaving messages about sport's political influence on the masses to more self-conscious cinematic efforts. Critics may disdain the film's superficiality but its lack of pretension makes easy viewing. Although much of the humour is born out of the absurdity of the situation, it is never brutal or unpleasant and the ketchup is kept at a minimum. The film may not be a science fiction classic but it is amusing entertainment and for that, one should be grateful.

The film opens as a deranged scientist strangles a young girl, cuts open her stomach and sits it with an onion with a scalpel. A bad enough start but a lot worse follows. The scientist has indulged in this belly-slaughtering to destroy his own creation, a parasite that he developed to replace diseased parts of the human body, but which mutates and runs wild. The organisms then start to infect other residents of an isolated apartment block and, once, in their victims' bodies, reproduce and prepare to infect further hosts. The whole business gets thoroughly squally as they burst through skin or out of people's mouths.

Director David Cronenberg pulls no punches and closely details the nauseating proceedings as infected victims vomit bloody innards and parasites.

There is no escape for residents, or the audience, as the film graphically follows the progress through the apartments, and as an added bonus each infected victim becomes a raging nymphomaniac. This provides a welcome change as much orgy, nudity and homosexuality can be crammed into the film's almost endless eighty-eight minutes. The film ends as the people of the apartments, now all inhabited by the organism, pour out into the night in their cars, seeking new hosts to infect.

All this and violence probably make the film sound far more attractive than it really is. Sadly, it is too pointless and squalid to be remotely enjoyable. Had Cronenberg chosen to parody his own ridiculous intentions then audiences could have been salvaged from the proceedings. Unfortunately, The Paradise Murders is totally devoid of humour or wit, and leaves audiences the choice of staying to ridiculous or walking out.

It would appear from this pathetic little celluloid offering that there are still plenty of producers who live in the days of 1950 grade-B horrors, and who are only too willing to make films which do harm to the reputation of science fiction.
Central Florida's skies are low and wide, its July weather distressingly steamy, its insects uncommonly voracious. We were grateful for the air-conditioning in NASA's 182-seat DC-9 as we were driven more than 60 miles of green and golden palm-tree thickets. Kennedy Space Centre manages to co-exist with alligators, armadillos, and hosts of wildfowl—experiences with the indigenous wild pigs were less happy and these have been removed. The landscape itself, within states of advanced technology resides outside untamed scrub and shoreline, provided for visual and mental stimulation. Our first stop was the white room where the Viking lander was being readied for Mars under the most rigorous conditions of cleanliness. We were, of course, immediately impressed by this facility's sheer, dazzling whiteness. But this sensation of uniformity faded as we became sensitised to the palette of subtle tones from mellow cream to wintry grey on the other side of the viewpoint.

Then we donned coats and coveralls for an hour's stay inside. This lunar-like environment inspired such self-descriptions as: 'a snow-suit chipmunk,' 'a futuristic nun,' a character from a Woody Allen film.' But entering the white room banished all giggles.

It is an austere, almost monastic environment. (I wondered if the workers found it anaesthetising.) The very brightness and neutrality of the place flatters contours and distorts one's sense of perspective. What I took for graceful metal rods with square terminals were actually cables disappearing into square holes in the ceiling a hundred feet overhead. The few spots of colour available—yellow safety markings, red exit signs, the blue glow of an insect-killing lamp, exposed hands and faces—assumed anony mous vividness. Departure was like awakening from a dream.

The tour proceeded to the Viking vehicle's pad, a distinctly unromantic site dominated by the purely geometric charms of the service tower. Afterwards we were sold to leave the mushy launch area for the cool, dim Mission Simulator Room and the chance to inspect some now-outmoded astronaut training apparatus. These included mockups of the lunar module interior (which seemed scarcely larger than a public restroom stall) and exterior (whose ladder bore the warning sign: 'Not designed for use in Earth gravity'). However, the principal object of interest was the Lunar Module Mission Simulator, popularly known as the "GO#: 494484

"Train Wreck." This forty-foot-high conglomeration of boxes, cables, and struts looks as random as a junkheap but is just as much a product of conscious design as any gadget. This structure houses a working replica of the LEM cabin into which television cameras relay surprisingly realistic lunar views that are generated by a lens gliding beneath a plastic model outside. A few members of our group took turns at the controls practicing moon landings. If the fragile, compact LEM represents one extreme of the space programme, the Vehicle Assembly Building is the other. From outside, the VAB is merely large. Our minds recoiled from comprehending its real size. Inside, reality engulfed us with majestic vistas, colossal piers, doors and windows sealed for Titans. Beams, scaffolds, rigging merge in a riot of perspective, an orgy of girders, struts, bolts, nuts, rivets. One obvious, indeed only, analogy is Piranesi's Carceri. But the awesome power of the VAB is simply a cause-by-product of its functionality. We had little time to examine the magnificent interior on this visit. Our destination was the roof. A glass-sided elevator whisked us up past a blur of girders and opened on a scene of unexpected serenity. The roof edge was its own horizon. Hundreds of thousands of square feet of pearl grey surface, resilient underfoot and slick with rain puddles, stretched before us. We scattered across this expanse, climbed catwalks, peered over the railed edge. We could see for 25 miles in any direction across buildings and parking lots; rivers, lagoons, and thickets; roads and the space shuttle runway. Flocks of black vultures wheeled against pale lavender clouds and hovered almost motionless in thermal updrafts before landing on the roof. Lights on distant launch sites began to twinkle in the dusk. I felt as if I were "high on top of a mountain, away from the sins of this world".

Our guides summoned us away before full darkness fell. We were reluctant to descend but beauty is the more sublime still to be seen. We were now allowed to contemplate the space craft for the next day's launch. We sat on the apron of an unused pad two miles away and shared our reactions in quiet conversation.

So much has been written about these night scenes—yes, even by me—that the porcellaneous spark of the white rocket and the gem-studded lacedwork of the service tower have been reduced to cliché. But has moonlight really been spoiled by but poetry? Neither have these marvels lost any of their power to move the imagination.

Powerful floodlights intersected on the pad, kindled the rocket dazzling white, and fanned out across the sky in tenuous streams of palest pastel green. Snugly bracketed by the light beams, the Big Dipper hung down bowl directly above the vehicle. Venus and a waxing crescent moon rode in the west. The lights of other space centre installations glittered around the entire horizon. Here were natural and man-made beauty complementing each other.

And so the day ended and with it the artists' special treatment. For the remainder of our stay we traveled to the launch in regular NASA transport. The press site is a semicircle of grassy, sand-dune-infested beach about three miles from the launch complex. It provides little except broadcasting facilities and covered shelters. We could have occupied a reserved section of the latter but most of us spurned the shade for the chance to be a few yards closer to lift-off.

Having witnessed the numinous spectacle of Apollo 17, I inclined to be a bit blasé about the Apollo-Soyuz mission. Saturn I-B is smaller than a Saturn V. A glaring summer afternoon, moon has less dramatic potential than midnight. Others must have shared my attitude because this crowd was noticeably more relaxed than the one for the final moon shot. And yet when fire blossomed and thunder ripped the sky apart, there was something of the same desire to will the rocket upward and genuine exaltation as it rose from sight. Whereupon we scrambled for the buses back to sleepy Cocoa Beach.

The works conceived here must now be produced back home. There will be future artists' tours. Other eyes will see what we have seen and more. But no other hands can make what wills us to make.
The short films also included several duds, in particular one called Paris, la Cumparsita (also Spanish, I'm afraid) which was made by two people called Mirada and Bene. Apparently filmed with a camera full of murky blue water, it showed a young man carrying a life-size statue of a soldier past various Paris monuments. That was all, but it went on and on... Estimates of its exact running time varied—some people put it as high as two hours, but that's probably an exaggeration—but every one agreed that it shouldn't have been shown at all. This sentiment was echoed that night by the public at the San Giusto Castle. Considering that the members of the public each paid 2,000 lire for the privilege of viewing the film, it's a wonder that there wasn't an outburst of violence.

For a science fiction film festival there was actually very little real sf in evidence this year at Trieste (of course, it depends on your definition of real sf). This wasn't completely the fault of the organisers as good sf films, as always, are thin on the ground. The organisers are also handicapped by the rule that only films that have never been shown before in Italy can be entered, which automatically excludes much first-rate material. Nor is the Festival prestigious enough to warrant the big-name producers using it as a premiere showcase for their films (though that has occasionally happened in the past). Two of the three American entries, for example, had already been seen in both America and England. They were Chosen Survivors, directed by Sutton Roley—a cheap, mediocre film about a group of people trapped in an atom bomb shelter (again!) and menaced by man-eating bats—and Phase IV, the Saul Bass film about intelligent ants which featured some brilliant insect photography by Ken Middleham but had holes in the plot that were so large one could have driven the giant ants from Them! through them. Phase IV did win the Festival's Grand Prize, but mainly because the opposition was so weak.

The British entry was The Land that Time Forgot (directed by Kevin Connor). Although it was billed as the latest in the line of great British horror films, it was really more of a great British disaster. The director, Kevin Connor, said in his post-conference that he will be leaving Amicus Films to start his own production company, though he will still be involved in the making of the next big Amicus film, At the Earth's Core. With his own company he intends to make a series of three films based on Lin Carter's 'Thongor' novels and after that he hopes to make a 'science fiction fantasy' film. Thongor films will be aimed primarily at children but Conan will be definitely for adults, not unsurprisingly. In the Thongor films Subotsky hopes to make use of the skills of American special effects man Jim Danforth whose model animation rivals that of Ray Harryhausen (Dawnforth did the animation in Flesh Gordon).

Apart from Phase IV the nearest thing to science fiction in the Festival was a Russian children's film called Cassiopea, a fairly humorous story about a group of school children who take off in a huge spaceship for a long journey to the stars. As it was the start of a series the film came to a sudden end but it won, deservedly, a special prize as a good example of children's entertainment and also because of its impressive effects. Another Russian film, The Computer and the Enigma, directed by Boris Znagyski—a slickly-produced look at the development and uses of computers—won The Golden Seal of the City of Trieste as best short.

The prize for best actor (no prize was given for best actress this year) went to Hank van Ulsen who starred in the Belgian film Golden Ophelia (directed by Marcel Martin). Ulsen played a senile Professor Heman who became depressed by life and decides to commit suicide, but his attempts fail. He finally falls in love with a girl and changes his mind about killing himself, but the police insist that he must flee, and he has to take the job to put their records straight. A visit to the Polish Embassy puts matters right, and the film ends on a upbeat note when his depression returns, despite his new-found love. It was a good performance and it was all beautifully photographed but it didn't really seem to have much point—though I'm told it was a huge success in Belgium. It's a complete mystery why it was included in an sf festival.

Germany had two rather interesting films in the competition, Parapsychio-Spektum Des Angst (Para-psychology: Spectre of Anguish). The one I mentioned earlier which, despite the autopsy, was an impressive film but
belonged more to the horror genre than to science fiction—except for the third and final story which some kind of mutant. It's a very black little story and William Berger, who plays the young man, manages to convey a real sense of evil. This episode, incidentally, as well as the autopsy one, was also denied a public showing, apparently because of its sex scenes.

The other German film was Das Genie (The Genius), which was made for Bavarian television by Rainer Eri. Compared with Parapsycho it was rather tame stuff, though it was well-directed and based on the intriguing concept of memory transfer. It concerned the activities of a rich man called van Reijn who goes about collecting the skills of various world-famous people—such as a chess champion, a concert pianist and a Japanese artist—by means of extracting a fluid from their brains and injecting it into himself. Unfortunately, the process results in the death of the unwilling 'donor' each time and eventually a group of scientists, involved themselves in similar research, realise what he is doing and apprehend him. Van Reijn attempts suicide by jumping off a building but the scientists manage to salvage his brain and the film ends with van Reijn's brain floating in a glass tank while he happily plays a piano via a computer link-up.

The third American entry was a strange film called Lifespan which was produced and directed by Alexander Whitelaw. I describe it as strange because it was so full of contradictions: it had a fascinating theme, that of death versus immortality, yet the script was so bad one couldn't decide whether the director and his co-writers were really taking themselves seriously or it was just a big put-on. The film was also damaged by having an American actor called Hiram Keller in the central role. He is handsome enough (he co-starred in Fellini's Satyricon) but his acting range isn't very wide, he completely lacks presence and his speaking voice is flat and monotonous. As he was on-screen for almost the whole running time of Lifespan, as well as being the narrator, these by the absurdities of the script. Yet despite all its faults—it's shoddy direction, its weak script, etc—the film looked beautiful, the result of being photographed by Holland's leading cameraman, Eddy van der Enden.

The film begins when a young American scientist, Ben Land (Hiram Keller) arrives in Amsterdam to work with a Dutch scientist called Linden who is doing research into immortality. No sooner does Land arrive than Linden hangs himself, leaving the American to carry on his research and also to try and find out the reason for the suicide. Land becomes involved with Linden's former girlfriend and through her discovers that Linden was working for a disreputable Swiss drug manufacturer, but the old man dies soon after the examination and Land is blamed. He is arrested, escapes from jail and makes his way to Switzerland where he agrees to go to work for the drug manufacturer. End of film.

One would think that a film based on the potent themes of old age, death and the possibility of immortality couldn't help but throw up some interesting ideas and situations, but no, Lifespan manages to avoid these dangers completely. All the important issues involved are neatly side-stepped and there isn't one original concept in the whole film—the various theories on ageing were apparently collected from a children's encyclopedia and the Spanish director Luis Bunuel, it was an unusual film about a young girl's obsession with an old house and the murderous pottergeist-like presence it creates. Not only was it rather frightening, it was also very funny with several examples of the unique kind of black humour that the younger Bunuel seems to have inherited from his father. It was very refreshing to see a haunted house film that didn't follow the age-old formula but instead kept changing direction, often with dizzying suddenness. Juan Bunuel has so far made only three films and Rendezvous was his first, made in France in 1972 on a very small budget. I haven't seen his other two but on the evidence of this one alone he has considerable talent as a film maker and a big future ahead of him. Rendezvous is being distributed, if that's the right word, by United Artists but it hasn't appeared in many places outside France. With luck, it might eventually surface in England.

The Trieste SF Film Festival has been running for thirteen years now and for all its faults one hopes it will continue. This year's programme, compared with previous years, left a lot to be desired but its shortcomings were compensated by a very good retrospective held at the San Giusto Castle during the week following the Festival. Organised by a group of Italian sf fans it featured the work of Jack Arnold—including such films as It Came From Outer Space, Tarantula and The Incredible Shrinken Man—as well as more recent films like Duel and Westworld. The retrospective is to become a regular feature at Trieste which means that from now on there will be the opportunity of seeing two weeks of sf films instead of only one. If you're planning a visit to the Continent next summer why not arrange to drop in at Trieste while the Festival is running? Anyway, Trieste is such a beautiful city it's worth a visit even when there's not an sf film festival in progress.
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