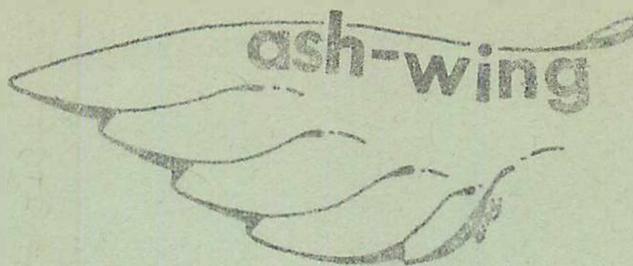


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ASH-WING 21

MARCH 1977

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ASH-WING 21 is brought to you at the whim of Frank Denton, Inimitable Roy Editor. I'm easy; locs, trades, illos, articles, reviews, and sometimes money. Or how about Save the Whales buttons, darning eggs, Tobler chocolate bars, gladiola bulbs, recipes for Black Forest Cherry Cake and dragons. Maybe even owls. Any or all of the above may be sent to 14654 - 8th Ave. S.W. Seattle, WA 98166. This is a Bran & Skolawn Press Publication.



THE FREE COMNOTS

Well, as all good editors must do (eventually), I am sitting here with a clean stencil in the machine and finally starting my own column. This is the part that is usually left for last, after all of the other material has been stencilled. To tell the truth, I'd much rather be outside. It's a glorious day here in the Pacific Northwest. The sun is shining, the temperature is in the low 50's, the air is clear. We should be out on some kind of a jaunt, perhaps a walk along the shore of Puget Sound or a trip out into the woods somewhere. Almost anything besides composing a column, especially when I don't have a great deal of interest to say.

BUT, both Anna Jo and I have had a touch of the mseries this past week and it's best if we stay in and rest up a bit before we get some more of them. Anna Jo has had a bad case of laryngitis, a malady which requires voice rest. That's not too easy when your occupation is teacher. Me, I've just had the flu for the third time this year. And I'm the guy who marched bravely up, stuck out my arm, and had the flu shot. Which may or may not prove anything. I had been feeling quite good, going for walks nightly, cutting down on food intake some in an attempt to lose a few pounds, and generally feeling on top of just about everything. Then Tuesday last round about noon I began to feel a little funny. By three o'clock I told my secretary that I felt rotten and was heading for home. By 3:30 I was in bed, curled into that escapist fetal position, chills running through the old bod, aches and pains all over, and running 102 degree temperature. I slept for about 20 hours and shook it off much better than I expected. But it's still too early to go charging out to do yard work or the more pleasurable hiking that today calls for. So I'll mumble my way through several pages here and hope to begin cranking the old mimeo this coming week.

Since the last issue, I had a very pleasurable time at TanKon VI, a small invitational con held between Christmas and New Years at Mike Horvat's new home in Albany, Oregon. No longer is it held in Tangent, from which it takes its name. This one was like old times with Dale Goble and Jim McLeod from Sacramento, Bill Marsh from Carson City, Dan Willott (who had attended one previous TanKon) and newcomer Jeff Frane from Seattle. Mike Bailey from Vancouver, B.C. made it down and another newcomer, Linda Emery from Vancouver, Washington came for a day. Other short time visitors were Larry and Judy Paschelke, Ted and Keta Toms, Chuck Gee, Will and Lenore Trojan, and Paul Novitski. Much good conversation, loads of Coors,

a pleasant slide show one evening, heaping plates of spaghetti, Irish coffee and copious toasts one evening, and just plain good companionship. It was a pleasant interlude during the holidays and I hope everyone enjoyed it as much as I did. Thank you, Sieur Horvat. We shall do it again next year, although I'm told that the northern California contingent thinks it's jolly well time we held it down that way. Well, Jeff and I have already figured out how nice a train ride it is from Seattle to Davis, so get started on the preparations, guys.

PLUG TIME

I want to throw in some plugs here for things that might get lost in the review column, and maybe a couple of things that wouldn't properly land there anyway. Just yesterday I helped to mimeo a new fanzine from Seattle that some of you might like to take a look at. The zine is named HEDGEHOG and it is edited and published by Jeff Frane. Jeff is a member of The Nameless, the author of the con report on the following pages, a reviewer for Delap's Review, and a member of The Expository Lump, Seattle's sf writer's group. Along with a job and school, he's not very busy. He's turned out a dandy first issue, with a nice McLeod cover, some excellent materials and an especially nice interview with Kate Wilhelm and a bibliography to go with it. If you wrote and asked nicely, he just might turn one loose on you. Some of you will get it anyway, as he snatched from my mailing list, but if one doesn't show in about a month's time, drop him a polite request. His address is: P.O. Box 1923, Seattle, WA 98111.

You may have read elsewhere about VOID, the Australian prozine. From what I have heard, there are a fair number of stories by young American writers, some of whom are friends of mine. Darrell Schwietzer, Bob Vardeman and Dick Patten spring to mind. I had a letter not long ago from Darrell Schweitzer and he is the American agent for VOID. He has issues 2,3, and 4 for sale at \$1.45 each or will send all three issues to you for a measly \$4.00. It sounds like a goo deal and I'm going to send for them just to see what these people have written. Darrell's address is 113 Deepdale Road, Strafford, PA 19087.

I don't know Steve Fahnstalk so I was a bit nonplussed when F.M. Busby one evening thrust upon me a fanzine and said, "Steve Fahnstalk wanted me to deliver this to you." What? Who? This turned out to be a copy of New Venture, number 5, to be precise. It happens to be a Special Art Issue and lists for \$2.00 for this particular number. It's 118 pages long, is spiral bound and sports a color cover by Kelly Freas. Interested? You ought to be. Inside are reproductions of black-and-white art by 25 artists. And these people are not the unknowns; they are persons like DiFate, Schoenherr, Barr, Kirk, Krenkel, Gaughan, Emswiller, and on and on. It's really an excellent production and I don't quite know how Steve and his art editor, Jon Gustafson were able to present it at this price. There is also a 7-page interview with George Barr and a 4-page article by him. Just outstanding. Steve, I don't know how you heard about me, but thank you much for sending New Venture my way, and this was the least I could do in return. The rest of you, put this down, drop two bills into an envelope and address it to Steve Fahnstalk, New Venture, Rt. 2, Box 135, Pullman, WA 99163. You won't be sorry.

Well, that seems to be enough plugs for one issue. I enjoyed it, and the fleeting thought went through my head that I ought to do a fanzine review column. It was only fleeting, however. Oops, there was one more thing that I wanted to plug. I almost forgot.

Algol Press has published a neat little item entitled EXPERIMENT PERILOUS: THREE ESSAYS ON SCIENCE FICTION. The essays are by Marion Zimmer Bradley - "Experiment Perilous"; Norman Spinrad - "The 'Bug Jack Barron' Papers"; and Alfred Bester -

"Writing & 'The Demolished Man.'" Although the book is slight, a mere 34 pages, it is packed with good stuff, people writing about what they know best, the writing of sf, and writing with a candor that makes it all the more delightful. For anyone interested in one of these writers or in the craft of writing itself, this should be a must. The booklet is available from Algol Press, P.O. Box 4175, New York, NY 10017. OK! Now I'm finished with the plugs.

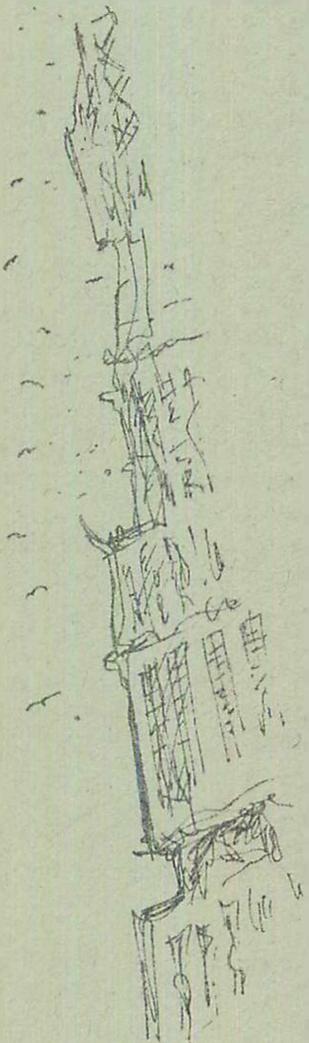
THIS AND THAT

As I write this we have a three-day weekend coming, the first one of the new year. It's one that we can use; it seems like an awfully long time since there was a good lengthy weekend. Anna Jo and I are thinking of heading north to Canada. A good editor/publisher would use that three days to run off a zine. Not this kid. I'm afraid it's going to have to wait. I'm looking forward to hunting for some books, having a couple of good meals in favorite Vancouver restaurants, and generally nosing about town. Then we may head east a little bit to visit with the Livingstones, whom we haven't seen for quite a while. They live in Chilliwack, B.C., and it's only a four-hour drive home from there. So, needless to say, we're looking forward to enjoying ourselves for a few days, forgetting about school and its problems, and even forgetting about fanzines for a few days.

Last night I was fooling around with the non-sf portion of my book collection, in particular with a couple of series that I'm fond of. While the sf collection is pretty much all together now and in pretty good order at that, the non-sf collection is just as confused and mixed up as it usually was. That is, the mysteries are together, the mainstream is together, the non-fiction is together, and even the few westerns are together, but pretty mixed up within themselves. So I was trying to get two or three series of books pulled out and listed so that I knew what I had and what I was still looking for. The first I tackled was Edward S. Aarons' series about Sam Durrell. That's the series that starts each title with the word "Assignment." Durrell is a CIA agent, and Aarons has been writing about him for nearly 40 years now. Forty-two books, as far as I know and I have about half of them. Another series of which I'm fond is Matt Chisholm's western series about McAllister. One mean sonofagun. Only need three of them out of a possible seventeen or thereabouts. And I recently discovered Hampton Stone's detective series, more correctly about a guy in the New York D.A.'s office. Will get that list tidied up tonight.

Don't know why I just thought of this but Michael Moorcock has started a series with the rock group, Hawkwind, as characters. And a while back I saw a volume from a series by an English publisher is doing which is about a character named Steeleye. Is this the newest wave, rock sf?

Well, I guess I've rambled enough. I may cut the next issue by some pages in order to have it completed before leaving for some time in England. I can also report that the trip report from two summers ago is beginning to get on stencil. So have patience. Until the next issue, stay well.



NEO MEETS BIG MAC

Jeff Frane

8/28: Up at 6 and out the door. Felt a certain sense of trepidation about leaving the apartment unprotected for two weeks. Actually, the cat and other valuables were being picked up for safe keeping by my sister. There doesn't seem to be much likelihood that thieves will steal books.

First leg of the trip was courtesy of Amtrak. They've drastically changed the ambience of the trains on this run. In the name of efficiency, they have sacrificed the social possibilities. Instead of a club-dining car, they now have a bar with two microwave ovens. The meals are pre-cooked and much slimmer than before, and they are to be eaten at one's seat, with a fold down table. Just like airplanes, all they need now is a smiling stewardess to complete the effect.

Jeff Levin picked me up at the station in Portland, and we stopped by the bookstore he owns with Chuck Garvin. Chuck cut off all his hair, and now looks like some strange GI. They showed me the artwork (by Danny Frolich and the Dillons) for the latest Pendragon Press books. Very nice.

Jeff had AAA work up a route for us, and they did an incredible job, including little maps for every 150 or so miles.

After dinner, Levin started his packing. He is totally disorganized and I was convinced that we would never get started. We taped a number of albums for the trip, including Heart and Fleetwood Mac. The lead singer of Heart looked very familiar, and I became increasingly convinced that I had a lightweight affair with her about eight years ago.

8/29: Amazing. We actually got started within the time period I had hoped for. We picked up Denys Howard, had a quick "breakfast" at Sambo's, and were on the road by 9. All I knew about Denys at this point was that he had been running an ad in Locus for sf stories with gay characters. I had the distinct impression I would know him better by the time we reached K.C.

Levin and I had decided to take turns driving about 200 miles apiece. This was risky for me, because I was driving sans license. Actually, I had one from Oregon, but it expired two years ago. I had planned to get a new one, but it never happened. Discovered that Denys was one of those people who can sleep in the car. That's one strike against him. I kept fighting with the desire to turn around in

my seat and kick him awake.

Denys surprised me with his use of the word "faggot". Ithas apparently become a radical term of self-esteem, throwing his homosexuality into the faces of the straights. He claims the term derives from the practice of using gay people to stoke the fires built to burn witches.



Ended up in a KOA campground east of Twin Falls, Idaho. I had no idea such things existed: showers, laundry facilities, swimming pool, the whole shtick. Disgusting. When we arrived, late, everyone was tucked away in their campers, watching TV. We rolled out on the grass. My god, lookit the stars! Living in the city for so long, I'd forgotten how many there are. At one point, a beautiful lightning display we'd been watching provided a brief gift of rain, driving me into the car and the others under the picnic table. When I slipped out, the ground was barely damp.

8/30: Woke up with the sun and availed ourselves of the facilities. On the way into Utah, spied a sign "Frequent High Winds / Occasional Blinding Dust Storms. Hmmm.

We were stopped at a construction site by two flag women and escorted by a woman driving the pilot car. The foreman, however, was a man. Certainly couldn't trust those women out there by themselves, hmph. What does it say about the nature of society that we even noticed their gender?

Detoured north of Ogden and stopped at one of a long string of fruit stands. Bought peaches, pears, and nectarines. Fantastic, sweet and juicy. And cheap.

Utah looked as I expected, but with more greenery than I remembered. We continued our ongoing conversation about sexuality and politics. Even some talk about sf. Mostly the talk was between Levin and Denys; there is a degree of ego-involvement that gets into talks like this that make a three-way discussion difficult. Some of it sounds like true confession time.

Arrived in Denver in a state of collapse, hungry and burnt out from driving in the dark. Levin finally reached some friends of his and got us a place to stay for the night, an interesting old brick house near downtown.

8/31: Southeastern Colorado was not at all what I expected. The only mountains we saw were far in the west. The route east from Denver passes through the high plains area, sort of Kansas at a higher altitude.

We experienced severe agoraphobia. None of us were used to this kind of countryside. Denys, in particular, had never been out of the Northwest. At one point, I woke him up (yeah, he was sleeping again) to show him his first-ever view of the horizon. 360 degrees of flat. Shook him up.

Stopped in some little dinky town or other. The service station had a sign pointing to their "bicentennial rest rooms." Right -- an outhouse. Real organic.

We've been in this car too long. There has been more than the usual amount of inter-Jeff bickering, and Denys and I have had a real problem of communication.

Stopped in Salina for ghastly chicken-fried steaks, and afterwards Jeff. L. called ahead to Tim Kirk to let him know when we would be arriving. Tim said to be sure to stick with the chicken-fried steaks if we planned on eating there.

Arrived in K.C. after midnight. The route Tim had given us took us back into Kansas before returning to Missouri. Very confusing.

Denys and I were meeting Tim for the first time, and I was leery about imposing on him. He turned out to be very polite, quiet, and friendly. His ears have little points like an elf.

Tim's house is a beautiful old home, very neat and impeccably clean. I was afraid to move around in it, for I was sure my aura of sloppiness would leave visible trails behind me. Although we were all exhausted, we managed to keep Tim up long past his bedtime showing us his artwork.

9/1: I felt much more human after a good night's sleep in a real bed, and a shower. We poked around the house a bit, at Tim's invitation. Levin found an enormous stack of photostats, the illustrations for *THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS*. Seems like there are hundreds, all beautiful. Tim is very versatile. Almost all the drawings are recognizably Kirk, but each is unique.

Eventually, we drove into downtown K.C., casing the Muehlebach and checking out various bookstores. One of them, apparently the center for sf and comics, had scores of men's magazines of the period that contained lots of Ellison stories, with illustrations by the Dillons. Not having my checklist handy, I asked if I could remove some of them from their plastic bags. No way! All right, then, I'll keep my money. Hmumph!

Dropped Denys off near the art museum. He planned to fend for himself tonight and check into his hotel the following day.

Levin and I had dinner and a quiet evening with Tim. I am convinced that Tim is really Buster Keaton. He told us incredibly funny Tales From Hallmark without ever cracking a smile. Tim and I discovered common interests in children's book illustrators: Wallace Tripp, Trina Hyman, etc. I bought one of his drawings for a rejection slip that had been rejected by *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*.

9/2: Finally. The first day of the convention. My very first. The lines for registration went on for miles, seemingly. I spent the time talking with a tall New Yorker who had been hitchhiking all over the country before arriving here. He was very worried over the state of his softball team at home.

The secret "unforgeable" identification is no longer a secret. We each got little hospital wristbands, and were instructed not to remove them. I wear long-sleeved shirts, and my wristband was checked once during the entire convention. The program book, with its full-cover, wrap-around dust jacket is a work of art; one I immediately tucked away in the car.

Levin was standing in line with a particularly attractive young woman, Mila Horan. The three of us ended up in the coffee shop where we were joined by Mila's friend, Dave Truesdale. Dave is the editor of *Tangent*, an excellent new sercon zine, and is very intense.

Somehow, Levin and I ended up helping the Trimbles to set up the art show. It seemed as though nothing was happening on time. Although the art show had been scheduled to open at noon, the entire afternoon was spent putting up the display stands and hanging the artwork. I was privileged, though, to get a good close look at some magnificent work and some of the artists. Particularly striking were the enormous paintings done by cover artist Michael Whelan. And I got to meet Kelly Freas! Whoosh! A very friendly man. I was doubly surprised when

Polly Freas remembered my name, apparently from their mailing list.

Nearby, the crowds awaiting the opening of the hucksters room could be heard to be getting nasty. Like overtrained race horses, they strained to burst into the welter of books and pulps. By the time that we arrived the dealers had been besieged by the horde. I tried to convince myself that I couldn't afford to indulge my lust here, but was drawn back repeatedly throughout the convention, always seeking the item that was missed by the horde. I even found a couple of things, surprisingly.

The most striking thing to me was the display of new, hardcover sf. Purple Unicorn and TK Graphics both had vast quantities of books. It is one thing to read listings of the titles, and another all together to actually see them. Ah, despair. I need to be rich.

Eventually, I wandered up to the roof for the "Meet the Authors Party". I discovered a mass of people blundering around in the Stygian dark. On the far side, brilliant floodlights illuminated a group of apparent celebrities. They were making remarks, no doubt brilliant also, into the vacuum of the sound system. As I stood there indecisively, an elderly gent in a white suit stepped out of a door near me, behind the crowd. My God, Robert Heinlein! My little heart went pit-a-pat. He was soon besieged, and made his retreat.

I plunged into the affray, armed with my trusty letter of introduction to andy offutt. Bubbles Broxon had given me this as an additional reward for the hours spent this summer typing up the SFWA Writer's Handbook. I discovered a nice lady named Jodie Offutt who led me to a nice man named andy. They were expecting me. I babbled something inane, stood around a while, and left andy to his admirers. I noticed he had his little rubber finger-guard for his autographing.

I joined the others in the "bump-into-authors" party. The trick was to grope around until one found a beard. Ah ha! Must be an author. Unfortunately, none of the women writers possessed the necessary identification. Consequently, I didn't meet too many of them.

I did get to meet C.J. Cherryh, though. andy offutt introduced her to the masses, and I terrified her with praise.

Later, I ran into Levin. He pointed out some more luminaries. (The authors, you see, had begun to glow in the dark, so that they were easier to identify.) I introduced myself to Ed Bryant.

Jodie Offutt appeared at my side to invite me to a party in the SFWA suite. "Well, I am here with a friend. I would probably not be here if it wasn't for that friend, can I bring him along?" This was not a good thing to ask, and I knew it. Still, she said yes. Thanks, Jodie.

I was very uncomfortable at the party, and hovered near the door. Look who's here. The Heinleins, Damon Knight, Kate Wilhelm, and people I don't recognize but probably should. I felt like an interloper. Also, I remembered I hadn't eaten for ages, and made my excuses. Down in the bar, discovering Fran Skene and a friend, we had one for the road, and stuffed ourselves with free peanuts. We made an early night of it, arriving at Tim's around 2 a.m.

9/3: We were out of the house every morning by 10 or so, and we could count on the temperatures already being well into the 80's or 90's. But as the man said, it's not the heat, it's the humidity. Downtown K.C. was like a swamp. But who

noticed? Outside of the brief exposure in the morning, and occasional trips out for food, the whole day was spent in the air-conditioned hotel.

I spent this morning avoiding the opening speeches. I trotted down to the basement bistro where the blood drive was being held. As per instruction, I had something to eat first, a hamburger and a Coke. After checking my blood pressure, which is always low, they asked me to drink a Coke to help bring it up, and then put me on the slab. While I was lying there, filling my bag, Heinlein put in an appearance to encourage the troops. After making my donation, I tottered over and sat down next to him. If anyone had told me as a kid that I would someday be sharing cookies and Coke with Robert Heinlein, I would have laughed. I was appalled at the evidence of age in his face and manner. Childhood heroes should remain forever idealized. I couldn't think of anything more brilliant to say than "hello" and the pressure on my bladder from all that Coke was beginning to tell. I added "goodbye" to my conversation and dashed for the w.c.

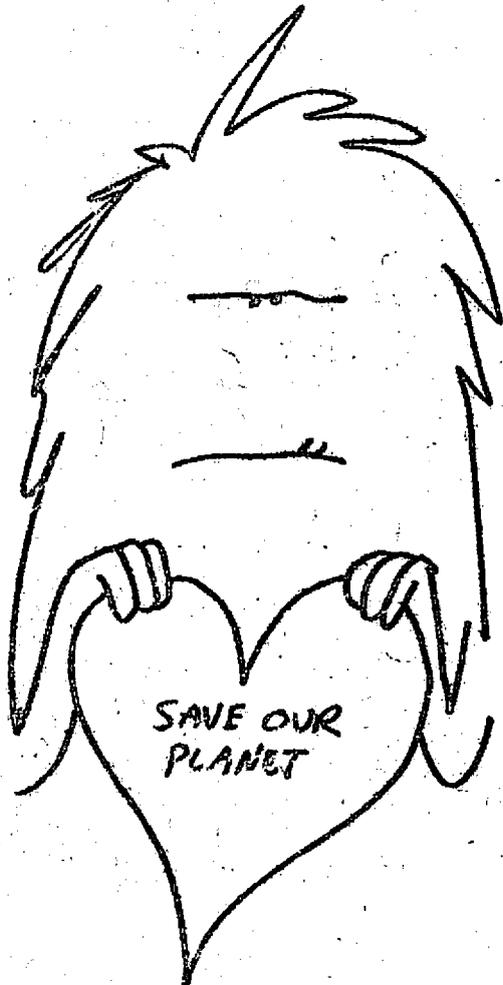
Promptly at 2:15, I found myself a good seat for the panel on women in sf. (As it turned out, this was the only panel I know of that got started on time. From then on, one could generally figure on them starting an hour late. The panel also turned out to be the only one I found of interest. Eventually, I gave up on them altogether.) The participants, Kate Wilhelm, Marta Randall, Amanda Bankier, Suzy McKee Charnas, and moderator Susan Wood all seemed to be exceptionally well prepared, and talked about the "place" of women as authors, characters, and fans.

I intended to join the group in an informal session after the panel discussion, but somehow got sidetracked. I did manage to work up enough courage to introduce myself to Kate Wilhelm and to request an interview sometime during the con. We settled on Sunday afternoon in the SFWA suite. Happily, I stumbled away.

Somewhere along the line, I ran into Mike Bailey, who took my picture and introduced me to Gil Gaier. Eventually, I ran into Dave and Mila again. We sat in the oh-so-classy cocktail lounge and talked about fanzines, sf, and school. Had a hot flash on a party, but it turned out to be an error. I found Levin again and the four of us attended the Midnight Special. Duck's Breath Mystery Theatre presented a funny play about Gonad the Barbarian, and then did a series of really hysterical skits. They reminded me somewhat of the Committee.

More wandering around and a couple of parties.

9/4: Dropped in the presentation of George Lucas; "The Star Wars." Someone from the film company's publicity department narrated the plot of the movie while a series of technical drawings and slides were shown. The plot is ludicrous, total



space opera, complete with galactic princesses, but the special effects looked to be extremely good. I was most put off by the plans for a series of paperback and comic adaptations of the film. The movie's male lead was introduced, a charming and attractive young man. I spotted him a number of times during the con, wandering around looking kind of dazed.

Paid a brief visit to the offset fanzine workshop. Sat next to Gil, taking turns photographing the heavies on the panel. Andy Porter seemed to dominate things, and the talk dealt with no information that was new to me. I split, and wandered some more.

Jeff Levin, Dave, Mila, Jim Bittner and I went out for dinner. An Italian restaurant down the street had been recommended as tasty and inexpensive. Well, the food was good.

As we were taking our ease on the steps in the lobby, a tall, elegant chap approached us for some conversation. I was to see a good deal more of Alfred Bester over the next few days, and I admit I have rarely met a more affable and fascinating person. He seems to be completely at ease and interested in everyone and anyone.

Attended the masquerade, which was theoretically sold out. Free tickets had been offered several times during the previous days, and had been snapped up. Yet, when we arrived, there were rows of empty seats toward the back. Denys Howard joined us, with Tom Reamy in tow.

Most of the costumes were interesting, but few showed the creativity I had been led to expect. The most ingenious was a startlingly lifelike Tars Tarkus, eight feet of four-armed Martian.

During the intermission, a striptease was presented for the benefit of the audience. I confess to being a little surprised at this, for there must have been children in the audience. The reactions of some of the audience seemed to indicate that this was a first for them. Others were apparently very upset, although there was no vocalization during the performance. (On the following day, the convention newsletter carried a complaint from Suzy McKee Charnas about the striptease. For the only time during the convention, the newsletter staff added a note stating that they did not necessarily agree with the opinion expressed in the item. A totally unnecessary remark, I think.)

After the masquerade, I was introduced to Stuart Schiff, editor of Whispers. We talked about the Whispers auction, and I asked him if I had won the bid on a particular item. He said no, some crazy bastard in Seattle had bid a ridiculously high figure on it. I laughed, and informed him that I was the crazy bastard from Seattle. Stuart is a very pleasant man, and we had a nice long chat about the vagaries of collecting. Stuart had brought an enormous stack of Heinlein 1st editions to the con, and wasn't going to be able to get them signed. Heinlein was only giving autographs to blood donors and only one book at a time during the reception.

9/5: Attended a very early morning session with the staff of Delap's F&SF Review. Everyone that made it looked as though they had been through a wringer. Talked about the plans for the magazine, editorial expectations, etc. I met Debbie Notkin and Mary Kay Jackson, two other staffers.

Visited the SFRA room and met Joe DeBolt. Levin and Jim Bittner are working on an extensive bibliography of Ursula Le Guin, and they were negotiating to have

a portion of it included in a new book Joe is preparing for academia.

Stopped in the bar for something to calm my nerves, and to kill time before my interview. Dave was performing a pre-interview with Alfred Bester, no doubt kicking himself that he didn't have his tape recorder.

Spent an hour or so hanging out in the SFWA suite, until finally coming to the realization that Kate was not going to be showing up. Ran down to the bar where Alfie was still talking. Finally lucked out by asking Ed Bryant if he'd seen Kate. He said she was across the street, listening to Marta Randall's reading, and so she was.

Kate graciously gave me a good half-hour on tape. Over the clatter of dishes and nearby conversation in the coffee shop, I managed to stammer out some questions. Although I felt like an idiot, I was pleased with the results of the interview.

After dinner, we gathered the usual crowd together for the Big Event. The Hugo Awards ceremony was held in the Municipal Auditorium about a block from the hotel. A long, long line was formed a good while before the scheduled opening, because we'd been warned that there wasn't room for all the convention members. I don't know of anyone who was turned away.

The beginning of the ceremonies was done like a tongue-in-cheek Hollywood extravaganza. While the sound system played suitable music, spotlights swirled in a pattern on the glittering curtain. Up it went, to reveal another curtain behind it, and another, and another. Ta da! And Wilson Tucker proceeded to dish out the awards, with romantic accompaniment from a female member of the con committee. Kelly Freas announced that the 10th was as good as the first. Tim Kirk, in tails, thanked all the little people that made his award possible. Ben Bova suggested, to no little applause, that maybe the voters were in a rut. He said that he wouldn't refuse another Hugo, but that there were other editors who deserved the award. A very good point, not only for Ben but for a number of others who have been receiving awards over and over. I get the distinct impression that a good many people voting for the Hugos don't take any time to really consider the various nominations, and merely vote for the name that's the most familiar. However, it is likely that it is going to take someone like Ben actually removing his name from consideration to get some fair treatment for the other people in the field.

Interspersed with the Hugos were various other awards. A very long speech was given, explaining why the Big Heart Award was being given to someone that most of the people in the audience had never heard of. Lin Carter explained that the Gandalf Award was given every year to the man that had made the most significant lifetime contribution to fantasy; and proceeded to list the nominees, including one Ursula K. Le Guin.

After the awards, Robert Anson Heinlein gave his Guest of Honor speech, which was for me a shattering experience. Over the past few days, I had become aware that Mr. Heinlein was not as cogent as he must have been once. But to sit and



listen to the man ramble on about inconsequentials, wander repeatedly from his point (often not finishing a coherent thought) and make statements about the inevitability and necessity for nuclear war, was very painful. One of my earliest introductions to sf had been through Heinlein's books and I had nourished myths about him for a long time. I was well aware that our political views differed somewhat, to say the least, but to hear him say that man's primary function was to fight and die to protect women was too much. I didn't feel that the booing that was going on in the audience was called for, the man is entitled to express his opinions. But, I don't have to listen, and so I left.

Later, Levin and I proceeded to Dave Hartwell's party. It turned out to be something of a spillover from the SFWA party. Saw lots of pros, which impressed me immensely. Talked to an elderly gent from Maryland who turned out to be Stephen Tall. Funny, I had imagined him to be a much younger man. I suppose just because his work has started appearing so recently. Dave's party was pleasantly quiet, so I got to talk to some people for a change. Made the mistake of trying to engage rock writer Paul Williams in conversation, just as he was taking notes on the previous doings. Sorry, Paul. Spent quite a bit of time talking with Debbie Notkin and Diana Thatcher, two extremely nice people from California. Finally got to meet Tom Whitmore, whom I'd been hearing about for years. Got the impression that all of the West Coast fans were going to be making it up to Vancouver for next year's Westercon, and I'm looking forward to seeing them again.

Wandered down to Kelly Freas' birthday party. The joint was jumpin'. Packed. Polly was curled up asleep with her arms around a four-foot high Scotch bottle. Lots of talking and laughing, but nobody I knew or anyone I could manage to meet. We went across the street to the Dixon where a party in Richard Delap's room was reportedly in progress. Turned out to be a small group of people reading manuscripts. My gho! Beat it out of there as quickly as politic. Wandered around a good deal more. Discovered a typewriter, where someone was working on a convention one-shot, and put in a few drunken words. Met a young fan who was complaining about how he hadn't been to any parties or met any pros. Steered him toward the right room. Yeah, I'm a real old-timer, now. Well, it felt good anyhow. Ran into my old friend from the registration line, the one with the softball team. His eyes looked like California road maps. As far as I could gather, he'd spent the entire con thus far doing nothing but watching movies, hour after hour, with only tiny periods allotted for sleep. Incredible. He was glazed, but happy.

9/6: Somehow managed to drag my carcass from the bed in time to catch a ride in with Tim. We'd had a fancy thunderstorm the night before (the likes of which we never see out West), and it was raining for the first time since we arrived. Armed with a couple of hours of sleep and a can of Pepsi, I waited in line for an hour and a half to have a book signed by Robert Heinlein. Old myths die hard. In line, I found Fran Skene again and discovered myself volunteering to help on Westercon. See what happens when you don't get your sleep? After that ordeal, I tottered down to the lobby.

Levin told me that Alfie was holed up in the coffee shop with Marion Zimmer Bradley. I decided it was ridiculous for me to have talked with him as much as I had and not get a book inscribed. Ran down to the huckster's room and bought a copy of THE COMPUTER CONNECTION and took it to him. He was very charming about it, and insisted that I stay for a cup of tea.

Went out into the lobby and sat for a long time, watching all the preparations for departure. Very sad, but I was too sapped to cry. Joe Haldeman came through with a hand cart full of books. When we congratulated him on his award,

he rushed over to shake hands, grinning like a kid. It was very pleasant to share his excitement; to see someone who wasn't the least bit blasé about receiving the highest honor that fandom can bestow.

Monday night might have been dead dog night for everyone else, but it was dead Jeff night for us. We did go around the corner for a delicious dinner at Jim Bittner's sister's home, and then made a fairly early evening in preparation for the next day's drive.

9/7--9/16: The following days could have been anti-climactic, but we didn't give them the chance. We had two days hard driving, through Kansas, portions of Oklahoma and Texas, New Mexico, and finally Arizona. Spent nearly a week in Flagstaff, where Levin's mother owns a piece of the Kowboy Kountry Club, which specializes in gigantic steaks, cooked over a mesquite fire. I met a wonderful woman who works there, and had a very interesting six days. Discovered one evening that my job was in jeopardy and that school was beginning a week earlier than I thought. End of vacation. A fairly breakneck drive up through the desert. Spent the first night in a colorful old hotel in Tonopah, Nevada. The next day, I got the long awaited ticket, for doing 75 in a 55 mph zone. Curiously, the Oregon trooper never noticed, or never mentioned, the fact that my license had expired. Arrived in Portland at 10:50 p.m. and was on a bus out at 11:20. It was a wonderful trip, but I was really glad to be back in Seattle. Spent the next day, a beautiful sunny one, wandering around, looking at the mountains. Even went for a sail. Great.

So that was what my first con was like. What did I learn? For one thing, as much as I appreciated Tim's hospitality and the opportunity to talk with him, next time I'm going to stay in the hotel. That way I can go to my room whenever I please, and throw a party if I've a mind to.

And next time, I'm going to spend a lot more time with people. I hope that by then I will have met more people, in person and through the mail, that I can sit down with...and talk and talk and talk. That's really what it's all about, isn't it?



COMA BERENICE

steve
sneyd

"Wee willie wood
he's no good
chop him up
for firewood

when he's done
wipe his bum
with a piece of chewing gum"

For a horrible moment, waking with that ringing in my ears, I thought I was back in the marriage I'd gladly fled three years gone to join the Solarian Exploration Army.

Darkness broken only by two moons throbbing with my head, and both no evil skinwhite, merely a friendly blue green. That was ok.

Berenice, with her horrid habit of turning me down week after week whenever I wanted loving, then turning on me and demanding her 'conjugal rights' when she best knew I was incapable with drink or tiredness or the wear and tear of intolerable office politics, underlings demanding attention to their personalities and near-achievements, bosses demanding that I take them seriously, she had salted the wounds the deepest when after her some particularly humiliating, head-splitting failure on my part, faced by her greedy bowl of tripe, she had sweetly said, "It's all right, love, all right, little man, all right, go to sleep and soon be better," and then ever so softly at the very verge of audibility like cats in heat howling three streets away so delicately hummed that song she'd previously made me listen to in the horrid gleeful way the children, quick playground learners, sang the tune, the words.

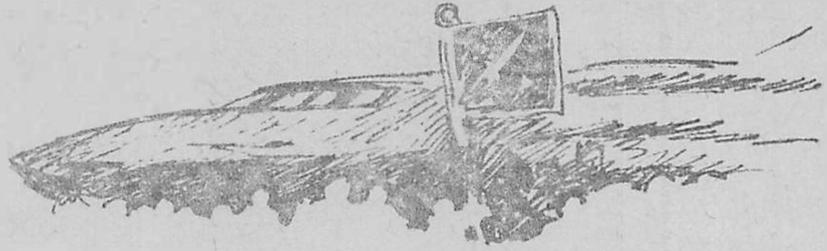
I hadn't killed her before I went. Hadn't even left a withering farewell note.

Just gone, and that took all my guts.

As for the Army, SEA or Neptune's Ark we called it, nothing it or its enemies could do to me was even a shadow of a patch on Berenice.

Three happy, yes, three peaceful years.

Even tonight's siege of another of the endless near-bottomless wells down which this flatland planet's people dwelt whenever enemies, like us, came near, had never worried me.



Hours of silence, those moons casting vomit colour on a lichened plain, the dark stunted hunchback gunbarrel of the well mouth, pool of darkness pregnant with a people.

All that was nothing.

And the blow that laid me out I'd never even felt.

Now curiosity made me slowly, cautiously, move eyes (but not head: the thing that had laid me out might well be still about, and merely laying off because it thought me dead.)

Nothing in front: merely the black, the humpt wellhead as before.

No sign of fellow soldiers of the SEA either side. Well, perhaps they'd stage a retreat, leaving their dead. Or maybe were merely better at camouflage than usual.

Cautious, now cautious, turn your head.

Two reasons to be slow: one, not to alert the enemy that had laid me low. The other, that my head still felt likely to explode or at least fall off at the slightest sudden move.

And behind, towering between me and the damn tricksome two moons that had even in a few minutes of recovery and thought whizzed another third of their twin-close circuit, like well trained hounds (scientifically, their low orbit explained it all, only speed keeping them aloft, but in green darkness and you head all aches left by an unseen enemy, science offers little comfort) was shadow.

Doubtless a tree.

Except damnable planet Ferret (we called it that, not the locals; their damn holes and even more damnable habit of diving down them at sight of us, hence our nickname for the planet, you see) seemed to have a built-in allergy to any plant-life taller than slimy ankle-tickling lichen.

Low fog? Tornado? Maybe our rocket come to get us, the grounder aspect of its triune mode at least?

Silence and the shape's precisely, yet obviously un-machinelike, profile soon put paid to cheerful thoughts like that.

Once again I wondered what the point was of warring on a planet of whose inhabitants' shape no one had the least idea, even aerial reconnaissance never timed just right...well-dwellers, hidiers, creepers...this goddamn hungry, yes, that big it must be hungry, like a Japanese wrestler who can't be good if he tries, this shapeless sharp shape could be a Ferret-dweller and I'd never know until too late.

The moons swung round again, and, as if to make sure no atom of the scene was lost, one of our searchlights joined in with a white din of light from up above somewhere.

And lit a scene I can't remember and yet am never allowed to regret.

The size was at least ten times mine.

The lovelight in the eyes only a blind man could mistake.

The practical difficulties of a giantess human from waist up, fish, rattail grenadier or the like at a guess, for all the rest, demanding, lusting, bellowing for love from someone small as me and even in the arms' fierce grasp, unable to take it all seriously, are something you must see in our SEA Archives, 'Regimental Film of the Ferret Expedition,' to appreciate.

I fooled her though.

I remembered the one thing that would put off Berenice.

The children crying for a drink of water.

My guesswork bellow choking shriek squeal highpitch lispig call must have been near enough.

My ventriloqual tricks, crude learning for children's parties' entertainment years ago learned from watching a Holo show, worked well.

And she dived back into the well, leaving only slime on my arms, the ground, and scaly pressure of fishtail thighs about my lower self, bruises the heritage that marked her grasp.

Berenice sent a letter to our next Rest and Recreation call, saying what a hero the Holo had made of me, and asking me to come home.

I'm sending her a piece of well-used chewing gum.

The SEA General has taken me out of combat and put me in charge of Unit Entertainment; he has kids of his own.

And as for Ferret, well, SEA's leaving it alone.

It seems the Army Psychologist merely wished to prove castration fears were what, deep down, drove every soldier on.

A lot of tax money to prove or at least confuse his theory but then I'm giving him Berenice's name.

I'm rapidly coming to the conclusion that the human race deserve each other.

I say, Holmes, how do you propose to outwit those nefarious IRS schemers?

By deduction, Watson, a charitable one!

BLLENHEIM A CAPPELLA

Robert E. Blenheim

ON LISTENING

What's a column devoted to serious orchestral music doing here in an SF zine? Good question, but I can't think of a single answer, even a stupid one. I can only say that it is here in front of you. If you can think of an answer, drop me a line and let me know what it is.

I was tempted to make this first column a kind of exposition, a statement of my beliefs and background which would pave the way for future columns, but I resisted the temptation. Might as well plunge into the subject, head first.

"How do you listen to music? What do you see when you listen? What do you listen for?" (It was my sister, Elise, speaking, circa 1970.)

There is a mystique about us "Classical" music listeners to all you outsiders, isn't there? You tease us all through school years and sneer at us in later years. Secretly you figure we're either phonies or else really special human beings, right? And you hated us for being so different. But I'll clue you (and my sister) in on a secret: the idea we're all that different is balderdash, baloney, and cow manure.

My sister seemed to think listening to Beethoven's Ninth or Wagner's "Liebestod" brought some kind of elite parapsychical pictures to my mind, a characteristic of having some secret input to a super-sensual experience. But no musical listener is any different from a non-listener except for one little thing: he or she is listening.

How does one listen? That probably seems a naive and even insulting question. But a simple misunderstanding is really all that separates us. Art is, after all, not made for the elite, no matter what people say. I grant you that never in the history of Mankind will the listeners of "classical" music be a majority; they'll probably always be a very tiny minority. But I'm talking about who art is FOR. Only mental blocks keep the majority from listening to "classical" music in a technical sense, or lack of time in a pragmatic sense. Or just lack of interest. But not because of any mental lack or intellectual incompleteness. If you are a human being with feelings, you'll do.

What does it take to be a listener? It takes (a) learning about the carrot dangling just out of reach, and (b) desiring the taste of the carrot so much that one finds it compensates for the work it takes to get to the carrot.

Work, yeah, that's right. Do you think we listeners can sit through something like four hours of Wagner's "Parsifal" without effort? Even with us, it takes good, hard discipline. Each time the Sunday afternoons I chose to hear "Parsifal" began (about a dozen, to date), I had to tell myself right off: "All

right, Blenheim, you're giving up the Sunday"; each time I heard that first Dresden Amen in the prelude (the Grail Motif) I had to just chalk-off my butt for another weekend, and realize I was truly checking-in my brain for about five or six hours (one must check over the plot synopsis, eat, grab a beer, go to the bathroom, etc. every now and then, y'know!). It takes acceptance of a certain discomfort and the sacrificing of a certain amount of spare time. (Thank god most musical works are not of Wagner-duration!) I just might have to miss the tenth re-run of "Jason and the Argonauts" scheduled at two-thirty in the afternoon (unless I can work it in between acts -- but that hinders the effect of the work's totality).

I know what you're asking: then why the devil do it? Why not watch Talos fall on Hylas and the skeleton's battling the Argonauts one more time? Why do it?

That is hard to answer. I can only say we feel it's worth it: it's that simple. The taste of the carrot justifies the sacrifices it took to get to it. I could go on and on trying to relate the effect of "Parsifal", for example, on me: the glory of the Transformation scene in Act I, the sensuousness of the Flower Maidens in Act II, the moving scene at Monsalvat concluding the work, and -- well, I could go on and on, you see. But I won't; I can only say that it is worth it. Every bleedin' minute of it.

I'm using Wagner here as an example. It's because of the fact that some people think if one can listen Wagner, one could listen to anything, but that's not true: I eagerly subject myself to his Music Dramas time and time again, but I don't think I could hear "Aida" a third time, or a Puccini opera again, without going mad. Nevertheless, Wagner does serve as, ahem, an extreme in the sense of committing oneself to music.

But I'm slightly off the subject. Even a non-listener can understand how one listens to a work with a STORY, like an opera, but how does one deal with pure music, music without a program, a guideline to listen with?

Well, firstly one trusts in the piece and then commits himself, telling himself he's forfeiting the time it takes to play the work. He doesn't ask for music with which to click fingers or do the mambo, but realizes he's going to just follow the notes as if their own development is a story in itself. He's going to try to get in tune with harmony (the blending of simultaneous notes), and counterpoint (two or more tunes developing on top of one another) and consider all parts of the music in the sense of shadings, like bright or dull colors in a painting, movement in a film, etc. Sometimes empathy will be passed back and forth like that great Hitchcock gag in "Psycho" when our alliances transfer from Marion Crane to Norman Bates; sometimes one will take a pratfall like Chaplin; sometimes one will hear notes clash in disharmony like Cagney gunning down twenty-five gangsters; sometimes the notes will blend harmoniously like Frederic March with his arm around Myrna Loy. There will be confusions, conflicts, resolutions of problems in both positive and negative ways, or whatever. But one must listen to the music in that sense: the development of notes as if they were characters. Not the music's singability, but what happens to it.

And after you have committed yourself to listening to a particular piece, don't be afraid of hearing something you hate. Too often one dwells on this and uses it as an excuse not to listen. Messiaen is sometimes banal and offensive -- but keep listening and listen as if it's supposed to be banal and offensive (even if it wasn't). If you really do despise something to the point where you can't concentrate on the development no matter how hard you try, then stop and go to another piece, but you must be aware of what I'm asking: I'm asking you to WORK at listening.

To help those of you who need it I have accompanied this article with a listing of a dozen pieces that I suggest make good examples and are perfect for the beginner in listening to the development of notes as characters. None are operas, and the few that have some general program are okay unless one sits there saying: "This is a river, this is the wind, this is a birdie, this is a burp," or whatever, absolutely fatal to any genuine musical experience. Just listen to the development of notes.

In the list I am naming my recommended recording of each, and its running time so you'll know approximately how much time you have to allow for each piece. And you won't find any "Rite of Spring" or "Bolero" on the list no matter how colorful their notes' development is. Over-familiarity makes listening easier and defeats the purpose of listening in the sense I mean; I'm asking for the non-familiar piece requiring listening effort.

One additional point: I believe in contemporary concert music, or -- at least -- of the Twentieth Century. I heard Vincent Price put it well on a morning talk show once (but he was referring to painting) that the crystallization of all the art forms and works of the past is in the NOW. One who listens to only Bach, Beethoven and Mozart is not so much a music lover as a lover of music in a historical sense. To be involved in music as an art form one must be familiar with, say, Ives, Penderecki, Cage, Varese, Messiaen and the like. Not all of it is good (and certainly won't be for you) but if one calls himself a Music Lover one must hear Beethoven in a head which knows Varese as well, for only then can one hear even Beethoven in his proper perspective. This explains why the list below has as many modern compositions as it does.

And as for those quotation marks around "Classical"; the Classical period of music is a specific period (ca. 1750 to 1800) in which Mozart and Haydn reigned supreme. Hence, my hatred of the term "Classical Music" in any respect. Moreover, its use when discussing Penderecki or Ives is downright ludicrous. Far better is the term "Concert Music".

A SUGGESTED LISTING OF WORKS CHOSEN FOR THEIR MUSICAL DEVELOPMENT:

shorter works

- Karl-Birger Blomdahl: PRELUDE & ALLEGRO FOR STRINGS (6:05)
(Bjorlin, Angel S-36576)
Krzysztof Penderecki: POLYMORPHIA (9:06) (Czyz, Phillips 839-7011Y)
Carl Nielsen: HELIOS OVERTURE (10:00) (Ormandy, Col. MS-7004)
Olivier Messiaen: LES OFFRANDES OUBLIEES (12:30) (Baudo, Angel S36559)
Howard Hanson: MOSAICS (12:34) (Hanson, ERA 1006)
Johann Sebastian Bach: PASSACAGLIA & FUGUE IN C MINOR (14:37)
(Stokowski, Seraphim S-60235)

longer works

- Toru Takemitsu: NOVEMBER STEPS (20:23) (Ozawa, 2- RCA LSC-7051)
Bela Bartok: DIVERTIMENTO FOR STRING ORCHESTRA (23:40)
(Foss, Turnabout TV 34154S)
Witold Lutoslawski: CONCERTO FOR ORCHESTRA (29:58)
(Rowicki, Philips 6500-628)
Charles Ives: SYMPHONY NO. 4 (30:40) (Stokowski, Col. MS-6775)
Henri Lazarof: STRUCTURES SONORES (31:05) (Abravanel, Vang. VCS-10047)
Carl Nielsen: SYMPHONY NO. 3 (37:40) (Bernstein, Col. MS-6769)

RICK'S RAMBLES

Richard Stoker

[We continue on with the account of the wanders of Rick Stoker in the autumn of 1973. The commentary that has come in so far indicates that I was right. The readers were interested, as I had been. -- ed.]

10-25: Drove to Jackson to see Mike and Marty [old friends from Alton]. Crossed Mississippi on ferry. Rural Tennessee is full of cottonfields and sharecropper's huts. They transport the cotton in giant bins with metalwork grilled sides, and as they haul it fluffs of cotton fly out and land on the sides of the roads, making them look very littered. Jackson's been integrated only ten years; drinking fountains in public square has two sides, originally one black and one white. Many of the blacks do look very southern and passive. The city does have a lot of interesting home, quite old. There's a progressive elementary school, designed with large domes that cover auditoriums for open classes -- no ordinary classrooms. The place is very religious. Most social activities are church-related. Went that night to Young Life, pre-Campus Crusade group. Met Susan, my date for Saturday night. Sang songs.

10-26: Ate lunch with Mike. Walked around downtown area. Not bad. Went driving around with Marty. Saw more of the city, colleges, etc., and the inside of their house.

10-27: Went up to Matchez Trace State Park in the afternoon. Very beautiful land. Had lake where Sam [Marty and Mike's Labrador pup] loved to go swimming though it had dried up quite a bit. Park contains world's largest pecan tree, though we didn't go to see it.

Drove to Memphis that night to eat dinner and see Overton Square. Stopped at a restaurant called The Godfather, after the movie. They told us that they were having Jackie Wilson as a floor show, and we'd have to wait a half hour to get in. We ordered one round of drinks while waiting, and the bill was \$6.50. \$1.50 for each of the three drinks, \$1.00 for Susan's ginger ale, and a dollar tip.

Inside the restaurant they had an old car they claimed was the same one Sonny got killed in in the movie; but there was only bullet holes in the windows, not in the body; and a horse's head hung on the wall. The waitresses were dressed in weird thirtiyish gangster outfits. They gave us a table right to the side of the stage, so we had loud music all right. Wilson wall all right, though not great,

and nobody else liked him at all; and it was pretty unnerving to be right next to it while eating. We all had some kind of spaghetti plate.

We asked for the bill, and the waitress told us \$34. After we picked ourselves off the floor we we asked what had cost so much for \$3.00 plates of spaghetti and drinks. The total bills included a cover charge of \$4.00 apiece, and a tip of \$6.00 added onto the bill. Mike protested that we hadn't been told, but it didn't do any good. We left.

And, yes, we should have been smart enough to realize that we couldn't listen to Jackie Wilson for free.

Walked around the rest of the square for a while, and it was very nice, then came back home.

10-28: Early church service really weird. A lot of people in service were handed placards with the name of a saint written on it. After a few preliminary hymns, the minister, who had mannerisms and speech pronunciation like Cortley Burroughs / Alton minister / read off their names, and the person with that saint had to go up to the front of the church. When they were all called they marched outside, followed by the rest of the congregation, and everybody sang "Onward, Christian Soldiers." Then we went to adult Sunday school, and the regular service at 11:00.

Afterwards, some friends of theirs, Gary and Linda Wright, had us over for dinner. Gary's an engineer at Proctor and Gamble. When he first got the job after being with the Army Corps of Engineers, they handed him a training program to be learned. Right in front of the boss he tore it up and said, "This is ridiculous. You and I are going to sit down and write a good one." Now it's used all over the P&G and in other places as well. The P&G plant in Jackson is the only one in the world making Pringles. The way to make them is kept a deep secret. The men who work at the plant can't see what they're doing to the pringles, can't see into other areas than where they work, and aren't supposed to talk about their jobs.

Gary and Linda also own two Airedales, which were nice dogs. To make their coats darker you're supposed to pluck them twice a year, that is pull out all of their hair from their tails to their eyebrows, except for the legs. Then it grows back a darker color. They also had a nice baby boy.

That night we went to the senior high youth group M&M are in charge of. But most of the kids are pretty obnoxious, acting like junior highs. They were supposed to work on their booths for family night the next night; we left early.

10-29: There's a very hard-luck family in Jackson. The little boy was crossing the street after getting off a school bus, his 5-year old sister right behind him, when a drunk driver ran into and killed him. The next day, his mother picked up her sister at the airport, who had flown in to go to the funeral. They had a head-on collision which killed the mother and badly injured the aunt. Then the aunt learned that her husband, after taking her to the airport, had been in an accident. The boy's father is naturally upset; he has many problems himself, including heart trouble and emphysema.

Saw the industrial section of Jackson, very surprising because it's very clean and well kept; no ugly buildings and the only thing put into the air is steam.

Learned that Elvis Presley lives in Memphis. When he wants to do some shopping, like for Christmas, the stores stay open several hours late just for him, he spends so much money.

Went to the church's Halloween family night. Chickened out of wearing a costume. Good dinner. Senior highs actually got about 6 booths set up and junior highs converted one building into a spook house.

Went into the Country Store, which was jam-packed with all kinds of antiques, and other things for sale. Had a genuine cigar store Indian, one of only twelve self-playing harps in existence, and one of three old type of soda fountains, and a box of zigzag papers.

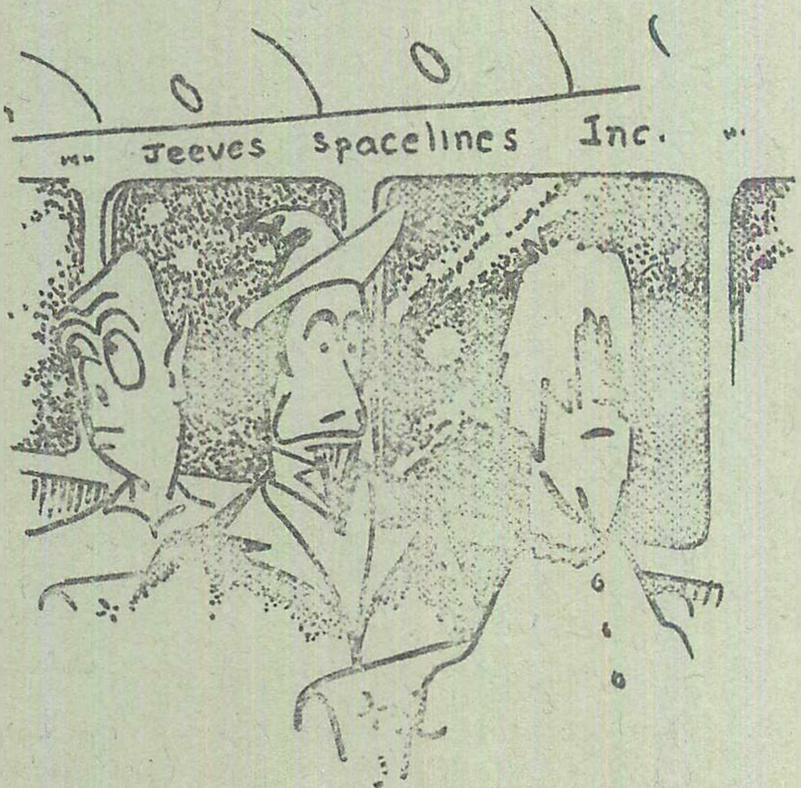
10-30: Left Jackson and went to Nashville, Music City, USA. Music Row rather unimpressive. Some of the bigger record companies have big, new buildings (Columbia and Capital share one) but it's basically an old run-down residential district. Most of the smaller companies work out of subdivided houses turned into offices. Loretta Lynn Enterprises has a whole old house that's right next to the Country Corner Tavern. There are vacant lots, high weeds and junk along the sidewalk, and some of the subdivided houses are low-income apartments. But the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum are very nice and quite interesting. Several movies and slide shows. Lots of personal relics like Jimmie Rodger's brakeman's uniform and lantern, Minnie Pearl's first hat, and Hank Williams' guitar. One old singer had his first musical instrument made for him at the age of four by his father out of a molasses bucket. There was also a short sample of a recording session.

For some reason, I didn't write down the thing that has stayed with me most about the Hall of Fame. That was a group of women standing around the placque of Hank Williams, who couldn't have been more than ten to fifteen when he died. They said little. One woman pointed out in amazement and sadness that he was only 28 when he died. The others murmured in low tones. They all sounded close to tears.

Also saw the Parthenon replica in Centennial Park. Very impressive to look at and walk around. Inside are replicas of many old Greek statues.

Bought a Carter Family album at Ernest Tubb's Record Store. Saw Ryman Auditorium from the outside. Its style and ugly red brick reminded me of the old YMCA in Alton which has not been used in ten years.

Ate chile for dinner and got drunk at Tootsie's Orchard Lounge a famous tavern in the C&W world just around the corner from where they used to hold the Grand Ole Opry. It's very much a typical redneck beer joint hole in the wall. A short bar one side and a row of booths along the other. But walls are just covered with pictures as they say, and all written over. There's a round wooden thing hanging from the ceiling that's covered with even more pictures. Somebody



asked Tootsie about something, and she said she'd have to have that wall replaced because Tompass Glazer went through it. There were also signed record albums along the wall above the booths, including THE BEST OF THE BEACH BOYS II signed by Brian Wilson. It seems to attract more ordinary drinkers than country stars, though there were two men there who looked like they should have been Opry stars. One was a tall thin old man in a cowboy hat. He was called 'Port.' And the other looked something like Johnny Cash. He was involved somehow with the waitress named Carla; and asked if his pictures were still on the wall and Tootsie said yes, all three. They called him Don.

Started driving up to Kentucky. Asked at a gas station where the next rest stop was, and he told me I could sleep at station. So I did.

Earlier at Tootsie's, she threw out an old obnoxiously drunken bum.

10-31: Went to Louisville and up into Indiana. Stopped at rest stop that has lighted, heated sitting area. Pretty country between Jackson and Nashville, and Nashville and Louisville, and even in southern Indiana. Drove through Fort Knox.

11-1: Drove up to Indianapolis. Disappointing. No used book stores and libraries wouldn't even be open until noon. I couldn't wait that long. Went to Bloomington. Betty / a friend from Alton going to Indiana University. The sister of Marty in Jackson / was walking along the street as I drove by on the way to her house. She showed me around some of the campus. The union is gigantic, with all kinds of things in it. The campus is beautiful, with lots of trees and a creek, and the classroom buildings are set back off the road in a traditional campus style. The whole grounds of IU are very big; I couldn't begin to see it all. All very confusing. I never did learn my way around.

Saw the indoor pool; the team was working out. Saw Doc Counsilman, John Kinsella, Tom Hickox, and others. / Doc is a famous swimming coach, and the others are famous Indiana swimmers. / Doc's office is decorated with lots of pictures and covers of SWIMMING WORLD and the Mark Spitz poster. / Doc was Spitz's winter coach. Betty told me that at Christmas the Indiana swimmers decorate the framed poster up as Santa Claus. /

Ate dinner at the sorority house which was strange. Doug Summers hitchhiked from Greencastle to get a ride to Alton the next day.

Spent the night in the dorm room of a friend of Betty's, a trombone player and Miles Davis fan.

11-2: Betty went to her swim team workout that morning, and bumped into Mike Stamm. Left Bloomington. Went to Greencastle and found my sister in her sorority house. Talked awhile, and ate dinner there. Mom came about 7:00 from Alton. We went to some stupid college vocal group concert, and I spent the night on Mom's motel room floor.

11-3: Left Greencastle and went back to Bloomington. Read THE TOMBS OF ATUAN in the library, saw WALKING TALL, THE AFRICAN QUEEN, and BETWEEN TIME AND TIMBUCTU, and ate a triple Baskin and Robbins ice cream cone, a B&R eggnog milkshake, five tacos and a large team, a B&R chocolate mint milkshake, and a Burger King whopper and shake for a midnight snack.

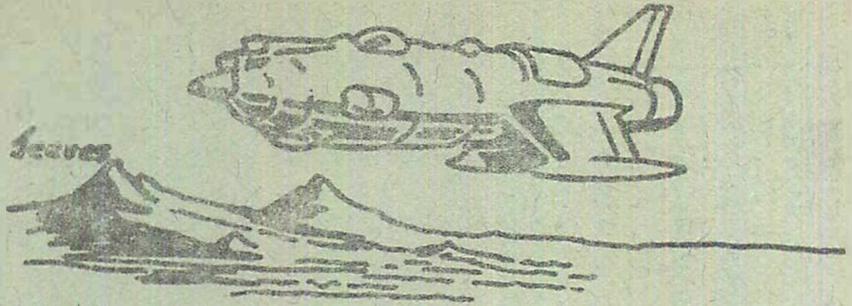
11-4: Spent most of the day at a rest stop reading. Called rich / brown / at night, and only cost \$1.15. Told me Terry and Craig / Hughes / were staying there, and John / Berry / was at White's.

11-5: Went to Cincinatti.

11-6: Travelled all the way into Virginia. West Virginia is a very mountainous state. Beautiful The road through the Appalachians was more winding and twisting than the road in the Ozarks to the canoe area / a float trip I'd taken /.

Stopped at a restaurant for dinner and talked

myself into buying a 12 inch hamburger, sausage, green pepper, onion, mushroom and pepperoni pizza. Ate all but three pieces. Drove for an hour, felt bloated, but that's all. After shopping and lying down for a while, I had to take a wicked shit and felt a little sick. After a while had diarrhea and threw up; felt better, but had to go one more session out in the woods in the freezing temperature before I could get to sleep. / I don't know why i down-played this episode. It was, quite simply, the most miserable night of my life. For what seemed like hours, I was squatting out in the freezing woods, shitting mud and vomiting chunks of pizza at the same time. /



A house on the river in Charleston, West Virginia had a widow's walk.

11-7: Got to Falls Church.

Epilogue: I stopped keeping a record at this point, although many things happened during the total of four months I stayed at the Browns'. This has to stop somewhere.

Just before Christmas, I left Falls Church to go back to Alton for the holidays. The first day I had wet, gray weather. Late in the evening, somewhere in west Ohio, snow began falling in earnest and I heard on the radio that St. Louis had gotten a foot or more of snow.

I went to sleep at a rest stop in Ohio just before the Indiana border, but woke up about midnight. The snow was still falling and I decided to move on. However, just over the border, I got stopped by a long line of semis backed up. I pulled off the Richmond exit and stopped at a cafe. Several kids in there had just driven up from St. Louis and said the highway was bad the whole way. They'd been stopped 20 times by semis going out of control and stopping traffic until they could be towed out. I slept in the cafe's parking lot and woke up about 7:00 a.m.

The next day, I drove the 300 miles back to Alton over a highway covered with snow and ice. Mostly ice. I averaged probably 25 mph on the highway. Every county had done a different quality of job on the roads. The section of highway in the county just east of Indianapolis had three lanes of slushy road where you could get up a fair amount of speed. But when you hit the county line, the highway suddenly became a one-lane strip of slick ice. I saw it coming, but not in time to slow down enough to avoid sliding out of control and into a snowbank.

One o'clock in the morning, 18 hours after I left Richmond, I finally reached home.

A month later when I went back to Falls Church, the independent truckers were striking to keep the speed limit at 60. One trucker had already been killed on the

highway.

The first day, I saw more signs of the strike the further east I went. Illinois had more state police out than usual, and a few truck convoys. Indiana had lots of convoys and cops sitting in every crossroad. Ohio was worse. I reached Pennsylvania in the evening, and about 9:00 stopped at a rest stop.

Although I'd bought the car off my mother a year before, we had just officially transferred the title to my name, to save on insurance. I'd applied for license plates, but I hadn't gotten them by the time I left Alton.

I went to sleep, and about 1:00 a bunch of cops rapped on the window. Seeing a dark car, apparently empty and with no plates, made them think I might have been a sniper. Once I convinced them that I was harmless, they told me that there were truck stops at each of the nearby exits, so I better not stay at the rest stop. The cops said anything could happen.

The rest of that night while I was in Pennsylvania I saw fires lighted along every overpass to keep the guardsmen warm. At a gas station off the turnpike, seeing a green uniform on a guy I approached from the rear, I almost asked him to fill my tank up, before I noticed the rifle he was carrying.

* * *
* * *

THE SEA WITCH

A sailor boy is home from sea;
A fair maid sits down on his knee.
"O where's your smile, and where's your cheer?
My love, your eyes are filled with fear."

"I caught a fish sailing 'round the Cape,
And on that fish was a woman's shape.
Said, 'Sailor, please, make love to me.
I've been too long beneath the sea.'

"O no I won't make love to thee.
There is a girl who's betrothed to me.'
'O since you won't make love to me,
When I've been long beneath the sea,

"I tell you sailor, for this wrong,
Your days will surely not be long.'
She leapt so quickly o'er the side,
In ocean dark, does again reside.

"I've sailed hard through wind and rain.
I've sailed long home to you again.
But now from you I must take my leave.
I pray you'll not long for me grieve.

"I feel her clutching at my heart.
I feel her scratching at my bone.
And so farewell my darling dear.
I know my death is surely near."

And when he's dead, and when he's gone,
A black silk dress, she has put on.
She's hanged herself from a high oak tree,
And cursed the witch of the deep dark sea.

THE RED BOOK OF WESTMARCH

DOUG BARBOUR

BRUCE TOWNLEY

FRANK DENTON

MAN PLUS by Frederik Pohl, Random House, \$8.25
BEASTS by John Crowley. Doubleday, \$5.95
BIO-FUTURES edited by Pamela Sargent, Random House/Vintage Books, \$2.25
CINNABAR by Edward Bryant, Macmillan, \$7.95
THE CLEWISTON TEST by Kate Wilhelm, McGraw Hill, \$10.50
THE MAGICIANS by James Gunn, John Wiley, \$9.25
THE GRAYSPACE BEAST by Gordon Eklund, Doubleday, \$6.95
THE BICENTENNIAL MAN AND OTHER STORIES by Isaac Asimov, Doubleday, \$7.95
THE PLANET THAT WASN'T by Isaac Asimov, Doubleday, \$8.95
DEUS IRAE by Philip K. Dick and Roger Zelazny, Doubleday, \$6.95

All Reviewed by Doug Barbour

All the new sf books under review today explore aspects of man-as-potential-new-being, man-in-process. In a variety of ways they provide fictional 'takes' on the concept 'humanity,' and in so doing broaden our philosophical sense of ourselves.

Frederik Pohl is too good a writer to ever give his readers less than full entertainment value, and Man Plus is good hard-science sf, good sociological and political extrapolation, good character study, and good ironic writing with enough final twists to the plot to make O'Henry smile. This is perhaps its only real problem.

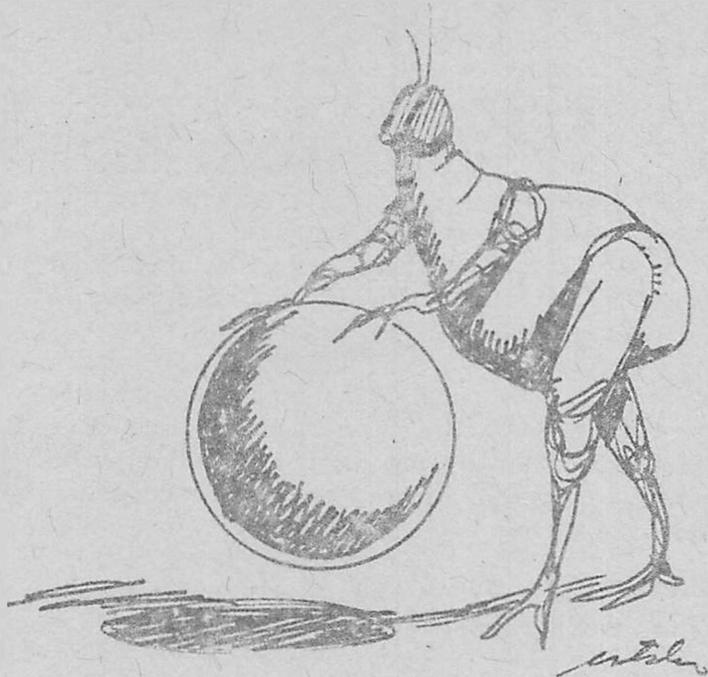
Man Plus is the story of the 'free world's' attempt to begin the colonization of Mars with a new type of cyborg-man. The workings of the Project, the way various people together remake Roger Torrance, is well rendered, catching the tone of emotional involvement such a scientific operation evokes. But, when the politicians enter, the whole thing threatens to turn into a social/political satire.

It isn't. The title is seriously meant, and the analytical style is finally revealed as the 'voice' of the real movers behind the whole project. The final revelation almost succeeds in both satirically putting humanity in its place and expressing an almost mystic hope for the future of the race. Almost. At any rate, Pohl entertainingly educates us about cybernetics, the space program, Mars as a planet of wonder still, and the native emotional foolishness of human beings. Man Plus combines the best aspects of such fifties science fiction as The Space Merchants with the most recent scientific knowledge to offer a few hours of prime sf entertainment.

Beasts, John Crowley's second novel, manages to pack an immense amount of human and extra-human interaction into its full and exciting story. In an America

fragmented by civil war, two groups are fighting for power. The Union of Social Engineers (USE) wants to unify the country by controlling everyone. The Leos (half-human, half-lion people resulting from genetic experiments at the end of the 20th century) seek freedom and something more, a destiny they are barely aware of, the rise of the animal kingdom above the hegemony of man-alone.

Beasts is the story of Painter, king of the beasts, Reynard, (the only half-human, half-fox in existence), the political manipulator, Sweets, the super-intelligent dog, and a motley group of humans who, for various reasons, follow Painter to his destiny. Crowley handles his disparate, complex and charged materials with grace and a kind of savage insight. He is especially good at exploring human feelings and suggesting the alien difference of animal ones. As well, he has a naturalist's eye for physical detail in the landscape. Beasts is an utterly marvelous entertainment with real bite.



If Frederik Pohl and John Crowley give us each single views of possible future changes in humanity, editor Pamela Sargent serves up a whole smorgasbord of possibilities in Bio-Futures. Sub-titled "Science fiction stories about biological metamorphosis," Bio-Futures is a provocative collection of humanly interesting stories which also explore various ramifications of the scientific concepts that are their contexts.

Ms. Sargent's Introduction is a stimulating guide through the moral and philosophical problems associated with biological manipulations and a solid historical overview of the way science fiction has dealt with the question from Mary Shelley through H.G. Wells to Gene Wolfe and Roger Zelazny. The stories are, most of them, well known to the sf fan, but they are superb choices to introduce the finer qualities of sf to the novice reader. Bio-Futures is an intellectually stimulating, entertaining anthology.

Edward Bryant's Cinnabar is a wondrous sequence of stories concerning the strange, almost other-worldly inhabitants of the city at the center of time. Or is it at the end? Or is it simply out of time but linked to all temporal possibilities? Or does it matter?

It doesn't matter. What matters is that Cinnabar is a city to end all cities, the final fortress and the first grand dream. And the stories, legends, myths which Bryant has to tell of this strange place are as colorful, glittering and gorgeously decadent, in all the best senses of the word, as one can imagine. Anything is possible in Cinnabar because its inhabitants, the best and brightest of them, know that 'biologically speaking, there are no imperatives.' This leaves human imagination free to create whatever it desires and to pursue any and every way of life, with often exhilarating, occasionally tragic results.

Bryant, an ever-maturing stylist, acknowledges his debt to J.G. Ballard's Vermilion Sands stories, but Cinnabar is its own place where characters like Tourmaline, the Network sex star and compleat tourist, Obregon, the always curious, non-specialist, Jade Blue, the computer-created cat-mother, Leah Sand, the melancholy media artist, Harry Blake, the boy from 20th century U, and the rest interact with each other and with Terminex, the ultimate, though only intermittantly sane, computer which not only runs Cinnabar but holds its many different time zones together to guarantee its existence. Since most of Cinnabar's inhabitants are nearly immortal, most also suffer from ennui. They appear on the periphery of the stories, while Tourmaline, Obregon, and the others I've named occupy centre-stage, changing and growing even in an immortal city.

I called Cinnabar a sequence rather than a collection of stories because it is a unified whole. The whole is much more than the sum of its parts: to read the whole book is to take an imaginative trip far wilder and farther-reaching than any single story can offer, and it is to do so with style, grace, and wit. Cinnabar is a marvel.

Kate Wilhelm's The Clewiston Test is a superb study of characters under stress a believable exercise in suspense and a compulsively readable novel.

Set in the research facilities of a small pharmaceutical company, it deals with the lives of some scientists who try to deal with a new problem in the testing of a serum designed to suppress pain. The test chimps have begun to act in a murderously psychotic manner, but the company president, seeking the key to unlock a merger with a major conglomerate, refuse to put off the testing of human subjects.

Anne Clewiston, the title character who discovered the serum and, with her husband, has done most of the research, is bed-ridden as the result of a car accident. In her isolation, she begins to question her "perfect" marriage and other aspects of her life. Her changing behavior leads some people, including her husband, to suspect she's used the serum on herself.

The novel intertwines these narrative strands in a brilliant exploration of sexual, social and scientific power politics, building to a climax that is satisfactory because it depends upon the felt reality of the central characters. Most of author Wilhelm's characterizations are good; her illumination of Anne Clewiston's inner changes is especially so. The Clewiston Test is a first-rate novel by any standard.

James Gunn's problem in The Magicians is that he can offer us only a cliched mystery story as the means of presenting some marvelously inventive speculations about magic as science and "extra-mundane energy" as a mathematically controllable force.

The novel is chock full of information about the history and practice of magic, but the private-eye hero and the lovely white witch who finally beat the evil, power-hungry politician tend to move before us in a language too banal for the sense of the mysterious that Gunn seems to be seeking. Moreover, the old-fashioned sexism, let alone sexuality, of the novel lacks sufficient charm to make up for their archaism.

In The Grayspace Beast, Gordon Eklund plays some nifty variations on some fairly hoary science-fiction conventions. He tells of the search for the destructive force which rages through "grayspace" -- that other place where faster-than-light travel is possible -- and of the crew chosen from various races of the galaxy to combat it.

But he fails to develop his context sufficiently: a distant future in which

humanity has flung itself out into the universe and then retreated from it. Instead, his narrator's comments on the story he participated in are too cute by half and fail to provide the proper shock at the end. It's an entertaining read, but it provides hints of a novel that might have been much more than that.

Isaac Asimov, who has been writing science fiction for more than 37 years, is back with a new collection, The Bicentennial Man and Other Stories. What Asimov does, he does well, and what he does is te-1 intelligently crafted stories in which problems are solved intelligently. The Bicentennial Man is a thoroughly enjoyable collection by an old pro, with the added bonus that three stories, including the title one, are inventive, and unexpected twists on the famous Asimovian Three Laws of Robotics.

And if you're still in the mood for puzzles and speculations, you can turn to Asimov's The Planet That Wasn't, the latest collection of his science columns in The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction. Asimov knows how to talk about science to laymen and he provokes thought and entertains, just as he does in his tales.

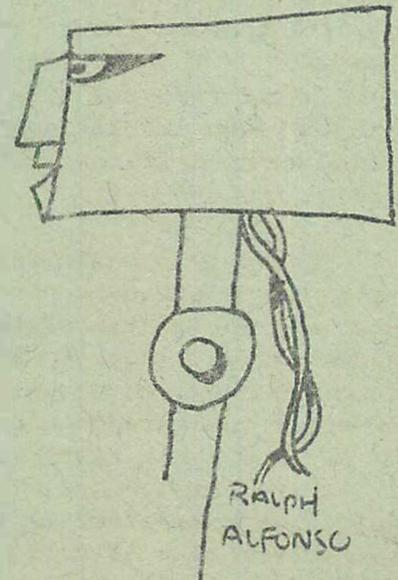
Many years ago, Philip K. Dick began a strange tale of a post-holocaust world and mankind's search for the "god of wrath" who caused such pain by inventing the master weapon of World War III. Recently, Roger Zelazny completed the story, and Deus Irae is the oddly moving result. Both authors have gained something from the collaboration: Dick is a man of unsettling ideas which he often expresses in a somewhat awkward manner; Zelazny has always had style, but recently his work has revealed a certain paucity of good ideas.

Here, given a typical Dick world -- in which "reality" is both slippery and dangerous -- to work with, he proceeds to unravel the mystery of the new man/god of wrath in a fascinating manner. Deus Irae has theological arguments, mythic replays from the past, awkwardly intense human-mutant contacts and some very weird humor. It's not the best work of either author, but it is an intriguing fable that will stick in your mind like a burr.

THE HOT BLOODED DINOSAURS by Adrian J. Desmond, Dial, \$12.95

Reviewed by Bruce Townley

This book is excellent science fiction. With emphasis on neither science nor fiction, it occupies the precise midpoint of the interface between the two: speculation. With a foundation and framework firmly built from concrete fact, Desmond provides the support to cantilever some art in. And the art in this case is the contention that dinosaurs are endothermic with the hot blood of the title flowing through their veins. Pretty hot stuff in deed. This completely turns the model of terrible lizard life as conceived in Victorian times on its head. This model stated that Iguanodon was nothing more than an iguana with pituitary problems, an overgrown present-day lizard. Which makes sense when all you have to go on are a few teeth and nothing like a complete skeleton. But The Hot-Blooded Dinosaurs is a textbook for the 1970's (not the 1870's) paleontology and as such should present the state of that artful science (where there's no chance to see the subjects of study in the flesh aside from weird time-warped flukes like Coelacanth crawling out of



sunny South African seas 70 million years after its salad days) and should completely as possible show where the conjectures of the art are bouncing and what concepts they're bouncing off from. Desmond comes to bat and does just that.

Which brings me to the detective story aspect of this book. Yeah, it's that too. Hardboiled in the toppling of clumsy scenarios in a pretty ruthless search for the most simple, sensible, and elegant solution. The mystery is how could such big reptiles live if they were so enmeshed in the vagaries of environment as today's lizards are? Our little lizards can afford to fool around with ectothermy (wish so-called cold blood that is as warm as the surrounding environment, generally); a cloudy morning only costs them a sunny afternoon on a rock, a cold couple of weeks a season's hibernation. But what about creatures weighing in at up to 50 tons? Desmond tracks down clues from the roots of paleontology, when the significance of fossils was being discovered in the late 1700's, to the newest branches in the 70's. A wealth of physiological details are run down for evidence, each in its logical turn.

This wealth provides a richness of detail that creates depth so you can come back for more again and again. A credible construction. Which sounds to me like a swell definition of what makes science fiction enjoyable. The rewards of this book appear when the rigorously defined speculations take off just like a Texas pterosaur. Some terrific fantasy elements here (after all, what is the difference between a dinosaur and a dragon? Which is more real today?) An example: "Pteranodon was a gentle, intelligent, slow-soaring pterosaur, probably coated with white fur." Dinosaurs are always removed from our gaze at least two times, two steps (we only have the impressions of their bones, mostly). And this is, throughout, a textbook and so it must have chunks of facts imbedded in it in order to teach. So what a joyful accomplishment it is that Desmond can make dinosaurs as immediate as the Tick-Tock Man or a Dashiell Hammett character with a .45 in his mitt. Lotsa neat pix of the big mothers, too.

DRINKING SAPPHIRE WINE by Tanith Lee. DAW Books, UY 1277, no. 226, \$1.25
Reviewed by Frank Denton

I had not read DON'T BITE THE SUN, so this was my first introduction to Jang slang. I must say that I didn't care for it. Tanith Lee uses this adolescent slang to help portray a certain segment of society which lives in four huge domes. The time is some future when life is pretty much unfettered and the QR androids take care of the populace. The Jangs are small adolescent groups of friends who spend their time enjoying life, changing sexes occasionally, getting married so that they can legally get laid, and generally being frivolous. I suppose that their slang was no different than that of our own teenagers, but it got in the way, so I learned to ignore it.

The story itself isn't so bad. It's told in the first person and I'm always a bit disconcerted to never know the name of the protagonist. Said protagonist gets in a whole heap of trouble with his/her Jang group when she sneaks off, sans benefit of marriage, to live with a returning former member of the group. This leads, somehow, to a challenge to a duel from another member of the group. Said member is run through and our protagonist is sentenced to the desert outside of the domes. Where all flourishes quite nicely, thanks to the automated mobile home that he/she is banished in. The only problems which occur are provided by other dissidents who come after it is discovered that he/she is turning the desert into a veritable garden of delight. This is really a fairly light and frothy piece, with some nice touches, but not heavy enough to make me turn back to the previous novel and read it. There are a couple of other books by Tanith Lee which might be worth the try, however.

BUY JUPITER by Isaac Asimov. Fawcett Crest, \$1.50.

Fawcett continues to come out with nice collections of Asimov short stories for those who have joined the readership lately. BUY JUPITER is a 238-page collection of stories spanning the period from 1950 to 1973. There are twenty-four stories here, as well as the good Doctor telling how they came to be written and providing nice literary vignettes about writing, sf and the editors. This is excellent value for the price. Asimov fans should enjoy having this one on the shelf right beside the two volumes of THE EARLY ASIMOV by the same publisher. Good stuff!

SHATTER AT 3:00

I close my ears
to the sounds of traffic

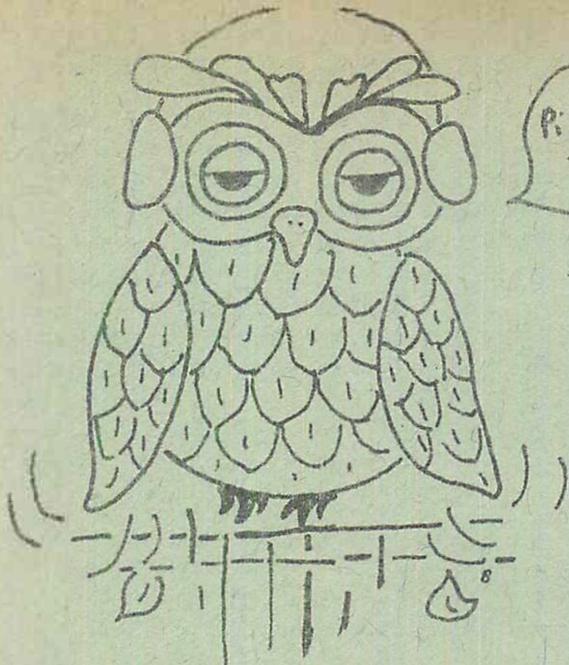
the rush hour
3:00 rush hour
tearing, ripping,
rippling, dancing
churning, grinding
swishing, wisps of
air through me over
me under me
in this year 2077

stranded on this desert
island
this American-French war
out of hand
I gaze upon the wreckage
no...
no, no hope of fixing it
gone
how many more weeks?

NOTHING. Nothing moves on this
island, no vegetation, no
movement, wild, crazy
sands and salt for miles around
I drink the salt, the water

It is afternoon again
I close my ears to
the sounds of metropolitan
traffic
there must be traffic
there must be traffic
the island is motionless
nothing but sands moving

there is the traffic in my skull
pounding
and I know I will join the rush hour



Pilot to
Tower....

AND...

THE
FEATHERS
FLY

JEFF SCHALLES, c/o Sloan, RD 5 Pine Road, Box 339, Carlisle, PA 17013

Reading your editorial pages, and a few other things like Amor, Rune, and Mota, I get the feeling that fans this year have been having rather a grand old time, traveling around visiting each other; I don't know for sure, but it seems to be a good year for it. Even me, who has averaged 1.379 cons a year for the last two or three, and who hasn't dropped in on a fan since 1973, me has attended six real live ones this year, plus one Sun-Con meeting/Chinatown adventure. Moving out of Pittsburgh and closer to the East Coast (Carlisle is approximately two-three hours from New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and Falls Church, sort of a centralized location, you might say...) may have had something to do with it, though maybe not. You just never know about these things. And anyway, I spend most of my time hiking in the mountains (there is one right outside my window, across the road, and it just so happens the Appalachian Trails runs along its crest) looking for bear tracks.

Next I read "Rick's Rambles", ignoring your short zinger of sercon cerebralness for the time because, although both types of writing stretch my mind and permit it to travel lengthy distances, I find it easier to dive into the longer rambling sort. Form and content. I sometimes have trouble telling what is really interesting and what is merely holding my attention from interior evidence. Most current major example being ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE, which is taking me months to read, and yet I am always thinking about it in odd moments, and picking it up first thing in the morning. I haven't thought about taking a long trip for a while, didn't do it at all in 1975, and haven't gotten around to writing up the second half of this Spring's attack on the Georgia end of the Appalachian Trail (I'm waiting to see how soon Real Soon Now will be for the new Spanish Inquisition, which has the first part) and therefore haven't been thinking deeply on the subject as of late, but reading "Rick's Rambles", which I enjoyed a great deal, has started me thinking on how to escape once again! Thanks, whew, I needed that...

Now, as for Eric Mayer, I'm not so sure that he isn't contradicting himself when he states that fusing mainstream techniques with genre sf is current, and unsound. He hints later in the piece toward his own rebuttal, but doesn't really get the idea off the ground. When talking of the best, and only the best, the top 2-3% of either mainstream or genre sf, it is my opinion that what is and what has been *all along* has been a definite flow of cross talk, a pattern that, despite cries of ghettoization, shows a meeting of the great minds of 20th Century literature. Of course, the deeper you submerge yourself into the ghetto, the further you get from any semblance of underlying form, but the elitist who only wishes to concern himself with the top, the cream, the ultimate that the culture (the million monkeys) has produced, will find, I think, that this is all as it is. Of course,

I suppose you could say that I am missing the boat or something like that, because I don't think Eric meant to limit himself to the upper parameters of the discussion. But he did stimulate me into wandering down a few personal paths, possibly further than before, that I haven't seen in a while. I've been throwing serious constructive stfish thoughts around in my head and notes for many years now, and have yet to commit anything to paper, formally. Not since college, anyway. Though I've always been tossing about the idea of sending my final criticism project from my senior year criticism seminar, an inquest into THE WORD FOR WORLD IS FOREST, something that caught my eye and mind considerably before it received its well deserved Hugo, to some clunky sercon fanzine under a pseudonym, just to see what happens. (If it surfaces, send it along here. Ash-Wing readers will love having a crack at it. And it's been far too long since A-W has had anything about or by Ursula. Anyone out there have a good review of ORSINIAN TALES? I'd love to have it reviewed. -- ed.)

It's too bad about fan fiction, really. Some of it isn't bad reading, like "The Law of Aryan," and shows a spark of intergalactic thinking, which is what is basically needed to write sf, but it really isn't all that good, and is often too short (though when it's long, look out!) to be of much use. But I have a feeling that without fan fiction there wouldn't be fans or fanzines, because we all wrote it at one time or another.

(Jeff comments on both the front and back covers -- Pearson and Fletcher -- "two of the better cover pieces by these two that I've seen.")

ERIC MAYER, 175 Congress St., Apt. 5F, Brooklyn, NY 11201

I thought #20 was a good issue. "Rick's Rambles" and "Monsters in Moria" were, I thought, sort of similarly inconsistent. The former was often fascinating, occasionally repetitive. The latter was often funny, occasionally in rather poor taste. Funny kind of story, "Monsters." As a piece of fiction it could never cut it on the basis of the general concept, plot, whatnot. But it was such a peculiar amalgamation that it really did hold my interest. I suppose that's because it was written in the spirit of any other faanish travelogue. The characters were the writers. Interesting idea! Just what should you call it? A somewhat exaggerated convention report, maybe. Or faan fiction written by Tolkien fans. (Ken is an old hand at this sort of thing, although "Monsters in Moria" was the first time for Liz Danforth and Jim Peters. Ken St. Andre and Terry Ballard did a series of this kind of thing back when Ash-Wing was a pup. I hope that they do more, now that Ken has found partners again. Hmmm, do you suppose I could get Jeff May to do a "Hookhand" story?) (When Ash-Wing was a pup???)

Though I enjoyed Rick Stoker's diaries I couldn't help wishing more than once that he had elaborated on some of the individual incidents. I think I can understand his reluctance to do so. I've had innumerable incidents to write about since coming to NY. I've taken all kinds of notes. But there's just too much. I don't know where to start, and were I to write about only one in a long chain of incidents I'd miss the feeling most important to me, the feeling of transition, the excitement of having so many interesting things happening one after another. I think Rick does capture this feeling rather well. And once again, like "Monsters in Moria," it's a fairly unique article and most anything out of the ordinary appeals to me when it's printed in a fanzine.

Fine covers on both sides. Different and yet oddly similar. Pearson's style looking very precise, polished; Fletcher's looking more sketchy, by sheer choice. But both bold and strong, thick lines. Only one thing, those are awful strange looking owls on the back. (Awright, cut that out!...)

Excellent book reviews, too. the ones by Doug Barbour and Bruce Townley are gems. (Thank you. Doug does a hell of a job for Ash-Wing, every issue, and I really appreciate it. Bruce is as off-beat in his reviews as he is in his art, and if I ever have room, there's a short story by him that's just as weird. I have not forgotten it, Bruce.)

I love you, Jean-Luc Ponty!

DON D'AMMASSA, 19 Angell Drive, East Providence, RI 02914

I just finished reading A-W and find that I must respond to Eric Mayer. Although Eric makes a surprisingly good case, I think his argument that characterization in sf is wasted falls apart in the long run.

First, while I will agree in principle that Dickens did use caricatures rather than characters, his caricatures are head and shoulders above that created by pulp sf writers. The idea may have been the lead character in those old stories, but most of those old stories were very forgettable, and have been forgotten. Heinlein does

caricature on the same level as Dickens, perhaps, but Don Wilcox, Clyde Clason, Alexander Blade, and the rest did not.

I like Leigh Edmonds' idea of Mundane Fiction Review. If he actually goes through with it, I'd like to contribute.

Bruce Townley is too hard on Cover's AUTUMN ANGELS. I thought parts of it were quite good, although I agree that it really wasn't as spectacular as Ellison's essay might lead one to believe.

DOUG BARBOUR, 10808 - 75th Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6E 1K2

I also found much to chew over in Eric Mayer's little essay. Much. I can't take the necessary time to discuss all that the essay calls to mind; in fact, I can't even remember all the things I thought while reading it the first time. Checking it over again, I find myself saying a few things in order as I read him: a) if contemporary 'mainstream' (a term I dislike only because I would rather not set up definition-walls anywhere) fiction is going to date because 'fashions change,' then so is sf going to date. It will happen with everything, or, it won't happen, really, as it really doesn't happen with Dickens (Eric's choice). The good will last, the bad will, I hope and believe, fall away: that's a different proposition, and not one that Eric made. b) this fol de rol about picking a literary fashion fifty years too late: 1) it isn't necessarily true, 2) it sure isn't necessarily 50 years; it could be yesterday, so why bother with it. If a technique proves useful, then use it no matter where it came from (I suspect some good recent 'mainstream' stuff has borrowed techniques from sf; why not, they were the right techniques). c) Of course, there's nothing wrong with limited characters, or caricatures, as Eric calls them. I would argue, however, that here too, it's how well they are used and developed that counts, not the fact that they are used. Eric, in fact, pretty well undercuts his own case at the top of page 6. Yeah, the old stuff, much of it, is seen to be trivial today because it's pisspoor as good writing. That's it. Gully Foyle, I would argue, is what Eric says, but he's more, and he develops. If he didn't, there would be no story, at least no transcendent ending. Indeed, I would argue that it is precisely because Bester does not develop the characters in THE COMPUTER CONNECTION as he did Gully that makes the more recent book a poorer one. Still, Eric makes some good points about sf caricatures when they are aliens (so-called) or robots. I look forward to where his thoughts will take him. Certainly to be sf a novel or story will have to be different in some obvious way from a mainstream story, but I'm not sure that means it has to lack those qualities I look for in all good literature.

I liked THE MOTE IN GOD'S EYE too, but I did so all the while grinding my teeth at some of the characterization. It didn't have to be '3-dimensional,' but it could have been intelligent, by which I mean, seeing the characters as flesh and blood. Actually it sometimes did, sometimes didn't, and that's what bothered me. Well, as you can see, I can always find something to loc.

You realize the enormous difficulties of building a better world when you finally get down to cleaning the garage!!!!

STUART GILSON, 745 Townsend Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3T 2V5

Richard Stoker's travelogue makes me realize there's a lot more to traveling than I've believed all these years. Wandering about the country with no set purpose or destination in mind is something I've never tried before, but if the opportunity ever arises I may try my hand at it. One thing Rick's comments make clear is that it's not where you go that's so important so much as your abilities as an observer; he took notice of small details that more than likely would have escaped the attention of most intrepid tourists, including myself. Most amusing about his experiences, though, was the bad incident in the Winnipeg bookstore; never having patronized most local stores (I've obtained most of my collection direct from Chester Cuthbert), this revelation of inhospitality comes as a complete surprise. I will have to introduce myself to the local booksellers and decide for myself just exactly who it was that gave our city such a bad name.

It's hard to disagree with someone who can express himself as articulately as Eric, but I found myself shaking my head enough times while reading his essay that some sort of response is necessary. Characterization in sf has always left much to be desired; as Eric rightfully points out, caricature has by and large played a substantial role in shaping and giving character to sf, and many times its use has been demanded because of sf's own particular structure. As far as caricature being a tradition to be venerated and preserved, however, we must consider the circumstances in which it first saw general usage in the genre. Sf's origins are not unique; early sf, rather than standing totally alone, in fact represented a whole slew of pulp fiction which was characterized by the same emphasis on caricature Eric observes in pulp sf. One has to wonder if the use of caricature was by the conscious choice of the early writers, or if in fact it was merely indicative of poor writing by poor writers who hadn't the talent or desire to utilize sound characterization. By Eric's standards, caricature was ideally suited to the genre; I must ask if early pulp writers were capable of rising above the use of caricature.

Caricature may indeed represent an old tradition, one marked with success and reader acceptance. Does not the whole purpose of sf, however, warrant a step up -- a recognition of mainstream techniques which are by far more sophisticated and versatile than those of early sf?

Sf is concerned with ideas clearly enough; a more broad and realistic observation is that sf is concerned with ideas and their effect on people. Early sf may have dealt most effectively with simple abstract speculation and scientific theorizing for the sake of theorizing; as far as examining the social consequences of scientific change, however, in many ways it failed dismally. Caricature by itself does not allow for in-depth studies of human nature; the less fully revealed a character is, the less significant are any changes he may undergo. Sf is a literature of change. It examines the substance of science and progress by examining changes in individuals. If these individuals are complex, intricately developed beings, then any changes they exhibit are not only more observable and better understood, they are also more interesting.

Eric argues that supporting characters are normally caricatures that support the protagonist, and that this protagonist can assume the form of a single idea or theme. While this is true in many cases, it's wrong to suppose that the protagonist cannot -- even in sf -- serve both functions at once. Consider Raskalnikov in CRIME AND PUNISHMENT. While existing as an intricate character who develops consistently as the novel progresses, at the same time Raskalnikov represents the concept of the Nietzschean "uberman" -- the divinely-chosen superman. In THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV, Raskalnikov-the-idea is simply divided into four distinct personalities, each of which is again fully developed as a character. Had Dostoevsky eliminated either side of his protagonist -- the idea or the character -- the work would have been seriously damaged; both exist together, and each contributes to the expression of the other.

The same reasoning applies to sf, and there's no reason why this same duality

cannot be achieved by same. Fully developed characters, if their personality and actions fit in well with the rest of the story, are not only memorable, they are vital for a full appreciation and understanding of the ideas. Had David Selig in Silverberg's DYING INSIDE been reduced to the status of a caricature, everything Silverberg was trying to say would have passed unnoticed by the reader. Characterization is fully as important as plot and conflict. If writers of sf are incapable of expressing themes and ideas through strong characters, then they should limit themselves to writing non-fiction. Sf does indeed have a long and valuable heritage. This should not prevent it from progressing by experimenting with new techniques which have worked elsewhere. Only the ideas sf grapples with are different from those espoused by mainstream writers; the means by which these ideas are expressed apply equally in all genres of writing.

MIKE HORVAT, 705 South Lyons Street, Albany, OR 97321

Eric says that science fiction will be studied for its historical value; he then says that he doubts modern sf's historical value because it is so faddish.

You know, one can't have it both ways: if sf is truly of the 20th century and "so distinctly a product of /it/" then it must be because it reflects the contemporary fashions so well. Science fiction of, say, 1900-1938 is terribly dated; one can tell from only a few pages when a story was written. The same is true of modern sf...instead of reflecting early 20th century wonder at science, optimistic change, or human possibilities of perfection, it mirrors these times of essential pessimism, despair of the human condition, and lack of faith that Man's problems can be solved by Man's inventions rather than by Man himself.

Eric feels that modern writers lose something as their writing approaches the "mainstream"; they forget the "traditions of the genre."

I think that the basic error of his approach is that it is not necessary for Good Literature to be an orgy of characterization; nor is a genre novel required to lack a roundness of person to contain ideas.

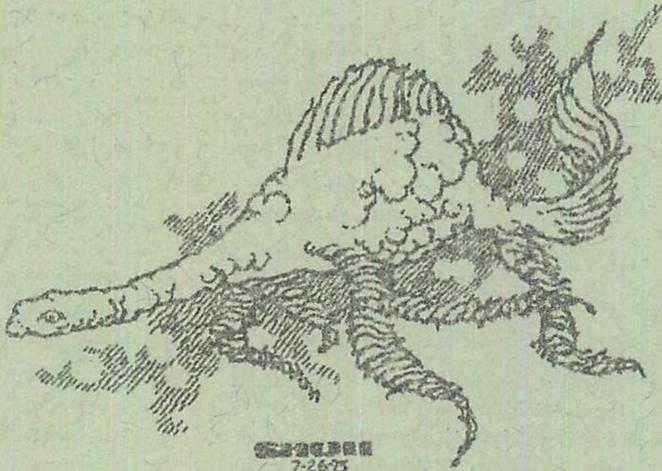
Science fiction must not give up its Ideas to develop character, but we still need help in the field with handling humans and representing them as such on the printed page. GOD IS AN ENGLISHMAN comes to mind as an example. This longish novel does not go into deep realms of psychological analysis of its main character; it does, however, show him in many different situations in which he shows a distinct personality...he is more than a caricature, much more. This book is not fascinating because of Swann; instead it is impossible to put down because it takes an idea, develops it, and runs it through many adventures to a logical conclusion (of the idea). If Delderfield would have placed this on Rigel II and called it

"The Story of Intergalactic-on-Wheels" it would have won the Hugo, the Nebula, and the Mike Horvat certificate of award.

There is too much in the roots of science fiction that says that a gimmick is all that's needed. Too often reading "The Old Masters" tells us that one need not be a good writer to succeed in science fiction.

"...early science fiction writers employed caricature so as not to detract from the intellectual content of their stories..."

I rather think not. It seems far more reasonable



that the early writers used caricatures because it was far easier to do than to write/develop their own characters. They continued to do it because they could get away with it. Campbell's genius is that he demanded more from his writers. What makes us think that character development would distract a thoughtful reader from the intellectual content of the story? Certainly a person capable of comprehending the intellectual content could find it in the midst of a decent story with decent characters.

Perhaps Eric's trouble is more like my own: I do not care for the modern fads of literature themselves. I tend to think that the older forms of science fiction are better than the modern because I like the older forms of literature far more than I do this new "stuff". I'd like to stick stream of consciousness in a critic's ear; foul language has no place in literature any more than it has a place in life; certain amenities regarding subject matter really ought to be observed.

Bill Marsh recently recommended that I try out one of Sterling E. Lanier's Donald Ffellowes stories; I tried "Ghost of a Crown" in the December '76 F&SF. It wasn't much of a story, but it was nice to read a current writer trying to capture the mood of 1920. (I usually go to a 1920 author to find a 1920 mood; a contemporary does it so much better, you know). But I digress. After reading this story, I happened to turn to "Life Among the Anthropologists" by Raylyn Moore. Let me judge this story:

CHARACTERIZATION: pretty good, hampered by the short story format, but there is enough for the purpose (albeit not much).

STORYLINE: of absolutely no interest to me. An anthropologist goes into the hills near Santa Cruz to study a cult. They cut his heart out in a birthing ceremony (they've apparently been waiting for another student-type to come poking around so they'd have a sacrifice). I don't mind them all eating the placenta as much as I minded getting suckered into reading the story in the first place.

SEX: the author managed to get three copulations into the eight pages; they were short, though. And in the context of this story one of them was appropriate.

DIALOGUE: next to none.

IDEA CONTENT: none

FANTASY CONTENT: none. I don't know what this was doing in F&SF, but I don't like finding it there; vomit.

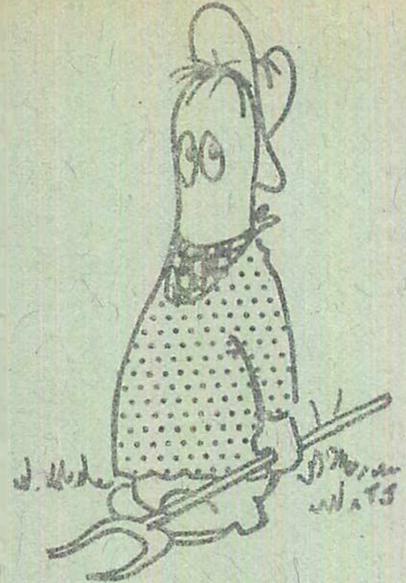
Rick Stoker's "Ramblings" was passably interesting, Frank, but not -- I think -- worth so much space. I have a haunting feeling that if a writer doesn't value his notes enough to enlarge upon them, making them a finished piece, then the notes themselves don't warrant printing. A lack of observational and critical ability can so easily be hidden behind more-or-less cryptic notes; a reader tends to add so much of himself to a half sentence here and there that he imagines that the author contributes a substantial portion. It is rather like taking one hundred words of R.E. Howard, adding fifteen thousand, and calling it a collaboration.

"Monsters in Moria" was a lot of fun -- like SPACEHOUNDS OF THE IPC, it is to be enjoyed, not analyzed! What's Pepsi, indeed!

DARRELL SCHWEITZER, 113 Deepdale Road, Strafford, PA 19087

I'm afraid Eric Mayer is rationalizing the shortcomings of science fiction. I can't believe the earlier pulp writers were deliberately creating caricatures. They were using stereotypes, pre-set simplistic characters which were simply the

tools of the trade. And most of the writers of that period who are around for comment (or whose comments have been preserved) regarded their work as a trade, not an art, and they didn't take it seriously. Real caricature is an extremely difficult thing and it has to be done with great care. A genuine talent for it is extremely rare, because the author has to make the caricature, as unbelievable as it is, live as a real person does, so that the reader cares about what happens to it. Dickens could do this, as could Peake, but after that I have to start thinking before I can come up with another example. Yes, I think Bester was able to do it in *THE STARS MY DESTINATION*, and perhaps Moorcock has approached true caricature at times, as has Lafferty, but I can't think of any others in science fiction.



It's a very dangerous thing (or it would be if Mayer were a fiction writer) to suggest that the one-dimensional non-characters of something like the Neil R. Jones stories are what is needed for that type of story. Quite on the contrary, any interest those stories had (and I've always found them stupifyingly dull) was there in spite of the lack of characterization, not because of it. Compare these with the stories of George Martin, Larry Niven or the later Poul Anderson (I'm thinking of *TAU ZERO* especially) and you'll find that the modern stories benefit enormously from having real people in them. These writers have hardly "lost touch with their roots", whatever that means, but they've brought a reasonable degree of literary competence into a field which hasn't had too much since the 1920's. (The pulp magazines, especially in the first two decades, certainly acted as a shelter for bad writing and lowered the standards of the field enormously. Before that a science fiction story had to measure up to the general fiction of the day before it got published. Which, I suppose, is why Wells holds up far better than Jones, Doc Smith or Hugo Gernsback.)

Leigh Edmond's idea of a "Mundane Fiction Review" is simply silly, and an example of reverse-bigotry which is no more commendable than the regular kind. What are "science fiction standards" anyway, save an admission that sf readers will tolerate poorer writing because the content is sf. Would anyone read a mainstream novel written as badly as Neil R. Jones or E.E. Smith? Not for long, I'd guess. The competition in the mainstream is rougher. I don't imagine anyone will be reading Jackie Susann in a decade, but writers of similar quality in sf have sometimes endured.

In short, the statement "SF must be judged by different standards" translates from the Fannish as "X (whichever favorite author is being passionately defended) may be completely illiterate, but I like him anyway." Anyone who really does want to see sf reach its potential can't compromise on that.

JIM MEADOWS III, 31 Apple Court, Park Forest, IL 60466

Eric Mayer makes an interesting point in his article on caricature and character in fiction; the tough thing, though, is to draw the line between the two. What's the difference; how can you tell the difference; where does one start, and the other leave off? Part of the problem is the concept of stereotype. Many authors stereotype all the time, I think, and get away with it -- because the stereotype they use is still in vogue. For instance, most of the reviews I read of the film, "Carrie", were very favorable; some of the even praised the film to the hills

for its true to life depiction of the social pressures in high school. But where they found accuracy, I found stereotypes, in a pimple-free high school that seemed to be all jocks and greasers and no freaks, and in the character of Carrie's mother, the old super-fundamentalist Christian fanatical shrew. Tiresome and irritating to me; but not to others, who found these same depictions perfectly logical, and probably satisfying. They were stereotypes that fit a certain audience. There are, no doubt, stereotypes that I call good characterization because they fit my own preconceived notions, and I am thus able to flesh them out mentally without really thinking about it. Of course, I couldn't tell you what they are.

"The Law of Aryan" didn't work for me. Too short, and the first person narrator knew too much, openly admitting and explaining the difference between the usual human love relationship and the owner-pet relationship intended here. I don't know if a member of another species who was in love with us would be quite as clearly aware, or as willing to admit the difference. All in all, the Aryans (this one, anyway) don't act human; the narrator is much too direct and frank, and yet doesn't go into much reason as to motive as if we knew. A longer form is needed if you really want to look at the Aryans' heads. And I would advise against such blatant tuckerisms as Phillips Fletcher Pratt. That's like naming a supporting character in a mundane story E. Richard Nixon.

HARRY WARNER, JR., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, MD 21740

Eric Mayer tackles a major problem in his article on caricature. I've always thought of characterization as coming in three varieties: one-dimensional, characters who are the basic ones like the mad scientist, sturdy young hero, unbearably repulsive bem, who could be interchanged among thousands of stories without altering their behavior; two-dimensional, characters who stick in the memory because they have some distinctive trait, like so many in Dick Tracy and each of the Seven Dwarfs, but don't possess the elements which could cause us to mistake them for real people; and three-dimensional, those who seem capable of stepping out of the book and making their way in the real world, like Thomas Wolfe's Gants and John Steinbeck's Okies. Eric's "caricatures" seem mostly to be the two dimensional kind. But the big problem which he doesn't go into is the contradiction between fantasy fiction and characterization: the very form of literature implies that the characters will have different environments from those in realistic fiction because they live in the future or on other planets or have supernatural attributes. How can the writer of fantasy make his characters seem real when success in this undertaking would defeat his very purpose? This paradox might account for the failure of science fiction and fantasy fiction writers to create many three-dimensional characters. It also might lend strength to Eric's belief that mundane and fantasy fiction should be criticized by different standards, although I can see a lot of potential good in other respects in your notion about reviewing mundane fiction by science fiction standards (although I think it's less likely that the literary establishment would read such reviews than we are apt to read their judgments.

I reacted just about as you did to Rick Stoker's diary. I must admit that the activities described in it are almost as alien to my way of life and habits as a typical day for a person who lives in the 24th century. But I could feel empathy with one of Rick's preoccupations, at least; that of hunting for second-hand bookstores. I wish they didn't have an increasing tendency to be situated in the more dubious neighborhoods. There are several in Washington which I no longer consider safe to visit even in broad daylight and even in one medium-sized town not far from Hagerstown, I feel more comfortable driving from one shop to another. I used to park and walk the circuit there before the crime rate started rising and tension increased not just between races but between poor white trash and anyone who wears a suit and hat.

"The Law of Aryan" has the potential of becoming a good story of possibly professional calibre. Maybe Carol Blalock will rewrite it, flesh it out more, make it seem more like an account of a series of dramatic events than a retrospective backward glance, after gaining some more practice and experience as an author. One thing that definitely needs changing is the hero's name. Fletcher Pratt is such a big name among the older generation of science fiction writers that the reader's concentration is broken every time he comes across the name, Phillip Fletcher Pratt.

BEN INDICK, 428 Sagamore Ave., Teaneck, NJ 07666

I liked Carol Blalock's story best. It was perhaps not completely successful, goodness knows why she chose "Aryan", making me await uneasily a "surprise" ending based on our own earthly usage of that term (happily, it never came.). And why take a well-known writer's name as 2/3 of her hero's name? Again, it causes certain expectations which have nothing to do with the actual story. Still, it was moving and, in spite of the colossal odds against it, credible.

Not to be curmudgeonly, but what was it in Rich Stooker's amiable diary which moved you so? I'd like to have seen something in it of what impelled him. Or moved him. Occasionally a glimmer showed -- but not enough to make it more than a surface affair. By the way, in both Greenwich Village and High Point Sector, Bronx, streets do such weird things as Rich describes.

Doug Barbour's favorable review of my controversial neighbor, happily I can add "friend" now, insofar as meeting him twice allows such an intimacy -- Barry Malzberg, is refreshing. Fan reviewers had led me to expect an ogre. As I can now attest, he is an interesting and personable man. I read HERO VIT'S WORLD with much appreciation.

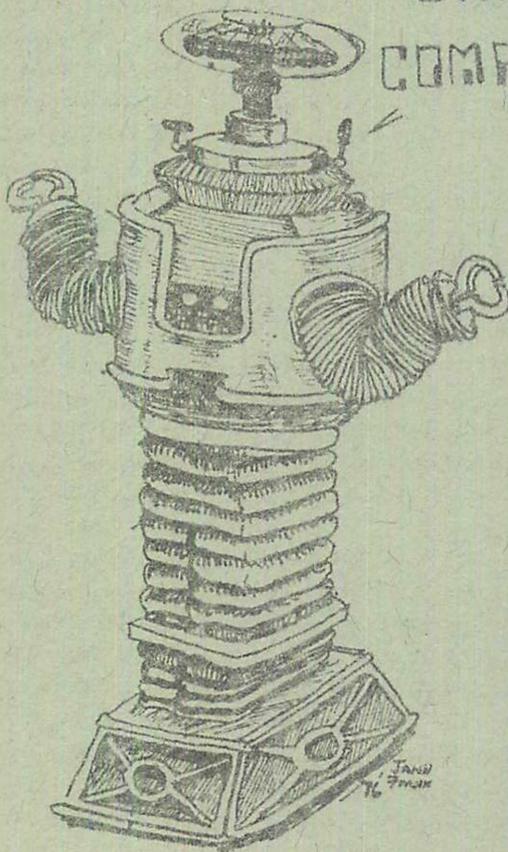
DON BUNGER, 25718 - 16th Ave. So., Kent, WA 98031

I've got 200 signed up for Science Fiction and Futuristics and only 90 seats, so all is well at Highline.

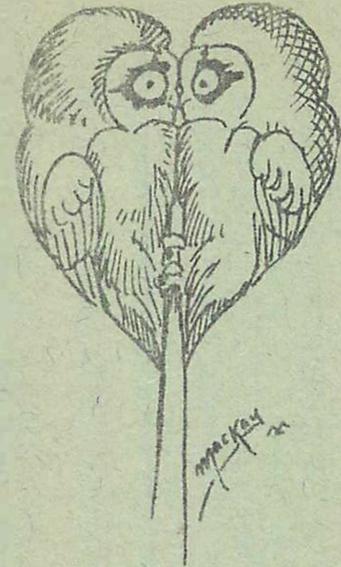
We have been informed by M.K. O'Neill's #2 man at Princeton, Dr. Brian O'Leary, that we have the first space colony model for public display in the world. We junked the #20 tank you saw -- instead we have a custom made Highline tin shop special! It has a 15' ring of agricultural pods and the cylinder is about 9 feet long

Hopefully, it will rotate and cycle in late April at the Pacific Science Center.

NONE OF THIS
"SHIT"
COMPUTES



Thanks again for your comments about our slide presentation. My brother-in-law is helping the situation by building me a counter at Hewlett Packard which will keep track of 400 to 600 slides using L.E.D. read-outs. It will handle six projectorw and eventually twelve. I plan to teach SF/Space Colonies/Futuristics at the Science Center once the model gets installed. I'll let you know when we get the new dissolve control working and try to get some tickets to you if we can do a general program in the fall.



Buy THE HIGH FRONTIERS - HUMAN COLONIES IN SPACE by Gerald K. O'Neill. William Morrow and Co., 1977. \$8.95. It has an excellent last chapter: "The Human Prospect in Space."

O'Neill explains the irony of having invented a scientific, logical means to colonize space only to find that writing a science fiction story would fail to realize his goal - to get the idea across to the public. He finally got his first article published through a personal interview. It seems odd that scientists suffer fantastic rejection even when their ideas are logical, but still sound like "science fiction."

GEORGE FLYNN, 27 Sowamsett Ave., Warren, RI 02885

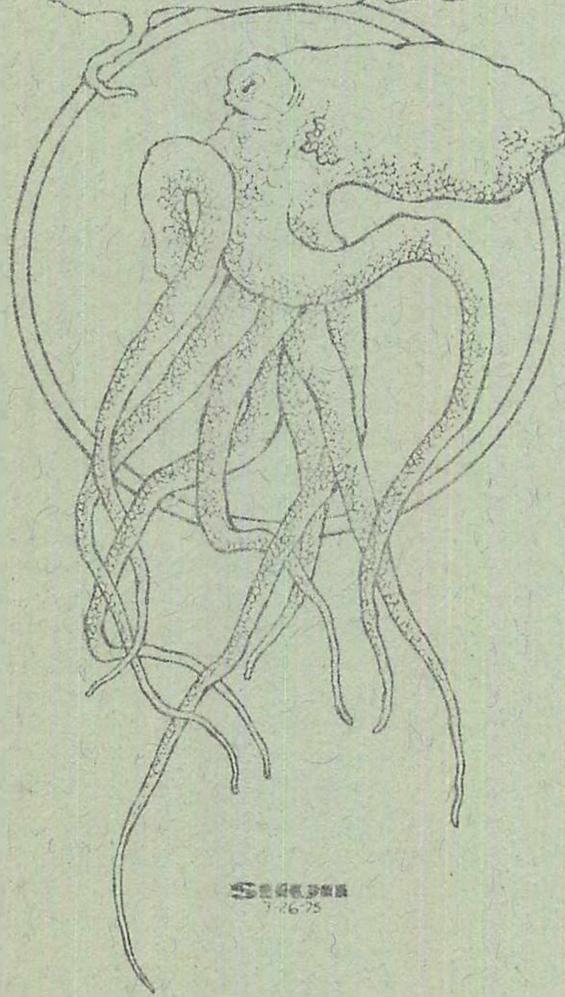
I was intrigued by Eric Mayer's article, which runs along similar lines to some of my own ideas. I've been maintaining for some time that characterization, while desirable, is not necessary to a good sf story. Indeed, there are some remarkable works that have essentially no characterization at all; the best example I can think of is Stapledon's LAST AND FIRST MEN, one of the most influential works in the genre. But I don't think I can agree with Eric that caricature is inherently superior to true characterization in idea-as-hero stories. A combination of well-developed ideas and well-rounded characters ought to be better than either alone; it's just that such a combination is damnably hard to pull off. In any case, it's hardly likely that this sort of argument will alter the views of those committed to the conventional literary values: what we're dealing with here (on both sides) are essentially matters of faith.

RONALD M. SALOMON, 1014 Concord St., Framingham, Mass. 01701

I, too, buy books and then can't force myself to read them for months - sometimes years, sad to say. But I will get to more Van Vogt sometime -- anyway, there are many classics I've yet to take a crack at. Just read "Foundation Trilogy" a year ago - tried the 1st volume 14 years ago and gave up after one chapter, but this time devoured the whole thing in a week or two at odd times of the day and night - loved it. Am still not through all of Asimov - why did I wait so long? I dunno. Read the robot stuff in the late 50's, then nothing. Length does deter me. Not a valid excuse but that's why I like prozines and short story collections; 30 pages at a time and zap you're done - no leaving off in the middle and forgetting the beginning - three times in a row. I never said I had a good memory, though it's getting worse, ~~ppp~~ Frank.

Re: the reviews: Judith Merrill has had less than her share of shelf-space on the bookstands and I, for one, look forward to buying and reading the BEST. Like the idea of reviewing serialized novels in the promags. More please.
//Loads more letters, but no more room. Thanks to everyone and keep them coming!//

The magazine
of the
preplexed.



SIEM
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