NEW FICTION FROM
ROBERT SILVERBERG
GARRY KILWORTH
ROBERT WELLS
PLUS
AN ILLUSTRATED
REVIEW
OF ROGER DEAN’S
BOOK “VIEWS”
Perry Rhodan No 11:
The Planet of the Dying Sun
Painting by Chris Foss
(By courtesy of Orbit Books)
Introduction

This year's Easter sf convention will be held in Manchester, hence the name ManCon. From 16 to 19 April a great many sf fans will take over the Owens Park complex at Manchester University and generally convene in the usual sf fashion. Robert Silverberg, the renowned American author, will be the Guest of Honour and to tie in with his visit to these shores we publish a special feature on him in this issue.

Brian Stableford, sf author in his own right and a Silverberg enthusiast, has been looking over the collected works of this author and has come up with an article called The Metamorphosis of Robert Silverberg. Indeed, Silverberg has undergone some change of form at least in his role as a novelist; his powers of adaptation have enabled him to write 7,000 words space operas at the drop of a hat and also to produce such outstanding novels as Son of Man and Dying Inside.

Schwartz . . .

As is the custom in SFM, if we tell you something about an author we like to show you an example of his work; 'Schwartz Between the Galaxies' was a Hugo nominee and a Nebula finalist and Robert Silverberg considers it 'a good representative of my recent work'. Whilst you're reading the story look out for a mention of Ursula Le Guin's father; it helps if you remember what her middle name is.

'Schwartz' isn't the only short story in this issue, we've also got

Compensating Factor by Robert Wells and 'Reaching Out' by Gary Kilworth. Readers of The Sunday Times may remember that Gary was one of the winners of their recent sf short story competition.

Roger Dean

Back in SFM Vol 1 No 11 The Artist in Science Fiction interview featured Roger Dean who is, perhaps, the most successful designer of record sleeves on the present music scene. He has produced over fifty album covers for various groups including Osibisa, Paladin, Wizard and Yes. At the time of the interview he was full of the plans for a book of his artwork and his architectural designs which finally appeared in November last year. As so many readers wrote in asking for details of the book we thought it deserved a special illustrated review which you'll find somewhere in this issue.

Next Month

An interview with D G Compton, author of The Continuous Katherine Montenhoue, Synthajoy and Farewell, Earth's Bliss; a belated report on AussieCon; Robert Holdstock's attempt to explain the myth of the Pied Piper of Hamelin; and plenty of full colour sf art.

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EXECUTIVE EDITOR: PAT HORNSEY

EDITOR: JULIE DAVIS

SUB EDITOR: BILL HOWELL

DESIGNER: CHRISTOS KONDEATIS

PRODUCTION: JERRY GATRELL

CIRCULATION MANAGER: RAY HELEN

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SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY 1
This is to be the Guest of Honour at this year's Easter Sunday convention which will be held in Manchester. To tie in with his visit to these shores SFM commissioned Brian Stableford, a long-time admirer of Silverberg's, to prepare an analysis of the author's work, to consider some of his recent work and to write about his recent work and to consider some of his recent work.
“People are staring,” Dawn says uncomfortably.

“...no, looking at whatever...”

“Let them stare. Do them some good that. A Pygmy chat, from Gabon, is equatorial Africa. Pygmies are my kind of people. More Pygmies. Everybody’s two metres tall. And what do we sing? Listen. Listen. He gestures fiercely at the cloud of tiny golden longtonguedsleepers flitting near the ceiling. A month or two comes from them: the current popular favourite. Savagely he mouths words, says, ‘‘Playing in every skyscraper right now, all over the world.” She smiles thinly. His hand reaches toward his cover, covers, presses against the knuckles. He is dizzy. The crowd, the eyes, the pale, the drink. The silence. Everything shines. Porcelain. Perlavent. The villain. Tom? she asks unusually, “is anything the matter?” He laughs, blinks, coughs, shrugs. She hears her calling in his mind, and then he feels his soul swooping outward, toward the galactic blackness.

With the Antarctae not-made beside him, Schwartz peered through the viewing station, staring in awe and fascination at the seductive vision of the Capellans colliding and recolliding outside the ship. Not all the passengers on this voyage had cold, sterile rooms like his. The Capellans were too big to come on board, and in any case they preferred never to let themselves be enclosed inside metal walls. They travelled just alongside the ship, basking like slippery whales in the piquant radiations of space. So long as they kept within twenty metres of the hull they would be inside the effective field of the Rabinozvit Drive, which swept ship and contents and associated fellow travellers toward Rigel, or the Lenser Magnificent, or was it one of the Pleiades toward which they were bound at a cool nine light-years? He watched the Capellans moving beyond the shadow of the ship in tracks of shining white, Blue, glossy green, and velvet black, they coiled and swam, and every track was a flash of golden fire. “They have a dangerous beauty,” Schwartz whispered. “Do you hear them calling? I do.”

“What do they say?"

“They say, ‘Come to me, come to me, come to me!’”

“...and then, then,” said the Antarctae simply, “Stop through the hatch.”

“...and perish.”

“...and enter into your next transition. Poor Schwartz! Do you love your present body so? It will be worth, I suppose, to be set free. It will be easy. It will be soft and cuddly. Oh, that is no good. Do you think I’m likely to get another one some day?"

“...No.”

“Wrong!” Schwartz said. “This one is all I’ve got. Isn’t that the way with you?”

“At the Time of Opening I receive my next housing, that will be fifty years from now. What you see is the fifth form I have been given to wear.”

“Will the next be as beautiful as this?"

“...All forms are beautiful,” the Antarctae said. “You find me attractive."

“Of course.”

A stilted wok. A bowing nod toward the viewpoint. “As attractive as ever.”

Schwartz laughed. “Yes. In a different way.”

“...Come to me, Schwartz,” the Antarctae said, “If we go out there, you would walk through the hatch into space.”

“I might. If they gave me a spacesuit and taught me how to use it.”

“But not otherwise? Suppose I was out there right now. I could live in space, I say, maybe fifteen years or so. How would you feel then, and I say, Come to me, Schwartz, come to me! What do you do?”

“I don’t think I am all that destructive.”

“To die for love, though! To make a transition for the sake of beauty.”

“No. Sorry.”

The Antarctae pointed toward the undulating Capellans. “If they asked you, you would go.”

“They are asking me,” he said.

“You refuse the invitation?”

“So far. So far.”

The Antarctae laughed an Antarctae laugh, a thick silvery snort. “Our voyage will last many months more. One of these days, I think, you will go to them.”

“You were unconscious at least five minutes,” Dawn says. “You gave everyone a scare. Are you sure you ought to go through with tonight’s lecture?"

Nodding, Schwartz says, “I’ll be all right. I’m a little tired, is all. Too many time-zones this week.” They stand on the terrace of Schwartz’s room, looking on, already, here in late afternoon; it is midwinter in the Southern Hemisphere, though the fragmentary horizon is clear, and even the few stars have appeared. He has never really known which star is which. That bright one, he thinks, could be Rigil, and that Saturn, maybe this is Deneb over there. And then this be red Antares, in the heart of the Scorpius, or is it only Mars? Because Schwartz is a New Yorker, a bright white room, and the fancy from the customary faculty recreation and the formal dining; pleading the need for rest, he has arranged to have a simple snack at his hotel room, a dinner. In two hours they will come forward in the company of his own university and the university, to the university to speak. Dawn watches him closely. Perhaps she is too much fascinated by his health, perhaps she is only waiting for him to make his move toward her. There’s time for all that later, he figures. Would rather talk now. Warm up quickly. As he figures, he begins his earlier thread:

“...For a long time I didn’t understand what had taken place. I gave everyone the impression that I was in a deep state of depression, that I was collecting myths and grammars and folkways and artifacts and strangeness, difference. Look, we can never have any real perspective on our own times and lives. It is a difficult thing to attain it, but all they get is a mound of raw indigestible data. Inconvenience comes later — ten generations later. But one way we’ve always been able to learn about ourselves is by studying alien cultures, studying them completely, and defining ourselves by those..."

...or illuminated, Schwartz said. “Those are the risks one takes in the field. The early anthropologists who unbastinately travelled to the Far West and the Far East, and the..."'

...but those were drugs that humans were using. You have no way of knowing how — oh, what’s the use, Schwartz? Research, he calls it. Research. Schwartz sneered. ‘‘Junkie!’’

Schwartz, his hands in his pockets, ‘‘Economist!’’

The house is a decedent tonight, close to three thousand, every seat in the house filled, except for the university’s great: great—the chair, an image, the university’s great: great chair, the university’s great: great image, the university’s great: great chair, and a video relay beside, hearing his lecture to all of Papua New Guinea. Schwartz stands at the foot of a very large screen, as if by a dimpled under a great-blue glare spotlight. Despite his earlier weariness he is in good form now, generous and broad and fine, eye deepening, voice deepening, voice deepening, voice deepening, voice deepening, voice deepening, voice deepening.

“Only one planet,” he says, “only one and crowded planet, on which all cultures converge to a dead and depressing sameness. How sad that is! How tiny we make ourselves, when we make ourselves to resemble one another? He flings his arms toward the screen, toward the screen, toward the screen, toward the screen. He says, ‘If you can, the millions of worlds that orbit those blazing suns..."
beyond the night’s darkness! Speculate with me on possible personal gods. Beings of every imaginable form, alien in appearance but not grotesque, not hideous, for all life is beautiful, being is beautiful. There are worlds of life, beings of inhuman size, beings of many millions or of none, beings to whom death is a divine culmination of existence, beings who never die, beings whose youth is a thousand years, beings of whom no reproductions of themselves — all the infinite possibilities of the infinite universe.

‘Perhaps on each of those worlds it is as it has become here: one intelligent species, one culture, the eternal convergence. But the mere existence of a vast spectrum of variety. And now: share this vision with me! I see a ship voyaging from star to star, a spaceship of the future, and about it ship is a sampling of many species, many cultures, a random scoop out of the galaxy’s fantastic diversity. That ship is like a little cosmos, a world, even enclosed, sealed. How easy might it be abandoned, to encounter in that little compass such richness of cultures, to be informed — no longer like a starship, a little cosmos, bearing with it all the thousands of Earthborn cultures, Hopi and Esikimo and Azte and Kwakiutl and Arapani and Onkole and all the rest. In the course of our voyage we have come to resemble one another too much, and it has improved the chances of us all living on the same planet. Suddenly he feels faint, and grasps the sides of the lectern. ‘Because. . . .’ The spotlight, he thinks. In my eyes. Not supposed to glare like that, but it’s blinding. Got to have them move it. In the course . . . the course of our voyage . . .’ ‘What’s happening? Paint a picture. I’m cold. My heart? Wait. Wait, stop up, catch your breath. That light in my eyes . . .’

‘Tell me,’ Schwartz said earnestly, ‘what’s it like to know you’ll have ten successive bodies and live more than a thousand years.‘ ‘Fine,’ said the Antarean, ‘what’s it like to know you’ll live ninety years or less, and perish for ever.’

Somehow he continues. The pain in his chest grows more intense, he cannot focus his eyes, he believes he will lose consciousness. Or they may even have landed by now at least once, and yet he continues. Clinging to the lectern, he outlines the face of the Menlo, Skimming the Skin. A rebirth of tribalism without a revival of ugly nationalism. The quest for a renewed sense of kinship with the past, the sharing in a national experience, that especial loyalty. Heavy taxation of exported artefacts, including films and video shows. An attempt to create something independent and self-sustaining cultural units on Earth once again while maintaining present levels of economic and political interdependence. Reestablishment of materialistic technological industrial values. Necessities and luxuries for fundamental meanings. An ethnic revival, before it is too late, among those cultures of mankind that have only recently shed their traditional folkways. (He repeats and emphasizes this point particularly, for the benefit of the Papuans before him, the great emphasis.)

The discomfort and confusion come and go as he rulers his theme. It is as though he were painting out passionately on an end to the homogenization of Earth, and gradually the physical sympomes leave him, all but a faint vertigo. But a different malaise seizes him as he nears his peroration. His voice becomes, to him, a far-off gauzy, meaningless and foolish. He begins to feel that the people, always to great ovations, but who listens? Who listens? Everything seems hollow tonight, mechanical, absurd. An ethnivial revival! Shall these people begin to revert to their loincloths and their pig-roasts? His starship is a fantasy; his dream of a diverse Earth is mere illusion. And yet he pushes on, as he concludes his con-

He takes his audience back to that starship, he creates a border story about men who have been placed on a planet by sketching the structures of half a dozen vanished ‘primitive’ cultures of Earth, he chants the chants of the Navaho, the Casho, the Arapah, the Anshanti, the Mandingo. He tells of a Crusade of applause engulf him. He holds his place until premiers are discussed, and people need to be helped down; they have perceived his distress. ’Nothing,’ he gasps. ’The lights. . . . too bright . . .’ Dawn is at his side. She hunches over his drink. The two of the sponsors begin to speak of a reception for him in the Green Room, ‘Fine,’ Schwartz says. ‘Glad to,’ Dawn murmurs a protest. He shakes her off. ’My obligation,’ he tells her. ’Meet community leaders. Faculty people. I’m feeling better now. Honestly.‘ Swaying, trembling, he lets them lead him away.

‘A Jew,’ the Antarean said. ’You call yourself a Jew, but what is that exactly? A clan, a sect, a minority, a tribe, a nation, what? Can you explain?’

‘You understand what a religion is?’

‘Of course you do. Judaism — Jewishness — it’s one of Earth’s major religions.’

‘Not at all. I don’t even practice Judaism. But my ancestors did, and therefore I consider myself Jewish, even though. . .’

‘It is not a religion, then, the Antarean asked, “that does not require its members to observe its rites.”

‘It is more closely tied to a hierarchy of hieratic cultural subgroups, actually emerging out of a common religious cultic base which is not a religion. . . .’

‘Ah. And the cultural traits of Jewishness that define it and separate you from the majority of humankind are? . . .’

‘We are a multiracial, multilingual, multi-genetic people. Our major cultural symbols, our sacred syllables, our ritual codes, a rise of circumcision for newborn males, a rise of passage for male adolescents, a language of scripture, a vernacular language, and a system of knowledge for the world more or less understood and plenty more, including a certain intangible sense of clan-

Not exactly,’ Schwartz admitted. ’In fact I don’t do anything

The Spicorum howled above him, wearing, hobbing, swaggering like a pack of hounds at a hound. But their howls were sympathetic; loving even. He felt the glow of their compassion. If his voice had not been drowned out to some extent among Greeks. He’s speaking of Italians and Greeks of the late twentieth century, of course. Nowadays. . . .’ It was all becoming a terrible mess, the Antarean was leaving him speechless. He smiled, they would be smiling tenderly, he knew.

One of the lemons leaned close. The little translating device in the Antarean’s hand toward Schwartz like a hooded and bony headed mess, his eyes, concentrating as intensely as he could on the amber framed sheet flushing quickly across the screen.

‘. . . has come. We shall . . .’

‘Again, please,’ Schwartz said. ’I missed some of what you said.

‘The moment . . . has come. We shall . . . make the exchange official.

‘Sacrifices?’

‘Drug?’

‘Yes, yes. Of course.’ Schwartz gaped in his pride. He felt the cool smooth leather skin of his drug-case. Leather. Someone brings it. Anyway. He didn’t like that stupid old ‘Siddhartha, le历史新lin, psilocybin, acid-57. Take your pick.’

The Spicorum selected three small blue siddharthas. ’Very good,’ Schwartz said.

Them least among the aliens proffered a ball of dried orange fungus the size of Schwartz’ two hands. ’It is an equivalent dose. We give it to you.’

‘Equivalent to all three of my tablets, or to one?’

‘Equivalent. It will give you peace.’

Schwartz smiled. There was a time for asking questions, and a time for unmitigating action. He took the fungus and reached for a glass of water.

‘Wait?’ Pitkin cried, appearing suddenly. ’What are you . . .’

Schwartz said serenely, and swallowed the Spicoran

In the Green Rooms some eighty or a hundred distinguished Papuans press toward him, offering congratulations. ’Absolutely right,’ they say. ’A global catastrophe.’ Our last chance to save our culture. Their films are chocolate potatoes with their faces betray the genetic mishmash that is their ancestry — perhaps they call themselves Arapah, Mandangi, Tondubuli, Mafaufu, in the way that he calls himself a Jew, but they have been liberally saddled with cultures contributed by Chinese, Japanese, Europeans, Africans, everybody. That dress in International Contemporary. They speak slangy, lively English. Schwartz feels seasick. ’You look pilled,’ Drew whispers. He smiles bravely. Body like dry mud. Mind like dead ashes. He is introduced to a tribal chiefman, tall, grey-haired, who looks and speaks like a professor, a lawyer, a banker. What, will these people return to the hills for the ceremony of the yam harvest? Will newborn girls-behemoths and, cords uncut, skins uninsured, if their fathers do not need more girls? Will boys entering manhood submit to the expensive ser-

His skin feels like a plastic coating. Away, away, to the ship! ’So long,’ Schwartz says, and lets himself slip away.

Outside the ship the Capellans twist and spin in their ritual dance, while the Earth satellite hovers overhead, its beam of light arcing toward the rim of the galaxy on a nine times the velocity of light. They move with a grace that is astonishing for creatures of such tremendous bulk. A dazzling light from the centre of the universe strikes their glossy skin and, rebounding, resolves itself into dancing dots and drugs the stroboscopic images of steamer of ultra-red, infra-violet, ex-yellow. All the cosmos glows and shimmers. A single perfect note of music comes out of the remote distance and, growing closer, swells in an infinite crescendo. Schwartz trembles at the beauty of all he perceives.

Beside him stands the seal-slick Antarean. She — definitely she, no doubt of it, she — plucks at his arm and whispers, ’Will you go to him?’

‘Yes, of course.’

‘So will I. Whatever you go.’

‘Now,’ Schwartz says. He reaches for the lever that opens the hatch. He pulls down. The side of the starship swings open.

The Antarean looks deep into his eyes and says blithely, ’I never told you my name. My name is . . .’

Together they float through the hatch into space. The Antarean keeps them close to the center of the galaxy, and no chill, no pressure at the lungs, no discomfort at all. He is surrounded by luminous spheres, by thrashing mounds of pure colour, as though he has entered the heart of the universe. Slowly the ship swings toward the Capellans, and the huge beings welcome them with their great hands of glowing cries. Dawn dances at the once, moving her sinuous limbs with extravagant ease; Schwartz will do the same in a moment, but first he faces to the starship, hangs in space close by like a man in a voice that could shake universes calls. ’Come, friends! Come, dance with us!’ Dawn dances at the once, moving her sinuous limbs with extravagant ease; Schwartz will do the same in a moment, but first he faces to the starship, hangs in space close by like a man in a voice that could shake universes calls. ’Come, friends! Come, dance with us!’ Dawn dances at the once, moving her sinuous limbs with extravagant ease; Schwartz will do the same in a moment, but first he faces to the starship, hangs in space close by like a man in a voice that could shake universes calls. ’Come, friends! Come, dance with us!’ Dawn dances at the once, moving her sinuous limbs with extravagant ease; Schwartz will do the same in a moment, but first he faces to the starship, hangs in space close by like a man in a voice that could shake universes calls. ’Come, friends! Come, dance with us!’
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Robert Silverberg has been one of the most prolific science fiction writers of the past two decades. A bibliography published in "The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction" in April 1974 credited him with 57 books published between 1953 and 1972. It also credited him with more than sixty non-fiction books, more than two hundred uncollected short stories and with the editorship of several yearly anthologies. There remains a great deal of work which did not fall within the scope of the bibliography, Silverberg's total published workage between these years ran into the tens of millions. He was, in April 1974, not yet 40 years old.

Silverberg's productivity is without parallel, but no less phenomenal has been the dramatic change which has overtaken his writing during the past five years. He began his writing career in the sf field, selling the short story 'Gorgon Planet' to the British magazine 'Nebula' in 1954 and attaining an awesome sales record in the years 1956-58. In 1959 he virtually abandoned the short-story market in favour of a host of others which, between them, could keep up with his productivity. In the next seven years some 1,200 sales appeared, but these were mostly derived from old material. In the late Sixties he began again to regard as one of his primary working media the other being non-fiction of high quality, but the Silverberg who thus returned to the field was by no means the Silverberg who had left it. His work — and it is a work as well — had undergone a considerable change. An account of the metamorphosis in personal terms was published in 'Foundation' 7/8 (March 1975) and in the collection of autobiographical essays by sf writers 'Hell's Castigators' edited by Brian Aldiss and Harry Harrison, published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson. What follows is an account of the evolution of the work.

THE METAMORPHOSIS OF ROBERT SILVERBERG
BY BRIAN STABLEFORD

The bulk of Silverberg's early work was written very easily, and reads very easily. Most of his early short stories are puzzle-stories in which people become involved with unlikely situations (usually featuring unlikely aliens) and obtain a resolution with an altogether too-likeable clever twist. Many other writers were producing similar stories; Robert Shoneley, perhaps, being the most adept in the type. Like Steckley, Silverberg specialised in a causal irony, while Shoneley's man-aliens encounters always tended to the comical, and in later years became outrightly farcical. Silverberg retained a slightly darker shade of comedy. When the turn around came and the briers were bitten, they were bitten good and hard.

In one of the most frequently reprinted stories of the period, 'Absolutely Indestructible', the protagonist is the man with the job of condemning all arriving time-travelers of the moon to protect a disease-free Earth from possible infection. Inevitably, he begins to tinker with a confiscated time machine, and winds up looking at himself from the wrong side of the desk. In other similarly-patterned stories, though, there is a distinct bitterness which underlies the calculated triviality of the form. In 'Eve and the 23 Adams' a starship captain is tricked by a girl who signs up as 'crew girl' under false pretences, only wanting a free ride to a colony in space. The captain betrays her into fulfilling her function unaware, but finds when the ship reaches its destination that she is his own intended bride. In 'Warm Man' an empathic 'tech' is sustained by the emotional troubles of his neighbours — until he encounters a small boy who has more troubles than he can take, and the power to broadcast them powerfully.

Characters in gimmick-stories do not always fall victim to their own follies; sometimes they are simply fall guys too inncent to know that the universe will always cheat them. Silverberg wrote 'Schlemihl stories' of this variety, too. But there is a darker aspect to the same facetious conviction. In 'Ozymandias' archaeologists, working on an alien world trying to make sense of the ruins of a once-great civilization, find a robot who can tell them all they want to know. But he can also inform the military wing of the expedition concerning the weapons with which the civilization destroyed itself. The presentation here is sombre; written in the shadow of the H-bomb, its very words were as the wind whispered. In the same year (1958), Silverberg published 'Road to Nightfall', perhaps the most impressive of his earlier stories (it had been written several years before), but quite apocalyptic of his mass-produced fiction. It describes social decay in a city whose food supplies are cut off in the aftermath of a war. Its ruthless conviction stands in contrast not only to the triviality of Silverberg's other work, but also to the constructed triviality of the market in which the mass-produced stories were slanted. The demands of the market were that ingenuity should triumph, whether it was the ingenuity of the author in designing stories like mousetraps whose final brutal snap could be excused by the principle of poetic justice, or the ingenuity of the character in cancelling problems one against another and averting disaster by a slick, superficial cleverness making light of any sober implications a story might contain.

The early Silverberg was an intelligent writer with an active mind, and he could produce a good line in slick, superficial cleverness. A good example is the novel Master of Life and Death, where the central character is faced with a quickfire sequence of problems which sustain him in furious action as he first juggles with them and finally, with brilliant sleight of mind, makes them all vanish. World and hero alike tremble on disaster throughout: Earth has a population problem, the protagonist is handling the rules, aliens are interfering with the space programme and someone has invented an immortality serum which can only make things worse. The author's hand, however, is incomparably quicker than the eye, and the problems disappear.

Such conjuring tricks gave Silverberg's best early work readability and interest, but as his productivity increased he came to rely more and more on the routines of pulp cliché, in which heroes are moved through a potentially infinite series of standard scenarios until a few ex machina can be evoked to tidy up. Many space operas, often produced under pseudonyms (Vernonors as Ivar Jorgenson, Aliens from Space as David Osborne, The Plot Against Earth as Calvin M Knox e.g.) follow this pattern.

Two novels, Recalled to Life and Invaders from Earth raised issues deserving serious consideration (the possibility of the material retrieval of the past and the manner in which recording methods may be used to manipulate public opinion) and did not skimp lightly over their implications. Science fiction provides, at least potentially, a framework within which hypothetical questions of this nature may be explored, and the heading gallop of social and scientific progress which carries us all space into the future makes it necessary that such questions ought to be explored in whatever frameworks are most convenient. Recalled to Life especially, Silverberg exhibited a degree of insight rare among his contemporaries, and this is the most interesting of his early novels, but in both books the plot acts in opposition to the theme. Recalled to Life, like Master of Life and Death, moves too quickly to a conditioned conclusion with whose naivete trivialises its impact, while Invaders from Earth relies heavily on the methodology of pulp melodrama.

The books are exciting: they involve the reader. Will our hero, by submitting voluntarily to death and revival, get the good publicity required to make resurrection acceptable to the people? Will our hero, having put the public in the right frame of mind to accept the genocide of the Gynemedians, manage to thwart the villains and save them all? The questions are set up so as to tug at the puppet-strings of the reader, but the trouble
is that such tagging works because it conforms to a tried and tested pattern. There is little room for deviation or for innovation. The intended writer is trapped by his own professionalism. When the first period of Silverberg's work is in the if field, his novel The Man in the Maze (1956) could not be said that he was anything more than competent. He had been voted a Hugo in 1956 as the "most promising new writer", but had hardly begun to look like a professional writer. Outside science fiction, in the genre of science fiction where Silverberg produced anything and everything for seven years, he was able to exploit his casual extravagance to the full. The problem of disturbing the questions did not arise, and there was just as little scope for innovation in the content of the work as there was in the style. The novel's characters, however, were more interesting. The science fiction novels which appeared during the years 1959-36 some were infused short stories and others pure humor. One of them (Collins Course and Search for Earth, especially) were earnest in their confrontation of central issues but failed to produce two stories; they lacked the grace and neatness of the best early novels, but he had little depth to compensate. Several short stories however, and especially two published in 1963, were exceptional. 'The Pain Pillagers' is a bit the story of a construction business in the early work, but with a visible twist literally unverifiable. An executive for the media has the job of persuading people in need of costly operations to forgo anaesthetic so they could be more easily operated on. One such operation - a colonial success from his point of view, then the actual meaning of what he is doing in the story the victim's son can, and even that he himself needs an operation. The rest follows logically. The story has its compressible forward irony of 'Absolutely invisible' than with the bitterness of 'War Man'. The warm man fed on the train passage is due to the exaggerated mannerism of the sad world has far more trouble than he could handle. In 'The Pain Pillagers' it is the multitude who fared on trouble, and it is their demand which is the real point. It is on the pressure on the supply. In this kind of reversed perspective there is a clue to the nature of the change which occurred in Silverberg's, work. The second story, 'To See the Invisible Man', was the best piece Silverberg had produced to date. It is a protagonist is punished for repeated transgressions of the laws by expulsion from society: he is declared 'invisible'. The condition, he finds, has both advantages and disadvantages: he can steal he can go the rover without interference, but he cannot get medical help and is cut off from all contact by the laws. In a sense, he is godlike in his ability to interfere inordinately in the ordered lives of others, but he is also totally vulnerable - if he does too far, 'accidents' may happen. In the end, he is the torment of the invisible man until the time to communicate which triumphs over all other aspects of the situation, and his torture is complete when even the invisibility man refuses to recognise him. When his sentence ends, he is approached by that same invisible man, who has by now learned to read and learned to plead for recognition in his turn. After an agonised moment of decision he embraces the man, and goes to trial facing probable condemnation for a second time.

The situation at the end of 'To See the Invisible Man' permits the reader to try to characterize Silverberg's early work, but it is rejected. The theme destroys the method, and the moral meaning of what is happening in the story the victim's son is trivialised. The mousetrap is un MGM, the invisible man does not turn away to confirm the neatness of situation and story. The simplifications of the central idea are made. Silverberg invites the reader to be more interested in the problem raises than those of the story's solutions. The role of the protagonist in Silverberg's fiction since 1963 is generally different from the role characterized of his early work. In the early work the protagonist is usually Either Schlemihl, falling victim to the story's hidden trap, or a hero, whose task is to conquer solutions out of its problems. After 1963 the heroes are often victims, and the victims are often heroes. The ironic twist of the new ambivalence may be found in the short story 'Halfway House' (1966) in which the ironic superficiality is again subverted. A man suffering from terminal cancer is called upon to justify his claim to prolonged life before he is allowed to use an alien transport system to visit a world where his illness can be cured. The price asked from him is five years in the service transport network; he finds himself assigned to the Halfway House as the selector who must decide on the claims with which other men seek to justify their use of the system. Like the invisible man, he finds himself in a quasi-genius role of deliverer of life and death but finds that his exertion of the power an intolerable burden on his conscience. He is not able to adjust himself to the power and can only cancel them with superfluous logical neatness as was the protagonist of the early novel, but must simply live with his vulnerability to sympathy for other men's troubles.

By 1965 Silverberg was in the process of changing his methods. He cut production and began devoting much attention to commercial work. He still wrote science fiction works which were in the preservative works of scholarship ('The Great Wall of China' and The Golden Dream) and to some of his science fiction. Science fiction has been one of the most successful publishing areas and simultaneously devote a great deal of thought to how he felt it was crucial to find himself with a poet of poems and cancel them with superficial logical neatness as was the protagonist of the early novel, but must simply live with his vulnerability to sympathy for other men's troubles. Some of these novels belong to the brand new form of Silverberg's science fiction. Science fiction, by its very nature, is the perfect medium for pulp romance; its vocabulary of ideas promises limitless possibilities for adventurous confrontation and the resolution of complex social problems. Science fiction is conventionally very 'mechanical' in its approach. It also provides the natural medium for a story of pulp romance. Since the late 1950s, however, Silverberg had written both kinds of his, mass-produced, hardcover book being typical pulp romance, while Recalled to Life, 'Road to Bigger Chance'. Both of these works are conventionally secondary and often neglected altogether. But science fiction can also be used in a different way: as a means of imaginatively exploring situations which are directly related to reality. In this case the story of ideas becomes not a reservoir of commercial fantasies or a construction kit for novelists of standing, such as Thrall and Hawkshill Station (also known as The Ant of Time). All these books, and several others, were published in 1967.

Thorn follows up the theme of 'The Pain Pillagers' but builds around an emotional core which has a lot in common with 'To See the Invisible Man'. Dorian Clark is the pain pillager who feeds himself and markets for the world the suffering of his chosen victims. The victims of the novel are Minor Merris and Lona Kelvina, two people forced by circumstance into states of extreme alienation, who are brought together by Clark for a brief period. The victims have been stripped of their humanity by alien beings who have literally alienated them by surgery. With the help of minor Merris has been stripped of something essential to her identity, in that ova removed from her body have been used in a massive operation in test-tube breeding. In the script, Clark provides, and they destroy the monster being, breeding back through him at the world which will save them. (They want to devour us," says Burris, at one point. "They want to put us in the freak show." "They are everybody." Though love triumphs over evil it is not the happiness of the ending which is remarkable, but its formlessness. Thorn is an emotionally violent book. No pulp cliches move its plot and there is no elegant slight-of-mind about the resolution. The concern of the novel, mechanically as well as thematically, is the predication of its hero-victims, elaborating, exaggerating and analysing the quality of their alienation.

Hawkshill Station, by contrast, is a book drained of all emotional drama. It is neither elaborate nor exaggerated, but its analysis of the state of alienation which is established for the remainder of a sciono-experiment. Barrett is far more deeply involved in the station. The station is a place of exile for political dissidents expelled from a near future USA. Barrett is in a far more intense state and as its occupants are aware there is no question of return. Barrett's 'king of the station', is tortured by a physical illness and by the memory of a past event. Barrett is in the process of building a woman out of rigs and fragments of Cambrian crustaceans and another is composed of experiments in psychical research, trying to escape by breaking through to a higher level of consciousness transcending time and the Hawkshill equations which make their exile obsolete. When a new arrival in the camp begins writing reports on the possibility of rehabilitating the inmates, there is no way for the others to know whether he is reacting to his circumstances or to the station and its history (as they are) or whether a real possibility of release now exists. So far as Barrett is concerned, in fact, the question of release no longer seems important - but there is a wider context in which the ultimate prison might thus be transformed into the first out

To the same period belong To Live Again and The Masks of Time (also known as Vornian-19), two novels which are all hypothetical in nature and the result of a metaphysical. The former is strongly plotted, and has a theme reminiscent of Recalled to Life, featuring a world in which the past-episodes provide the means for the dead to be resurrected as paragons upon the living. That this theme is closely allied to Silverberg's new universe of discourse is evident in the fact that the idea of putting two minds in one skull was used to dramatize the alienation condition in a later novel, The Ascendancy. In the Masks of Time, by contrast, all but devoid of plot. It is a curious novel describing the activities of a time-traveller who comes to observe the apocalyptic climax of the twentieth century and becomes a part of it in a quasi-Mesopotamian fashion. The strategy of using 'a man of the future' as an 'observer' for the future, has its own interest, at least in so far as it is a personal method, such as science fiction books (eg Grant Allen's The British Barbarians, John Bennett's Hampsleshooting Wonder, Olaf Stapledon's Odd John, etc.) but Silverberg used it not as a vehicle for social comment and
criticism but as a symbol of rebirth. The time traveller returns to a "Time of Sweeping," which makes it clear that our world is doomed, but he attempts to influence the world with his own knowledge and is himself the incarnate spirit of human regeneration. This book is particularly significant in that the myth of rebirth and regeneration is one which natural links to the problem of alienation—and the forging of that link was to become the predominant concern of Silverberg's subsequent work.

Despite his illness in 1966 Silverberg was still producing books at a phenomenal rate in 1967. In February of 1968, however, he was interrupted by a disaster when his house burned down and he lost almost all of the apparatus of his life. The house was rebuilt, but Silverberg was left with his autobiographical essay:"I was never the same again. Until the night of the fire I had never been touched by the real anguish of life... The fire and certain other dark events some months earlier had marked an end to my apparent immunity to life's pain, and drained from me, evidently forever, much of the bearable energy that had allowed me to write a dozen or more books of high quality in a single year."

He began again. For a novel collection on the theme of man's vulnerability to technological disaster he wrote 'How it was When the Past Went Away,' about an epidemic amnesia which forces a city's inhabitants to start their lives all over. He also produced the novels 'Nightwings,' a nostalgic, almost lyrical, return to the exotic backgrounds of his old Science Fiction Adventures space operas, but with a sober plot which was transformed in two sequels, 'Perry's Way' and 'To Jerusalem,' from a science-fiction novel and then into a myth of Earth. Watcher, whose task it is to warn Earth of alien invasion, cannot reissue effective opposition when it comes. The aliens take over Earth and he becomes a stranger in the world they are beginning to change. Ultimately, however, the invasion paves the way for a human renaissance, and the Watcher undergoes transcendental metamorphosis into an angelic being.

It was also shortly after the fire that he wrote the superb short story 'Sundance,' in which the morality of colonialism and the possibilities inherent in human contact with alien beings are explored in a compact and elegant piece of prose where co-existent alternative realities show the issue from several perspectives.

The same question became the starting point for the novel 'Downward to the Earth,' a tour de force which brought together many of the threads of his past work. Its hero, Gundersen, returns to the planet Belthezer with the idea of mining in some way for the crucibles which he was party to imposing upon the natives, who were once enslaved but have now been recognised as people. One particular crime which haunts him is the fact that he once prevented seven of the aliens from going to the ritual rebirth which forms the core of their religion and life. He ultimately follows the path to rebirth himself, cursed by one of the seven and aided by another, to become a new kind of being, at once human and alien. Symbolically, at least, this was the most satisfactory solution Silverberg found to the problems that now concerned him. It is, however, not too difficult to design surreal and symbolic solutions to real problems.

The novel draws a parallel between Simeon Krug, who is trying to make contact with the infinite universe beyond Earth via a giant tower intended to beam and receive messages to and from other worlds, and Thor Watchman and the artificial intelligence of the androids which both disguise and help the evolution of the artificial intelligence of the androids which is both deity and hope of salvation. When Krug discovers the secret religion of the androids, with himself as its godhead, and tells Watchman that in his eyes androids are more than beings (products unworthy of any special consideration) he is seized. The android retaliates by destroying the tower, and condemning Krug's hopes.

The surrealistic novel 'Son of Man was a logical outgrowth of this climate of thought. The world in the book is set not in the physical planet Earth but in the Earth of human perception—the model world of the mind. It takes place not in a future of expanded possibilities but in a future of psychological potential. Sensations are incarnated as landscape; there are places called Old, Heavy and Slow. Modes of psychological orientation become alternative human species: alarmists, awakners, destroyers. The protagonist watches the ceremony of the Five Rites, culminating in the Shaping of the Sky, but his presence upsets the progress of the rites and he is referred to by a being called Wrong to the Well of First Things, where he is called upon to forsake his alienated isolation and accept the whole burden of humanity. Here, he has abandoned even his metaphorical structures, and is experimenting with pure symbology.

In two novels which followed 'Son of Man Silverberg developed a new direction of approach to his central concern. The World Inside and A Time of Changes focus not on the state of alienation but on the kind of circumstances which generate alienation. The first deals with a populated world whose citizens are gathered into skyscraper urbanism, forced to live in such close contact that social relationships disintegrate under the strain. The second has an alien society which, by its communication, especially emotional communication, is a sin. One may regard The World Inside as a metaphorical extraction of modern city life, and A Time of Changes as a metaphorical extraction of contemporary social convention. But there are no symbolic transcendental solutions here: from the World Inside there is no escape at all, while the hero of A Time of Changes clings desperately but hopelessly to the traditional solution that love can triumph over any adversity.

This particular story of Silverberg's work culminated in a return to quasi-mysticism in the novel 'The Book of Skulls', in which four characters are separately examined in terms of their formation by and through their relationship with the environment. The metaphor is stripped from the situation—the world of the book is contemporary America—but it is retained in the goal which is described as so to provide a set of rules for the interaction of the characters with each other. There is a promise that the 'winners' in the game may achieve immortality, but only on special terms.

While the Book of Skulls summed up Silverberg's study of the forces causing alienation, Dying Inside summed up his extensive exploration of the idea of alienation. Again, the imaginative component is stripped down to a single definitive trope: the world is a contemporary America, but the protagonist, David Silig, is a receptive telepath. His talent gives him godlike powers of perception and understanding, but it also isolates him in the face of what he perceives and understands. The central paradox of the problem of alienation is a topic of more elegant dramatisation. Within the book we are offered the predicament of Kafka's heroes as a standard for comparison, but it has much closer parallels with Sartre's Nausea. The plot of the novel is consummately simple: Silig is losing his talent, losing his ability to understand his fellow men and in so doing becoming like them, losing his alien-ness. The central issue is starkly clear: it is a case of heads they win, tails he loses. Can the death of his present self, his 'metamorphosis', really provide a 'rebirth' into the human world?

The Book of Skulls and Dying Inside completed a phase in Silverberg's career; together they constitute a kind of punctuation mark. In order to display the context in which this work may, in my opinion, be best understood, I do not mention a number of other works published between 1967-1972. Although this work is, for the most part, outside the developing core of his work, it is not necessarily inferior. There are a number of other stories which construct situations which are metaphors of alienation; some of them, like the time-paradox novel 'Up the Line' and the short stories 'Caliban' and 'The Reality Trip', are much lighter in treatment and recover a wryness usually associated with his older work. Others fit closely into the scheme I have mapped out but seem to be adjuncts to it—the brilliant novella 'In Empyrean's Jaws' is thematically related to Son of Man, while The Second Trip forms a bridge between To Live Again and Dying Inside, following up the idea of two minds in one body while developing the idea of the receptive telepath as an archetype of the alienated man at a much more sophisticated level than 'Warm Man'. There still remain two first class juvenile novels (Gate of Worlds and Across a Billion Years) and much more short work, including two more award winners ('Good News From The Vatican' and 'The Feast of St Dionysus').

More recently, Silverberg's output has decreased drastically. He has written very little in the last three years, content for the most part to amuse himself now with short stories which toy with such conventions as the 'Skin of the Earth' and, occasionally, the 'tradition' of the short story. Silverberg is, of course, with a considerable degree of artistry, and has produced such gems as 'Schwarm Between the Galaxies', the story of an anthropologist in a future Earth tending more and more to cultural uniformity, who fantasises about the possibilities implicit in the concept of a universe so merged with alien cultures. In two major works, 'Born with the Dead' and The Stoicastic Man he has extended the pattern of his post-1968 work slightly, but it seems that it is no longer the metaphorical qualities of the central ideas which interest him so much as their philosophical implications. Though The Stoicastic Man is superficially another version of Dying Inside, it concerns a man slowly cultivating a new mental power (preoccupation) instead of losing one—it is the logical implications of the situation, its intellectual aspects rather than its emotional ones, which are explored for examination.

It may well be that there will be no return to the level of productivity which Silverberg maintained even in 1969 and 1970, but it may also be that there remains another new phase in his career, in which he will go on (or, in a sense, return as a more capable writer) to a more objective study of imaginative ideas and their implications. As a hypothesis, it is significant that he began this period of semi-retirement by re-reading the entire body of his work, which, however, without disturbing the content. His future work may be of which is "harder" in its method, if not in its content, than the work already published. This hypothesis is one of the most remarkable, as well as one of the most complicated and coherent, artistic achievements in science fiction.
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You probably had quite a shock when you bought this copy of SFM. We've had to put the price up to 50p; there's nothing else we could do. For too long we've been trying to absorb the steady rise of paper and postage costs, and now we've no alternative but to pass it on to you. We're sorry, but it's happening everywhere.

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In next month's SFM we're offering you the chance to buy six super posters for only 40p. If you only want one the price is 50p, but if you buy three you can have them for only £1. The posters include five by Bruce Pennington: The Green Brain, Worlds of Robert Heinlein, Space Ranger, Whipping Star and Earthworks. The sixth poster is by Tim White and is his illustration for The Legend of CIX/11. See SFM Vol 3 No 4 for full details.

Nasty Rumours

Joe Haldeman, author of The Forever War, is no longer editor of Astronomy magazine and is back to full-time writing. His new novel, Mindbridge, will be published in America in June... Richard S. Shaver, whose stories and articles dominated the pages of Amazing Stories and Fantastic Adventures in the Forties, has died at the age of 68... Fritz Leiber's next book will be called The Pale Brown Thing and will be published by Berkley... Philip K. Dick's Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said won the John W Campbell Memorial Award for 1975... Frederick Pohl's new novel, Man Plus, will be serialised in The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction and then published in July to coincide with the Mars Landing... Faber & Faber will be publishing Harry Harrison's newest novel, Skyfarer, later this year and then Corgi Books will be bringing out the paperback... Faber have just published Chris Priest's new book, House Machine, which is subtitled 'A Scientific Romance'... Robert M Pirsig's amazing book, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, has recently been published by Corgi: it's not of, but it is well worth reading... Bantam Books in America are to produce an original Star Trek novel called Spock, Messiah... William F Nolan and George Clayton Johnson are preparing a sequel to Logan's Run called Logan's World... "Condon Dickson has finished a fantasy novel entitled The Dragon and the George... New English Library will be publishing the English edition of Irwin Porges' book Edgar Rice Burroughs: The Man Who Created Tarzan... fans of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's science fantasy adventures will be pleased to hear that publishers John Murray, in conjunction with Jonathan Cape, have revisited the Complete Professor Challenger Stories; price £3.95. This omnibus edition includes the classic The Lost World as well as The Poison Belt, The Land of Mist, The Disintegration Machine and When the World Screamed... Conan Doyle's other great of classic The Marocot Deep, which has been out of print, will be published by Pan Books in July... Pan have also bought the rights to issue the UK edition of The Ant Farm by Frank Zappa. Frances Cress Welsing has become one of America's top illustrators, known widely for his illustrations for the Conan series of books and for the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs. So Far Pan have not decided on a publication date... A BOY AND HIS DOG

A Boy and His Dog

Director and Screenplay: I Q Jones, based on the novel by Harlan Ellison. Reviewed by A Ashford

Screen adaptations of books never start off on a clean slate. Everybody who has read the book has his own idea about how it should be filmed. The better known the book, the more ground the film has to make up. With Harlan Ellison's A Boy and His Dog the problem is further complicated: how do you film such a story and still maintain the quality of the original? Both problems are overcome by a close adaptation. According to the author, surely the most critical judge, the film is a faithful version. In order to achieve this, though, mountains had to be moved. A mountain, 41,000,000 lbs to be precise, was actually moved 82 miles to the Coyote river bed. The set itself covered 43 miles and was filled with 4,700 tons of building materials, to create the setting of a world devastated by a fourth world war. Impressively these figures are, except for a single shot of a half-buried car and some sunken telephone poles, the extent of the effort put into creating the world is not apparent in the film. This is the film's advantage; the aura of desolation is created in the background, providing a setting for the story, yet not becoming the story itself.

The year is 2024, the war has devastated the world, whose remains lie partly entombed beneath mud flats. It is a very dangerous place: the people are armed, some move with gangs, others, the 'soldos', go it alone. Vic is a solo, but he isn't alone, he has his dog. To describe Blood as belonging to anyone is to do him an injustice. He is highly intelligent, able to detect the presence and sex of people in a limited area, and what's more he can 'talking'. This is done telepathically and it is not until we see Vic 'talking' without moving his lips that we actually realise that the exchange at the beginning of the film was between Vic and Blood. The talking dog was probably one of the hardest ideas to put over. If the relationship didn't gain credibility at the start, then the whole film would have been lost. The dog's character is established through the gruff delivery of sarcastic digs at Vic, and by editing the sequence so that it appears to act. Blood is no lap-dog: in fact he is more intelligent of the two and tries to educate Vic. Their days are spent in the search for the two basic commodities, food and women. For in the post-war world women are scarce: if one is found she is brutally raped and left to die. (At the end of the film when Vic comes across a dead girl the only emotion he shows is that of disappointment at not finding her first.) The food comes from cavi, dug up or stolen. The entertainment is in the form of junk pile cinema that show sex and violence films which are scratched and yellowed with age. It is here that Blood first senses Quilla June, she is disguised as a solo and Vic and Blood follow her to a deserted building which has only its roof visible above the ground. They are not alone, a gang has also trailed her. Vic refuses to leave her, but not out of any noble thoughts. In the fight that follows, Blood is injured and they have to hide in a giant boiler. Blood is ignored as Vic and Quilla make love; Vic is not used to a female who responds and this, coupled with the fact that she easily tricks him and escapes back down under the ground to Tepoka, makes Vic determined to follow her. Blood tries to dissuade Vic from going, he tells him that it is a trap and that she was just bait. Vic ignores this as he leaves a wounded Blood by the entrance to Tepoka.

Tepoka is an alternative society to that of the street gang society that roams on the surface. The people are pale and bloodless, reminiscent of clowns' faces. Here the American society has been preserved and frozen in all its 'old glory'; the land of plenty, with a Walton-like populace ruled by the committee. It is a paranoid, parasitic, sterile community. They need Vic to provide the seed for the next generation, as the women have become impotent through living underground for so long. The grin is soon wiped off his face when finds himself connected to a machine that is feeding the world.

Here the film deviates slightly from the book, the character of Quilla June is developed in greater depth. Vic is looking for love, to a harder, more mercenary type of person, probably to make the ending of the film more palatable. She beats Vic, hoping to use him to kill the committee: 'we can rule together,' she implores, 'Vic, however, has had enough, he just wants out, but it is not that easy – the committee is far from helpless. Quilla June joins him after her teenage rebellion fails, and they barely escape with their lives.

They return to the outside world where Blood, close to death from starvation, is still waiting. He has to have something to eat or he will die, but there is not food to be had. Quilla June urges Vic to leave, 'there's nothing we can do, you do love me?'. But the boy loves his dog.

The film, which was shown at the Thames Film Festival, is well worth seeing, whether you have read the book or not. The original theme of the book is subordinated in the film, but nowhere does it deserve the description 'a kinkly tale of survival' which seems to have been applied to it. Some of the dialogue is inaudible and this spoils a lot of the witty exchanges between Blood and Vic. However, it is a faithful adaptation; now let's see them do Dethbile.

PAPERBACKS ON TRIAL

COMPiled by Maxim Jakubowski

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REACHING OUT

BY GARRY KIWLTH

CAPTAIN FLASHBENDER was blind yet he could see. One of his senses was an artificial one, adequate, but not by any means perfect. It was precisely because of this imperfection that the benign, bumbling government employee was chosen for the fourteen-year mission to a planet beyond his own solar system which was believed to have atmospheric conditions similar to his own world. The population was not yet a problem on Flashbender's home planet but his superiors believed in planning well in advance to avert such serious occurrences as life and civilization. Two missions to the stars had already failed, disastrously. The one-man starships had never returned; at least not fully returned. The last one, it is true, but all made it. It was just that the pilot was terrified of landing. A touchdown on any planet, even his home, would have made his nightmares real.

"I can't," Captain Yais had screamed at them. "The spaces... the open spaces. I can't come out there where you are. It'll kill me." Then Yais had deliberately piloted his $500,000,000 vehicle into the white frothing mouth of the sun, killing himself anyway. They lowered a coffin full of his favourite books into his grave and sang the Hymn of the Star Walkers. Whatever would have killed him on landing was obviously worse than being incinerated inside a metal tube. Those who watched and listened to his last few days of life were certain that Yais had an extreme case of agoraphobia.

Agoraphobia had not been dismissed completely by the scientists in the discussions that followed the non-return of the first craft and its pilot, Captain L D Polkinghorne. It must be a consideration after all, when a man had to spend seven years in a cabin 2 metres by 3 metres by 3 metres stepping out onto a world again. However, as Polkinghorne had not returned, any hypothesis they chose could have been the correct one and people do not normally die of agoraphobia.

So the man they chose for the third mission was Calvin Flashbender, honorary Captain for the purpose of the mission and blind from birth. They reasoned that a man who could only see shadows in his mind's eye up to a distance of 3 metres would hardly know the difference between a prairie and a large living-room. They could not be sure of course, but interstellar travel was a gamble anyway. The ship could be placed on the pilot die of a body malfunction. Over a period of fourteen years anything could happen. But they thought they saw the need to continue trying. Flashbender seemed the right type; happy in his own company, unemotional and philosophical about death. His life had been spent so far in a routine job behind a desk. Here was an opportunity to break the monotony. He was fit, being an exponent of martial arts (the result of a defiant attitude towards his blindness) but then fitness was not a primary concern of the scientists whose subject was going to spend at least fourteen years in a ship that had an interstellar drive which was only faster than a normal interplanetary drive and not amazingly faster. Before the discovery of the drive, scientists and laymen had envisaged an interstellar ship as being supernatural in its speed. Alas, natural boundaries yet prevailed. The drive they discovered could only travel at the speed of light.

Perhaps later would come the dream of spaceship drives: a slide around a bend in time; matter transmission...

Flashbender made the necessary corrections to the course and then sat down to finish his game of one-man chess: the invention of Hoppenland St James for use on the first mission. Captain Flashbender moved the heavy chess pieces with the sureness of one who has played the board many times before. In his mind's eye the chess board with its largest squares appeared as a block of shadows: well-defined shadows at the edges, but shadows nevertheless like other completely blind men who had to rely on the probe rods projecting from their heads, lived in a world of ghostly shades of black, where objects had shape and size but no depth: a two-dimensional world. Since he had known no other form of sight, it was to Flashbender quite normal. His judgement of distance within his 3-metre vision was perfect and it would have been difficult to differentiate between him and a sighted person in his present environment. In fact, within a 3-metre radius Flashbender was superior, for he had 360° vision.

The probe struck out comically from the top of Flashbender's bald pate like a miniature lighthouse on a dome-shaped rock. Inside the dome, fine wire thinner than a spider's thread ran the transmissions of black and grey photographs to his optic receiver. The probe was Flashbender's white sick. It gained him unwarranted and unnecessary sympathy in society, but it was essential to his livelihood. Out in space he was no more an invalid than the next man. On the contrary, his 360° probe put him in the superhuman class and relegated the normal man to a cripple by comparison: He had eyes in the back and at all the other compass points of his feet down head.

The planet which was Captain Flashbender's destination was now only forty-eight hours away. It showed on his external viewer as being a great deal larger than his own world and about 3,000,000 miles further away from its sun. Flashbender had high hopes, however, that it would support human life. He had reason to believe that Yais had been on its surface and if so, he was of the other planet's race. Flashbender had also read that the planet's orbit was such that it might be possible to find Captain Polkinghorne and re-establish contact between the two. This was not a planned event. The plane had appeared to him as a piece of crown jewels, but with the heightened awareness of the brain and the brain sort them out into real or imaginary objects. The boy sitting outside the corner of an eye at the same time as a bird flies over his shoulder, brings a momentary start of astonishment as the ball falls over the fields and out of sight. For an instant the boy is on a par with the little tailor in the old tale of the ogre. He is superhuman: a soccerer. But then the mind puts its foot down hard.
and analyses the event, choosing an answer compatible with his worldview. A boy cannot throw that far, consequently the ball was tossed simultaneously with the arrival of a bird. What was seen was not seen, but thought to be seen. The world is in order again. The mind can rest easy and the heart cease to flutter. Flashbender's spontaneous shout was so impolitely loud, it startled him, something happened, a cringe from his opponent. Thus the board dimmed to his expectations and he almost apologised to the opponent for his outburst. Then his mind, his rigid, inflexible mind, refused to let him glory in his success and merely left him feeling foolish. If eyes and probes were not the battlefield question there would still be a little magic left in the world.

Flashbender began his final preparations for landing. To his nervousness, the board would be an understatement. He was badly frightened. Piloting the shuttle this far from home was very different from working in his office, but soon the practical side to the mission would rear its painful head. Soon he would have to become a navigator and intrepid explorer of the comic books he had read as a child. Apart from his indulgence in the martial arts he had never been a man of adventure. He was at the surface of the planet hero. After a couple of long sleeps and a search for a landing site he would have to begin to prove that the choice of the shuttle man was not a mistake. Flashbender, a blind clerk, was their choice as saviour of the world.

The fact that he invariably hit his thumb with the hammer while hammering a nail was beside the point.

Captain Flashbender attempted two landings in the module before finally finding a patch of ground stable enough for the shuttle's weight. He had already secured the planet so that the module could photograph most of its aspects from several miles up, then he went down, using the shuttle's instruments, to the surface of the planet. The next stage of the operation was to gather soil and rock samples, and fauna and flora, if there were any. He was too short to reach the ground, but he had spent in waiting — waiting for the module's instruments to check the surface gases, the bacteriological content of those gases and the surrounding areas for infectious germs. Excitingly enough, it found germs, including aerobic bacteria, but nothing which would not classify as harmful. The atmosphere was breathable. The hour was at an end and the module had ceased mentally counting on its fingers. It politely informed Flashbender that he was permitted to leave its portals — but with extreme caution.

Flashbender was certainly cautious enough as he inched the airlock open and sniffed the outside suspiciously. He had deliberately not looked into the external systems. He was at the surface of the planet for fear of agoraphobia. Now he was about to be tested fully. The breeze was scented and felt cool on his cheek. For a moment he experienced a flush of panic as a picture, unassociated with his probe rod, came into his mind: an endless bleak landscape, broken only by scattered montane dark woods. Quickly he concentrated on immediate surroundings and they were interesting enough to hold his attention. He seemed to be on the crest of a large hill, covered in coarse grasses. To his left there was a tree, a conifer of sorts, and several varieties of grey flowers poking through the grasslike style leaves of its roots. Had he been able to see colour Flashbender would have seen at least as many shades as are to be found in the Crevy Window of Gloucester Cathedral. But this splash from an alien paint box left him ignorantly unimpressed. He lived in a world where nature took on the monochrome hues of Gothic architecture. Then Flashbender heard sounds, of small insects, and reminded himself that he would need to wear his protective clothing at all times to avoid stings or bites. Volitionally he pulled his gloves on tighter.

Some of the smells and sounds were so familiar that once, during an unguarded moment, Flashbender felt he was the victim of an expensive hoax. He shook the memory from his thoughts and together sample packets and generally preparing for a day's hard work. He began by pulling up small bunches of the grasslike leaves and putting it in bags. While he was doing his part the module would be catching insects in the traps attached to its elephantine legs. Flashbender had dropped his throck with a startled cry and was attentive to the pictures in his brain. There was nothing there, or what he thought was there, because he hadn't noticed the range of his probe rod. His heart was running over his ribs like knuckles on a washboard. Had he imagined it? Was it another illusion? Something called forth by a lonely mind? Flashbender began to reassure himself. Then it was there again, a huge predacious beast with open jaws and sharp teeth dripping saliva. It paused for an instant as Flashbender let out a snort of fright then it came forward swiftly with gleaming eyes.

Flashbender screamed, started to run and tripped head-over-heels on his own instruments. There was a loud crash as his head hit the ground and shattered the probe rod. Pain followed, but not enough to make him lose consciousness. A few seconds and then Calvin Flashbender felt the hot breath of an alien beast at his throat. A minute later he tried to struggle upright but this time the pain was too fierce and he passed out.

When he came round he tried immediately to focus on his surroundings but nothing came into Flashbender's mind except vague pictures which he knew were of his own making and not transmissions relayed from the probe rod. That was broken, he knew. He was completely blind and the pain was still very bad. He had to get back to the module. He stood up right, swaying a little in giddiness. Which way was the module? O, God! he groaned aloud, ‘If I move the wrong way now I am finished.’

Think! He must think. Almost a dead art with Flashbender. He tried to remember which way the sun was in relation to the module. Think! Yes — it had been directly in the doorway because the shadow had been behind the module. He turned slowly in a circle trying to feel which direction was warmest on his face. That way? Yes, definitely that way. But how long had he been lying unconscious? Had the sun moved any great distance? He would have to chance that. Wait a second. The broken was on his left cheek when he stepped from the module. It was on his left cheek now, as he faced the sun. He began to feel optimistic. Now don’t be too eager, he told himself. What about the land? How did it slope? Away from the ship, definitely. He stepped forward, tentatively feeling with his feet. The ground did slope downwards. Jubilantly he spun 180°, making his head sing in pain, and began walking uphill with the sun on the nape of his neck and a breeze on his right cheek. He stretched his arms out wide to give himself maximum frontage, and walked until he struck his shin on the solid foreleg of the module. Success exhilarated him beyond anything that he had previously experienced. He felt his way to the door of the module and on inside. Painkillers tablets were in the medicine chest. He needed them.

By the time he was tired enough to sleep he had worked out the details. Seven years in a room the size of a prisoner’s cell may be very boring but they made for habitual actions that a man could not forget even if he tried. Flashbender knew every litre centimetre of his living and working quarters. All that remained was to amuse himself during the long voyage home.

Firstly, would he be able to manage the starship’s control panel? Fortunately the most important instruments had audio as well as visual indicators: these had been installed as an emergency measure, but he had found it safer to use both audio and visual on the journey out. He was not so familiar with the module panel, but it was basically a scaled-down version of the one in the starship. Once he had got the thing into orbit, provided he did not hit the starship on exit (a chance so remote he could discount it), he could allow the module to home-in automatically. Of course if anything went wrong with the auto he was in one hell of a spot, but then what was he in anyway? The starship’s computer would help him keep his homeward course; it had the memory of the outward journey locked in its brain. All Flashbender had to do was get it to reverse the journey.

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At first he had not considered completing the mission. The films would be the scientists’ main interest; those of the planet’s surface and the ones the module had taken when he went down. After all, any samples and specimens he took back would be extremely localised. He had not the power to go hopping about all over the planet, and not the space for the samples either. Survival, both for his own sake and the mission’s, was the most important factor. When he woke from his sleep, however, he had the urge to go outside again. He felt his way to a cabinet in which there was a reel of wire, found it and fastened one end to his belt. The reel he fitted in a notch on the side of his bunks so that it would unravel as he walked, then he felt his way outside.

The animal had gone, but he was no longer afraid of it anyway. An hour was spent feeling his way down to where he had left his specimen box. He picked it up and made his way in the direction in which he had seen the tree on arrival. It took a long time but he found it and began taking leaves and scrabbling underneath for
pieces of root. Then he had an idea and felt for a branch, broke it off and stripped it of leaves and projections. He began tapping his way around with it.

"This beats crawling," he said aloud, pleased with himself for his ingenuity. "I wonder no one thought of it before." Flashbender continued his collecting of mosaics and fungi and anything else he could lay his fumbling fingers upon, determined to be beaten by his blindness, yet knowing all the time that his work was to be in vain—a futile mission bound to end in ultimate failure. One thing was certain, he was not sure it was no fault of his that the last hundred years of struggling to reach this goal had been for nothing. Two lives lost and a third on the brink and all for a few muddy pieces of unusable planet.

Flashbender launched the module without trouble and once in orbit found the starship by audio search, then he aimed the module in the direction in which the tone was loudest and switched to important questions—"find and lock-on." In the big ship he had the resources of the starship's complex computer at his disposal and he could set course for home. The blind captain was extremely proud of himself for coping with his primitive infirmity with such ease and competence. He was like the castaway bank clerk who finds new depths in himself when faced with survival in an alien environment. It was the making of a man.

On the return journey Flashbender taught himself to play chess in his new state of complete blindness. It meant that he either had to ask the computer where the pieces were during a game or he had to remember every move from the beginning. The former was tedious and the latter almost impossible, but he found himself improving. Also he would sit for hours allowing his thoughts to follow a logical trail of connections in the way that an ant with a trend of the pheromones it has been laying behind him. The basic moves followed the game as he was involved. Suddenly he stiffened as a thought came to him which really should have come before. After a while he said to the computer,

"The starship take any photographs of the planet's surface? The computer took over for a few seconds then answered 'No' in its flat monotone.

"Then I want you to destroy all those films taken by the module," said Flashbender firmly. Eyes can lie, I know that. There are illusions that play games with eyes and minds, but the truth, the feel, is sure. We shall have to look elsewhere.

"One of the scientists muttered. 'Well the films will soon prove you right or wrong.'

"No they won't," replied Flashbender. "I got the computer to digitize them. We don't have to do that."

Shaw shouted at him then. 'What! All our work ruined!' he shouted. 'You imbecile, I've waited half a lifetime for you to come back and do that.'

"The blind man replied. 'I don't wish to be responsible for an invasion.' One of the men, an old psychologist, spoke up in quivering accents. "We have no need to do that."

Flashbender turned on him coldly. 'What happens when we are shouldering each other for a square metre of ground? I'll tell you what happens, we become desperate, and when we become desperate we justify previously unjustifiable acts. If future generations invade that planet they've got to do it blind; without films to guide them to cities; without the knowledge of the technological state of their enemies and most of all ignorant of the weaponry they will have to face. Blind, you understand? They'll never do it like that. We're not that brave.

"Shaw said quietly. 'We can always send someone else.'

"Flashbender tapped his cane on the floor like a drumstick. 'Yes, but can you afford it? First a reconnaissance and then an invasion fleet, full of expensive men and machines. All that work for nothing? Wouldn't it be better to search elsewhere?' They nodded and Flashbender was relieved to hear their grunts of assent.

"Shaw smashed his right fist into his left hand. 'Damn it!' he spluttered. "How can you be so sure? If you neither heard nor saw nor felt humans—how do you know?"

Flashbender grinned and turned his glassy eyes in the direction of the speaker. 'That beast I mentioned,' he answered, "it came directly for me. There was no hesitation.'

"So?" Shaw queried.

Flashbender touched his own face and said, 'It ticked my nerves like nobody's business. It's a man who finds me so similar to its masters that it does not hesitate to approach; a beast with masters who believe in taming animals with kindness; an animal the equivalent of a dog, that greets one of its benefactors with a fond wipe of the tongue over a familiar face.'
Back in SFM Vol 1 No 11 Roger Dean was interviewed for the Artist in Science Fiction feature and he talked about his album cover designs and architectural projects. He was also very eager to expound on his plans for a book of his work. The book was finally published just before Christmas and probably appeared in many a Christmas stocking; it’s obviously the sort of book which is earmarked for present-giving. Very few people could fail to find Roger Dean’s work appealing.

Topographic Oceans by Roger Dean

Badger by Roger Dean from VIEWS
Roger Dean grows pictures as some people grow plants; you could say he has green fingers. A painting may take him a week of painstaking attention to detail and involved technique or simply ten minutes with a spray gun. He often does hundreds of sketches and working drawings in preparation for a picture. His huge collection of reference books supplies him with valuable information about insects, birds, plants, mechanisms, fairy tales; in fact every subject imaginable. A large selection of literature is close at hand, as well as a vast quantity of colour slides featuring waterfalls, rocks, trees, clouds and the sea. He will work systematically and carefully through the night, often watching a television programme at the same time or listening to some music, unburdened by the passing of time and undisturbed by frequent intrusions by his numerous cats.

When he was at college he received no formal training in drawing and painting (in fact, he studied furniture design), yet over the years he has developed a unique style of illustration and design techniques made to order to his own requirements. He does not think of himself as an artist or even a designer, but more as an architect-inventor, or perhaps discoverer would be more appropriate. His pictures are vivid and shocking, combining hitherto combining images such as birds with elephants, or insects with machines, to create a striking realism. Indeed, when asked if his imaginative fantasy landscapes he produces, he eagerly explains their everyday reality. The strange organic dwellings that appear in many of his pictures are serious architectural projects that he has worked on for years, while he studied the psychological impact of environments and solved the technical problems. The mechanical creatures are not just inhabitants of his alien worlds, they are Roger Dean's exercises in combining the compatible elements of mechanics with living organisms. All his knowledge and ideas come together in his three-dimensional designs: for example his architecture and his project for a huge mechanical butterfly-like stage mount on a truck. He expects the stage to be used for pop festivals in the near future.

As a compulsive explorer of the unknown he is highly successful at producing futuristic science fiction landscapes and views. However, there is more than a suggestion of the past to be seen in his work. The atmosphere of a medieval fairytale is created by his bridled dragon climbing to a towering cloud-wrapped castle and scenes such as the helmeted knight on a charging horse in the underwater Paladin picture. Roger Dean mixes prehistory with science fiction and science with the supernatural as liberally as he combines insects, machines, space and waterfalls. He is concerned with the essential nature of the thing he is dealing with and reducing it to its simplest form—a flying elephant needs a wing and a mechanical space ship needs pivot joints and luminous horned casing. He is not concerned with decoration that is taken care of automatically or embellishment, as that would merely defeat his aims; he is interested in simplicity and integration.

One of Roger Dean's most popular paintings depicts flying elephants and was commissioned for an Osibisa album cover. The group liked the idea of elephants charging through a hot African atmosphere, it suited their image. So he painted winged elephants swooping down over a brilliantly coloured swamp inhabited by huge lizards. The elephants soon left the swamps and were seen many times on posters, single covers, T-shirts, advertisements, billboards and even on a hot-air balloon. Animals are a large feature of his work and even when they are depicted in their natural surroundings with no anatomical alterations they convey a strange uncanny other-worldliness.

A good example of this is the beautifully drawn budgerigar picture. The strokes on the budgerigar cover also create strange sensations by their massive size and realism, and they serve as an example of Roger Dean's ability to create an appropriate sense of scale. He is able to draw an ocean without making its impressiveness and a wizard without limiting his power. In one of his most interesting paintings he depicts himself as a wizard carrying a wand, wearing a butterfly-winged wolf cape and big hairy boots. He is walking across a rocky watertfall which is hanging in space. The original painting is quite large and the wizard is comparatively small. He is surrounded by infinite stars and planets; the sense of scale that this creates is most effective. There are certain pieces of his work which are quite underrated, such as the McKendree Spring album cover; beautiful in its simplicity and sense of space. The blue demon, one of his most popular paintings, has a great feeling of energy and movement and therefore no distracting details that could possibly limit its scale.

All of his pictures have their own individuality but as so many of the well-known ones are frequently discussed and analysed it is worth mentioning a few of his more obscure pieces. The Budgie cover that was based on a photograph of a bird's skull and a model plane is one of his most shocking images; without fail this painting promotes a sense of horror. Nitro function was another quite ominous painting. It did not take him long to complete but, by emphasising the shape of the surging horse and the rapidity with which the flying creature appeared from the distance, he created an atmosphere of speed and power. Undoubtedly, the most under-rated Roger Dean picture is the one used for a Sneaky cover. It shows a sunset scene with a man and an ox, pulling a record style around a circular field. Both record cover and poster reproductions of the original painting were of bad quality and failed to show the original depth of colour and fine detail.

It is possible to get a better look at his work in the book he has recently produced called Views. It contains as much of Roger's work as can be got into 160 pages of 12 inches by 12 inches format and is excellently reproduced to capture the quality of the original artwork in full colour throughout. There is also an informative text with many drawings, small pictures and double-page spreads. Since the publication of Views, Roger Dean has been completing a book on architecture which will be his next publication. He has also been involved in preliminary work on an elaborate science fiction film with his brother Martin Dean which promises to be a breakthrough in filming technical and fantastic effects.

Green Castle by Roger Dean from Views
The Query Box

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 Query Box," Science Fiction Monthly, New English Library Ltd., Barnard’s Inn, Holborn, London ECIN 2JR. They will be answered as soon as possible.

Concerning Weinbaum, Olling writes: "The subjects of this series are not based on the basis of their overall contribution to the science fiction field, with regard for their present popularity, which must be influenced to some extent by the availability of their books. This is evident from the results of the "inadvertent" poll of SFM readers, published in Vol. 2 No. 5, which would show some peculiar anomalies if judged by the criteria I have adopted. As it happened, seven of the thirteen subjects covered in the poll were voted as the first seven, but the tail insisted, notwithstanding, on including Heinlein, most otherwise acceptable "masters" as Jack Williamson, Heinlein, Hamilton, Murray Leinster, and even the vastly influential editor, John W. Campbell. Not to mention poor old Verne (score 60), who must be turning in his grave . . ."

BUSY BEES

Many years ago I read a story by A.E. van Vogt called "The Space Knights", and now I would like to know if van Vogt has written any more stories since. The copy I have is a rare item and I should be grateful to hear if it has ever been reprinted.

Glynis Lenney, Derby

The classic anthology edited by Raymond J Healy and J Francis McComas, published by Randon House, New York, is a review copy of the Modern Library series, and given the new title Famous Science Fiction Stories. The book may be bought through Mike Sandow, Pall Mall Road, Chelsea, London, at about £3.00 plus postage. But you may have to wait your turn.

Your correspondent levied many criticisms of a book he had read. I am sure that the correspondent, if he chose to do so, could have found material in the book to support his arguments. I think that what one really needs when viewing the programme is that it is basically a "serialised" epic. The enormous amount of information which the writers and producers of the show have has created something which is sure of being our greatest show ever. I am sure that it will be a great success and that it will bring people back to the show who have not seen it before.

I hope Mr. Brown can see the situation more clearly and that he will do his best to produce a successful programme. I am sure that it will be a great success and that it will bring people back to the show who have not seen it before.

John X Mind (Racoffice-on-Trent, Notts)

May I add that the review copy of "The Space Knights" which I have is a rare item and I should be grateful to hear if it has ever been reprinted.
To work! To work!' His face suddenly became serious, fierce even. Staring at the silent, trembling Insosi delegation he drew his formidable gloves from his belt and laid them, claws uppermost, on the table.

'Now then,' he said in a purr, 'Who's your chief spokesman, gentlemen?'

Things happened so fast Quartermann was bound to get a shock.

Ensor, his deputy, hurried through the base complex to the commander's office. He tried to keep far enough ahead of the Insosi delegation to be able to give the chief fair warning, but he was always losing the contest.

'You won't like it, Dan,' he said. 'It's crazy.'

'Won't like what? What's crazy?' Dan Quartermann looked up irritably. His table was littered with task-force reports and the geological analysis of Sector Ten which had been produced by the base's computer.

Quartermann was dark complexioned, dark haired, hook-nosed. His face showed the cumulative strain of four tours of duty in command of a Forward Exploitation Unit.

The Insosi delegation's about one jump behind me,' said Ensor.

'What's so surprising about that? We said we'd see them this morning didn't we?' Quartermann returned to the print-outs as if even the few seconds before the delegation appeared must be put to work. He ran a finger along the figures for deep-strata drilling analysis.

Tony Masero

cause only a minor interruption. It was their third or maybe fourth appearance since the signing of the draft treaty permitting exploitation of the mineral rights on M19 by the Federal Fleet's Commercial Wing. Complaints dropped into a regular pattern. You could guess how they'd fall out.

'They've brought an adviser with them,' said Ensor anxiously, looking over his shoulder.

'OK, Rolf -- OK! They can do that! The treaty's standard.' He quoted: 'Indigenous negotiators can elect to be advised by any party they choose provided said party conducts negotiations in accordance with recognised code and in English or other official federal language. So what?'

'It's crazy,' said Ensor. 'The adviser ...' But he didn't have a chance to brief the commander further. A gong chimed. The voice of Quartermann's robot secretary announced, 'Chief Pratz: Insosi delegation. The curved wall of Quartermann's office made a door. It opened and there they were.

Quartermann looked at them and smiled politely; the smile they said you have to smile at aliens to whom you owe treaty obligations and who think they have grievances. But it was a weary smile. The aliens of Sector Ten received it in their blank, hostile way. There
was the paramount chief, Prazel, and one or two lesser chieftains. They were oily-skinned with bony, auricular chins, their eyes like the skull of the sea gull's miniature torpedo tubes.

Quartermaster wondered why one of them had brought a domestic animal with him. Maybe he was a good-luck token. Funny; none of the other delegations had been so accoutered. He glanced at the creature. He had about the same shape and looks as a cat back on Earth. He sat by the legs of one of the chiefs and licked his chops with a bright pink tongue. He regarded the base commander greenishly from steady eyes.

"Welcome," said Quarterm. "Feel at home.

"We bring an advisor," said Prazel. "We lodge a complaint.

"Let your adviser to join you. Time's short. Chief and valuable.

Enser coughed discreetly. The Insoi chief looked puzzled. He stroked out his left hand in a sweeping, downward gesture. It was then Quarterm got his shock. He suddenly found himself looking at the cat. Very closely at the cat, which had purred himself gracefully upward onto Quarterm's table. He couldn't help bounding backward in his chair. In a second the years of training asserted themselves. He to the last full stop and comma," said Enser. "We're go-
ing to have real trouble with him.

"You bet! He's going to have real trouble. And you know why?" Quarterm glanced at his deputy.

Enser waited.

"I'll tell you why, Rolf. The computer analysis shows that Insoi Sector Ten is rich in pronucleon seams at zero penetration. Chances are the deposits expand into Sectors Nine and Eleven. That smart psycat knows that. While there's a dispute the FE Unit's for-ced to suspend digging and mining. While it's suspend-
ed the Insoi are working their oily hands to the bone, ripping the ore out of the ground with stone axe, feeding trowels, hair-grips or whatever's handy.

"Sub-section thirty, paragraph two," said Enser.

"Indigenous population with settlement rights shall receive full compensation for waste disposal injuring the en-
vironment," said Enser. "When they do we're going to be as-deep in consolation demands. And stalled all over.

"I need someone from home," said Quarterm. "I need a lawyer as smart in frontier codes as Mr. Sinn.

"The commander chewed a knuckle, "Goddam!" he exploded. "They've got us over a barrel. Rolf! If we agree to investigate waste disposal and pollution and have to put in systems it'll double the cost of the pro-
nucleon. The Energy Purchasing Commission's gonna give us that. We lose the franchise. If we wait to get an adviser from home the Insoi will rob us ragged, then sell the stuff back to us and there'll still be no guarantee we'd defeat.

"Make a deal. We could take care of the Insoi.

"Quarterm scratched his map of black hair. How about a tour of the diggings, and an accident--fatal, of course?

"No dice, Dan! Official policy in the forward areas put a stop to that long ago. Remember the big speech? "After a quarter million years of progress it's time high intelligence species stopped trying to eat each other..." And so on. If it misfired it would be curtains for us. Besides, the Insoi would have a replacement within a week. System Minosa's a whole lot closer than the Fed.

"What do we know about P30? quarantine asked.

"Except that it's in System Minosa and has a bunch of psycats running it?" "Not much," said Enser. "I've asked my girl to have a photocopy report rushed from home. But Minosa's outside the Fed. It's an "Associated Territory," whatever that means. P30's part of it. Not much con-
tact yet, commercial or diplomatic. He ignored it.

"If that attorney's a representative specimen they sound pretty highly developed to me. Him and his "compensating factor."

"So, what are you going to do, Dan? I think there's nothing for it," said Quarterm. "You'll have to make a deal. Rolf? Right now, Sinn's on the wrong side. I want him on my side because those machines have got to roll again.

"Well, I've thought of some way to work it. Well, I could've beamed the Institute of Alien Fauna to ship me a giant mouse to make things even?" The preliminary meeting was over. The three inattentive stymied in a half circle at a respectful distance from the other side of his table. He looked along their faces, but they were as rocklike and expressionless as statues. They betrayed nothing.

"You dumbhead! You could've found some way to work it. I could've beamed the Institute of Alien Fauna to ship me a giant mouse to make things even!" The preliminary meeting was over. The three inattentive stymied in a half circle at a respectful distance from the other side of his table. He looked along their faces, but they were as rocklike and expressionless as statues. They betrayed nothing.

"The sonofabitch knows the standard treaty down waier. If we can't get a settlement fast all the equipment will have to be moved out of the sector into others.

"Until the other tribes get to hear that alley-cat's arguments about waste disposal injuring the en-
vironment, said Enser. "When they do we're going to be as-deep in consolation demands. And stalled all over.

"I need someone from home," said Quarterm. "I need a lawyer as smart in frontier codes as Mr. Sinn.

"The commander chewed a knuckle, "Goddam!" he exploded. "They've got us over a barrel. Rolf! If we agree to investigate waste disposal and pollution and have to put in systems it'll double the cost of the pro-
nucleon. The Energy Purchasing Commission's gonna give us that. We lose the franchise. If we wait to get an adviser from home the Insoi will rob us ragged, then sell the stuff back to us and there'll still be no guarantee we'd defeat.

"Make a deal. We could take care of the Insoi.

"Quarterm scratched his map of black hair. How about a tour of the diggings, and an accident--fatal, of course?

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The box said the curious, strangled word again. Suddenly the cat yawned. Ensor jumped as the deep pink throat and sharp little teeth confronted him. The cat realized him quietly with his green eyes. 'Don't worry, Ensor,' I'll get you free. And I'll see that my clients get good advice.'

The cat sneered and stroked his whiskers. 'My clients' price for a consolation waiver, as I said yesterday,' said the cat, 'is $5,000. The contract includes compensation and a parallel agreement that the FEU will put in a neutraliser and a waste disposal system that ensures full ecological protection.'

Ensor stayed silent, so the attorney went on. 'And when we've got it here, Master Ensor, we'll go on to the other sectors. So you'd better advise your commander to admit he's beaten and sign up fast. And as for me—I don't know.'

Ensor flashed his lights at the first skimmer. The signal meant, 'We're wasting our time here, let's go.'

'His conclusion added at this point, 'OK, cut the speeches! You're breaking my heart. I've heard it all before. You're one of those! I get the message.'

Quarterman was resigned. Now and then his fringes would wave. 'The staff is angry,' he said. 'The staff is angry.'

'There has to be something, Rolf. I've never been anywhere on the goddam frontier where we couldn't negotiate something without having our pants sliced off. If I sign a deal like that, you want me, I'll be downgraded to grease-monkey in the engine house before the end of the week. Where the hell is the next space phone? Report on P 30? There has to be something. Some vice? Competition? Power? Profit? What motivates them? They don't have to be something! Unless this goddam specimen's an angel in disguise. Corer checked and found the report on P 30 had come in while they were up country. He had the secretariat feed it through on the television screen.

'Craps!' said Quarterman. 'They know nothing about it!' 'Last report from Investigatory Trade Mission 62B. Indications: once high degree of social order appears in mid-stage of decline. Numerous mammalian specimens dominated by cat-like mammalype TypeFed Sima 611 of which ten sub-species identified on current mission report on P 30. 'Hold it,' cried Ensor. 'Hold it, Dan. What does this mean?'

'Slim.'

'What does this mean? quarterman said to the unrecognisable word which had come out of Sima's translator box.

'Klyer. That's what it sounded like.'

'So what?'

'I don't know,' said Ensor thoughtfully. 'But he said it like it was something he hated, even feared. He was mad when he said it. Really angry. Twice.'

Quarterman attacked his well-chewed knuckle. Ensor got to his feet and strolled up and down. Neither man spoke for a minute or so. Suddenly Ensor said, 'Dan, suppose Simm's not from the dominant species. Suppose he got to P 30 in System Minoa and has even smarter pycsaycals than Simm.'

Quarterman smiled a genuine smile for the first time in two days. He thumped his table with delight. 'Rolf, get me the Fed Fleet agent on the photophone by 22.00 hours. If we can't beat 'em, let's join 'em! We need an agent on this case. Chief Praza and his agent a shock. For the first time in my life I'm going to get me an adviser. A pycsaycal lawyer; a klyer lawyer!'

'Can you get an agent at this time of night? He surprised, certainly. There weren't too many Forward Ex- ploitation Unit Commanders who asked for advisers to assist in interstellar negotiations. There were still less advisers from non-Fed civilisations. Still, it wasn't the agent's job to question field commanders. Besides, he knew what Quarterman and he knew if Quarterman asked for a—what was it?—oh, yes a klyer lawyer from P 30 in System Minoa, then Quarterman must have a good reason for it.

So, inside forty-eight hours, the agent was able to beam a message saying that Mister (sorry delete Mister) Roror was on special transport and would probably come in to M 19 on the next freighter. Meanwhile, Quarterman kept the talks from moving along, stalling for time. On the third day Praza and his delegation, cooly advised by the cat, threatened to walk out unless they had been let through to a creative diversion by starting to pull the team and its equipment out of Sector Ten for Sector Eight.

He'd calculated that the cat would be under the weather and he was right. The Section Eight Insol swiftly prompted a con- solation demand on terms similar to that filed for Sec- tor Ten and Simm. Uncharacteristically, Roror asked around at base to see the reaction. These manoeuvres were fine in the short term, but the general situation through M 19 was getting more and more tense. The machines and robots were shut down their fuel cells had to be inhibited. Every day that passed meant that much longer before a realist achieved a distinct advantage. It was too late, the worry of local units cut off in the field with time on their hands among increasingly disadinant and hostile popu- lations. The relief was considerable when the fleet sent in a special freighter with the new adviser as supercargo.

Quarterman and Ensor both got out of bed early and rushed to the landing area by surface truck, unshaven and buttoning their uniforms as they went. If they had ever been surprised by how tiny Simm they were, it had been the worry of local units cut off in the field with time on their hands among increasingly disadinant and hostile popu- lations. The relief was considerable when the fleet sent in a special freighter with the new adviser as supercargo.

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