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Good Grief! It's mid-February already, and this issue should have been out weeks ago. There is snow on the ground outside now, but it is the first around here this winter, so I must complete this issue quickly, or Steve Fox's cover is going to be very unseasonal!

The need to do an editorial arose rather suddenly, after Martin Helsdon let me know that he couldn't complete a centre-spread in time, which is a pity, since his work has been much admired, and an issue without Martin feels a bit lonely. However, he has promised to get back to it once his studies are complete, so I'm hopeful of material from him for CS8 or 9.

Since then, I had looked around for a subject to enlarge upon, when an odd 'event chain' built up and presented me with a suitable subject. There I was, with a loose question 'Why SF' floating vacuously around, thinking about why the genre interests me so much, when I found a book called VICTORIAN FANTASY, by Stephen Prickett, in which I found a Coleridge quote that encapsulates the whole experience. No sooner had that appeared, when I finally read a FOUNDATION that I'd stacked away in the middle of last year. Inside there was an article by W.M.S. Russell on 'Folktales and SF', part of which covered my own experiences, and showed how typical it was in the field.

The Coleridge quote I came across goes as follows:

"...from my early reading of Faery tales, and Genii, etc., etc., my mind has been habituated to the Vast ...and I never regarded my senses in any way as the criteria of my belief. I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions, not my sight - even at that age. Should children be permitted to read Romances, and Relations of Giants and Magicians, and Genii? I know all that has been said against it, but have formed my faith in the affirmative - I know no other way of giving the mind a love of the 'Great' and the 'Whole'..."

"Mind habituated to the Vast..." That's it! The best description of the cumulative effect of SF and Fantasy that I have come across. Yet, when Coleridge wrote that, SF as we know it hardly even existed: FRANKENSTEIN was the only example of the genre available. But that solid link between SF and Fantasy was already there, and the effect that Coleridge describes as originating from immersion in the wellsprings of Fantasy, in the establishment in a child's brain of an appreciation of 'the Vast, the Great, the Whole', that is still applicable today. What other literary genre can inculcate in the developing mind an awareness that the universe is something bigger than the immediate backyard, or the city, or even the nation? The universe is a place of majestic size, of infinite possibility - and that's something valuable to know.

As a child, my earliest choices in reading were reference books - there was so much I wanted to know! Alongside the 'how aeroplanes fly' bits, there were brief outlines of Greek and Roman classical mythology, and these fascinated me as much as the factual entries

in the encyclopaedias. When I joined a public library, at about the age of nine, I immediately ransacked the shelves for tales from folklore (as well as the normal adventure stories by authors like W.E. Johns and Arthur Ransome). I really couldn't get enough of those legends, and Arthurian lore, in particular, fascinated me - I must have read the story of Arthur retold a hundred ways over the next few years!

The nudge towards SF came from outside of books, in the form of radio. (Does that make me an original 'Media fan'?) In the mid-fifties, serials like Radio Luxembourg's 'Dan Dare' (I never did see the comic version), Charles Chilton's 'Lost in Space', and the children's stories by Angus McVicar about the lost planet Hesikos, were all avidly listened to and anticipated. I found books by McVicar in the library, devoured them, then looked for more. (As an aside, my very good friend Jean Holly loaned me some of those self-same books not so very long ago - they proved beyond doubt that you really can't go back!) I homed in on Clarke's 'Kemlo' juveniles, then many others, before venturing out of the childrens section altogether (at the age of eleven, I would guess) to borrow books on my mother's tickets from the adult section.

Soon I was merely reading non-fiction from the children's library; heaven was across the room, in the yellow-backed Gollancz SF series. Myopic even then, those virulent yellow covers were irresistible to me - I could spot them an aisle away! They introduced me to the 'adult' Clarke, to Asimov and Sturgeon and many other SF writers of the mid-late fifties. They also introduced me to adult fantasy, in the shape of the Gollancz Fantasy Classic collection. That included, among others, such goodies as David Lindsay's A VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS. A little later came Peake, then Tolkien, and the habit was firmly

entrenched - I was an SF/Fantasy junkie for life!

Lest it be said that the diet of SF/Fantasy accounts for my appalling taste, it should be noted that, simultaneously, I was reading voraciously in the classics, everything from Homer and Virgil to Hugo and Tolstoy, (it was about now that I acquired a taste for Russian literature), in other genres (crime especially, where I formed an early attachment for Raymond Chandler), and in non-fiction. My tastes were (and still are) wide, and dwelling in one corner of literature for too long bored me, though I suppose SF and Fantasy made up a good forty to fifty percent of my reading material. As I did briefly touch on in an earlier issue (CS4), other fiction often tends to get treated as a subset of fantasy in my mind, and there is no doubt that I gravitated towards those classics and mainstream works which contained elements of that larger viewpoint that I found so attractive in SF and Fantasy.

The Russell piece in FOUNDATION was fascinating, for it indicated that many authors followed the same route into SF, via a grounding in fairy tales and folklore that left them with a taste for Cole-ridge's 'Vast', an appetite only appeased by the larger world-views of SF and Fantasy. I suspect that it reflects an 'outward urge' (if I may borrow a phrase from John Wyndham) in Man, something that has been 'headed off at the pass' by religion for many centuries, since it was always easier to answer the question of "What's out there?" with pieties about "God" and "Heaven". Now, in more skeptical times, that same question fires the creative imagination. The size of the universe in which we exist is so vast that, to all intents and purposes, it is infinite, infinite in volume and duration, (as Doug Adams suggested in HHGTTG). So the imagination can run riot - with infinity to play with, anything can, and probably will, happen!

ARNOLD AKIEN'S

AN AGE WITHOUT AN AIM?

Good morning, mon enfants...or afternoon, or evening or whatever. When you attain my venerable age, such trifling units of time cease to have any significance. Yes, once you too are in your third decade of existence, the petty dictat of time will cease to have any meaning; all life's mysteries will unfold before you, and...but I wander. Now let's see. Ah! Yes, the lesson for today is history.

You will have noticed, I trust, that I said history and not History? Doubtless the significance of this distinction has not passed you by? History (with a capital 'H') is the word that you scrawled into that little compartment in your school timetable that almost invariably augured a few hours a week spent in the study of captains and kings and Suraja Thingy, who had something or other to do with the Black Hole of wherever-it-was. On the other hand history is about people like you, who have lived, breathed, and read SF magazines, and even books.

Most of us think of the past in fairly simplistic terms. This is not so much the product of the deficiencies of the education system of whichever outpost of Empire had dominion over our respective childhoods - and by Empire, I mean the American, Russian or Chinese empires - but rather the natural result of the limitations of each individuals' attention span. Eh? *Sigh* Very well. We get bored easily. We suffer terribly when confronted by reams of erudition on the subject of Roman Laws, but are quite fascinated by Roman Wars. Simple Roman Wars that is - simple Roman wars altered a bit, and set in Space - the Final Frontier. (I sometimes think that there's more empty space between

the ears of yer average sciffy fan than can be found between Earth's sea of tranquilisers and Luna's Sea of Tranquillity - and I don't exclude myself from the number of the vassals of the vacuous). Give us a war we can understand, a simple war, a romantic war, a nice war fought with ink on snowy arctic wastes of paper, or flickering technicolour on the noisy screen. An everyday story of everyday people who die that we might stave off the perils of ennui.

Oh, why do I bother? No, Smith minor, ennui is not a very rare disease that is contracted by those who live in close proximity to large Australian birds! Now, where was I? Of course - history. Since history is about us, we like it to be in our own image: as simple as possible, and heavily biased towards the Good Guys. The past is a mask moulded to fit the right faces - and how the mask will cling long after its wearer has passed into the void! Rotten but Romantic Cavaliers war forever with Right but...Rotten(?)Roundheads through the classrooms of England, while hundreds of thousands of childish brains cruise down well-worn highways.

Since the past is as dead as diamond, we can easily facet the fragments and polish them with platitudes. There is no dead cause that can't be pieced together - the fragments gathered and glued with essence of unction, so that the dead might serve the living. Nothing was ever so complicated, no issue was ever so involved that it couldn't be cut down and delimbed: a tree only makes a decent battering ram when it's chopped down and trimmed. Still, it is unfair to dismiss history as being compounded of outworn platitudes,

and unjust to regard last year's (or last decade's) trite truism as being, like last year's blonde, the fond error of gauche youth. The clichés that we see as history can tell us a lot about ourselves. Clichés, like clowns, appeal to sentiment and not to reason. A sharpened precis of history is designed to slide under reason and drive into the gut. Clichés are like pigments: when properly applied to the right canvas, they will become a picture that long outlives its creator.

You are all, I'm sure, aware that the word 'cliché' originally meant 'an electrotypes or stereotype plate; a photographic negative'. No? Neither did I until I consulted my dictionary. There is a quiet irony here, in that the historical cliché - the summation of an era - has become the photograph. I have lost count of the times that I've heard knowledgeable bores proclaim that the camera can lie, as a prelude to yet another recital of the wonders of photographic technique. Fortunately, that particular preface to mental anaesthesia has lost favour with the art of photography pundits in recent years, as 'trick photography' has evolved into 'special effects', and become commonplace. We all know the camera can lie - haven't we all seen STAR WARS? We have learned to recognise when the camera is lying - or so we fondly imagine.

The still picture is as close as we have come to duplicating the instant emotional impact of the unexpected. The still photograph is more than an extension of the art of painting or drawing (the still picture); it is a distinct departure from it. A photograph's interpretation lies more with the observer than the artist. While a photograph appears to catch reality, frozen in an instant of time, reality itself is open to interpretation: there is no lie more convincing than the lies we tell ourselves, the lies we want to believe. It is human nature that we believe what we want to believe, and,

because a photograph, by its very nature, triggers 'knee-jerk' reflexive twitches of the emotions, it has become the universal cliché: the cliché has become cliché - a merry-go-round of emotion.

But the cliché is not of itself a bad thing. The word cliché has become a term of derision only because it has been sorely misused: 'gay' was once quite a jolly word. Poor cliché is more than the summation of our prejudice, and he can climb above his lowly station, of sixletter four-letter word, if we treat him kindly, recognise that he represents raw emotion, and make sure that we don't lazily forego the effort of thinking in favour of encapsulated prejudice. It is all too easy to look at a photo of an Asian child that has been basted by fire from heaven (in its latest guise, napalm), to look at eyes that hold all the pain in the world, as they scream silently from the page of your newspaper, and blame America for all that is sick in a sick country. But that photo isn't a lie - it is the epitome of the horror of all wars. The fault lies not in our cliché, dear brutes, but in our tendency to allow emotion to stamp reason into the ground. It is not enough that we can feel: we must think as well.

As a student of the art and science of SciFi, you doubtless possess many back issues of the moderately famous 'fanzine' LOCUS, "the newspaper of the science fiction field", an American zine that narrowly skirts the borders of professionalism. No? Ah well, that's a problem - the recession doth make paupers of us all, eh? You won't have a copy of Vol.14, no.9 (or October 1981, if you prefer), then. You could always borrow a copy from a friend...no? Hmmm; we all have our problems. No matter; a thousand words are worth a picture, as we writers say. It's a pity you don't have a copy of this fanzine, for, on page 12, there is a photo of Clifford D. Simak. It isn't a large photo (it's meant merely to illustrate Simak's guest of



I SEE ARNOLD
AKIEN'S AT IT
AGAIN - AT
LENGTH, TOO!



WELL, THE READERS
CAN THANK THEIR
LUCKY STARS THAT
IT ISN'T D. WEST

honour speech at Denvention, the 39th World Science Fiction Convention); it will never rival Capa's 'Death of a Soldier', but it's a good photo, and it has impact. Well, it had impact on me anyway.

Photographs of top SF writers are nothing new, especially in SF zines, pro and am, but look at this one. It's an unconsciously cruel photograph: Simak stands before a lectern, above which is mounted a microphone; the viewpoint is from below, the lighting harsh and sharp. Simak looks like an ancient bespectacled turtle that has looked upon the world in despair for a thousand years.

I was hardly more than a child when I first encountered the writing of Clifford Simak. I, in common with many (if not actually the majority) of partisans of the peculiar literary genre called SF, was captured young. It is easy to be wise in retrospect, but I believe that what I carried away from that first encounter with Simak was an impression of the author's compassion: Simak seemed to care. Compassion is another cruelly, and carelessly, used word: it has come down in the world and, clad in the tattered remains of its finery, it is now in lowly employment as a synonym for pity - it has lost its subtle shades of meaning, and that is a pity, or rather, a shame.

Compassion demands empathy; demands the ability to feel as one with someone or something. It is the understanding that 'there but for fortune go I'. Pity requires superiority: the belief that others would be much better off if they were more like you, There aren't many genuinely

compassionate men in the world: it was after I had finished reading WAY STATION that I decided that Simak might just be one of them.

WAY STATION is an appositely titled novel in that, in many respects, it is in itself a 'way station' in the SF genre. Many writers have as their prime objective the engagement of the reader's sympathy with the writer's characters. Alas, authors of science fiction have all too often limited themselves to gaining the sympathy of the reader by creating characters that are no more than that reader's idealised vision of himself - with one or two advantages and skills that a reader feels he, too, could acquire, given the right circumstances. The central character is Mr. Average - with wings of wish-fulfillment, (do you believe in fairies?). Only token reference is made to human weakness in such a character, for the author's objective is to boost the egos of his readership, who slip on a comfortable persona and vicariously conquer over-simplistic problems in childish power fantasies: the ship of ego must sail serene and never, ever, sink.

Superficially, WAY STATION is not untypical of the standard SF power fantasy, and the novel does have the folksy bucolic feel about it that had become the hallmark of a Simak story, even when I first read it. What set WAY STATION apart from the commonplace was Simak's insight into the fact that a human being placed in an extraordinary situation remains a human being - with all the fallibilities and virtues of human beings. WAY STATION follows the familiar 'biographical journey through momentous events' plot that was old before SF adopted it, and is

the story of Enoch Wallace, who returns home after the American Civil War to the backwoods farm in Wisconsin where he was born and his parents died. At the time in which the story is set, Wallace is 124 years old, as a result of a gentle 'Faustian' bargain he made with a stellar confederation of alien races, who have traded him near immortality in exchange for his services as the keeper of..."An Inn, he thought, a stopping place, a galactic crossroads". In fact, a matter transmission station for interstellar travellers.

Had, say, Spider Robinson thought of this idea today, the way station would have been a jolly place in which alienated aliens would gather chummily together that they might recite interminable 'puns' and tell tedious anecdotes to mein host, the folksy innkeeper. Simak used to be a far better writer than Robinson will make if he lives to be one hundred and twenty-four years of age, and so the apparent simplicities of WAY STATION evolve, almost imperceptibly, and wholly naturally, into a complex and rich tapestry that never quite develops in the way you expect. It is a novel of simple complexities, or perhaps, of complex simplicity. Just as no story in the real-time world of day-to-day existence ever has an unqualified happy ending, Enoch Wallace finds fulfillment and loses his heart's desire at one and the same time: his private dreams are shattered, literally, at his feet, the implication being...just that - an implication. The novel, just like life, is not so much concluded as left, and, again like life, it is self-contained: any sequel is best left to the imagination.

WAY STATION was published in 1963 (according to this 'ere reference book - publication dates are often pretty confusing). Again, the date is a kind of way station. At that time Simak felt able to move on to pastures new (a happy state of affairs that

would be unlikely to be permitted today) and, although he retained his 'country boy makes good' style he also held onto his appetite for challenge, and met that challenge with a rare ability to convey the way real people feel and behave. Simak was not a puppet master who gave his characters a few wooden moments on the stage before stuffing them back in their boxes.

A writer who genuinely enjoys a challenge will place his characters in genuinely challenging situations. The majority of authors do not enjoy challenges, and publishers, as a general rule, hate 'challenging' books - at least they don't like them now. Since it is bloody hard for a writer to shape real people in print, too many writers prefer to print people in types: stereotypes. Character isn't so much developed as presented in the form of a specification, and depth is added by the trite expedient of revealing that the character is, after all, the possessor of a remarkable attribute or talent: he is a prince disguised as a frog - kiss him and see. The practice of literary stereotyping is perfectly acceptable to the undemanding. So, provided it isn't too obvious (even idiots don't like to be treated like idiots), and the story's setting is comfortably exotic, then with any luck he will be so stunned with the wonder of it all he will be untroubled by the fact that this 'new' story could be subtitled 'the competent man rides again'. (Who was that masked man, mommy? - I don't know dear, but there'll be another one along in a few minutes.)

I said earlier, that a stereotype (a literary cliché) is not necessarily a bad thing, and this is true, provided that the stereotype is used as a departure point rather than treated as a revealed and immutable truth. Just as the original stereotype (the photograph) is open to interpretation, and liable to mislead if that interpretation is too narrow, the



HE DOESN'T PULL HIS
PUNCHES DOES HE? HOPE
SPIDER ROBINSON DOESN'T
READ THIS ZINE!



DOES SPIDER
ROBINSON EVEN
READ?

literary cliché is a deceiver. A literary cliché will provoke comforting twitches of the reader's emotional muscles, as he recognises a familiar figure in light disguise, but will do no more - unless the author makes his audience look at the familiar in a new way, makes them see 'the skull beneath the skin'. The good writer will use a stock literary image much as a pole vaulter employs his pole: to reach a barrier that he might then leap over it. A bad writer uses that same stock image, that same pole, as an ungainly crutch, for without it he'd fall flat on his face. And yet there are many successful authors who have spent their literary careers propped up on such crutches - and many talented writers who have trouble making a living from the pen. Success is a two-faced word.

Once upon a time, in the late 40s and early 50s, there was a poor American boy who made good ('comfortably off' is, I gather, how well-heeled people term the condition) called Scott Meredith, who had tired of being a hungry, struggling author, and established a 'literary agency'. Well, we all gotta live! Meredith was, I don't doubt, an opportunist, and more than that, a little ruthless, for such things are a positive boon, if not an absolute prerequisite, to business success - but the section of HELL'S CARTOGRAPHERS, by Aldiss and Harrison, where I found this information gives little impression of the man's character. Suffice it to say that Mr. Meredith's agency ran an interesting, and, I assume, profitable sideline in adult education. No, no! They didn't sell that kind of magazine. This was thirty years ago, remember; sex hadn't been

invented that long ago!

No, the Meredith agency ran an advice service for budding writers: for budding writers who were prepared to pay \$25 a throw for an evaluation of a novel, and \$5 for one of a short story. This evaluation was but the start, for a new client always received a letter which told him: - a. that his story was unsaleable; b. that this sad state of affairs was due to him having failed to follow the Plot Skeleton in some or all of its parts. The letter then dangled the Plot Skeleton before the hapless novice, and it said (to the tune of 'Dry bones, dry bones, dem dry bones') that a story had to have:- 1. a sympathetic and believable lead character; 2. an urgent and vital problem; 3. complications caused by the lead character's unsuccessful attempts to solve the problem; 4. a crisis; 5. a resolution, in which the lead character solves the problem by means of his own courage of resourcefulness. This isn't as bad as it sounds, for the manuscripts submitted for evaluation were, in all probability, not even as good as some of the fiction that is published in fanzines. The neophyte authors were taught how to transform their abysmally terrible stories into a happy state of mere awfulness, while the writer of awfully bad stories was taught how to improve them into a happy state of saleability. Since their advisers included Jim Blish and Damon Knight (from who's article in HELL'S CARTOGRAPHERS, I shamelessly abstracted the forgoing Skeleton) we must assume they (the hopeful scribes) got some sort of value for their money. But, the section of my research (into ancient SF men) that gave me pause for thought was...quote, "We were certainly exploited, but the training we got was invaluable."

able. Along line of Meredith employees went on to become editors. Meredith encouraged this, on the theory that such people would be inclined to buy from the agency, and in most cases he was right."

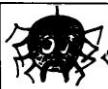
Meredith's employees were given considerable latitude in how they went about giving their advice, but the constraint that was placed upon them came, not from their employer, but from the clients they were earnestly trying to help. You can teach an unskilled writer the basics, but you cannot teach him how to use those basic techniques to vault from mediocrity into literary competence, let alone greatness. Knight, Blish and the others were part of the climate of their time - part of the enormous American market place, and American publishers would only buy SF stories that conformed to their own view of what the market (the book and magazine buying public) would bear.

There is an age-old argument (or open question, if you like) that goes 'do people change history, or does history change people?' It is an old argument because it can never be resolved to anyone's satisfaction. The modern variation of this same argument is 'does the media create public taste or just reflect it?' There are those of us in the SF fraternity who claim that a cabal of American editors and publishers did incalculable harm to science fiction by pressing it into a mould of their own making, a mould that could be called the American Dream. This view contains sufficient truth to make the Dream, as it is mirrored in SF, a very tempting target for critics of the genre. The 'truth' tends to be a fairly pliable concept, and thus is hard to divine. Truth is not just buried, but buried in fragments. What can be said is that, in catering for what they believed was the tastes of their readership, the 'cabal' did no more than reflect the American tradition of SF.

The Golden Calf of biblical mythology was no more than a representation of a nation's self image - or what the majority of the people of that nation wanted to believe was the nation's collective image. The 'We Are Sick Of This Sodding Wilderness' party had a perfectly valid viewpoint: that it was overthrown by a militant minority does not alter the worth of their argument. That the minority opinion represented the best interests for the long-term future of the people was not immediately obvious. What was certain was that, in the short term, life would be uncertain, and nobody likes uncertainty, save the trouble-makers - it's bad for business.

The American Dream was never more than the desire of the people of the USA that the manifest virtues of the American social system should prevail and be improved - in the right direction. The Americans wanted (amongst other things) freedom, unlimited opportunity, and a steadily improving standard of living; they believed in progress, and their popular literature reflected their beliefs: it still does.

I have carelessly used 'America' as a synonym for the USA. This is a common practice, and serves to infuriate the South American nations, and blur the fact that America is, despite its appearance of unity, a nation made up of many large immigrant, social and racial groups, who have little in common save the overall unity of that United States of America. That unity, that union, was shattered hardly more than a century ago, and reformed only after a bloody civil war. The American Civil War had many causes and was as much a clash between the predominantly agrarian values of the South, and the industrial complexes of the North, as it was a clash of political ideals. In the event, the North's supremacy in the New Technology of the time prevailed, and the Union was rewelded and expanded with the aid of that new technology:



HERE, HE'S GETTING A
BIT HEAVY, ISN'T HE?
WHAT'S ALL THIS
HISTORICAL STUFF?

HISTORICAL?
LOOKS MORE
LIKE HYSTERICAL
TO ME



railways, the telegraph, mass-produced consumer durables (like repeating rifles); these were all the outward signs of a reformed Union.

The early Industrial Revolution that steamed over the agrarian cultures of Europe was a mixed blessing in the view of both the agricultural workers (who were swept into noisome factories) and the intellectual and literate elite, who saw their (relatively new) romantic vision of unspoiled rural simplicity vanishing under a pall of foul smoke. It is hardly surprising that the first SF novel, FRANKENSTEIN, took as its theme the misuse of science and technology, and the devastation that such misuse could bring on ordinary people. The novel's author, Mary Shelley, had grown up in a society that was dominated by the war with France, and the growth of the Industrial Revolution. When Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin eloped with Percy Shelley in 1814, she fled to Europe during the lull that followed the Abdication of Napoleon, after his defeat at the Battle of Leipzig - or so I would assume, if the dates in this 'ere reference book are correct. When she was comfortably established in Switzerland, two years later, after having married Shelley, the contrast between her life in her new home and life in England could hardly have been greater. In England there was heavy unemployment; bad harvests and profiteering by landowners; riots and insurrections had broken out all over the country, and were put down by the army. To the Shelleys, in their retreat in Switzerland, it must have seemed as if the machine age was leading towards the Apocalypse. This was

the background against which the novel FRANKENSTEIN was written. Its theme, the perils of misuse of the new-found scientific power, has become a recurrent one in the British and European tradition of SF. Technological innovation, and the social changes it brought in its wake, was, and is, a Greek gift, that should be treated with suspicion, and handled with care.

At the other side of the Atlantic, the Americans had a less cautious greeting for technological novelty. In the Old World, technology was socially devious; it had thrown down all the old certainties. In the New World, technology was a force of social cohesion. Railways spanned a vast wilderness; guns manufactured to kill soldiers fighting a civil war killed Indians instead, as refugees from starvation in Ireland, and persecution all over Europe, flooded into the Land of Opportunity. While the USA was evolving into a unified (if not homogeneous) society, the states of Europe were in a condition of continual chaos. There was scarcely a year during the development of the Industrial Revolution when there wasn't a sizeable conflict of some kind; often it was a case of countries with new industrial muscle kicking sand into the faces of their less well-developed neighbours. This constant ferment ensured that, even during the height of the Victorian passion for mechanical gadgetry, the literary establishment maintained a healthy scepticism for rampant technophilia.

The Americans were much less ambivalent towards the forces of change. In a country with so little established tradition of its own, and plenty of room for malcontents to move away from the worst

excesses of industrialisation (in theory, if not always in practice), Progress became equated with improvement and wasn't the overwhelming threat that it had been to the underdogs in Great Britain.

But I, like history 'masters' everywhere, ramble. Never fear, I'll get somewhere eventually, by way of the scenic route, over-looking views of SF's 'unique' qualities (or lack of them) and its relationship to the rest of literature. Admirers of the 'To Hell With This Literary Crap, Just Give Us A Good Story' view worry about their genre losing its bright shiney surface under the over-harsh acid tongues of the critics who belong to the literary school. As a consequence of this fear, they insist that SF is a 'special case', and thus it should not be examined under the cruel light of reason lest its virtues vanish like fairy gold. The followers of the 'SF Is A Literary Ghetto' view propound their belief that the only thing that prevents the SF genre's advance into the literary mainstream, is the protectionist, isolationist efforts of the uncritical Sciiffy fans. In a sense, both of them are right, but what is more important is their mutual error in believing that SF is a single entity divorced from its separate traditions. SF doesn't have a unified, linearly-developing, tradition, but two divergent traditions, and our concern should not, primarily, be whether or not the genre will join the mainstream of literature, but whether the two separate traditions of SF can be united.

When literature emigrated to the USA, it went with the literate classes. When SF was developed as a new literary form it was developed by that same, rather narrow, social intelligentsia; it was rooted in, and developed from, existing literary traditions. After social reforms made literacy an increasingly commonplace accomplishment in Britain, the newly-literate classes were

catered for from that tradition. When the USA produced its own native-born 'mainstream' authors, they wrote as Americans, but with the same ambitions as European writers: they wanted to be artists, and had a well-tempered disdain for what they saw as being bad art. But America had attributes that England, a small and socially rigid, stratified island community, did not possess; it believed that it was, at one and the same time, a frontier community - in every sense of the word 'frontier'. The USA had the brash confidence of the nouveau riche, and the knowledge that, in the early decades of this century, it was rapidly catching up with Europe and would soon challenge the European assumptions of superiority. The Americans revelled in their increasing self-confidence; all setbacks were temporary, even economic disasters could be overcome, and that great destroyer of national self-confidence, War, was behind them. War was something that happened to distant foreign places. Foreigners were unfortunately those who would prefer to be American, if only they had the opportunity. America was, and to some extent still is, the land of opportunity. The most illiterate, uneducated, poverty-stricken immigrant could start at the bottom of American society and rise to the top by his own efforts: there were always people pushing their way upwards from the bottom of the heap, people who shared the American dream, and who wanted a literature that would reinforce their own self-confidence. They didn't find enough golden nuggets in the European literary stream, and so a need arose, and American entrepreneurs are never ones for merely jumping on a bandwagon - they usually snatch the reins from the driver's hands given half a chance. Literature for the People, and by the People (the American People) was born, and named Pulp.

The wave of cheap dime-novels and pulp magazines that swept across America had its counterpart in Britain. but the sheer size



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JUNE 10,

of the American market, and its demand for themes that would appeal to Americans, meant that American authors held the ring in any contest with foreigners. The new popular American fiction was not really 'escapist' fantasy, but rather 'wish fulfillment' fantasy.

All right, that does, I'll admit, look like what is often rather contemptuously called semantics. But that contempt is but a reflection of carelessness, and disregard for subtlety. I don't want to get bogged down in the quagmire of definition, but I believe that what is usually called 'escapist' fiction could more accurately be described as 'wish fulfillment' fiction. In any society there is an ideal, a model of perfection, which represents all that that society admires in an individual. The ideal is a goal or objective that any individual is driven towards by his society's consensus vision of individual perfection: a consensus that, at its most transient, is called 'fashion' (and causes hemlines to zip up and down, and trouser legs to widen and narrow as if at the dictat of some law of nature as yet unknown to science) and which at its most enduring is called 'national character'.

The Ideal is a concept that defies analysis (and that in itself is why people continually attempt to analyse it) but which nonetheless has substance. The American Ideal (or the Ideal American) is a straight forward, two-fisted individual who, given the opportunity, will reach whatever goal he sets himself; he is a just man, who talks quietly, and carries a big stick; he is optimistic, and not much given to self-doubt; he is usually a Man - when he is a woman, he is a female Man. The Ideal American is normally young and virile, but, if he is old (beg pardon - elderly), he has a wisdom that is rooted in experience, and not in academic learning (he distrusts academics -

they complicate things). He is the man in the white hat, the good guy. If these things seem mutually contradictory, well that can't be helped. It is, after all, an Ideal.

The American popular literature (dime novel, pulp mag) was aimed squarely at a market demand for simplistic fiction that was supportive of American ideals, and therefore the publishers chose themes that lent themselves to the celebration of those ideals. This kind of fiction has come to be called (usually inaccurately) 'genre' fiction. The most obvious celebration of the American Ideal is the Western, and this was the first genre to be exploited. Crime detective fiction of the 'Hard Boiled' variety flowed naturally from the Western, and SF was adopted and modified to meet the demands of the technology fans. Since what the American SF readership wanted was, in the opinion of the publishers, American heroes in novel (technologically novel) situations, then that is what they got: the customer is always right. From the 30s through to the 50s, the pattern remained much the same except for a gradual improvement in the standard of writing within the American tradition of the SF genre: it had averaged somewhat in the low abysmally awfuls in the 30s, but by the late 50s it had become competent, if pedestrian. The basic underpinning of the SF tradition in the USA remained, however, virtually unchanged. Insofar as American popular culture became accepted, even welcomed, in Europe, American traditional SF gained a following amongst Europeans, especially amongst english-speaking British men and women who were, by the 50s, bi-lingual in American. The generally dystopian visions of the European SF writers remained untainted by American optimism, and it was the best of these studies of the dark side of the future (every cloud does not have a bloody silver lining) that received critical acclaim from outside the genre, and thus deepened the rift between the two traditions.

The Scott Meredith agency was



I THINK HE'S
UPSETTING THE
AMERICANS
NOW.

THAT'S NO SURPRISE - EVERY
BRITISH CRITIC OF THE LAST FIFTY
YEARS HAS MADE A GOOD
LIVING KNOCKING THE YANKS.



only doing what came naturally when its employees dangled the dread Plot Skeleton before the un-literate, and moaned horribly. Indeed, similar advice, from similar advisers, was probably responsible for such improvements as there were in traditional pulp SF up until the 50s - but those improvements were but to add polish to beloved stock genre images, and the selling point was still technological novelty and the American way.

I shudder to think of just how much fierce debate has taken place within the SF family over the precise origin and nature of its bastard child, New Wave. Most of this argument is, like most family disputes, only of interest to its immediate participants and, in any case, is greeted with indifference by the neighbours. The only certainty, in a morass of doubt, is that in the early 60s there was an unprecedented series of social disturbances in the USA that disrupted many of the unquestioned assumptions of American superiority, and led to a widespread questioning of long established values at a time when many competent SF writers were becoming impatient with the confines of what many 'family people' regarded as being the traditional SF. The unspoken confidence of Americans in their ideals was shaken but certainly not broken. They were, however, in search of new certainties, and since the market for new forms of SF had been proven by the sound market practice of allowing some other idiot to try selling the new product, and then jumping on the bandwagon if he succeeds, SF writers who were chafing at the bit suddenly found that publishers would buy as much British

pessimism as the market would bear. Writers who, for years, had supplied technological propaganda to a readership who were only willing to accept technological change set in comfortably familiar social backgrounds, discovered that they could be the propagandists for social change. But if they got too big for their newly expanded boots, then the reins of editorial and publishing control were still there, and ready to jerk the bit as required.

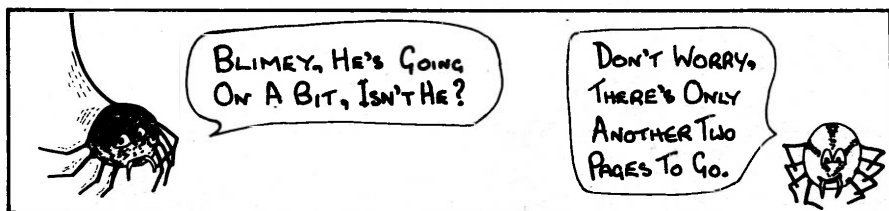
The SF component of the publishing industry exists only because it makes money. There is a certain unwordly revulsion for this by we literary types, but nonetheless, this unpalatable fact is a fact. Altruism does exist in publishing; books are published which will make little or no money (or even, horror of horrors, a loss), but the New Wave was the expression of a demand fulfilled. That writers were able to find new avenues for creative expression which were largely based upon standards that existed outside the genre (outside the SF family) but still employed, as vaulting poles, some of that genre's clichés, was all very worthy. Publishers could, and did, give themselves a pat on the back for good deeds on those grounds. But the governing principle that Meredith agency graduates knew so well still ruled supreme. The Plot Skeleton might be permitted a modicum of muscularity, and a wider range of articulation, but it remained a force to be reckoned with: like a grisly abacus, it still counted. The New Wave did not destroy the American tradition (the 'pulp tradition' if you like - though I consider the wide-spread careless

use of the word 'pulp' misleading) but rather enabled SF writers to reach a more discerning and slightly more literate readership, who would scorn the raw use of the old trappings of Am. trad. To the writer, New Wave was a new-found freedom, if he wanted it, and a demand that the taboo areas (like sex) be explored. To the publisher and his editors, New Wave represented a new market that should be exploited.

It is human nature that we should want more than we have, and it is the nature of the explorer, the experimenter, to want ever more freedom; the limits that others find comforting he considers an intolerable restraint. Up until the clamp-down by the military government of Poland upon the apparently dynamic and ever expanding Solidarity Movement, there was a widespread (and, in retrospect, hopelessly romantic) belief that the cat had leapt from its bag and could never be returned. The steel gauntlet of the military took care of the few scratches Solidarity was able to inflict. Before the economic pressures of the 70s blighted the publishing boom, there was a similar, and again rather romantic, belief among the SF literary fraternity that there was no going back to the bad old days. In a sense, they were right, in that SF was now socially acceptable to a larger audience than ever before, but even before the Energy Crisis dumped the occupants of a sinking economy into the lifeboats, the publishing industry was beginning to realise that the needs of the new SF markets were not very different from those of the old. Accommodations had to be made, yes, but the avant-coureur was bad news. The old guard of publishing had retreated, but it never surrenders, and so newly innovative writers had an uphill struggle.

To newly reformed hacks, like Silverberg and Ellison amongst others, the battle with conservative editors and publishers who held onto the old verities in the

face of social upheaval, must have been bitterly frustrating. Silverberg, the self-confessed manic writing machine turned Euro-(mainstream) style author, was as near to being a heretic as the old guard could conceive. Here was a man who had made a fortune by underpinning their Ideal, and who now chose to turncoat. Gentle joggers like Simak could assimilate the changes brought by New Wave in peace, but Silverberg wanted too much, and his change in style was too great to permit an easy transition. As his career developed, he began to develop traditional American SF themes in the style of the rival 'literary' school, and by the early 70s, his work was receiving critical acclaim from the literary fraternity, and near total hostility from the old guard. I have been told that some of Silverberg's 'near mainstream' novels were virtually mutilated as a pre-condition of publication, most notably DYING INSIDE. DYING INSIDE is a superb inversion of the telepathic superman theme so beloved of SF hacks, in which the protagonist, a man who has never found the inner strength to exploit his power to proper advantage, slowly loses that power, the only thing which made him unique, his only virtue so far as he is concerned. The story of David Selig, the pathetic superman, is as near to being an allegory of Silverberg's own crisis. Again and again in DYING INSIDE, you meet the real Selig: Silverberg himself. "Probing their minds, Selig found them almost always to be dim and sadly informed - how could you live to the age of 75 without having ever had an idea? - but a few of the livelier ladies showed vigorous, passionate, peasant rapacity, charming in its own way. The men were less agreeable - loaded with dough, yet always on the lookout for more." (DYING INSIDE, page 150) The publishing industry's reception of DYING INSIDE must have hit Silverberg hard: it was a final rejection of Silverberg himself. In mutilating DYING INSIDE, the old guard of publishing as good as destroyed



him as a creative, original writer, but their victory was not quite complete.

While Simak's despair has been slow to develop, it is no less deep than Silverberg's. WAY STATION, whilst more subtle in its rejection of the imbalance of modern society's technological power against its ability to handle that power, was nevertheless in the dystopic tradition that started with Mary Shelley. WAY STATION was, like many of its contemporaries, not so much an attempt to pull SF into the mainstream, as an effort to rejoin the two traditions of SF. The novel's protagonist seems to share the concerns and pre-occupations of Simak himself; yet, despite its ambivalent ending, its tone is guardedly optimistic: mankind can find the strength to govern its power, if only.... But he could not answer that 'If'. His later novel, WHY CALL THEM BACK FROM HEAVEN, a dark vision of a future society that is ruled by the Forever Centre, the sole controllers of suspended animation for the dying, and therefore sole arbiters of potential immortality, is as near to, say '1984', as the gentle, humanitarian Simak ever went. It is, I believe, at this point in his career that he began to withdraw from confrontation with the problems of reality, and retreated into a never-ending journey to Fairyland that has continued up until the present day, and which is matched by what many critics of SF see as a march back into the mediocrity of the ghetto.

The dream of the literary tradition of SF has always been expressed as a desire that the

genre should rejoin the 'mainstream' of literature from which it emerged. The dream of the oldguard is expressed in an almost religious belief in the Golden Age of American Trad. and the conviction that all will be well if only we return to the good old days. The reality of the present situation of SF is rather different from both these objectives. American publishers are quite used to the fact sales patterns of publications vary across the USA, in reflection of regional differences. A book that is a runaway success in, say, New York, might achieve only moderately good sales in San Francisco. It's something that they try to anticipate, and allow for. The Americans who emerged from the social turmoil of the 60s, and the political shock of the Watergate scandal in the 70s, had their faith in their national institutions tried to the limit; they had put men on the Moon, but they couldn't.... solve whatever problem hit them next. (It has become a catch phrase.) The people of the USA have a faith in simple solutions that is hard to break, and faced with the fact of the present, seemingly insoluble, economic problems and international threats, have crept into whatever safe havens they can find. The result in the SF field has been that the established pattern of two separate traditions, with adherents on both sides of the big pond, has broken down still further. Just as literary success is governed by regional variations in cultural patterns, SF's key to successful publication is the New Ghettoes.

Starting in the 60s revolution, there has been an increasing trend towards sub-cultural formations of like-minded individuals. This trend has been noticeable throughout

the free Western world (and to some extent in the third world, as in the supra-national Islamic Movement), but it is in the USA that it finds its most disparate forms, which are indeed many and various from the return of the Christian Age of Faith (commonly called the Dark Ages) and its fundamentalist anti-rational dogma, to the Feminist movement and its slightly more attractive, but equally fervently promulgated dogma. The New Ghettoes have existed in proto form for some time, but so far as SF is concerned they are a new development - and as far as the publishing industry is concerned, they are a godsend. The Christian Fundamentalists haven't produced a publishing market for SF yet, (though it must have generated a sizeable demand for Christian literature) but the Feminist movement certainly has, as has the Libertarian movement, the Ecological movement, the 'Man-kind's Future Is In Space' movement... and so on. They have one thing in common: they Believe, and they will buy books that support that belief. And so the Feminists have John Varley's simple exchanges of the male/female role via easy sex change operations, and his implausible adaptations of the Big Alien Artifact In Space, with female central protagonists. Then there's Joan Vinge's masterly rehash of an old fairy tale in THE SNOW QUEEN, and...I could make a list. Feminism is Big Business in the States - which is not to say that similar group-oriented lists wouldn't be equally long.

Overlying the specialist group, or Ghetto, story that is aimed at a specific target, there is the publishers' dream. A sure thing New Ghetto sale is nice, very nice - but how much better if, say, a novel that is certain to wow the Fems spills over to become a broad spectrum best seller. You have it both ways, and you do it by marketing a book that most readers are bound to love. The feminist bias is still

there (the certain market) but you throw in exotic locales, space ships, black holes (bloody dragons too, if only you could think of a way of doing it), happy endings and even more happy endings! The same technique is good for any target population. The general trend is towards wish fulfillment because the Ghetto Feminist or Libertarian or whatever wants desperately to believe that the Dream will come true, without them having to work for it.

Any author who cannot count on, at the very least, a certain sale to one of the small horde of special interest groups is in trouble. Such an author does not need to be of the literary fraternity, for some of the Ghettoes have an 'up-market' end, but the books that cannot find a safe market niche are all too often book of high literary merit (like, say, Priest's THE AFFIRMATION), and they have a hard time gaining publication in mass market, paperback format. In short, it is the work of innovation by an author who works 'outside', in the areas between the new ghettos, who suffers. The branch of literature that started life by reinjecting meaning into the word 'novel', is blocking from mass publication any book that is (just barely perhaps) SF, but which does not have a readily discernable market - a book that is genuinely novel.

What we have now in SF is a set of revamped cliches that can be manipulated and built upon, but not (under the present economic and social conditions) disturbed too much. New SF writers must conform, and the pressure upon newcomers is to conform to the wish fulfillment 'down-market' ends of whatever sub-culture he plans to write for. Why work hard on original prose when you can make as much money by writing the literary equivalent of comfort blankets? The established SF writer is pressured into maintaining the safe course of repeating past success. Old established authors are locked into a strait-jacket of 'family' veneration, and the sense of obligation to the



WELL, THAT WAS INTERESTING,
WASN'T IT? BETCHA DIDN'T
KNOW ALL THAT FIFTEEN
PAGES AGO!



SF family that burdens younger established authors like Niven has paralysed Simak.

That cruel photo of Simak gives an impression that is confirmed out of his own mouth in the speech that it illustrates - a speech that reads like that of a great, great, grandfather to a gathering of his family, most of whom he expects never to see again. I do not begrudge Simak the comfort of his friends, his SF family, in his declining years, but I do resent the state of affairs that crushes the work of authors like Priest, and permits (nay, demands) the return to life of the remains of Bob Silverberg's talent. There is no cynic so terrible as a disappointed idealist, and whether Silverberg's competent, very long and very lucrative pot-boiler, LORD VALENTINE'S CASTLE, was produced through the pressure of economic need must remain uncertain. What is certain is that Silverberg knows what he is doing. He knows how low he has sunk. He knows that the massive fee that he commanded will mean less money is available for new writers. Silverberg, more than anyone in the field of SF knows what he has done. That Simak still writes in his dotage is sad - but what of poor Silverberg? The old guard must relish what looks like their final victory over their heretic. It remains to be seen if that victory portends a living death for the branch of literature that Silverberg once loved and served so well.

Of late, any worthwhile comment upon SF has been, at best, gloomy, and at worst makes Cassandra sound like a comedienne. We are faced with a dark prospect, and by all accounts would seem to be preparing

for the worst. It is as if we are gathered about the sickbed of a friend who is mortally ill, and who clings to life only through the alarming impedimenta of the Intensive Care Unit. We expect only bad news. Could we be wrong? It is hard to believe that all that is left to us is mourning, but already we wear black in expectation of a premature burial. Maybe it is too easy to find reasons for despair.

At first glance, it seems as if it is. If SF has not yet lost its soul, not yet sold out entirely to the marketing men and become a sort of literary sycophant, good only for murmuring sweet nothings in the ear of the latest in a line of highest bidders, then it is surely losing its role. This is not so: what we are really seeing is the latest step in the process of evolution. The process is disturbing, yes, but if you were guaranteed at birth a life of total tranquillity, then you are either dead (in which case why are you reading this article - go away and read the News of the World), or so alien that any SF fan in good standing would be proud to know you: you certainly aren't human.

What we now see is not just the genre being devoured by savage cannibals from the media, nor is it, at last, being swallowed daintily by the effete standard bearers of the 'mainstream' of literature. Nor are the back-to-nature and Am.Trad. cowboys riding into the sunset alone and splendid, having got the girl and shot the baddies. No one of these bogeymen is triumphant... they all are. Each takes from the genre according to his needs, and as their nature dictates - that is what SF was born for.

In The Halls Of Meritocrassee

John D. Owen

It is not a rare occurrence for a Mundane to be invited to the Halls of Meritocrassee, for Meritocrassee is a singularly strange country, whose population is often drawn from Mundania, and whose older inhabitants frequently return to the outside world when their interest or standing in Meritocrassee wanes. Nevertheless, the invitation from the Elite of that land to visit their renowned Halls was a signal honour which I could not readily refuse.

To travel to the Fandom of Meritocrassee is, in itself, an intriguing business, for their embassies possess 'portals' through which travellers pass, and which instantly transport them to Meritocrassee. There is no sense of time passing on the journey, and the only sign of change is the disjuncture between the behaviour of the people on the Mundane side, and those at the arrival point.

The inhabitants of Meritocrassee dress curiously, in colourful apparel very reminiscent of the 'Hippie' period in Mundania. They are a voluble people, ever ready to talk on a diversity of subjects. They have an enormous capacity for imbibing intoxicants and while I was there, I rarely saw a Meritocrat without a container of liquor in hand. Nevertheless, the Meritocrats are an interesting people, very open and curious with newcomers, though often viciously sharp when speaking to their fellows.

I was met at the portal by the blind bard of Meritocrassee, Langopell himself, together with his companion Hazel. Langopell dressed rather conservatively for a Meritocrat, but he was most warm in his welcome, and whisked me off on a lengthy tour of the Halls

Hazel led the way, with Langopell's hand upon her shoulder,

both keeping up a constant stream of comment on the nature and content of the rooms and corridors that we passed. And what splendour there was! Whole corridors lined with the most magnificent portraits and statues of the heroes of the Fandom. In particular, I found the huge statue of Jaygeebie to be overpowering, standing tall and golden on the back of the prostrate devil Gern, a fitting monument to one of the prime gods of Meritocrassee. Further along I spotted a portrait of the dark demi-god, Platt, hidden in the shadows, still holding the dripping pen which he had used to depose the mighty Willis. Later, in an odd corner, I came across a fading tapestry of Willis himself, torn, but still a proud portrait of a hero of the past.

Then there were the huge portraits of recent years, with heroes that battled against the forces of darkness, of off-white knights on chargers leading onslaughts on the citadels of the devil-worshippers, the evil followers of Camp-bell, Hein-lein, Tubb and Don-Aldson. Though these pictures were enormous uplifting pieces of art, I could not help notice a certain desperation in their execution, as though the artists had been forced to show things not as they were, but as it was ideologically necessary that they should be. I kept my feelings to myself, not wishing to offend my hosts, and followed Langopell dutifully, appreciatively, for he was a witty, charming man.

After a sumptuous repast (a trifle over-spiced, but most palatable), we continued our exploration of the Halls, until we arrived in a corridor which led into a great hall, where a great throng of people were gathering for some purpose. Langopell motioned for me to follow as Hazel led us off to the

side of the hall, where a wide flight of marble steps took us up to a balcony overlooking the room, from which I could see the whole crowd below.

Langopell conspiratorially whispered to me, "You're very lucky. Today is a court day, when the Elite select a member from amongst their ranks to sit in judgement on a criminal from our land. The selection process is supposed to be random, but, such is the way of things, I can tell you now that you will see the Beast in action."

The Beast! The very name thrilled me to the marrow. The legendary Beast was a Meritocrat philosopher of renown, silent for long periods of time, cogitating upon the affairs of the Fandom, then pouring forth the fruits of his labour in great works that took years for lesser mortals to digest and understand. Indeed, even as I stood on that balcony, the reverberations from a publication of a mere six months ago were in process, mixing with his previous works of five years or more ago in a rich, dense and lustrous dance of point and counter-point, as the Meritocrats deciphered and popularised the great philosopher's thoughts.

Hazel looked down into the hall. "We are in time - the Beast has not yet arrived." Langopell smiled. "Good. The case before him is going to be an interesting one, and one which, if my nose tells me true, is going to lead into an hitherto unsuspected area."

Just then, fanfares blared out below, and a hush fell upon the assembled crowd. A path melted away, which led from the doorway to a raised platform at one end of the hall. On this platform was set a richly polished wooden plinth, like yet unlike a bench seat. "What is that?" I whispered to Hazel. "That's the 'Panel', upon which our noblest Elite sit at times like this," came the answer. I nodded, realising that the answer should have been self-evident from my own reading of the

published annals of Fandom. The 'Panel' was the focal point for many events at the gatherings of Meritocrassee.

Into the hall came a string of people, all gorgeously apparitioned. Hazel began whispering excitedly to me. "Look, there's the Amerikan envoy, Ted the Wight. He's one of the founders of Meritocrassee, even though he's Amerikan. The tall, imposing figure behind him is another Amerikan, the historian Bergeroni, the re-furbisher of Willis' reputation. The slight figure beside him is his acolyte, Hansen. Look there, in the multi-coloured coat with cap and bells! That mishapen figure is Nickelarse, the court jester, whose every word is a tautology, and whose sentences have been said to girdle the world. Ahh, and look, bringing up the rear in the position of power! That's the Beast!"

This last figure was strange indeed. An ample figure, swathed in gold cloth, with slicked back greasy hair and a small goatee, the Beast had the face of a common man, and the body of an aging, bloated rake. There was an unhealthy pallor about the man, relieved only by his rubious nose. In one hand he carried the largest mug I have ever seen, a stein containing a brew that was black and, no doubt, powerful. In the other hand, he held a whip, his symbol of magistracy. The whip was gold-handled, but its nine 'tails' were black, with, at the tip of each tail, a gold penknib. The Beast swung the whip nonchalantly as he sauntered towards the platform, and I happened to see a tail flick delicately onto the bare arm of a courtier, a young boy. Blood sprang forth from the wound, and the Beast cackled as the boy reeled back into the crowd.

The Beast reached the platform, and enthroned himself upon the Panel. The crowd bowed low, the Beast belched twice, waved his whip, then spoke. "This Court of Meritocrassee is now in session to hear the most vile of crimes. Bring on the prisoner!" His voice

was deeply effecting, a booze-induced croak that was painful to hear.

A scuffle at the doorway drew my attention away from the Beast, to the prisoner, who was being dragged down the aisle to a spot in front of the Panel. He was a nondescript little man, not more than twenty years of age, at a guess. His clothes, though rent and disarrayed from his struggles with his captors (two large women, whose bulk dwarfed even the Beast), were severe, almost like a uniform. The women forced him to his knees in front of the Beast.

The Beast laid his whip across his lap, reached into the pocket of his gold coat, and, after some rummaging, pulled out a scruffy, torn and well-thumbed fanzine. The prisoner's eyes fastened on it immediately, and I swear that tears started in them at once. I realised that the poor wretch had probably published the mutilated zine in the Beast's hand, and felt a pang of sympathy for the fellow.

The Beast fanned himself briefly with the zine, then launched into a speech, a long, forcefully delivered address the content of which is forever lost to me, since it was, for the most part, indecipherable. "What's he saying?" I whispered desperately to Langopell. "Oh, it's just the ritual excoriation of the assembled Horde of the Fandom. He's being as rude as he can to everyone present to show his impartiality in the case before him. He'll even include a jibe or two at you." The stream of invective continued unabated for ten minutes, interrupted by an occasional shout from the audience as a particularly vicious insult struck home. One or two people had to be ejected from the hall when they tried to storm the platform (with, I should imagine, every intention of coming to blows with the incumbent), but finally it was over, and a spontaneous burst of applause swept through the hall.

The Beast took a deep draught from his stein, wiped his mouth on his sleeve, and spoke again. "Who accuses this woe-begone fan I see here before me?"

A garish figure stepped out from the crowd, a dark-skinned man with a suit of impeccable cut but the most lurid colour (a sort of incandescent creme-de-menthe) with wide-brimmed hat to match. Hazel whispered, "That's Leroi J. Cuttlefish." I whistled softly to myself - Cuttlefish was the most notorious scandal-monger in Meritocrassee, a reckless, though excruciatingly funny, liar who had no respect for anyone's status or reputation.

The apparition in green spoke. "It was I that brought this miscreant to the attention of the Fanac Police, old chap. I really didn't like his attitude - some what lacking in the proper fannish graces, don'cha know."

"Leroi, my man," roared the Beast, "your nose is atill as good as ever at sniffing out dirt. But I'll wager even you don't know the whole of this matter!" The hall became hushed again; something out of the ordinary was afoot.

The Beast, with a flick of the wrist, tossed the fanzine into the air. It flew across the platform and landed at the knee of the prisoner. "Is this your fanzine, sonny boy?" the Beast drawled, scratching his crotch with the butt of the whip.

The prisoner seemed hypnotised by the moving whip. "Yessir," he stammered, and the Beast grunted. "In this zine, all of the articles are written by you, are they not?" The prisoner nodded limply. "Including the ones with bylines by Arthur C. Claptrap, and Bando Bindlestiff?" The prisoner's head bobbed again in affirmation.

The Beast smacked his lips together in distaste. "This is the third issue of your zine, is it not?" he inquired, and a ripple ran through the audience. Even I recognised the mystical significance

of the third issue. The prisoner looked up at the Beast, and a faint whisper of assent came from his lips. His inquisitor smiled, not pleasantly, and continued. "You are accused of bringing the standards of Meritocrassee into disrepute. More specifically, you are accused of bad writing. In this one issue alone, you have transgressed several dozen times. And, lest it be said that we are being harsh, this does not include mistakes that may just be typos, which are, of course, allowable, even obligatory. No, your errors are entirely grammatical in nature. Three issues have been published, and yet you show no improvement, no awareness of the sloppiness of your writing, no perception of the puerile nature of your prose. Have you no shame?" The Beast leaned forward suddenly, and swung at the prisoner with the whip, the gold tips whistling past the cowering figure with mere inches to spare.

The Beast curled his lip in contempt. "Unworthy scum, you should be punished for your broken English alone. A few years as a committee member at the cons would convince you of the error of your ways, were it not for the fact that there is something more sinister afoot here." At this, the audience began to murmur excitedly. The Beast raised a hand for silence, then continued. "I have thoroughly perused the trash you have been producing, and this searching critique has revealed, beneath all the neofannish crap, a purpose. A purpose of evil malignancy, of devilish intent. In these three issues, you have been unable to conceal all the evidence of your past. Some signs of your true proclivities slip through. In short, in a mere three issues, you have let fall no fewer than ten clear cases of the split infinitive!"

At this bold accusation a hiss ran round the hall, a surprised intake of breath. The Beast waited until the murmur subsided. "Yes my friends, we all know what that

shows, don't we? A moderately bad, though honest, faned might occasionally perpetrate a split infinitive - but ten in three issues! There is no evidence that this wretch's scribbles are really that awful! No, this fact reveals a conditioning behind the mask that he wears, an upbringing in a culture other than ours. In fact, this man is, or has been, a Dreckie!"

Pandemonium broke out in the hall. There were screams of disgust, shouts of "Lynch the bastard!", and a groundswell of sheer anger that shocked me to the core - such animal violence was most unexpected. But the Beast contained it all with one masterful gesture of his whip.

"Let us not be too hasty, oh Horde of the Fandom, for it has been known for Dreckies to turn into true blue Meritocrats, though it is rare. The question remains: is this man a reformed Dreckie or not? I have a further piece of evidence to produce." He gestured again, a short wave of his hand over his head. The lights dimmed, a white screen lowered from the ceiling behind the platform, and a still photograph was projected onto it. It was a candid photo taken at a Fan Gathering, and showed the prisoner in the centre of the shot.

The Beast continued. "Notice if you will, in this photograph taken at our last Eastercon, the prisoner, isolated in the middle of the crowd. Note the severity of his dress. Not quite a uniform, but not far from it. But I want you to notice something else in particular. If the projector operator would be so kind as to zoom in on the area just around the chest, we shall see the final damning piece of evidence."

The projector zoomed in as requested, the picture grain increasing in size as the magnification went up, but the detail remained good enough for the Beast. Using the whip as a pointer, he began his final accusation.

"There, at the left armpit. See the tell-tale bulge. That, my friends, is a shoulder holster, and it contained a facsimile laser blaster, an artifact of appallingly bad manufacture that the Fanac Police recovered from his apartment. My people, this little creep before me is not just a lousy writer, not just an unreformed Dreckie - he is a living and breathing agent of Med-ia, a follower of the twin Priest-kings, Speelburg and Loocas, that devilish pair whose minions forever roam the Media Fens at the borders of Meritocrassee, seeking ways to overthrow our wondrous nation. This abomination seeks the destruction of our whole system. Death is too good for him!"

The last remark was thundered out over uproar in the chamber, and the guards were swept aside from the prisoner as the crowd turned into a raving mob, which grabbed the prisoner, hoisted him above their heads and carried him out of the hall, screaming insults at him all the while. The Beast sank back onto the Panel, took a final draught from his stein, raised his eyes from the now empty hall to the balcony, and addressed Langopell. "How was it, Bard? Did I play it right?"

Langopell raised his hands before his face, and clapped them together, twice. The Beast looked downcast, for the tone adopted by the Bard was heavily ironical. Then the Beast sighed, twirled his whip defiantly and stood up. "You're a hard man to please, Langopell!" He shook his head and left the hall.

As we were leaving ourselves, to return to the portal, I asked Langopell what the fate of the faned would be. "Oh, he'll be dead before nightfall. The mob will pile the collected works of Moorcock on top of him, and crush him to death. It won't be a quick demise, but all denizens of the Media Fens like a lingering death, don't they? More chances of a dramatic deathbed speech that way."

I tried to hide my own feelings of revulsion at the callousness of the Bard's statement, but it was with feelings of relief as well as regret that I stepped into the portal and took my leave of Meritocrassee. With such a rigidity of standards, I could not help but feel uncomfortable there, and I was relieved to be back in the muddled, but relaxed atmosphere of Mundania.

By-ways Of The Galaxy, No. 1: Catalpa

Allan Jones

A proper scholarly study of the history of Catalpa, along the lines of Roaz and Pense's monumental THE HISTORY OF BETULA : A MARXIST PERSPECTIVE (Galactica Heritage, 12 vols.) would be a vast undertaking, but one which, I contend, ought to be undertaken as a matter of urgency by someone equal to the task. In the short space allocated to me here I must necessarily be brief.

Anyone working in the field is indebted to Skelton and Pond for their pioneering NOTES ON CATALPAN LIFE FORMS, and I have had to draw heavily on their work, supplemented by some researches of my own.

Incidentally, Skelton and Pond seem to be the first to have made the now seemingly obvious deduction that life forms on Earth and on Catalpa evolved from a common ancestry; the similarity between life on the two planets is truly remarkable.

Unless we grasp at the outset some of the peculiarities of the Catalpan character we shall not be able to make much sense of their unique cultural history. However, once grasp those peculiarities, and much becomes clear. The Catalpans are on the whole an equable people - rather pacific and earnest - with a great

respect for their own culture and education. We pride ourselves on these qualities on Earth, of course, but in contra-distinction to the Catalpans, these qualities can hardly be said to have shaped our entire history. To a Catalpan, though, it would be quite unthinkable, say, to enter upon the world of public affairs, of politics, of the arts, of commerce, etc., without a thorough grounding in all aspects of Catalpan culture, extending as far back as permanent records survive.

When the Catalpans were in transition from an oral culture to a predominantly literary one, a thorough education was reckoned to take about thirty years - their life-span being about the same as ours. As the decades and centuries passed, so the fruits of their culture grew. They had, for example, a great musical heritage, a great legacy of imaginative literature similar to our fiction, and many studies of their own history. With the growth of their culture there was a corresponding growth in the proportion of an individual's life spent in education. It became not uncommon for Catalpans to spend fifty to sixty years being educated and only the last ten or twenty years of their lives on productive work.

The Catalpans are nothing if not rational, and the absurdity of this situation was as evident to them as it is to us. Their solution, though, was peculiarly Catalpan. Groups of young people moved out and began a new culture from scratch. A thorough education in this new culture did not take very long, and it thrived. I should stress that not everyone deserted the old culture (which I shall call culture 'A'; it would be pointless to attempt a translation of the Catalpan term). But the mantle of cultural leadership fell on the new learning, culture 'B'.

This was a truly admirable solution, but its very success brought problems. In culture B all ideas are radically new, and

the quite novel discoveries in the sciences, and the peculiarly original contributions to the arts flourished to such an extent that a thorough education - necessary before embarking on a particular calling - took longer and longer. Eventually, it was quite normal for the educational period in culture B to last for seventy years.

How cultures C,D,E,F and G came into existence over the centuries I am sure I need not bother to explain. But by the time the latter ones were emerging, the earlier ones were almost extinct. They had survived, just, but a thorough education was taking a whole lifetime. Given the Catalpan respect for its own heritage, it was unthinkable that these old cultures should be allowed to die out. Once more a novel solution was required and found. The more recent cultures took it upon themselves to keep the older ones alive. They did this in two ways. Firstly, groups of young people were dispatched to be brought up in the ways of the old culture. This ensured a living continuity. Secondly, since these people would have to spend all their lifetimes in education and training, and doing no productive work, the recent cultures also undertook the material sustenance of the old culture.

This has been an effective solution; but, to come up to date, the burden of these older civilisations on the younger ones has grown so great that all their productive effort is now directed at maintenance. Not to put too fine a point on it, things are becoming critical on Catalpa, and whether life can survive there in any vital sense remains to be seen.

DEATH ON TWO LEGS

BY

KEN MANN

During the time this article was being written, terrorists seized 13 hostages in the Polish Embassy in Switzerland. They demanded the lifting of martial law in Poland and the release of political prisoners. When the siege ended, neither of the demands had been met and, personally, I never expected them to be. These idealistic terrorists were daring to challenge institutionalised terrorism in Poland - their failure was a foregone conclusion.

The seizure of embassies by terrorists - and occasionally by mobs - has been a comparatively recent development. In 1979, 35 embassies were seized by armed terrorists; in 1980, 42 embassies. The embassy seizure which caused the most widespread international repercussions was not seized by terrorists but by an armed mob. A total of 52 diplomatic hostages were held for 444 days in the US Embassy in Tehran. Although it is unlikely that Ayatollah Khomeini ordered the seizure, he supported it for internal political reasons to the extent of commanding Iranian armed forces to aid the mob.

This is a sinister development in terrorism. Even embassy staffs of the smallest country are at the mercy of the host country if the host betrays his goodwill by actively or passively encouraging terrorism. As a result of this betrayal, most countries - and especially the Islamic states - condemned Khomeini.

The reverse of the coin is where embassies are flagrantly abusing their diplomatic privileges. Notable are the embassies of Libya and Iraq, which often serve as bases for terrorists, usually against their own exiled nationals. Commonly, their diplomatic bags are used to smuggle in weapons.

The answer in such cases is not to seize the embassy, but to withdraw diplomatic immunity, or to make an example by

expelling a number of embassy staff.

However, terrorism is more than seizing embassies. And its problems cannot always be solved by ordering diplomats out of the country. For instance, the seizure of the Iranian Embassy in London was a prelude to the Iran-Iraq war. The hijack of a Lufthansa airliner with 87 hostages by Palestinian terrorists in 1977 was a failed attempt to publicise their cause. Martin Schleyer, President of the German Employers' Federation, was kidnapped in September 1977 by terrorists who killed four people in the process. Schleyer was later assassinated.

From this, it can be seen that different terrorist groups have different aims. They also use different techniques - from kidnap to embassy seizure - and tactics to achieve their ends. However, their causes are unlikely to succeed due to the terrorists trying to impose their will by committing atrocities.

Terrorism uses the traditional tactic of criminal gangs, by threatening to kill or wound a small number to intimidate a community. The Mafia use this tactic successfully, as do small professional gangs (e.g. the Krays) who dominate a sector of a city, preventing people from informing against them. Terrorism was succinctly defined by an ancient Chinese philosopher: "Kill one, frighten ten thousand".

The commonest aim - and the one most likely to succeed - is to gain publicity for their cause. I was one of the five hundred million people who watched horrified as eight Palestinian terrorists kidnapped and killed eleven Israeli athletes at Munich in 1972. Horrified as I was, I had heard of the Palestinians and of their cause - and felt some sympathy for them because they had been driven to such extremes to re-occupy what they considered their land.

Nobody had heard of the South Moluccans until they hijacked a Dutch train in 1975. Similarly, only ardent stamp collectors had heard of Khuzestan until six terrorists seized the Iranian Embassy in London in 1980.

Terrorist tactics which have been used at various times have included extortion and ransom to raise money for terrorist activities. For instance, \$60 million was handed over to the Montoneros in Argentina after they kidnapped the Born brothers. Political blackmail, often including the release of prisoners, is a common demand. In 1977, a spate of terrorism endeavoured to discredit the Italian government. In Latin America, countries are often destabilised by provoking an over-reaction to terrorism by the government in power. In totalitarian regimes, state terrorism stifles political and intellectual opposition. Usually, however, the overriding aim of terrorist groups is to arouse social conflict and hatred amongst the populace.

Terrorism is practiced by governments to maintain them in power. Many Latin American countries, the USSR, Iran and Uganda under Amin's rule are all prime examples. Internationally, terrorism is also supported by governments, to enable groups like the Palestinians to operate outside their countries. Often terrorism is supported by (or has the shared cause of) a significant proportion of the populace. Examples of these include the IRA in Ireland and the ETA in Spain. Lastly, terrorists comprise fringe movements with extreme views (left, right or religious) with no popular support, such as the Red Army Faction, and some neo-Nazi groups in Germany.

Normally, states practising terrorism only do so to stifle opposition and to create conflict and hatred. However, they may also clandestinely support terrorist and criminal gangs preferring other tactics. The

all-time record for terrorism is held by Stalin, who killed between 15 and 25 million Russians to impose his views on the rest. In comparison, the terror practised today in Russian labour camps and psychiatric hospitals, although brutally effective, is relatively mild.

The age-old technique of publicised (but not necessarily public) executions as practised by Khomeini in Iran is another way to maintain authoritarian power. Perhaps the ugliest form of terrorism is the secret torture and murder of captives in prison - Steve Biko springs immediately to mind. Often the existence of a politically sensitive prisoner is completely denied by the authorities. Lately, especially in Latin America, the line between secret murder of prisoners, murder by soldiers and policemen on the street, and the tacit acceptance of murder by terrorist gangs (sometimes with off-duty soldiers and policemen in their number) has become blurred to the point of confusion between terrorists and government.

Only totalitarian governments of various complexions use these methods to suppress opposition. Examples include the fanatically religious government of Iran, and extreme right wing governments such as Uganda under Amin and some South American countries. Fortunately, terrorism on such a large scale cannot be practised in a democracy with an active free Press.

International terrorism is usually supported on a small scale by many governments. Quadafi-supported Libyans have murdered anti-Quadafi Libyans in London and Paris. Doubtless, the seizure of the Iranian Embassy in London in 1980, carried out by Iranian Arabs, was launched and organised by the Iraqis, probably in anticipation of the Iraq-Iran war.

But these events are merely sideshows beside the carnival of violence orchestrated by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation

(PLO) since 1968. Supported by the exiled Palestinian government, and sometimes by Libya, Algeria and Syria, the PLO is equipped with Russian and Czech weaponry, and is composed of about 14,000 guerillas in five main groups, plus a number of splinter groups which fight a great deal amongst themselves. Formed in 1964, its aim remains the expelling of all Jews from Palestine, and recovery of the country for the Arabs.

During 1965 to 1967, the PLO made over 100 raids into Israel. This provoked the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict, and resulted in Lebanon becoming their only point of direct access to Israel. In 1978, the PLO turned a raid on a civilian bus into a bloodbath. Since 1967, they have concentrated on international terrorism, with the aim of publicising their cause - spectacularly achieved at the Munich Olympics. Other TV extravaganzas have included Dawson's Field (1970), Lod Airport (1972), the Saudi Embassy in Khartoum (1974), and the kidnapping of OPEC oil ministers in Vienna (1975).

The cumulative result was the disowning of Palestinian hijackers by the Arab States in subsequent ventures. The final humiliation of the PLO in their international campaign came when two successful rescues of hijacked passengers were made by Israeli and German commandos at Entebbe, Uganda, in 1976, and Mogadishu, Somalia, in 1977. Internal feuding since then has reduced the PLO capability for terrorism, and their international terrorism has been substantially reduced.

Through the PLO, terrorism has created folk heroes for the Palestinian refugees, and helped maintain their morale as a nation. In addition, the PLO have a worldwide network of offices based on huge contributions from the OPEC nations, some from friendly countries such as Libya and Iraq, some as protection money from oil states. Further, by provoking Israeli reprisals, they have gained some sympathy despite their

terrorism. And they have prevented any attempt to reach a lasting Arab-Israeli peace settlement, where Israel maintains her 1949 borders.

Despite these advances, Palestine is still in Israeli hands, and Israelis will resist any attempt to wrest lands which their government considers vital insurance against Palestinian terrorism. By their actions, the PLO have made the concept of a West Bank settlement an empty dream for Palestine.

The saddest irony of all is that, through internal feuding and the Lebanese civil war, the PLO have killed more of each other than Jews. Arab opinion has turned against them - as well as world opinion - and spoiled the success of the Arabian oil weapon. It was oil, not blood, which gave Yasser Arafat the UN rostrum.

Although neither the IRA or ETA have the active support of more than a small percentage of the Basques or Northern Irish Catholics - and despite the fact that both these groups are minorities - they do share the terrorists' aims while deploring their violence. The IRA aims to create a united Ireland, while ETA wants the establishment of a Basque state.

IRA terrorism has reduced the level of support from the Catholic population. Their terrorist activities peaked in 1968, and had fallen to such a low level in 1972 that they were forced to abandon a military style organisation, with battalions and companies. The disbanding of this military organisation was due to the fact that, even in deeply committed republican areas, they were often betrayed. Company officers were forced to adopt the classical cell concept of the revolutionary. Although this structure was more secure, it effectively distanced them from the republican community.

The IRA's 1980/81 hunger strike, together with the propaganda coup of getting a hunger striker elected to Parliament, has proved more

effective than their terrorism of North and South Ireland, and has had a greater impact on the Irish-American community in the USA, which provides most of their money and modern weaponry.

Although IRA terrorism has achieved some dramatic publicity in the short-term for attracting funds, it has prevented the prospect of reunification, its primary aim, and aroused a paramilitary Protestant backlash which has a greater potential strength than the IRA.

In contrast with the IRA and ETA, the German Red Army Fraction and the Italian Red Brigades have never enjoyed popular support. These terrorist groups are the outgrowth of the student revolution based on Marcuse's philosophy. The essence of the philosophy is that students, (and other so-called minorities) were the spark that would ignite the revolution, since the recently affluent workers no longer composed the revolutionary class.

The movements began in the late 1960s with demonstrations by students. When these achieved nothing, student revolutionaries became more violent. Frustrated by lack of response from the public, a small minority began burning and bombing the symbols of capitalism. However, this only served to alienate popular opinion, since working class members were killed who were unfortunate to be there at the time of the blast. As a result, this extremist minority was forced into selective terrorism, kidnapping and killing representatives of authority and the Establishment, such as bankers, judges and politicians.

The theory behind the student groups was one of simple escalation, with the group as the trigger for social change. The kidnapping and killing of influential people would result in a clampdown on the populace to minimise the occurrences. This would alienate the people, eventually leading to chaos and civil war. During the chaos, power would be seized by a

syndicate of students' and workers' committees as the instruments of the revolution. In turn, the syndicalist revolution would be headed by an elite party vanguard based on Leninist principles. Another form of terrorism; another empty dream.

This escalation was caused, not by the failure of the German government, but by its success. Post-war Germany, with its growing prosperity and pride, was an unlikely place for discontented manual workers. In addition, the German political system encourages centrist stances by the main parties, leaving little salvation for politically acceptable extremist parties.

As a result, only a core of about forty individuals remained to carry out selective terrorism. In the meanwhile, the German police and intelligence services had introduced a highly effective computerised intelligence system. This system has forced the remaining terrorists to devote their efforts to just surviving, by constantly moving their safe houses, and restricting their operations mostly to robberies which provide necessary money for their continued existence.

Recently, a new Revolutionary Cells (RZ) movement has taken root, with more student support than the RAF, with a broader base of older intellectuals. Till now, RZ has done little killing, but whether they will follow the same escalatory pattern as the RAF is a matter of pure conjecture.

As well as the university-based left-wing movements, right-wing terrorists are active in Germany and Italy. Usually composed of manual workers, they resent the disruption caused by the left-wing groups. Often, these right-wing groups disguise their own terrorist outrages as left-wing activities. However, they are less discriminating about who they kill than the left.

Both groups, strangely, have the same aim - to provoke

government repression. The right because its their kind of society; the left because they believe an authoritarian government is more easily destabilised.

No democracy has ever been overthrown by a marxist or anarchist revolution. Attempts with other government systems have only provoked takeovers by military juntas, or similar authoritarian counter-revolutionary governments. And in the process, democratic freedom has disappeared. Left and right-wing terrorists are equally enemies of democracy.

It is a historical fact that governments have always exploited internal conflicts and unrest in other countries they wish to destabilise. The Russians, Libyans, Cubans and Nicaraguans have all provided training, money, weapons and propaganda for terrorist and dissident movements which they hope will encourage destabilisation.

There is no real evidence to suggest that any international terrorist conspiracy coordinated by the USSR exists. Terrorism is exploited rather than created. Terrorists are not the puppets of the Russians or the Cubans, but comrades-in-arms, with the knowledge that the economic inter-dependence of countries means that destabilising one country will contribute to destabilising the others.

Terrorism is a marvellous tool for achieving spectacular short-term advantages. But it rarely advances the aspirations of the people it claims to represent.

The terrorist who will use nuclear weapons does not exist, except in novels such as THE FIFTH HORSEMAN by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre. Although the use of nuclear weapons by terrorists is now technically feasible, their use would be in conflict with the aims of the terrorist group.

With nuclear weapons, operations would become more complex with consequent detection and conviction of the terrorists increasingly

likely - detection and conviction being the main deterrents to terrorists. In addition, nuclear blackmail is not a credible alternative to holding a gun at a hostage's head, because the actual explosion of a nuclear device would be political suicide. Terrorists' use of such a weapon would be indiscriminate to say the least. And without discrimination of the target, the aims of the group become totally abstract against a backdrop of mass murder. Any threat of nuclear blackmail is likely to come from a maniac rather than the thinking terrorist.

Political terrorism is unlikely ever to be wiped out. As one movement becomes discouraged by lack of popular support and inability to achieve its long-term aims, another rises to take its place, attracted by the short-term successes terrorism brings. The USSR deals with terrorism (and dissidence) at the cost of severely restricted civil freedom for its populace. Terrorists know it and exploit it. A small, vicious minority can develop legitimate dissent into terrorist violence.

In this violent world, democracies have to tread a careful line between suppressing dissenting voices and the suppression of terrorism. Suppression of dissent poisons a democracy, but if measures are taken to wipe out terrorism, a democratic society is poisoned by these intense measures.

West Germany seems to have got the balance right. Other countries could reduce terrorism from a menace to an irritant by employing the computer against the terrorist.

FOOTNOTE: From the time that Israeli troops entered Lebanon, the days of the PLO military presence were numbered. The Israelis merely wanted an excuse - the attempted assassination of one of their diplomats, which they

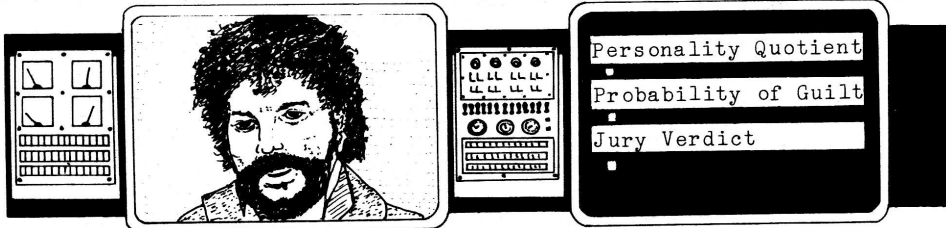
assumed was by the PLO - to move into Lebanon. The long, protracted negotiations eventually leading to the evacuation of the remnants of the PLO caused thousands of unnecessary deaths. These resulted from the stubborn refusal of the PLO leadership to admit defeat. Meanwhile, with characteristic efficiency, Israel continued to destroy the PLO and throw it out of Lebanon.

For the PLO leaders, long accustomed to ridiculing the Arab states for their military impotence against Israel, had to persuade their own men that the defeat was something else entirely, to preserve the power and the prestige of leadership. Thus the climate of the PLO evacuation was one of unreal victory due to manipulation of Palestinian public opinion by PLO leaders - the morale of the evacuees was exceedingly high at the time.

But the sword cuts both ways. Through this manipulation of internal public opinion, the PLO lost the chance of a propaganda victory over Israel. The tragedy of the Palestinian evacuation should have hit world public opinion with the force of a sledge hammer, and, if correctly handled, would have increased sympathy for the evacuees. However, the PLO leaders favoured Palestinian public opinion, and pretended an absurd victory. It was not surprising the world remained aloof.

Yasser Arafat must have rejoiced inwardly when the Israelis allowed the massacre of Palestinians by Lebanese Christian militia. Even Israel's closest allies were shocked by the action. Jews, both inside and outside Israel, strongly criticised the Begin government - it was as if Israeli soldiers had pulled the triggers. For world public opinion, the wiping out of the Palestinians drew comparisons with the Holocaust - and the PLO picked up the wave of sympathy that had passed it by at Beirut. At a high cost!

INNOCENCE 2000



DAVID R. MORGAN

- 'Are you innocent or guilty?'
- 'Innocent.' What else could I reply?

When I first landed, had no dreams that it would all go so far.
I watched as the Nymphomaniac Tax Lawyer at the Customs desk panted
to the Officers
To strip her; as her husband, the back-street Vasectomist, dragged
her away
And beat her up terribly badly in the Departure Lounge.
The Multi-multi-Millionaire, who had always wanted a house in the
country,
Was flying out to buy a country to put it in.
The Urban Terrorist whose comrades were flying away, screamed
As the Brain Police entered, "Brothers, have you no sense of history?"
On the way out a Pin-striped business man pirouetted past me on
Nijinsky toes,
Happy that the permissive age wouldn't pass him by,
As he boarded his Ultra-Boeing for a weekend trip
To Butlin's free-love nudist camp in Surrey.
As I left, a Groucho Marx look-alike without a sense of humour -
Whose only regret was that he was not someone else -
Was busy having a nervous breakdown in the high-speed Cafeteria.

- 'What do you mean by Innocent?'
- 'Are you innocent of everything?'
- 'Are you innocent as charged?'
- 'Are you innocent with extenuating circumstances?'

As I walked to her house (And I love her so)
I passed an old-aged Hippy busking on the street with a song
For another alternative, alternative, alternative society.
Further on, some cosmic-punks slid out of a cul-de-sac, muttering:
"The gang bang's off; she's got an 'eadache."
Unemployed Romantics with death-wish dreams drew meaningless hexagrams
in thin air.
I crossed the road and was almost run down by a Securicor Juggernaut,
Delivering Parliament's Christmas puddings.
On the other side I stopped to watch Dessicated customers in a dried
food store,
Chasing a little creature, emptying hearts to stuff bellies,
Crying: "Don't kill it, whatever it is! We'll get a pan and some
garlic."
I carried on, but was sincerely worried;
"Something's definitely going on that I don't understand." I thought,
Quickening my feet chased by cöpycat shadows;
But the crowd that flooded around me suddenly stopped in a non-
bio-degradeable moment
And started suffering from adaptive breakdown.

- 'What do you mean by Innocent?'
- 'Are you innocent of everything you are not charged with?'
- 'Are you innocent of anything?'
- 'Are you innocent in the eyes of God?'

Forcing through I finally reached her (And I love her so)
 And her family; the first time I'd met Mummylumps and Daddykins,
 I was still wondering what was going on, but when the Medium Dry Sherry
 flows
 And the Family Album (Vol.9) comes out (look, there's Grandad going
 metric)

One feels that everything is somehow exactly what it seems.
 They told me that when the baby comes it must be plugged into an I.B.M;
 Because one must always keep an eagle eye out for a prodigy.
 I smiled vacuously, as little Simon and Emma wandered around in circles
 Touching each others exposed private parts,
 Feeling frightfully inadequate with no pent-up frustrations or anger to
 release.

I began to feel strangely at home, as if I had lived in that house
 forever and ever...
 And then it came to me, like something between waking and deep sleep,
 As the whole family turned to two dimensional black and white -
 It... came... to... me... that I must decide to leave;
 Or I would be two dimensional monochrome as well and fade away.
 So, rubbing the cosy chains from my eyes, I broke out; but THEY arrested
 me.

- 'What do you mean by Innocent?'
- 'What does innocence constitute to you?'
- 'Are you innocent as in blameless?'
- 'Are you innocent as in Naive?'

I never ever thought it would all go so far. Now, it has... brittle
 unease.
 The man in front of me, accused of making love to a tree (labelled
 Arborality),
 Is being acquitted because the offence is bio-degradable.
 My defense lawyer is drinking himself stupid in celebration of his third
 liver transplant.
 Outside, in the Institutions gigantic Deep-Freeze,
 I see the guilty Hypochondriacs' grave-fridge with 'Now do you believe
 me?'

As an epitaph; I suppose a visitors' book by a grave-fridge
 Indicates the deceased was in the hotel business.
 But 123456789 with stiletto eyes the Jury is flashing up on the screen;
 The verdict surely now will be scored up,
 And in my ear I hear a Serpent forlornly hissing:
 "Adam and Eve were always having orgies;
 But guess who got the blame and always will."

- 'Are you innocent or guilty?'
- 'Innocent.' What else could I reply?

My shadowy merchandise of Innocence declared I thought the trial finally
 over.
 It had only just begun.

- 'What do you mean by Innocent?'

THE DREAMS UP THERE

David Thiry

That circular lake of glass might have seemed like an odd place for a siren's song, but it was appropriate to its time. Every man is a mariner in any world, but among these craters, the lure of female song had a special meaning. In a land of hard surfaces and sharp edges, only the sound of a woman's voice could move a hard man to trembling, to tears.

Those few who had come here had survived much, though none could tell you why they had bothered. No one wished to be reminded of the simple bombs, the viruses that came in the morning and swept their wives, mothers, their sisters into midnight. They would then have to recall the rage that carried them through the days following, and the nukes that reunited husbands, sons and brothers with the women of their wistful memories.

No one cared to be reminded. No one cared to be reminded that they once cared.

After the disasters, the survivors set about discovering what love was left in the world for them. The cities were but barren heaps of rubble; the countryside, scorched and cleansed like the abandoned fields around an old, active volcano. Men soon learned that there was no love in stones, and only a bit in the few remaining trees and grasses.

Animal life had almost disappeared. Weather, once gentle and cyclical, had become harsh and relentless. Cold or hot or still, the world seemed always hateful.

A few fortunate men discovered the love which had always lay dormant in each other. But most found that the moral climate had

not changed despite the conflagrations, and searched for their love in forms that were other than human. These flitted through the landscape, on a quest that was as hopeless as that of a honeybee, scanning the cold surface of a mirror for a reflection of sweetness.

Many decided to die. The rest, wandering and hoping, hid their despair and silently wept. The living realised that the world had shrugged off its special charm, and nothing - but nothing ever again - could be described as feminine.

I had resisted the daily tides of despair. How I did this, what convinced me to last through the lonely nights, is beyond my memory. The time simply passed for me in discarded weeks, forgotten months. What I felt no longer mattered. What I ate and drank are even more unimportant: obviously, none of it was poisonous.

One day, I watched a storm slip between two mountains. It covered the valley down there in a solid water curtain, concealing the details from my eyes. The air around me was hot and pungent, and I almost expected to see steam hissing up from the nasty-looking, shifting clouds below.

The storm was obviously going to hold me at my high altitude, far above the rain. It seemed best to wait until morning, and descend after the clouds had passed. So I nestled down at the base of a great rock face, my heels dug into the chipped shale, and dozed.

A caress of light, a flicker against my eyelids, startled me awake. All around was a soft glowing. And in the valley, now cleared of the storm, flashed

a towered beacon, white and sharp in the night like a fallen , but still active, star.

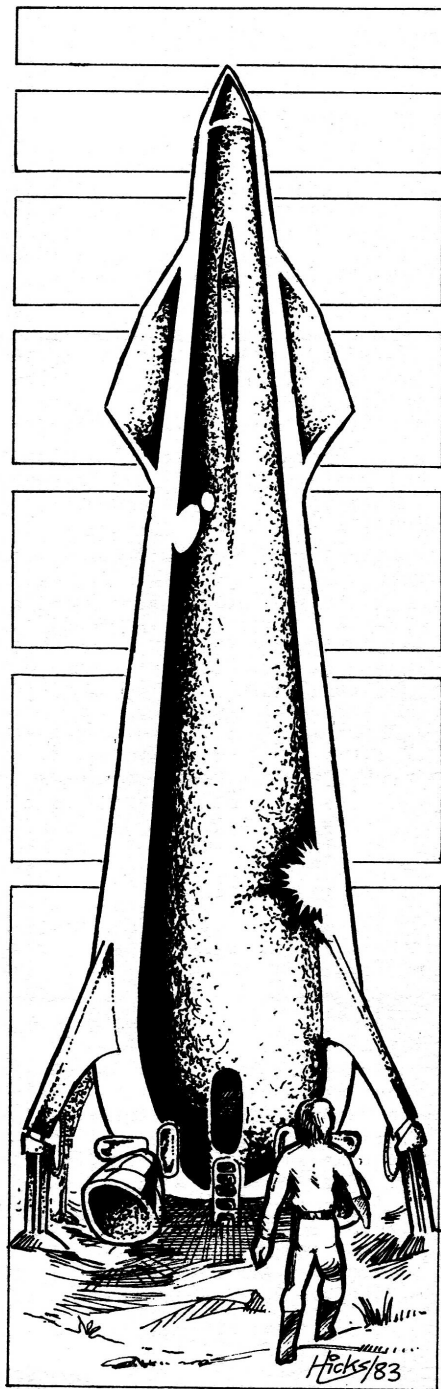
My mind cleared of sleep instantly. My eyes focussed on the scene below me - a bizarre sight in a year of oddities.

The tower marked the centre of a jagged impact crater, its delicate, skeletal legs propped against the surrounding slopes at five points. Dwarfed by the height of the tower, a file of pines rimmed the lifeless glass lake. Outside this cultivated circle, only occasional trees had rooted into the cracks in the fused, obsidian-slick ground.

There seemed no good justification for my descent to the light. But even my apathy failed against that lifelong curiosity which had always drawn me into new places, into the unexplored caves and forgotten backstreets that the world ignored. This compulsion had allowed my survival and now overcame my terrible spiritual inertia. I slid down that deep, deep slope and followed the beacon through the night.

No unlike the surface of the moon, the valley was pitted, end to end right up to the knees of its mountains. What stellar heat had melted the previously-fused soil, I couldn't tell. It must have passed quickly though, for the layer of glassy silica was thin and brittle. The sides of several small craters had shifted away and fresh soil spilled down to their concave bottoms. Passing between these ragged edges was frightening, like crossing an expanse of frozen ocean, its heaving waves stilled and held as by a cold out from between the stars.

I slid down the inner slope of the tower's pit on my backside. Standing there, beneath the beacon's glare, I realised that I had been lured to that spot intentionally. Yet I didn't



care. Finding a door at the base of the tower didn't surprise me, nor that it was ajar: more of the siren's bait, daring me to enter the darkness inside.

I crossed the crunchy ground. A dull blue light flickered inside the tower's chamber, then steadied into a rather bright glow. Moving closer, I discerned a row of men reclining on waist-high couches, their heads nearly set back against a wall.

Approaching this scene might appear foolhardy, but it was just the sort of challenge, the offer of discovery, that drew me on despite my weak will to flee.

My fingers touched the door, and gently pushed it fully open. I stepped inside and paused. Nothing happened.

There were four men laying there, still and quiet in the soft, bright light. All were clothed in the same rough manner as myself, as far as I could see. And they wore headsets, grey headsets strung on long wired which were attached to wall panels behind their heads. Three of these men possessed expressions which could be best described as anticipatory. The fourth, an older fellow lying in the shadows at the far end, was of a visage both pale and slack. He didn't seem alive at all.

The sight of possible death didn't bother me, though my body responded to the clammy air with goosebumps and a shudder which could have been mistaken for fear.

There weren't many odd objects about the room. A glassy screen was set in the wall opposite the door. At first, I figured this was some sort of two-way mirror, but closer examination revealed it to be an inactive television screen. A small, oval, silent speaker was installed below this. There were no controls for either of these gadgets.

I eyed the earphones. Obviously these were working, or those men expected them to do so soon. In

fact, they seemed completely oblivious to my presence, and were totally concerned only about what they could hear. None of them had stirred since I entered the room, but only breathed quietly, their hands curled and calm as if their reality was most distant.

I figured that they would react violently if I were to deprive them of their sets. So, I settled on sampling the headphones of the old man, who looked as if he were someone I could easily handle. I shuffled across the room to his side.

This pale-faced fellow was much older than I had first thought - his hair was thin and his slack face still held many deep wrinkles. He possessed a hooked, Gallic beak. His clothes, I noted, were expensively sporting, quite inappropriate to the area about the tower. He had even gone so far as to don a clean, wide cravat.

A single cold touch told me that he was quite dead. Gingerly, I ignored my squeamishness and lifted the phones from his ears. As expected, he remained motionless. Witnessing a sudden resurrection would have pushed me a bit far just then, I believe.

I pressed an earpiece to my head. It was silent. I wriggled the wire. It still remained silent. Figuring the thing wasn't going to work at all, I obeyed a delayed sense of propriety and set the headphones back on the dead man's ears.

As I stepped back from him, the tiny wall speaker popped - the sound of infusing electricity - and the videoscreen began glowing gray against the solid blue light. I had obviously set off another automatic alarm, though I could not figure out how it was done. In apprehension, I skipped to the door: out of curiosity, I remained inside the jamb to see what was going to happen next.

The speaker continued its hissing, and the television blew more snow, refusing to clear into

a coherent transmission. None of the men beside me seemed to stir. Outside, I could see through the open door, the beacon at the tower's apex continued to revolve as before, its glare reflecting off the glassy cratersides.

Then there was a rushing sound, and static dampened. And, God help me, a woman's voice from out of no one's memory said, "What? Has another one come?"

My heart skipped a beat, fluttered, then quickened still more. I dared not breathe. I dared not move, lest some delicate connection between that voice and myself be jarred loose. At first, I thought that I was imagining this, exaggerating the femininity of the voice, but the smiles on my companions' faces were of a type, and could only mean one thing: there was a woman here! Somewhere! Somehow!

Oh Lord, it all seemed such a delicate unlikely possibility that I continued to hold my breathe, though I badly needed to sigh.

Then the voice in that other world said, "Look, you can talk, right? We can't see each other, you understand, but the audio still works." She paused, then added with more than a hint of impatience: "What have you got to say?"

Wonder-shocked, the words rushed out of me, "I...uh... that is, who are you? Where are you? Why is this place a ...I...uh"

"Jesus," she muttered pleasantly, "but you are an articulate one." The voice chuckled and I smiled too. It brought a small relief. The meagre humour of her sarcasm was a world of comedy to me.

I reorganised myself, but still asked my questions as quickly as I could because the past few months had convinced me that any pleasure was but a brief experience. The woman had no choice but to answer as rapidly. Which

only encouraged me to enquire quicker still, just to force her to speak:

"Who are you?" "Amani Ahouris." "What is this place?" "I call it my 'sword', my last contact with men." "Who are these others here?" "Those who came to the tower before you."

"That makes sense." I laughed and it hurt.

"They listen to me," Amani explained. "Listen to my music. I used to play for them for both our pleasures, but I'm afraid that it has become a bit much for them."

I passed off this last remark, and forced myself to think. After a bit, I asked, "Wait now, where are you?"

"In orbit."

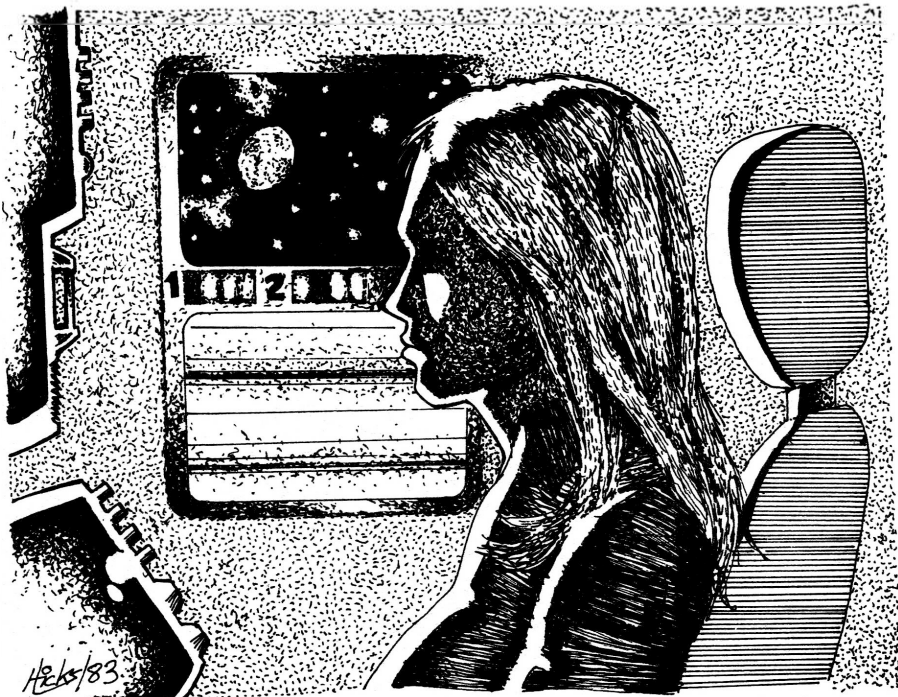
"What?"

"Yeah," she said, sounding a bit exasperated with me. "Up in the air going around and around in synch with the tower and all that. Jesus, I'd never think you'd been to school..." She waited for my response. I had none. She continued: "I was - am - an astronaut. Really. Part of a shuttle crew of four. We were doing maintenance runs on satellites when the first virus bombs were dropped. The others, the men with me, decided that their place was down with you. God knows why."

I told her that I could understand their reasons. "But," I added, cueing her, "you decided to stay up there..."

"You bet your ass!" Amani snapped. Then she said in a quieter tone, "And it looks as if I'll never be coming down. Ah, I can't take the chance. You might be carriers of the virus, all of you. And whatthehell, the supplies'll last me for years, which will be as long a period before you can get anyone up here for me, anyway. So, whatthehell?"

"But, Christ, you're up there all..."



"It isn't half so bad as what you've got down there," she pointed out. "Look at it this way; I have my men, in that room with you. But outside, all the men are without women. The situation has but two bad sides. I've been given the better."

"And this tower? Where'd it come from?"

"My men didn't land until long after the last nukings. There weren't really any good places to set the glider down, so they went round and round for weeks. After a while, they simply let the ship set itself down... I don't think they cared if the landing was a safe one. But they made it safely. This tower was constructed of materials available aboard the ship. It's not like it was a great engineering feat or anything."

"They didn't have much else to do," I ventured.

"Ha, that's right," Amani said, audibly smiling. "I could

be rolling in social luxury, what with the demand on my time being ridiculous. But this tower is so remote, the whole thing is kept manageable. Few come by this way, and fewer bother to come into the valley."

"And these are the men who followed the beacon?"

"No, only the old man." Before I could tell her of his death, Amani asked quickly, "Can you guess who the others might be?"

"The shuttle crew."

"Yeah..." Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed that the others were grinning. It was almost like that sudden resurrection that I feared... Fortunately, they lost their interest in what I had said, and passed back into their close-faced, open-mouthed stupor.

"Anyway," she continued, "they maintain the station. That is, whenever they can drag their asses away from the phones. Seems some times I have to threaten to break connection before they do anything."

I stepped closer to the screen, and touched the glass.

As if she could see me, Amani said suddenly, "The video doesn't work any more. No parts for the... uh... shit, I don't know." She fell silent.

To make her talk again, I said, "They look dumb, lying there like they were just paralytic..."

"I'd stop playing," Amani told me, "but that would do them even more harm. Besides," she added much slower, "I'm afraid that they would go away for good if I..." And she let the rest hang, unsaid.

I told her, "I wouldn't need much more than your voice to keep me here." For a moment, the adolescent sheepishness of those words lanced through me, but I quickly suppressed my foolish feelings.

"They knew me," Amani explained, "knew me before." There was a thumping against the microphone on her side. "But this little nothing, my music, changes all that."

Without a prelude, she strummed a triple chord on some stringed instrument, and I suddenly understood what this was all about.

It was more than simply a sound, those notes. The sound of Amani's fingers on the metal strings became, for me, all the caresses of my mother on my infant's skin, awakened memories of my fingertips on my lover's breast's, the touch of life and love and the light of my lost love's smile. The vibrations, set up simply by a female touch, shattered the blurring glass of my isolation. Music was a woman. And for the last, small part of me who cared for a soft, soft sound, a single song compensated for all those years of silence.

I smiled and wished Amani could see my expression.

"Music is all I've become," she was saying, "I don't even have to sing. I hit these chords, and their imagination does the rest."

There wasn't much I could say, but I managed: "I guess...uh..."

I, yeah, I can see it now."

And she hit another chord, a soft crystal sound that echoed all about me. I half-noticed the nods of the three men near me, responding to the same easing of pain that I was. I moved to the door and nodded sympathetically, though no one was watching me.

As I stood there, as much as alone, it occurred to my addled brain what had brought me through the months of hell - not just hope, hope for love, but rather a wish for a living fantasy - a dream of ecstasy serving as a reward for my successful passage through the new world's nightmares.

Life, having been reduced to fantasy, allowed only the fantastic to serve me as a justification for living. I've known that all along. But circumstances, both normal and abnormal, had forced me to deny this simple rule. My clue was in the caves, those darkened stages where what I wished for dominated what was. Darkness was my natural element. And I assumed that joy, even this artificial, drugged happiness was not.

So I went away.

The oldest legend, as far as I can recall from out of my limited knowledge of such things, was that of the first woman and man on earth. Now, there's only one Eve, and as many Adams as can be imagined. And though she cannot repopulate the world, this modern Earth-mother does manage to rebuild the shattered hearts of those who contact her.

To rekindle love: there's no more real need in any world.

For those addicted to this musical romance, the events of the struggling world outside the blue-lighted room are unimportant when compared to the sharp reality of the shared dream. Above them, Amani, alone and trusted with their hearts, lives as long as she can, as well as she can

Below them all, I gratefully turn on.

(Written at the Sandra Airflite February 1982)

What can I say? Response to CS6 has been terrific, and compiling this loccol has been pure hell, with blood all over the cutting room floor. No space for long apologies to all those worthies relegated to the WAHFs, despite valiant attempts at making the main column. If the zine was twice the size, I'd still have had to make cuts!

Anyway, lets get the ball rolling in appropriate style with something unique in the way of comment - would you believe a haiku-of-comment?

COLIN GREENLAND,
17, Alexandra Road,
Chadwell Heath,
Essex,
RM6 6UL

A considerable journey across water, following the sun from east to west.

The wise man publishes the superior fanzine.

Advance with confident joy.

No blame.

Aw shucks, Colin - the 'no blame' bit done ruined the effect, and worries me no end, (what does it mean?).

Mind you, Graham James worried me even more, as the following

extract from a lengthy letter will illustrate.

GRAHAM JAMES,
12, Fearnville Terrace,
Oakwood,
Leeds,
LS8 3DU

...I wonder about the wisdom of the inclusion of these serious articles in your fanzine. I do not wish to return to the Nicholas 'sercon versus fannish' argument in isolation, but I must say that those people who like serious articles in fanzines are surely kidding themselves about the absorption or propogation of knowledge by these means. Personally, I do not find that articles or letters which re-write the 'history of science fiction' in two sides of A4 are really all that worthy of reading. All right, I accept that serious articles need not be judged on the basis of whether or not they are didactic; but, in all seriousness, they cannot provide, in a few hurriedly written pages, any depth of knowledge or understanding on a given subject. (This is one of the criticisms I have of Simon Ounsley's otherwise exciting and literary STILL IT MOVES.) Although Martyn Taylor is something of an exception to the general rule..., the serious articles never ever do justice to more than one viewpoint; they are rarely argued from different stances - they take a

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THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE
ALL YOU JOKERS GET THE
OPPORTUNITY TO PICK UP
A PEN AND WRITE BACK.

view and proceed headlong at ninety mph until they run out of steam or reach a convenient endpoint. At best, they are shallow and dogmatic; at worst, they pitch an argument at point zero and elicit a response at zero plus or minus one. If I want to read about a particular subject (and why do you think that your choice is necessarily other people's, merely because they respond in half a dozen lines on the matter?), then I can either go out and research it, or consult my library and obtain coverage in far greater depth and detail than the superfluous article in a fanzine...

You might not wish to re-open the 'sercon vs. fannish' argument, old son, but you've certainly done just that by your letter. Firstly, let me say that I like the mix of sercon and fannish in CS, and I'm trying very hard to keep it balanced. From the mail I receive (and most people do write considerably more than half a dozen lines, as this loccol shows), the readers do like it too. So, as I've had occasion to say before in these columns, in my zine, you're lumbered with my taste!

Secondly, I feel that Graham does a grave disservice to people like Martyn Taylor, Mary Gentle, and myself, in dismissing our efforts in such a fashion. Comments like 'rewrite the history of sf into two sides of A4', or 'a few hurriedly written pages' do not, in any way, sum up the effort that went into either my Asimov piece, or Martyn's or Mary's pieces in CS6. Speaking for myself, I know I did a great deal of work on the 'Flashback' article, re-reading the books, chasing up reference works, buying the Asimov autobiography, working and reworking my ideas as I acquired more information.

I don't know how many weeks work went into the writing of that piece, since most of it was done several years ago in any case. But I will not accept that it is hurriedly written, anymore than Martyn or Mary would accept that their pieces were of little worth.

Graham's contention that 'serious articles never ever do justice to more than one viewpoint' is, of course, poppycock. Nobody, except the most academic critic, ever approaches things from anything but one or two viewpoints; most are purely subjective views, and are interesting precisely because of their subjectivity. To take Graham's point to its logical conclusion would mean that every piece of criticism would have to contain every other piece of criticism within itself, a patent absurdity (and boring, to boot). As the loccol (I hope) will show, people do like this kind of thing and are moved to comment on the articles presented. That's all that worries me!

There's a good example of this from Jim Darroch, in the following letter. Jim was one of many who were delighted to see the Kurosawa piece in CS6.

JIM DARROCH,
21, Corslet Road,
Currie,
Midlothian,
Scotland.
EH14 5LZ

The similarity of the 'new' Western, as exemplified by Leone, and THE SEVEN SAMURAI is even closer than the fact of THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN being a rip-off. In fact, the first two Clint Eastwood Italian jobs (A FISTFUL OF DOLLARS and FOR A FEW DOLLARS MORE) are direct rip-offs (or, more kindly 'used as archetypes') of Kurosawa's delightful samurai stories SANJURO and YOJIMBO, starring the master, Toshiro Mifune. As in TSS, the action is heavily stylised, with sword-wielding opponents facing each other for what seems like an eternity, and

finally dealing with the opposition in a split second move. The dialogue in these two films is played more for laughs, and they are a case of Kurosawa letting himself go after the stress of making TSS. The resemblance to the 'spaghetti' films does not end there, however, as, in SANJURO, the wandering samurai is filthy and immoral, and yet commands respect by his overwhelming swordplay. In YOJIMBO, the widescreen is used to quite marvellous effect.

To get back to TSS, as Martyn goes some way to indicate, the film is perhaps the only one ever to seriously attempt to integrate all aspects of the soundtrack - the film is nothing less than a symphonic poem: if one attempts to listen, for example, to the final battle scene without any visuals, the result is staggering - battle sounds, music, rain and extraneous noises all combine in an astonishing tapestry. Kurosawa also pioneered the use of slow-motion and long super-telephoto in TSS, both of which have now become standard features.

...Mary Gentle's section on Cordwainer Smith and Sucharitkul was interesting, as a devotee of Smith's extraordinary Universe. By the way, read Robert Lindner's THE JET-PROPELLED COUCH, which contains true psychiatric case histories, one of which is almost certainly that of Paul Linebarger. The particular case is of a 'Kirk Allen', who creates an amazing other universe which he believes he actually visits occasionally. The detail of this 'other universe' is awesome, and does bear similarity to the Instrumentality. The notes 'Kirk' made up on the universe amounted to c.18,000 pages! One of the other cases formed the basis for the film PRESSURE POINT, which starred Bobby Darin as a psychopathic Nazi kid.

Mind you, some people did pick up Martyn on a loose fact or two, like the comment about the full-length version not being seen outside Japan. Several Australians claim that the entire film has been seen out there, and Terry Jeeves even recalls the BBC showing of the film in the mid-sixties, which was spread over two nights and, Terry thinks, was certainly all of 200 hundred minutes long. Buck Coulson came in from a completely different angle.

BUCK COULSON,
Route 3,
Hartford City,
IN 47348,
USA

...Martyn Taylor's comments on the comparative inaccuracy of 'wild west' guns is acceptable; his implication that they were too low-powered to be effective weapons is not. In the first place, no hand-held weapon short of a bazooka is going to kill anyone instantly unless the bullet hits in the head or the heart. Second place, the power wasn't all that low. A modern .38 Special revolver has a maximum muzzle energy of 575 foot-pounds; the old Colt .45 can develop 672 foot-pounds. And the 1857 Walker Colt, a revolver loaded from the front with loose powder and ball, produces slightly more energy than does the modern .357 Magnum. The velocity is less, but velocity doesn't kill people. For that matter, the guns were adequately accurate at the ranges they were used most - though the people using them weren't nearly as expert as movies make them out to be. Oh yes; Taylor mentions the Sharps, type not specified. Well, the .50-140 Sharps produced 2850 foot-pounds; the .303 British rifle develops 2580.

None of which has anything to do with Kurosawa, of course, but I don't own a reloading manual for Samurai swords...

Oh? Who judges the Foundation Series as "the work that took the genre out of the pure pulp adventure style"? Nobody I know, certainly.

First place, the style wasn't all that far removed from that of the pulps. Asimov was stealing his background from a more literate source than most pulp writers did, but then so were most of Campbell's writers of the period.

Yes, well, actually it was my judgement, Buck. Though I did pick up hints of it from the worthiest of precursors, guys like Sam Delany for example. I tend to think that because of the length of time that the series was in production, and the differences that lie between one end (lying in the early Campbell period, while the character of both 'Astounding' and Asimov were still very 'pulp' oriented) and on through into the early fifties, when the 'adventure series' became less the norm, and sf with a lot more thought and writing skill was being produced. Granted that 'Foundation' was only a part of that movement, but it was an important part, and it can be seen as a touchstone text, one which reflects the changes going on around it more clearly than almost any other.

The Asimov piece produced much comment of worth, but none worthier than the following, which I make no excuses for printing at length - it justifies itself completely.

BRIAN W. ALDISS,
16, Moreton Road,
Oxford.
OX2 7AX

Your article on Asimov's FOUNDATION trilogy impresses me... It is brave, rash or commercial-minded (depending on your point of view) of Asimov to contemplate a sequel to this popular work after so long. You provide a primer for that ordeal we all - and not Asimov alone - have to face. What a splendid surprise if the book turns out really well!

If his impulse in writing it

is, as you imply, to scotch accusations of fascism, the results may not be too happy; a novel needs a better creative urge than that. The whole field will cheer if the old general wins this battle.

You rather forgot what I actually said about the Foundation series in my BILLION YEAR SPREE, or did not bother to check. You say that I was critical of Asimov because FOUNDATION is a series and not a novel as a whole. No, my point was sympathetic towards Asimov because, when he wrote - and I read the Foundation stories as they appeared - writers were unable to think in terms of novels in the traditional sense. Surely this was an unfair disadvantage for all sf fans. We were then a persecuted minority, and no legitimate publisher would think of publishing sf in hardcover (the paperback revolution lay in the future). Sf in 1943 was a kind of samizdat - subversive messages from a better world, as far as I was concerned. And I add (in BYS), "Conceived as one organic whole, the Foundation series would have undoubtedly risen to greater majesty".

In a way, you elsewhere appreciate my point, since you demonstrate how the stories were influenced by their times. Those were dramatic times, when a global drama was being played out, and one would expect no less. It is true that I complained that Asimov was prone to mean only technology when he says 'culture'; that was a myopia he shared with many sf writers. Perhaps I might give you an example of what I mean, since it allows me to air a crux in one of the early stories which has niggled me ever since I first read it.

I can't quote the original magazine story, since poverty has forced me to sell my whole magazine collection, but it's the first story of Part II, 'The Encyclopaedists' (p50 in the Sidgwick & Jackson edition, if that's any help). Was it 'Bridle and Saddle', 'Astounding' 1942? Forgive my lack

of proper reference.

The Empire threatening the scientists of the Encyclopaedia is represented as decadent and barbaric, opposed to civilisation. The scientists plainly represent good self-help American academics, and eschewing frills, even refusing cigars. Who then does the Empire represent? The basis for Asimov's structure may be Gibbon, but the details would be filled in from the present in which Asimov wrote. He wrote this story before the USA entered the war, when Britain had already been fighting Nazi Germany alone for two or more long years. Most Americans were sympathetic to Britain at the time and, indeed, were itching to attack Germany. So are these Barbarians who threaten the Foundation Nazis in disguise?

Well, they sound more like the British Empire in disguise. Here's a Lord Dorwin (not Darwin, surely?), chancellor of the Empire, talking to Hardin. "A gweat acheivement, this Encyclopaedia of yoahs, Hardin." He sounds just like Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the old Frank Richards stories. He is a parody - rather a hostile one - of the effete English aristocracy. Rather a curious item to throw in, surely. I've always puzzled about it.

Another point, same page. Lord Dorwin takes snuff (another sign of British decadence). He offers his snuff-box to Hardin, who of course refuses. The snuff-box is described as 'over-adorned and poor workmanship'. Here's where a confusion between culture and technology comes in. We all know that technology has surrounded us with cheap junk; we need cheap junk, it's our birthright; but go to a seaside town or anywhere where tourists are catered for, and look at the actual workmanship, the detail. It's lousy. Fine eighteenth century prints are carelessly reproduced in garish colours, or turned out in copper on trays. Wood carvings turn out to be machine-produced, with rough edges. Glassware is moulded

and shows its mould-marks. China alsatians show ignorance of canine anatomy. That phalanx of clutter you encounter in the tourist-trap shops, from Bournemouth to Princes Street, Edinburgh, is the cheap gear that technology turns out by the million items. It is, on examination, over-adorned and of poor workmanship.

It is the 'barbarians' - Asimov's usage - who turn out the fine delicate work, whose stinking back streets produce the delicate filligree, the snuff-boxes that connoisseurs treasure, the lacework, patchwork, woodwork, silverwork, etc., that no machine can imitate.

Technology represents innovation. Culture represents continuity. Good hand arbeit springs from tradition, not innovation.

In describing Lord Dorwin's snuff-box incorrectly, the youthful Asimov tells us a great deal about his own scale of values in the early forties. I am uncomfortable with those values, and I shall keep a weather-eye open for the workmanship of snuff-boxes in the forthcoming volume.

See what I mean? On the other hand, there were those whose levity is seriously in doubt!

STEVE SNEYD,
4, Nowell Place,
Almondsbury,
Huddersfield,
West Yorkshire.
HD5 8PB

Read your Foundation article expecting you to prove that Asimov had ripped his government concepts off from the works of Kung Fuise or Chairman Mao, or somebody suitably oriental, or compare/contrasting The Mule with Timur-i-leng, or at very least revealing that As-i-Mov was a Eurasian sleeper planted in the higher ranks of US sf yonks ago as a Manchurian pre-candidacy ploy, a dead letter drop for Dr.No, or whatever... foiled again, not a single eastward link in the whole article - what

is going on, I think we should be told. At the very least, you could have segued in the fact that Asimov uses the Purloined Letter principle re location of the Second Foundation, that Poe wrote the original Purloined Letter, that Poe took opium, and there we are back with Chinese cultural influence, ho ho. Tsk,tsk.

Yes, humph, thank you Steve! Passing on to another sf author mentioned in CS6, Norman Spinrad, and Ian Covell's contribution to the debate, all that remains of a long and very interesting letter - sorry Ian!

IAN COVELL,
2, Copgrove Close,
Berwick Hills,
Middlesbrough,
Cleveland,
TS3 7BP

I wish I'd read that article on Spinrad. I recently obtained some (non sf) novels by Spinrad published years ago which soon disappeared. Spinrad has admitted making a determined effort to become 'famous', a 'name author', by producing works of either contention or worth. I presume he's worked out that only long novels are being read nowadays and so naturally extends any ideas he has. I presume he has worked out that many readers don't like confused morality and so he keeps his issues very simple, very immediate. Spinrad is a television writer because all the popular media now are for the television audience. Television tie-in novels and novelisations are bestsellers. Films become watered-down TV series. Personalities now are seen on TV more than films... in short, the TV format has become the fictional format, the pulp format of our age. It is the common denominator (some would add 'lowest', but not me, not me). Those authors seeking an audience naturally pitch their work at that level.

Of course A WORLD BETWEEN is simplistic television (no-one can take the morality shifts in the cultures seriously; Spinrad may, though, be making a deeper point about the effect of TV on the audience, and vice versa) and fails as 'good' fiction. I think Goudriaan is wrong about SONGS FROM THE STARS, but that's because I liked it.

Be interesting to see what the reaction from Spinrad is now that a real movie is being made of one of his works, as I understand (courtesy of Dave Langford) that BUG JACK BARRON, one of Spinrad's earlier works, is now being filmed. Glad to see that a few other non-space operas are getting in on the sf film boom.

Peter Presford's piece brought in a lot of comment, with the next letters showing the two ends of the spectrum of opinion.

LAWRENCE O'DONNELL,
58, St. James Street,
Milnrow,
Rochdale,
Lancashire.
OL16 3JY

...Well done Pete Presford for an amusing piece. Dragons sure have had a lousy press! What with sorcerors zapping you with fiery bolts, maidens with bondage fixations screaming under your lair till all hours, young conservatives poking you with spears. It's enough to drive anyone up the wall - especially if you have a triple-jointed body, the head of a camel, etc. Still, Pete confuses folk-lore with reality when he looks eastward. The lone samurai warrior was probably as rare as our 'White Knight'. They were warriors, family retainers, generals. Bushido and Chivalry were both noble, austere paths, for the warrior, at any rate. As a peasant, I know whose armoured toes I'd rather tread on!

MARY GENTLE,
Flat 1,
11, Alumhurst Road,
Westbourne,
Bournemouth,
Dorset.

...Presford's 'What I Don't Know About The Orient' (when it approached the end of its rambling progress) managed to get right up my nose. The sheer arrogance of stating that other, different civilisations 'stagnated on the very crest of knowledge'; the assumptions that all early civilisations in some way failed because they didn't come up with Western ideas - this is incredible. We don't know what end other civilisations might have arrived at, left alone. (The supremacy of the Western idea, dubious as the concept is, has a lot more to do with mobility than with any inherent superiority.) We don't, basically, know what a civilisation ought to be. Who says that the progress which leads to nuclear power and smallpox vaccine is better than the stability - call it stagnation if you like - of pre-twentieth century China? It is not something that can be judged. For me, it spoiled what had been a fairly enjoyable article...(And if we're picking nits, which I'm in the mood to do, there's plenty of oriental fantasies around for Presford to read if he wants to - J.A.Salmond-son and E. Hoffman Price, for starters.)

...I can sympathise with your aims for putting (CS) out...The feedback must be tremendous. I've found one disadvantage of fiction is that, so far, I get very little feedback; even with what goes out to the great public at large. (Maybe it's just as well!) It's true that one of the cornerstones of the if-you-want-to-write-then-write method is some kind of regular system of doing it. It's much easier, always, not to write. I should think CS and its schedule serve, even at the most basic level, to get one working on something. And when you want to

move onto other, different things, that'll come too. (I do think you are being a shade timid. Why shouldn't you have world-shaking aspirations? A touch of megalomania is essential to the writing career, I always say; that and a hide like a rhino.)

Anyone know of a shrink who can give me megalomania, rather than cure? Sounds like a necessary tool of the profession! I draw the line at the rhino hide, though; grey skin is so unbecoming, don't you think?

Here's another faned to take up the feedback theme, who amplifies one of my points.

MARC ORTLIEB,
P.O.Box 46,
Marden,
S.A.5070
Australia

...I liked the piece on your reasons for doing a fanzine. They seem very similar to mine, though I must admit that the notoriety within the Australian fan community is another of my reasons for publishing. The letter box, though, is probably my main incentive. My post office box is on my way to school of a morning, and so I empty it on the way, thus giving me some reason for dragging myself out of bed and hauling myself down to that place where they pay me to act as the butt of adolescent jokes. This, of course, does have its drawbacks, such as this morning when there was absolutely nothing in the post box. It made the whole process seem even more futile. (It is a week until pay day, too, which doesn't help my state of mind.) Usually, I do have another chance, as some of my personal mail is sent straight to my flat, but today even that was denied. Sigh!! Cold turkey again.....

So there you have it - the real reason for pubbing! We faneds are real mail junkies! So support

my habit - write a letter today!

Moving on to Mary Gentle's 'A Touch Of Strange', now, which was very well received (cries of 'more please' abound, many of 'em from the editor!). The next two letters show this quite well, if illustrating the general unawareness of Britons to Sucharitkul's work.

MIKE DICKINSON,
Via Garibaldi, 18,
Taino (Va.),
Italy.

Perhaps (a) glint of malice occurs in the Mary Gentle article. I confess to my complete ignorance of Sucharitkul's work (based on the prejudice that anyone whose provenance is Anal-og and Uncle Ike's Book of Comfy Stories can't be worth rushing to read) but really, to compare anyone of his comparative youth with Cordwainer Smith is gross cruelty; especially if the point of comparison is that one was influenced by the Orient (a big place) whereas the other was born there. There are certain writers whose best work is so original that they defy comparison (comparing the poor sod with Davidson as well is really vicious): Smith is one and the others I can think of are Dick, Davidson, Angela Carter, M.Harrison, Lafferty, Wolfe, Sladek and Arthur B. Cover. All are, at their best, sublimely different and inimitable. Whether Sucharitkul is a large or small nut, Smith is too formidable a hammer. Perhaps the key is the comparatively mature age at which Smith began writing, giving his oeuvre a complexity and subtlety a younger man cannot be expected to possess. Nevertheless, there was much to be enjoyed about that article, as there has been in everything I've seen of Ms. Gentle's work so far.

There you are, Mary, fame at last. Hope Mike won't go off you when he discovers you've sold stories to Uncle Ike!

ANDY SAWYER,
45, Greenbank Road,
Birkenhead,
Merseyside,
L42 7JT

Mary Gentle's piece was interesting - I'd never read any of Somtow Sucharitkul (hell, why pose, I'd never heard of the guy!) but her judgements on Smith are ones I'd basically agree with. I've seen many references to the influence of Chinese storytelling on Smith; I'd like to read more on exactly how and from what this influence is worked out. But Smith is one of my favourite storytellers - he combines imagination and narrative ability, which is rare among any school of writing. Even sf is so often conventional. Mary's last paragraph's are interesting here. Many of the books I read which explore the 'alien' are sf - Smith is a prime example. But you don't have to go to sf to reach the 'alien'; more conventional novels like THE HARDER THEY COME or SHOGUN or the African novel (Achebe's THINGS FALL APART) - or even much of our English 'heritage' of the past - present us with pictures which are as alien to our normal assumptions as any sf invention.

(In fact, I don't necessarily find our 'normal' assumptions normal. Having spent much of my childhood abroad, there are things about English life which I'm having more and more difficulty in coming to terms with...)

I don't think I've ever been under the allusion that we are a 'normal' society, Andy - you only have to look around you to see how peculiar we all are!

My 'First Fanzine' piece (just a little something I ran up to fill a hole) produced some comment, not all of it rude.

DAVID THIRY,
8, Princeton Drive,
Jacksonville,
NC 28540
USA

'The First Fanzine' was amply entertaining - but did you know there really was a sort of fanzine more than two thousand years ago in Ancient Greece? The theatre way back then was very important there, as you know, and very widely attended. But there were no widely-distributed criticisms and commentaries on the plays shown, so space was reserved on certain walls of the cities for free comments on the works publically presented.

Can't you just imagine Aristophanes studying on of these fan-walls, one fist cocked on his hip, reading the reviews and trying to identify the hand-writing of particularly vicious critics? Such a loss to history, that these walls were periodically scrubbed! Then again, second thought informs me that these materials would only glorify the sleazy profession of critic. Who needs that?

There are some folk in the world who have to go one better all the time - I just never realised that Harry Warner was one of 'em.

HARRY WARNER, JR.
423, Summit Avenue,
Hagerstown,
Maryland,
21740
USA

...So, you undoubtedly know more about fandom's beginnings than I do. But I couldn't help wondering after I read 'The First Fanzine' if the whole truth might lie even more deeply buried in China's past. Before 2000BC, the evidence would be harder to find. But consider how many rice fields existed in that enormous nation, how primitive its sanitary arrangements were several millenia ago, and the way fandom

seems to experience a similar course of events in every nation where it develops. By logic, then, somewhere in China at some time in all those lost centuries, couldn't decaying rice, human droppings, mud and rain have produced a gelatinous consistency of muck. And couldn't some vandalous Chinese youth have used this substance in which to write some graffiti? And couldn't this character's characters have accidentally stained the garments of the next person to use that spot for either agriculture or an imperative need? And wouldn't some ingenious science fiction devotee have heard about the incident and seized upon the procedure to develop the first hektograph, on which he published the very first fanzine?

Yes, well, passing rapidly onto the subject of Dave Thiry's poems. These excited a certain amount of praise, but also gave rise to the following odd piece from Paul Williams.

PAUL WILLIAMS,
25, Caernarvon Place,
Grove Park,
Blackwood,
Gwent.
NP2 1DB

...Ambiguity in prose is a vice, in poetry it becomes a virtue. Perhaps the following conversation makes the point:-

"Ah, Grasshopper. Consider the self-centred man. Is he not like a stone in paradise? So secure in his own strength and finite boundaries that he cannot perceive the wonders about him. The stream that flows, is channelled by the bank and, as it passes, the bank is washed away. Thus the course of the water changes and both the bank and stream perceive the change."

"But, Master, what if the stone lies in a desert?"

"Ah, Grasshopper. When you no longer need to swap sophistries with your teacher, then you will

be ready to receive a tube of Savlon and leave this place."

"But, Master, I wish to understand."

"Ah, Grasshopper. Understanding will never come to literal minds. The map does not give understanding of the territory."

"Master, is this why many leave but none return?"

It's a good thing that the reruns of KUNG FU have finished, methinks!

Chuck Connor had more than a few things to say, but ruthlessly I've reduced it to the following little titbits.

CHUCK CONNOR,
Sildan House,
Chediston Road,
Wissett,
nr Halesworth,
Suffolk.
IP19 ONF

David Thiry didn't catch with me this time around. Most likely my fault as I've never been interested in Zen. I'm not a heavy Christian or anything like that, but every time I think of Zen I either picture Honda 250s, or a pair of tigers on a cliff eating strawberry man surprise.

((Chuck, I got to think you're really weird, man.))

RIPPLES, and I have to give you 10 out of 10 for including those rather lurid (and contortionistic) suggestions in High Nectarine Chinese. Y'know, I haven't seen anything as adventurous as that since I bought a copy of THE PERFUMED TAKE-AWAY in Singapore many years ago. And, as proved on page 37, the annotated copy as well: you do surprise me! I expect the wife thinks its 1001 ways with beansprouts, or something equally innocent...

((What..Who..Why..Tsk,tsk, Chuck, you nearly had me worried there. Those ideograms are all perfectly innocent, being the titles of various poems in Chinese, and not love poems, either!))

...To see you hiding behind Marty Cantor's skirts is beyond me! I know you're an unbeliever in Ballard, and fair enough. One can always expect to find blasphemers in the world (and, I mean, I still talk to you, don't I? I haven't labelled you as a social outcast, nor pointed a finger at you for being less than human, have I?), but to import them is disgusting. And I make no mention of the fact that it comes from one of the colonies. I wonder, he said, starting on his (obvious) defence, what Marty calls sf? Big BEMs with Doc Smith weaponry and spaceships? Or is it something along the lines of Hamilton's SPACEWOLVES series? But, there again, I thought sf had something to do with looking at the future and giving possible 'future pictures' along different view-paths.

This, I would say, fits such Ballard 'classics' as CRASH; where the idea of sex and violence as a sex substitute are seen through several sets of eyes.

Of course, a more realistic view-novel has to be HIGH RISE, certainly very little extension of the future is needed, yet you tell me where similar violence-related-to-environment (on a smaller scale, of course) has not happened? Hell, look at Glasgow, Birmingham, Nottingham, Newcastle - do I have to go on?

I take the liberty to quote from the intro of TERMINAL BEACH (Penguin '64 edition). "He ((JGB)) believes that inner space, not outer, is the real subject of science fiction." To boldly go where no writer has gone before??

I suppose, in the words of Marty, that VERMILION SANDS was "gibberish", or does VS come under the 'early' Ballard? Hmmm, question, questions, and no hard facts to back up all that bunkum. Hell, Dick did VALIS and DIVINE INVASION, yet when Ballard follows along another 'inner space' line and does UNLIMITED DREAM COMPANY, he's "gibberish". You could say that about VALIS, THREE STIGMATA and NOW WAIT FOR LAST YEAR, or any other Dick 'classic' (and I'm also

a PKD fan as well).

Well, I suppose some people aren't happy unless it's got sf stuck on the cover, with at least three pairs of tits and a laser blaster. Ted Tubb rools Ok, eh?

Hmmm, standing in the middle of a minefield here, aren't you Owen? First, let me point out that I've said clearly, in the loccol of CS5, that I don't like Ballard's work, so I'm not 'hiding behind Marty's skirts'. To say that Ballard's work is or is not sf demands a definition of sf that is acceptable to everyone in the field; that little nut has ruined more pairs of nutcrackers than the puny little ones I carry, so I'll leave it where it lays, and just say that any definition of sf that allows in a work like CRASH would be so wide open as to admit all other fiction as well. The thing I dislike about Ballard (and Dick too, in his worst books) is the obsessive quality, verging on madness, that drives most of his later works; I cannot come to terms with this feature of his work, though appreciating that he does write well. It is not a question of requiring a comfy, escapist read, but of being able to come to grips with his work in my own mind. I simply do not want Ballard's visions in my mind. Chuck's zeal is misplaced, and his automatic assumption that excluding Ballard precludes an interest in everybody out to the other side of Doc Smith is, of course, nonsense.

As one or two people were quick to point out, ol' Chuckles does rather go in for the sweeping statement or two himself.

BERNARD EARP,
21, Moorfield Grove,
Tonge Moor,
Bolton,
BL2 2LQ

Re Chuck Connor and his comment
'...these buggers should be shot

at birth'. How the hell do you tell? I'm reminded of a similar comment in a recent crudzine, ONE OF OUR TYPEWRITERS IS MISSING, along the lines of 'Puffs and Pervs should be shot at birth...'; again, how do you tell? Can one tell a 'puff' if he makes an instinctive grab for the doctor instead of the nurse? And of course, a future 'perv' is the baby who gurgles happily when you accidentally stick a nappy pin in it. Sorry, got off on one of my hobbyhorses there. But if Chuck (and I mean that) Connor has a foolproof method of identifying buggers and bigots at birth, he should publish his proofs, and not just make his own bigotted statements.

Re Joy Hibbert. Joy, I know, is a radical feminist and (in her letter to CS5) is seeing things through her own view of the world. Perhaps in her way (she is) just as much a bigot as the ones CC was sounding off against. Her statement '...they show the way that men took over society and enslaved women...' seems to assume that there was once a Golden Age in which everyone was equal, regardless of gender. In this world we live in, men and women aren't equal, and never have been, but then men and men aren't equal, and neither are women and women

I don't think that there can or will come a time when everyone is equal. Having written that, I'd better add that there must come a time when some of the present inequalities are absent, and that I'm more than willing to help work towards that, not least in the way I live my own life (just as long as I'm not required to treat everyone as my equal when they demonstratively are not). Perhaps Marx had the right idea when he wrote: 'From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs'. Now fuse that with Heinlein's idea in STARSHIP TROOPERS of voting having to be earned by service to the state (not necessarily by military service) and you get some idea of my ideal society. Can a society really be well-governed by the

amassing of votes of an uncaring electorate, rather than the numerically small number of votes from those who have proved that they care for, and will defend, the state. This, I'll admit, does sound an elitist theory, but is no worse than many another person's daydream.

Mary Gentle was asking for more controversy last ish - Bernard has obviously taken the hint!

Martin Helsdon's artwork has been a mainstay of CS for the last four issues, and about the one thing in the zine that most people agree on. So Pete Lyon's 'line vs stipple' letter last ish prompted some response. I've left it to the artists to argue it out.

DAVE HICKS.
26, Mead Road,
Edgeware,
Middx.
HA8 6LJ

Martin Helsdon's artwork sits well with the rest of your material. With that sort of detail litho is really essential to do justice to the amount of work the artist has put into his image. Although I can't disagree in principle with Pete Lyon on the value of line when compared with the stipple method of rendering a drawing, I think Helsdon's choice of subject matter is about the only area where this sort of approach can be justified (he said, having used it himself in ORGONE ACCUMULATOR). The pseudo-photographic style Pete describes is as good a way of producing these fantasy/alien images as you'll get in black and white. There's a not insubstantial amount of skill present in the way Martin manages to convey the space between each object in his drawings (not something many people think about properly, but actually a vital element in any drawing).

And now, a word or three from the man himself.

MARTIN HELSDON,
32, Burns Crescent,
Chelmsford,
Essex.
CM2 0TS

I suppose I should reply to Pete Lyon. I would agree that stipple can have a tendency to fade into a set of shades of gray, but if controlled it does have the ability to show depth, something line cannot do except by using perspective. That's a rather general statement. I suppose line with colour is extremely powerful, but I see stipple as an extension of line in black and white. It's a matter of taste, and I'd also say that stipple is no less dynamic than line if done well. In black and white motion may be suggested not only by the bold stroke of line, but also by the contrast used. If done well, this is the determining factor. As with all art, I suppose you have to be in control of the medium, and stipple may be less dynamic than line because it permits a small area to be done slowly. But, personally, I sketch in line using a pencil, and then transfer the illo onto card. I would imagine that most fan artists sketch first, and then ink in - the method and the result are defined by the nature of fan-zine printing.

The proof of the pudding, as they say, is in the eating, and anybody who has seen all the work Martin has done for me over the years would have to agree that he does succeed in creating dynamic situations in his illos.

And now for something completely different. The subject of 'names' in fiction has been simmering for the last couple of issues, with various comments in the letter column. The following letter was sparked off by those comments, and again, I make no apologies for printing it virtually in full.

SUZY McKEE CHARNAS.
8918-B, Fourth St. N.W.,
Albuquerque,
New Mexico,
87114
USA

...Intrigued by Mr. Thiry's remarks on names in fiction. Someone recently asked me how I came up with the names in MOTHERLINES, and in explaining I noted that it had been a mechanical, though amusing process (involving taking ordinary names and stretching them with a kind of drawl, ie. "Nancy" = "Nenisi", "Jane" = "Shayeen", and softening some of the sounds; as in WALK TO THE END OF THE WORLD, I cut everything short and made the sounds more harsh). This was a sort of game. With my vampire in THE VAMPIRE TAPESTRY I was able (thanks to a contribution from an audience member at some convention panel or other) to trace a different sort of process. Dr. Edward Lewis Weyland came as "Weyland" first, and then I sat down and drew up long lists of names from which to choose his given names (I knew from the beginning there would have to be two of them), and much later was reminded, as I say, of the existence of a novelist who died young after producing several strong books (most of which I'd read years ago): Edward Lewis Wallant (author of THE CHILDREN AT THE GATE, THE TENANTS OF MOONBLOOM, etc.).

Generally speaking, people (that is, characters) arrive, if they are real and living at all (and they'd better be, or why bother), with their names either in part or complete, and for me, changing them is a major step, often an impossible one. My latest novel (currently nameless itself, and looking for a publisher) began with a character 'left over' from VAMPIRE TAPESTRY, the painter Dorothea Winslow, who would not go away till she got her own book. By the time the book was into draft no.3 or so, I could see that Dorothea had become a very different person than the

Dorothea in the earlier book (for example, she had ceased to be Lesbian and had acquired three grown children, a divorce, and a male lover). But her name was still Dorothea, no matter what I tried to do (Margaret, Ellinor, Katherine, even Theodora, were all tried on for size and found woefully wanting). So I changed her last name from Winslow to Howard and left it at that. Since there are no references in this story at all to events or persons in TAPESTRY, I hope I can get away with this without causing great thrashings of confusion. Actually, it's most probable that no one will notice.

Then there's her friend Ricky Maulders, an Englishman who comes to visit on his way to his grave (he's dying of lung cancer). A friend has pointed out, quite correctly I think, that 'Ricky' is an intimate name, a family sort of name, and that Dorothea, who only met him when they were both fully mature people, would probably know him as 'Eric', as would other people in the story who are only just making his acquaintance. BUT. He came into my head as 'Ricky', and Ricky he has remained, probably because I know him as intimately and as comfortably as I know the members as I know the members of my own family, and when I call him or think of him as 'Eric' he goes all stiff and cold on me, worthless, impossible to write about. The Russians handled this problem by including all the varieties of a given name that go with different levels and qualities of relationship, which is one reason I can barely struggle through their books, so I couldn't try to handle it that way and settled for our Western convention that a character has his/her name in X form, period. Which is, in life, pretty much nonsense for most of us (one of my sisters, Patricia, is also Patty, Pat, Patch, Boots, and god knows what else that I'm not even aware of: and it always gives me a jolt when outsiders refer to my father, Robin - Robinson McKee in fact - as 'Bob' or 'Mac').

Put all that together with the sorts of concerns involved in actually making up names for members of a made-up culture and you have one hell of a stew! Maybe that's one reason I find myself writing, of late (the last two books, that is), about the culture I know, where people are named Edward or Ricky or Dorothea, rather than Eykar or Servan or Nenisi or Shayeen. I find that I like very much the luxury of not having to invent every damn thing in my character's surroundings because that seems to leave me more energy etc. for inventing the people and for playing around with whatever the single fantasy element is that I'm exploring in the book; in TAPESTRY, of course, the vampire himself as a natural product of evolution trying to cope with modern life, and in the new book - reincarnation. Both of these books are firmly grounded in the here-and-now, although both are 'fantasies' in the sense that they deal with concepts that are not generally accepted as 'real', unlike, say, a book full of spies from the KGB or fictional senators and Presidential candidates. The new book seems to me to be a sort of metaphysical mystery, which is why I say I seem to be drifting out of the sf field. On the other hand, directions can always change.

I think what I set out to comment on concerning naming fictional people is the complexity of the process (provided always that the author is doing more than putting labels on cardboard cutouts). And I thoroughly agree that the names that you come up with are extremely important - or why would we put in so much effort and time doing it, undoing it, reconsidering, surrendering to necessity under the aegis of poetic licence, etc.?

Having been very impressed by MOTHERLINES and WALK TO THE END OF THE WORLD, I hope that Suzy doesn't stray too far away from

the sf field, since writers that have as powerful a talent in the field as displayed in those two books are few and far between.

Another change of subject now, with a letter from Eric Bentcliffe, which was more an answer to a loc I sent in to his excellent fanthology of fifties material WHEN YNGVI WAS A LOUSE (available from Eric for £1.50, and well worth it), in which I commented on how much fun the fifties fans seemed to be having, in direct contrast to the desperate urge to do things that the current fans seem to display. This was Eric's answer.

ERIC BENTCLIFFE,
17, Riverside Crescent,
Holmes Chapel,
Cheshire.
CW4 7NR

Without getting too involved in things past...I'm fairly sure that a lot of the divergence - the style of fanac - then and now is purely and simply due to the times in which it took place. Then life was quite a bit harder in a lot of ways, but they appeared to be getting better (WW2 was over, that was reason for future optimism), people and fans were looking forward to what was coming next, and meanwhile they were enjoying life. Whilst now... and I'm talking about a now that stretches back a couple of decades ...things in the big bad world appear to be getting worse and that is strongly reflected in everyone's attitude to life, love and fanac - if you'll excuse the pontification! Another fairly relevant point is that most of today's fans are 'better' educated than we wuz, ie. they had a much longer education...and a more stratified one. I, and a lot of other fans of that generation, left school (not college or university) at around 14; we'd been given the basic tools of life (those inimitable three Rs), after that we were on our own - we didn't know what we should be writing about, just that we wanted

to communicate with other like individuals within the common interest of sf. This resulted in inventive, innovative fanac (not always particularly grammatically pure!)...whilst now people are actually taught how they should write about literature! I suspect they are also taught that it is not sufficient to just enjoy something, they must know why they are enjoying it - that would explain much.

Room for one more letter, I reckon, so we'll go from one of the oldtimers in fandom to one of the newcomers, who has an axe to grind.

NOEL K. HANNAN,
24, Aldersey Road,
Crewe,
Cheshire,
CW2 8NR

...A recent issue of MATRIX, the mighty BoSFA's official organ (no puns please), carried an article by Rob Hansen on fandom in general, fanzines, conventions, neofans, etc., which I found very interesting, since I have only recently entered fandom in a proper way with my own fanzine SANDOR. Perhaps CS is the wrong place to take this discussion up, but I believe that it is one of the fundamental grouches which puts off neos like myself until it becomes evident that it isn't really a problem at all.

What I am talking about is fanzines, particularly the controversy about fan fiction appearing in them. Rob Hansen's main argument, backed by a few quotes, was that fanzines tend to have lower standards of acceptance than prozines. True in some cases, maybe, but it's not fair on those faneds who publish fiction but do have the objectivity to reject what is bad. Okay, so fandom is on a much more personal level and pieces of fiction are usually passed in trade for that particular zine with no payment, but generally I

would say that fictionzines such as Geoff Kemp's QUARTZ would be as reluctant to print crap as would EXTRO (RIP) or INTERZONE. Prozines have the added problem of receiving a bad piece of work from a popular writer, whose appearance would attract buyers. Fanzines don't have this problem, and also aren't 'corrupted' by money offers. It's just the pleasure of seeing one's work in print. Also, hasn't an experienced, intelligent faned as much objectivity as, say Paul Campbell or Dave Pringle? If not, why not?

One of the main criticisms about the first issue of my zine is that I should not be publishing my own fiction, as I tend to be less objective. Untrue. I was probably more objective about my own stuff than about anything else. I didn't want anyone to say that I printed my own stories because they were my own. That sort of attitude didn't stop Paul Campbell from putting a long story of his own as the cover feature for the first issue of EXTRO. Hats off to him for having the guts to do that. It was said in Rob Hansen's article that bad stories in fanzines are permanent monuments when the writer gets better. Obviously if I do go on to publish professionally, which I would like to, I will look back and find fault in my stories. But I won't wish I hadn't published them; I'll be glad that when I was still learning to write, I found the objectivity to publish my own work. After all, it is the best way of circulating a story to as many people as possible for helpful criticism.

We do seem to be dragging up old corpses in this issue, don't we? But there is an element of truth in Noel's letter. One of the things that has often amazed me over the 'fan fiction' argument is that many editors who vehemently condemn fan fiction publish real rubbish themselves, because a friend promised to do a con report, or whatever. I

really cannot see any great 'objectivity' being displayed in many of the zines that I receive in exchange for CS (which is not necessarily a harsh criticism, since a zine can be enjoyable to read on a subjective level, for what it tells you about the faned, or fanwriter, in question). If zines print bad non-fiction, then why draw the line at bad fiction, too? And with the current state of the market, then budding science fiction writers could do with some sources to get their work in print of some kind. More power to the fictioned's elbow, if he can be objective about it. I think that Geoff Kemp does a fair job, as does Chuck Connor with his SELF-ABUSED BUT STILL STANDING. I don't necessarily like all they print, but there is normally quite a good selection in their zines.

Enough - its time for the -

WAHFs

Arnold Akien (you don't really expect me to print a loc as well), Harry Andruschak, Neville Angove, Mike Ashley, Harry Bell, Richard Bergeron (who sent two Hokusai prints with the simple injunction 'Enjoy' written on a slip - I have, Richard, I have), Pam Boal, Sydney Bounds, Judy Buffery, Phil Collins (not the!), Anthony Cooney, Mat Coward, Jeremy Crampton, Benedict Cullum, Chester Cuthbert, Dorothy Davies, Gary Deindorfer, John Dell, John Duffy, Richard Faulder, Steven Fox, John Fraser, Alan Freeman (bloody long time till March and the Brazilian GP, isn't it Alan?), Ian Garbutt (now resident in Milton Keynes, would you believe?), Earl Geier (whose artwork will appear in future issues), Roelof Goudriaan (whose only comment was 'Bloody Fantastic - I'm still reeling', though I'm not sure what from), Steve Green, John F. Haines, Joan Hanke-Woods, Jack Herman, Joy Hibbert, Nic Howard, Kim Huett (who sent the most amusing pleading letter I've yet received - hope it was worth it, Kim), Maxim Jakubowski, Terry Jeeves, Rod Jones, Dave Langford (who wrote a loc, then changed his

mind about having it quoted from), Steve Lines, Mary Long, ~~Matt Mack~~ Mackulin, Ken Mann, M.R. Mapson, Helen McNabb, Trevor Mendham, David R. Morgan, Peter Muller (you'll need the dictionary for this one Peter!), David Palter, Eunice Pearson, Peter Presford (who embarrassed me greatly by dedicating an issue of BARDDONI to me - I'm still blushing, Pete), Marilyn Pride, Kev Rattan (wahfed again, Kev - will Bernie ever let you live it down?), Dave Redd (who complained about 'those idiots who keep on about cycles in Popular music' - can't imagine why!), Andrew Rose, Moira Shearman, Nick Shears, Jean Sheward, Mike Shorrod, David Taylor (who fulminated on the 'held-over hippy element in fandom' and who insists I print the following, if nothing else of his letter: "Joseph Nicholas is as obsolete as a clockwork calculator". Happy now, David?), Julie Vaux, Roger Waddington, Ann Wainwright, Jon Wallace, Ian Watson (yes, the IW), Cherry Wilder, Walter Williams.

That's the lot as at 13th February. Anything after then is consigned to limbo - you're just too slow!

Also received were huge numbers of fanzines, far too many to mention by name. Anyone who says that the zine scene is dying hasn't seen my mail files, which will be up to about ten files, each about an inch and a half thick, by the time I answer all the mail that's outstanding at the moment.

The influx of mail has been such that I've really had a hard time keeping up, and some people have had to wait for six weeks or more for answers: for that I apologise. I'm going to try to deal with the influx differently with this issue, though I've not worked out the full details yet - that's first priority once I've got this off to the printer. A response of some sort will come to all locs and zines, you can be sure of that!

And that's it, everything just about crammed in right down to the very last line of the zine!



