



# CRYSTAL SHIP 8

### ALL THE NECESSARY DETAILS.

This is the CRYSTAL SHIP 8, a genzine produced in the Shire of Buckingham by John D. Owen, for many reasons, but mainly because I'm masochistic enough to like doing it.

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The CRYSTAL SHIP is available for all the usual reasons, except money (filthy stuff that it is). Displays of interest may get a newcomer a copy, if there are any left. A status slip enclosed will warn of any impending cessation of supply. However, I retain the right to change my mind between issues, so, to be sure, why not write me a letter?

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This issue is dedicated to Martin Helsdon, now languishing in Glades of Gafia.

# Gumbo's Variations

## CRITICISM AND THE CONFUSED FANED.

Peruse, if you will, these two reviews of CS7. The first was written by Martyn Taylor, and appeared in MATRIX:

"The latest edition of the best zine that presently there am, which ought to satisfy anybody's eclecticism. Arnold Akien reviews the state of the genre at his inimitable length, stupefaction guaranteed. Ken Mann discusses terrorism, which is fine as far as it goes (about a third of the way), and John shows us another amusing snapshot of fannish life. The loccol is largely response to the excellent sixth issue. This one is worth getting."

The second review is by Richard Geis, and appeared in the Fall issue of his SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW:

"I don't like the faint type, or his mis-spacing typewriter. I don't like his O-my-god-what'll-I-write-now editorial, nor his choice of badly written ho-hum analytical and same-old-shit articles and fannish satire. His letter-column, with good letters, is cut off at the knees by his blah responses...BUT -- good artwork by Steven Fox, Dave Hicks and Joan Hanke-Woods."

Now put yourself in my place - what am I supposed to do in the light of these reviews? The first puts me in the position of increasing the print run (it certainly helped use up all the spare copies of CS7!), the second leads me to cancel the next issue entirely. I have to ask myself the question: "Do either of these reviews say anything that I should take into account in future issues?" The answer is obvious to me - since I don't have the wealth required to either up the print run or replace the typewriter, I must try to ignore both.

Obviously, Martyn's review pleases me - I find myself in general agreement with the man over many things, having enjoyed his work in this zine, and in RAA, as well as other publications. Geis, despite all the Hugos, is a writer I find myself disagreeing with a lot. I'm always pleased to see SFR, but mainly because of the other writers that appear in its pages - in other words, despite Geis.

Both the MATRIX and SFR columns are really only guides to what's around on the fanzine scene. They're not vast, weighty, considered pieces of criticism, so it's not fair to labour their critical failings. It's just that I cannot agree with either review. CS7 was not my best issue, and it had a number of failings that were apparent to me. But the issue was in no way the disaster area portrayed by Geis, so the unfairness of that review rankles.

In other places there have been more detailed criticism of CS7. Some of the criticism I can regard as justified, some not. But the general tone of the criticism is rarely of the type I'd call 'fair assessment'. It's 'either/or' stuff: either it's a good issue, or it's a terrible issue. What riles me

in particular are those critics who do not review the whole zine. Classic example of this was Rob Hansen in EPSILON, who dismissed half of CS7 as 'amateur fiction' (including in the dismissal two pieces which elicited the most favourable responses of all the items in the zine - which must prove something, right?), thereby putting in dispute his own ability to fairly judge the zine. It was no surprise, therefore, that he then proceeded to find fault with the rest of the issue. That is his prerogative, of course, but can one really expect a fan critic who has so notoriously narrow a view of what constitutes a fanzine to view THE CRYSTAL SHIP with anything but a jaundiced eye? And if the critic's viewpoint is so obviously biased, then what is the point of the review in the first place? If fanzine criticism is merely a statement of bias - 'this is good because I like it: that is bad because I don't like it' - then what is the purpose of it?

It is a constantly reiterated point within fandom that what matters is not what you write, but how you write it. This is the criteria by which any fanzine may be judged. The point was repeated in the intro to Hansen's review column. Yet what is the first thing that Rob Hansen does in reviewing CS7? He says "these parts of the fanzine are 'amateur fiction'. I shall not deign to even weigh them in the balance." The offending pieces - including one by a poet of increasing renown, and another by a professional editor - are not worthy to be judged, because in content they do not comply with Hansen's views of what should be in a fanzine, no matter how well written they are (that factor is not even discussed). When the contradictions in a critic's stance mount up so quickly, then one has to ask again: "Why bother?"

There are valid points in Hansen's review. The one I agreed with entirely was over my use of illos for Arnold Aklen's article. The Spider cartoons were a very bad idea, and one that I would like to offer apologies to Arnold for perpetrating in the first place. My only excuse is desperation - the design I had originally envisaged failed miserably, and I was left with gaps to fill at the eleventh hour, hence the cartoons. I do learn from my errors, though, and I'm determined that it won't happen again. Honest!

That apart, there is very little I can agree with in Hansen's review (and I'm known for my own self-destructive criticism, which has stalled me completely in the past). Hansen's criticism of 'Meritocrassee', for example, was so laughably off the point (with an inference at the end which I'm at a loss to see where it was drummed up from), that I have to say that people see what they want to see in what was a deliberately ambiguous piece of writing. Perhaps that is the value of it, in that it brings out a truer reflection of what a person's view of me or fandom is than any loc would normally achieve!

Criticism in British fandom has, in the past, been an excuse for the release of rampant egos, pillorying the works of faneds and fanwriters in the name of 'standards'. These 'standards' seemed to result in a 'standard' product - the quarto-sized, dupered fanzine, with art only on the cover, a severe (not to say 'boring') layout, and covering the same fannish ground again and again. If the description sounds remarkably like EPSILON, TAPPEN, TWLL DDU and others, then that's not surprising, is it? Let there be no mistake:

these are good fanzines, well worth getting and reading. But they are not the be-all and end-all of fanzines, and their ways are not the way to 'pub your ish'. (It may be the way to get noticed and to gain quick admission to 'Merito-crassee', since everyone loves the image in the mirror.) There are many, many ways to produce a fanzine, and as many reasons for doing so. My way, and my reasons, are just one of those ways - this way happens to suit me. The postbag seems to show that there is a sufficiently large body of opinion that agrees that what I am doing is interesting, worth getting, and worth supporting. To me, that is the barometer of opinion that a faned should listen to carefully. Listening to the critics is an act of masochism, best indulged in by those whose inclinations are perverse, if not plain kinky!

#### PUBLISHING POLICY IN THE EXPANDING UNIVERSE.

I know, I know! I said that I would be trying to get three CRYSTAL SHIPS out in a year! Me and my big mouth - always departing from reality in search of the utopian ideal! I now have to accept that it takes me six to eight months to put together one of these behemoths, but I can't bring myself to cut down the size of the thing to make it more frequent. In any case, it has to be this large to make room for the letters! So, as those of you who received a copy of RASTUS 1 will have noticed, I'm diversifying.

First of all, between issues of CS there will be a regular little rascal called RASTUS, which will be sent only to those fans who loc the zine, or who trade. A few copies might go out speculatively, but if you get CS and haven't communicated with me in any way, then you won't get RASTUS. Eventually, of course, you won't get CS either.

RASTUS is a little thing, a mere stripling zine of 12-16 pages, mainly of my own writing, with an occasional 'guest' spot, and a small loccol. It'll come out as fast as I can fill the page allocation (and find the money to print it). It will be striving to be more informal, and more immediate, than CS - lotsa folk thought that the first one was a bit too much like the Ship, so changes are in the offing. Who knows - it might evolve into an entirely separte entity altogether, with a personality all of its own!

After that comes QUIET SUN, a project I've been contemplating for the last year or so. QS will be a fictionzine (shock!horror! collapse of fandom as they know it) the same size as CS, with the best damned fiction I can lay my hands on. The difference between QS and my other zines will be that QS will largely have to pay for itself. Copies will only be available for filthy lucre, at a cost that shouldn't exceed sixty pence (or one dollar) a copy. First issue should be out sometime in the Autumn of 1984, and subsequent issues will depend on the success of the first one. So, if you've got stories a-moldering in the bottom drawer, then send them along. I may just add to your rejection slip collection, since I intend to very selective about what I accept. On the other hand....

So there you have it - the Grand Design. No doubt it's one rejected long ago by the Great Pickersgill, but what the hell - if he's rejected it, it's probably worth trying anyway!

# **The Court Of Avallaunius: Arthur Machen and "The Hill Of Dreams"**

Arthur Machen seems to be a writer more heard of than read, and not very much of either. Most of his work is out of print - the current BRITISH BOOKS IN PRINT only gives a two-volume 1975 Panther edition of TALES OF HORROR AND THE SUPERNATURAL - and although Wesley Sweetser listed over 200 articles/books/theses concerning Machen in a bibliography published in 'English Literature In Transition II' (1968), many of these are ephemeral, and few seem to be of serious critical value. I am unaware of any major current of interest in Machen, unless it be in the fantasy fanzines, which I rarely see nowadays. Nevertheless, it is possible to pick up various paperback collections of his horror stories if you haunt enough second-hand bookshops. Unfortunately, these tend to be shoddily produced, unrepresentative of Machen as a writer, and usually graced with ridiculously inappropriate blurbs.

To many, I suppose, Arthur Machen is part of that gothic/horror/proto-SF line which commenced with Mary Shelley and crystallized (or do I mean fossilised?) with H.P. Lovecraft. Machen was an important influence on Lovecraft, who spent several pages praising him in his essay 'Supernatural Horror in Literature'. Lovecraft wrote: "Of living creators of cosmic fear raised to its most artistic pitch, few if any can hope to equal the versatile Arthur Machen...the elements of hidden horror and brooding fright attain an almost incomparable substance and realistic acuteness." (DAGON, Panther, 1969, p204) Aficionados of this vein remember Machen as the author of such tales as THE GREAT GOD PAN, THE SHINING PYRAMID, and that classic story-cycle entitled THE THREE IMPOSTERS, which, for some ungodly reason, was published by Corgi in 1964 under the title of BLACK CRUSADE. Those whose interest lies more in minor curiosities of literary history may remember him as author of THE BOWMEN, a story of supernatural archers supposed to be the souls of English bowmen from Agincourt coming to the aid of the English at Mons. This is supposed to have been taken for truth, and established a legend which persisted for some time. There is no doubt that these pieces are amongst his best work, and in the best of all possible worlds I would be writing at greater length about them and more: however, here and now I would like to confine myself to saying a little more about why I consider Machen to be a writer worth attending to, and then looking at what I consider to be his best work, THE HILL OF DREAMS.

Arthur Machen was born in 1863 and died in 1947. A

Welshman by origin, he became first a clerk in a London publishing house, and then taught briefly while trying to establish himself as a writer. Despite - probably because of - a mystical vision of Literature as a gateway to ecstasy, he was only partially successful. He wrote over thirty novels, collections of tales, essays and autobiographical works, as well as translations (including a translation of Casanova's MEMOIRS which ran to twelve volumes) but by most accounts his best work, including everything so far mentioned, except THE 30WMEN, was written during the last decade of the 19th Century. In 1902 he became an actor, and toured with a Shakespearean repertory company for some years. In 1912 he became a journalist on the EVENING NEWS. The entry in TWENTIETH CENTURY AUTHORS states that "In his early sixties he deliberately killed himself as an author, since writing had always been painful and he had won by it neither fame nor economic security". Despite a revival in the 1920s led by the American fantasist James Branch Cabell (whose literary theories seem to have much in common with Machen), when Machen died he was poor and largely forgotten.

The paradox in all this is that most of Machen's work takes a specific stance against mass appeal. His writer-characters are consistently struggling to capture a private, esoteric vision, on the verge of poverty, if not right over the edge. Edgar Russell, "realist and obscure struggler" in THE THREE IMPOSTERS, and Lucian Taylor in THE HILL OF DREAMS both concern themselves with the purity of their art rather than 'success', as does the 'Hermit' (the mouthpiece for Machen himself) in that curious volume significantly entitled HIEROGLYPHICS (Secker, 1926; first published by Grant Richards, 1902) which is Machen's explication of his ideas on literature:

"I can scarcely say whether he wrote much himself. He would speak of stories on which he was engaged, but I have never seen his name on publishers' lists, and I do not think that he had adopted a pseudonym... But I never spoke to him about his literary work; and I noticed that he did not much care to talk of literature from the commercial standpoint." (HIEROGLYPHICS, p.9)

Machen, by definition, set himself against popular success by seeing his writing as an occult art: "If a great book is really popular it is sure to owe its popularity to entirely wrong reasons." (HIEROGLYPHICS, p.85) That word 'occult' conjures up all sorts of impressions. It was apparently true that Machen had connections with the Order of the Golden Dawn, with which the poet Yeats and the so-called Master of Evil, Aleister Crowley, also dabbled; that, however, is not particularly relevant to understanding Machen's art except in the general sense that it fits in with the idea of Writer as Adept which is central to THE HILL OF DREAMS and certain other works:

"The secret places of the human nature are not heedlessly to be exposed to the uninitiated, who would merely profane this occult knowledge if they had it."  
(HIEROGLYPHICS, p.96)

Underlying Machen's work are in fact several interconnected themes which I'll go through briefly. There is the ambiguity to be found in rational science, a sense which is present in most Gothic SF: experiments with a drug (THE NOVEL OF THE

WHITE POWDER) or surgical experiments on the brain (THE GREAT GOD PAN) lead to appalling consequences. Linked with that is the conclusion that our knowledge counts for very little in the cosmic scheme of things: beyond our 'reality' lies a more disturbing realm. Usually this is the source for horror. In Machen, this is generally linked with his native rural Wales, with pagan survivals from the Celtic past surviving underground. THE NOVEL OF THE BLACK SEAL, OUT OF THE EARTH, and THE GREAT GOD PAN are only three of the tales in which a subterranean threat from another order of reality is featured. Only rarely does Machen spend much time on describing the nature of this threat: in horror fiction, of course, the horror is most effective when hinted at, and so, in one of Machen's later and lesser-known works, THE GREEN ROUND (Ernest Benn, 1933), we see the link between character, a brutal sex-murder, poltergeist activity and a certain geographical location never explicitly explained: "He has never attempted to give me any account of what



happened to him in the year 1929; chiefly, I think, because he doesn't know what did happen to him." (THE GREEN ROUND, p.204/5) Using one of his favourite stylistic tricks, Machen tells the tale as a straightforward narrative, mainly from the point of view of the main character, and adopts the stance of the puzzled but neutral scientific investigator, taking the facts as facts but issuing no firm hypothesis (while building enough hints into the tale to allow the reader to guess at 'the mystery beneath the mystery').

Conspiracy and paranoia is the logical outcome. In THE THREE IMPOSTERS, in which Machen weaves, with great skill, an Illuminati-style vision of lies, cabals and plots beneath the surface of everyday life, one

of the characters remarks: "I see the plot thicken, and our steps will henceforth be dogged with mystery, and the most ordinary incidents will teem with significance." (p25) There is as much detective story as fantasy or SF in Machen - indeed, one critic has pointed out the obvious similarities between the fictional Londons of Machen and Conan Doyle.

All this comes out in a vision of the Artist as hermetic creator, one who sees beyond the surface of the mundane to a deeper inner reality; one who, as the alchemists expressed it, reaches 'illumination'. Two stories best show Machen's version of this quest (which is by no means original to him: Rimbaud, whose life had some parallels to Machen's, expressed it with far greater passion and genius and ultimate tragedy). One is A FRAGMENT OF LIFE, a novella about a suburban clerk who begins to awaken to a sense that "the whole world is but a great ceremony or sacrament, which teaches under visible forms a hidden and transcendent doctrine". (WHITE POWDER, p.98) The other is THE HILL OF DREAMS.



THE HILL OF DREAMS is the story of Lucian Taylor, who is based on Machen himself. The only child of a curate, Lucian is influenced by the magic of long solitary walks and meditations among the Roman ruins and desolate hills of Celtic Wales. At school he reads Villon and Rabelais and "the rhymed Latin of the middle ages", an eccentric among his companions:

"He liked history, but loved to meditate upon a land laid waste, Britain deserted by the legions, the rare pavements riven by frost, Celtic magic still brooding on the wild hills and in the black depths of the forest... The masters did not encourage these researches; a pure enthusiasm, they felt, should be for cricket and football, the dilettante might even play fives and read Shakespeare, but healthy English boys should have nothing to do with decadent periods... His schoolfellows thought him quite mad, and tolerated him, and indeed were very kind to him in their barbarous manner." (THE HILL OF DREAMS, p.14/15)

His father's poverty forces him to remove Lucian from school at the age of seventeen. His isolation increases and he turns to writing. He sends a manuscript to a publisher who ignores it for months and finally returns it; later, Lucian finds that many of the best sections of his book have pirated by one of the publisher's hacks. Despised by Caermaen's 'society' for his poverty and ambitions to become a 'scribbler', Lucian returns the sentiment. He is disgusted by the brutality of the villagers, summarised by an incident in which he comes across some boys torturing a puppy, and is equally repelled by the more subtle but more hypocritical brutalities of the 'gentry' as he watches them ostracise one of their number who loses all his money in bad investments. All he needs are the hills, and the valleys and the woods, and the ancient memories of dead civilizations which surround Caermaen, and the magic incantations of literature. With these, he develops his imagination to such a point that he can cut himself off from humanity, and creates a 'dream-city' in which he dwells as observer of the rich pleasures, sometimes pure, sometimes corrupt, always rapturous, of the inhabitants, and ponders the mystery of the sensual symbol:

"Lucian wondered whether there were in the nature of things any true distinction between the impressions of sound and scent and colour. The violent blue of the sky, the song, and the odours seemed rather varied symbols of one mystery than distinct entities. He could almost imagine that the boy's innocence was indeed a perfume, and that the palpitating roses had become a sonorous chant." (THE HILL OF DREAMS, p.77/78)

By his meditation within the dream-city, Lucian raises himself above the common level of life, and comes to understand the symbolism behind the alchemists' transformation of base metals to gold: "He saw the true gold into which the beggarly matter of existence may be transmuted by spagyric art." (HILL, p.82)

All this existence however, is dedicated to Annie Morgan, a farmer's daughter who becomes his muse-figure, for:

"He knew that it was she in whom he had found himself, and through whom and for whom all true life existed. He felt that Annie had taught him the rare magic which had created the garden of Avallaunius. It was for her that he sought strange secrets and tried to penetrate the

mysteries of sensation, for he could only give her wonderful thoughts and a wonderful life, and a poor body stained with the scars of his worship." (HILL,p.79)

So Lucian spends a summer exploring his inner world, exulting in his masochism, trying to find the right literary symbols for his vision, while his physical self-neglect alarms his relations. At the end of the summer, Annie marries; an event which in fact leaves Lucian more relieved than anything else: she has now become unattainable and their relationship has now no danger of becoming a sordid intrigue. He can remain with his idealised image of her. At the same time, a distant relation dies, leaving Lucian enough money for a small private income. His old ambition to go to London and write returns, and Lucian does what his creator Arthur Machen did: living for days at a time on green tea, bread, and strong tobacco he dedicates himself to literature in a West London garret, analysing and recreating in a literary form his visions.

For Lucian, he now realises, had become too obsessed with his dream-life, and only now can he really put it to some value in literary creation, far from the hills into which, sometimes, his very soul had seemed moulded. He turns a deaf ear to the incantations of the woods, surveying his visions "from without, as if he read of opium dreams". (p.96) He immerses himself in his work, spending his time at first not so much in creation as in analysis and preliminary exercises, travelling along the lines indicated in Poe's PHILOSOPHY OF COMPOSITION, squeezing out the secrets of sonorous and rhythmical words and phrases, trying to create more subtle melodies than "the loud and insistent music of never more". (p.102)

As winter comes he begins to explore his environment and discovers no difference between the Philistinism of urban bourgeoisie and rural gentry, or the brutalities of urban proletariat and rural peasant. As he wanders in the London fogs, tortured by his vain attempts to put on paper his spiritual visions, and weakened by his diet and general ill-health, he sees the brutal, drunken pleasures of the working class as vicious Bacchic orgies, timeless survivals of the Black Sabbath. Several times his staring face looming out of the ghostly fog frightens people; morbidly, he begins to wonder if he is himself human. He becomes obsessed by a beautiful prostitute he passes who is for him the image of Satanic destruction - the opposite of Annie. He is also haunted by a desolate house he comes across, a symbol of death and decay through the flesh.

Like Rimbaud, Lucian becomes more and more tortured by his inability to work out a true and lasting 'alchemy of the word'. He is as helpless in the town as in the country:

"He had thought when he closed his eyes to the wood whisper and changed the faun's singing for the murmur of the streets, the black pools for the shadows and amber lights of London, that he had put off the old life, and had turned his soul to healthy activities, but the truth was that he had merely exchanged one drug for another." (p.110)

Finally he returns to the dream, but this time he cannot control it. It is not the luxurious corruptions and purities of the Roman city, but is suffused with images

of witchcraft, black magic, of the darkness and disillusion he has come to experience. The images of the woman, and the decaying house, and other persistent pictures which haunt him fuse into a cataclysmic vision of the final Black Sabbath. Lucian's landlady finds him dead of a drug overdose, on his desk a neat pile of paper on which he has written his 'work' (a word used by him in its literary and alchemic sense): "all covered with illegible scribblings; only here and there it was possible to recognise a word".(p.156)

Driven to dwell within himself, forced to engage in a titanic conflict between his vision and ill-health, neglect, lack of encouragement and even, as Lord Dunsany says in his introduction to the book, "an inability to write" (p.7), Lucian takes the only way out. Identifying himself with his art, unable to bring his art to fruition he destroys himself.

THE HILL OF DREAMS is not fantasy as such, although it is possible (just!) to read it so: Machen's prose shifts from one order of reality to another; Lucian's self-created 'garden of Avallaunius' is shown as real, as tangible as the 'ordinary' world he inhabits:

"Mr. Dixon was innocently discursing archaeology...

'There can be no doubt that the temple of Diana stood there in pagan times,' he concluded, and Lucian assented to the opinion, and asked a few questions which seemed pertinent enough. But all the time the flute notes were sounding in his ears, and the ilex threw a purple shadow on the white pavement before his villa. A boy came forward from the garden; he had been walking amongst the vines and plucking the ripe grapes, and the juice had trickled down over his breast. Standing beside the

girl, unashamed in the sunlight, he began to sing on of Sappho's love songs...The vicar shook hands and went on, well pleased with his remarks on the temple of Diana, and also with Lucian's polite interest." (p.76/7)

The last chapter of the book, as powerful and mysterious a piece of prose as anything Machen ever wrote, is full of dark Satanic images which weave in and out from Lucian's consciousness.

Yet the real power of the book doesn't lie in its imagery but in the picture it gives of the problem of the Artist - perennially, perhaps, but certainly in the last few years of the 19th century when the Decadents revolted against the Philistine ideas of the self-satisfied bourgeoisie of the time. (And please let it be stressed that these labels depict tendencies at the most; many artists who themselves would have denied strenuously any connection with the movement dubbed 'The Decadents' were well aware of a gulf



between themselves and a society the values of which they could not accept.) Art was something to be aspired to far from the ordinary common round of making a living. "Art and Life are two different spheres" wrote Machen (HIEROGLYPHICS, p.27): Lucian Taylor concludes, "a painstaking artist in words was not respected by the respectable; secondly, books should not be written with the object of gaining the goodwill of the landed and commercial interests; thirdly and chiefly, no man should in any way depend on another." (HILL OF DREAMS, p.92)

If the mundane world was not a fit subject for Art, what was? Significantly, many artists turned to fantasy to resolve this conflict; at least in fantasy values can be portrayed as they should be, and the soul of Man is seen nakedly against the Eternal - or at least, maybe that is the idea. In practice, different artists resolved the problem (or failed to do so) in different ways. We all know the fate of Oscar Wilde. William Morris allied himself to the cause of Socialism, and focussed on the future rather than the past, although anyone taking a cursory glance at his novels would perhaps be forgiven for thinking otherwise. The fantasy of Lord Dunsany, perhaps the best fantasist of the period, is shot through and through with a melancholy alienation, cushioned, through his aristocratic background and conventional Etonian unconventionality - hence, perhaps, his reservations about the 'unwholesome' side of Machen. Machen himself, forced to struggle against poverty, against artistic neglect, against an easy ability to write, clung, as so many from his kind of shabby-genteel background would, to High Aristocratic values - Catholicism, anti-democracy, mysticism - as his lifeline. I suppose it need not be said that I share few of his values; yet like so many avowedly 'reactionary' writers - Thomas Nashe in Elizabethan times, George Borrow in the mid 19th century - his individualism in both style and personality stands out. It is his commitment to his vision, whatever lonely pathways it leads him down, which attracts me to him. It is as if, like those other writers I've mentioned, the whole current of Machen's times and circumstances rubbed up against him, keeping him throwing off literature like sparks from amber.

THE HILL OF DREAMS is for me an extremely painful book to read. Whereas much of Machen's work, however 'good of its type', seems custom-made to appeal to those who believe that H.P. Lovecraft had a genuine style, much is flawed and/or trivial, and much of his theory is gloriously (I use the word deliberately) wrong-headed. THE HILL OF DREAMS distills the best part of his writing - that sense of the Numenous on the other side of the Veil - and fuses it with a deeply personal tragedy. I suppose that expression 'a minor classic' is by now tired and worn from overuse; nevertheless THE HILL OF DREAMS is well worth the attention of anyone who wishes to experience a genuinely Mysterious novel.

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# Reviewing A Friend

## John D. Owen

I suppose one of the worst things a reviewer can do is extoll the virtues of a friend. At the best it could be said to be an act of foolishness. At the worst, it is plain nepotism. But, if you regard a review to be a guide to the potential reader, then there is no real reason why such a thing should be undesirable. To condemn such a practice would be to put me alongside such luminaries as C.S. Lewis, who seized the opportunity to soundly trumpet the virtues of Tolkien's LORD OF THE RINGS on its first publication. Such a ranking would no displease me in the least.

So, if you would regard this not so much as a review as a plea for a friend, then I would be very much obliged. The plea is "Please, please, go out and buy (note: buy - not beg, borrow or steal) a copy of Mary Gentle's marvelous book GOLDEN WITCHBREED". The book was published by Gollancz in September '83, and should be out as an Arrow paperback sometime in the not-too-distant future. Believe me, you'll be doing yourself a favour.

GOLDEN WITCHBREED is not Mary Gentle's first book, that being a juvenile fantasy called A HAWK IN SILVER (also published by Gollancz in 1977). That was a very Garnerish fantasy written when Mary was only eighteen, yet which impressed me as a work of surprising power, with a writing skill way beyond her years. GOLDEN WITCHBREED confirms, and enlarges considerably, my respect for Mary's abilities: to put it plainly, I believe that she is one of the finest talents that British SF has come up with in recent years.

GOLDEN WITCHBREED is an excellent book, full of adventure, wit, observation and colour. It is stylishly written (slightly reminiscent of Gene Wolfe in that the writing is 'nuggetty', full of little turns of phrase that catch the eye and ear) and beautifully crafted. It's a book I've now read twice, once quite swiftly when I first received it, the second time slowly, with much relish for the lively eye-for-detail that Mary displays. It is a book that is filled with images that leap out of the story and scream to be realised in picture form - always a sign of a good work with me.

One of the chief strengths of the book is the characterisation. The main protagonist, Lynne de Lisle Christie, the Earth envoy to the planet Orthe, is finely realised, reacting in a totally believable way to the unfolding mystery of Orthean society and the dangers that it throws up. The Ortheans themselves, humanoid and very close to a Terran norm, display just enough alien traits to be unpredictable, so that the various twists and turns in a quite involved plot follow a logic that is clear in retrospect, but which is often very surprising when first encountered. Mary has managed to maintain a firm grasp on her material right the way through the 450 plus pages, with only one or two patches where the imagination flags, and the pace is slackened a little too much.

I have seen the book described as being 'after Le Guin'

(Continued on page 33)

# Men Who Wear Hoods (shouldn't throw stones)

It happened in that brief hour of autumn dusk, when the sky is pink-and-lavender, and bats begin their night-long flights, and a person's breath glows.

The cross flared like a beacon in the wide clearing. A circle of nearly a hundred people caught their breathes - a fire in this season, be it a leaf-fire or a burning cross, is beautiful!

Most of the audience were dressed normally for the chilly clear air; maybe a dozen or so were clothed in full dress hoods-and-cloaks. All of these were armed, but made threatening moves at no-one because of the sheriff's deputies who were present. These weren't particularly necessary, as all the spectators were white. (If any blacks had shown up, I'd have run quick as a blink, and not be able to report any of this!)

One of the Klansmen, a tall figure whose pot belly showed despite the looseness of his uniform, stepped towards the sparkling pretty fire. (Considering what he was wearing, he got a little too close...) He spoke. In a twangy, Mid-western accent, he quietly explained to us how the niggers were doing this and the Jew bankers were getting away with that, etc. Most of his speech was crap; the rest I didn't understand because he spoke too damned quickly for me.

When he was through, he stepped back from the fire. As if on cue, his robed friends drew their weapons and blasted the stars, scaring us all half to death. It was too dark to see, but only a few people stuck around to witness this breath-taking display of masculine firepower. After all, once the cross had been set alight, what else was there to see?

The newsmen from upstate had remained. They stood in a small group apart from the other people, dressed quite incongruously for the damp cold. Their cameras stood on tripods, ignored, as the media people paid little attention to the klansmen, and only murmured among themselves about sports or beer or whatever. Obviously, they'd wanted to see trouble - just as obviously, they were disappointed.

Once the chill began penetrating my parka, I left. To tell the truth, I would've like to have seen something more colourful - a nice miniwar between white and black bigots might satisfy. But the cross-burning turned out to be nothing, just as the Klan is nothing.

As a Southerner, I put up with Ku-Klux Klan jokes. People usually don't listen when I tell them the anti-climactic truth that a cross-burning is just that. Satan doesn't appear in the flames, virgin boys aren't sacrificed, and the Klansmen themselves are always grossly overweight. The whole thing is just an embarrassingly amateur means of getting attention.

The press loves them just the same.

The Ku-Klux Klan is part of the local colour here in the swamps. They've been around for over a century. Our dark marshes shelter scores of the rascals, in scattered konklaves from the Virginia border down through the alligator country of Northern Florida.

The core strength of this organisation, the leaders and more intelligent bullies, don't come from my people, though. Please don't get that idea. These reactionaries are typically from Texas or California or some northern state like Vermont. They're few: maybe no more than fifty in all.

Those are the dangerous characters.

The greater proportion of the Klansmen are swampers, born and bred in the mud, just like Yours Truly. They are banded together in the aggregate hundreds.

These are harmless, unless they drink and drive.

I've known many Klansmen, and have watched, a half-dozen times, groups illuminate the barren fields in my home county in holiday-like glee, as cross-burnings can be surprisingly cheerful rites when the fellows bring their families along. One of their paramilitary training camps is situated only a few miles from where I sit now (though our state legislature is grudgingly moving towards ordering it shut down, the bullies - it's some kind of law dating from the War Between The States which prohibits the establishment of private militia or some-such). One of my daddy's best friends - now deceased - rose to a certain ranking in the robed tribe. Being fair and blue-eyed, I've even been offered a place with them, since I'm obviously more pure than those they 'struggle against' (like brown-haired, brown-eyed Klansmen, I presume).

What I'm trying to say is that the Klan and I aren't strangers. My path has led me into contact with these characters many times, much to my discomfort. (Having a Klansman come near is like being approached by a red-eyed, foul-breathed, alcoholic uncle...who slobbers. Being near several is like walking through a herd of cattle, all of whom have unpredictable bladder dysfunctions.)

I know the sort of people who compose the bulk of the Klan, and want you to know whom you fear ... or are interested in, at least.

Movies and TV have given people the wrong impression of what the modern Klan is all about. The mention of the name conjures visions of terror-riders galloping through black shanty towns, their spotless robes reflecting torchlight. Outsiders (anyone who's never lived where all this is supposed to be happening) think of 1920's-era lynchings, marches of white-sheeted armies through Washington, and imagine that Southern nights are controlled by Klannish terror-squads, who creep about and beat and murder their enemies at will.

Well folks, no one rides horses around here, except for pleasure, these days. The shanty towns still exist - but I wouldn't dare to enter any! The few lynchings still committed are initiated as much by blacks as whites (hate visits all our houses, race aside). And terror squads? In this county, the law enforcement community is very, very efficient. With a U.S. Marine Corps base next door, they've got to be good!

Anyway, if any of the above things did occur, the mass marches and night raids, their time is long past. Public relations doesn't go beyond cross-burnings, for the Klan has a new mission, a bigger activity, a consuming passion: the 'Race War'.

Our local Klansmen, and, I assume, all the others as well, are preparing for Total Economic Collapse, and the Fall of Western Civilisation. With the consequential breakdown of our social institutions, they assume our families will become easy prey for 'criminals' (read: niggers and jews, though a few will also attack Vietnamese and Mexican immigrants). The police will no longer be able to suppress the angry, hungry mobs, and, God forbid, what if the Commies see what is happening and hop aboard their Tupolev transport jets and try to capture Morehead City? Deary!!

A very small proportion of our local Klansmen have armed themselves to the teeth - to the point where they've collected illegal automatic weapons and rockets stolen from heaven-knows-where. Now they're forcing themselves through a comic, stumbling, muddy, confused regimen which they assume passes for military training. They're doing this right now, down in the mosquito and snake filled quicksand bogs along the Cape Fear River. A few Klansmen have even got their giggling children in the field, all dressed up in kiddie-sized combat boots and camouflage fatigues.

Are these brave Southern men training to fight the Commie hordes? Will their arms answer pleas from their desperate, unarmed, put-upon neighbours? Have they vowed to maintain peace and justice and the freedom of America while civilisation rebuilds?

Nope. In the words of one man I saw on the TV: "We're intendin' to protect white wimmin from them niggers".

What can I say? Most of the swamper females I know should frighten the blacks into arming themselves. Even I am afraid of the local girls!

Seeing as how these troopers are the armed backbone of the Klan, what sort of characters are they? Who are these fearsome warriors? (This is where I get to chuckle.)

I've never been to one of their camps, but I've seen the publicity the media has handed them, and I can make certain assumptions about these men, which might make one feel that they're formidable indeed.

For the most part, they're expert woodsmen and crack shots (so possess suitable mobility to terrorise the swamp people). They're probably as clever as any wild creature, and so are superb guerrilla fighters (the best infantry in the world are born in marshes like ours). Their ferocity is so vigorous it spills into their other activities...Klansmen fight each other constantly, and have been known to kill each other over a woman (the duel is still a Southern tradition, laws be damned.)

Oh sure, so they have their fearsome aspects. But I refuse to fear pot-bellied, drunken, illiterate, tobacco-chewing bumpkins who leave their \$500 rifles barrel-up in the rain (for shame), and who are just the same attached to their TV sets like any spud in any developed country in the world.

The Ku-Klux Klan talks hate, but mostly hate each other.



They mumble about the dignity of white people, while scratching themselves in places propriety forbids me to mention. They boast to any in sight that they're the roughest, toughest men in the swamps, but few can let a day pass by without calling their moms.

In other words, they are men like any others - though more obnoxious than most. (Their dogs though - Whew! There's some vicious creatures!)

Seriously, modern Southerners consider the Klan to be an anachronistic embarrassment, a facet of life most would prefer not even to mention. And, for sure, their public support is nil.

During a 1978 altercation upstate, a group of Klansmen and brother Nazis - all from other states - had a pleasant shoot-out with a rival gang of American Communists (who cares where they came from?). A half-dozen were shot on both sides. After the firing abated, none of the 'neutral' spectators made a move towards the fallen. Just about everybody looked on the extremists of left and right, shook their heads and muttered about "good riddance to bad trash".

Most practical, these modern Southerners, hmm?

In their enthusiasm to peddle escapism-in-the-guise-of-news, the media people have tried to make these strange Klansmen seem like the National Socialists of the late 'twenties. 'Tain't so. The Klan has no organisation beyond coteries of buddies, no sympathy with or from the public... and if a new Hitler were to appear, we'd run his ass out of town. (Jerry Falwell is supported by the banks and politicians - not us. So don't give me that.)

The larger picture reveals that the Klan is dead, outside of a few very bitter men. Our locals don't count. They're in it for the beer.

There are overgrown boys everywhere who like to play war, and feel themselves to be the new nobility. And let's face it, if you're not on the receiving end of the Klan terror, there's some romance in this business of secret empires, imaginary enemies, and very real ideals.

But to fear such is to put yourself through unnecessary pain. I don't fear them, but rather how their actions influence the way people see me. My accent isn't all that noticeable, but I get sideways looks from people when I say I'm from North Carolina.

The last person you need to fear is a Southern libertarian. Or a swamp-born Klansmen, for that matter.

I've found it necessary to tell people not to blame the actions of those criminals in Washington on me. I now add: don't blame the Klan on me either.

And don't worry about them. Clowns are for laughing at, not encouraging.

From the Sandra Airflite, 1983



## H. Beam Piper

Whatever is written about H. Beam Piper must be tinged with the knowledge that on Monday, 9th November 1964, he took one of his collection of guns and shot himself dead.

The probable causes of his suicide have been explained in several places - most detailed in the introductions John F. Carr wrote for the Piper collections *FEDERATION* and *EMPIRE*.

Piper was born in 1904. He rarely spoke of his life before the publication of his first story in 1947, and few details have been released at all. In the late 1950s Piper married badly and was attempting to secure a divorce by the early 1960s. At about this time, his agent died. His agent kept few written records, and Piper suddenly discovered that he didn't know which, if any, of his stories had sold, or if money was due. The marriage and honeymoon had drained his financial resources and Piper thought he was penniless, though several payments were due. His third Fuzzy novel was rejected. At that point, unwilling to become a burden on the state or upon friends, Piper killed himself.

The suicide note (as quoted in *FEDERATION*, 1981) seems to reveal several things:-

"I don't like to leave messes when I go away,  
but if I could have cleaned up any of this  
mess, I wouldn't be going away. H. Beam Piper."

It is the style of his stories. It is pithy, it bears traces of poetry, and it has a wry undercurrent of humour. It also leaves the reader wanting to know the background to the events.

Piper was a master of the unfinished tale. Every story seemed to be part of a much longer one. At times he ended on a sentence of dialogue, at others, a new tale was to begin with the presumed next sentence. (This, in part, explains why the manuscript 'fleshed out' by Kurland as *FIRST CYCLE* fails.)

From first publication to last (a story which was actually part of an already published novel), Piper had written 27 short stories, 3 serials, and 10 books. Some of the books were derived from stories or serials, and one story later appeared as a serial. One of his books was a mystery novel based around a gun collection resembling his own; the rest were science fiction.

Piper - in many ways - was a man of his time, and his emphasis on action/adventure must be judged relative to the preoccupations of publishing at the time. The philosophy and deep thought that is evident in most of his work is

generally only a small part of an adventure story, or an exploration of an alien society. What Piper might have written given the freer stories of the 60s and 70s is open to question. Perhaps the third Fuzzy novel will show.

His work concentrates almost entirely on two subjects: history, and time. In fact, they are aspects of each other, but divide Piper's work neatly into its two major series.

There is the Terran Future History (TFH), and the Paratime series. (As became evident with the posthumous publication of the story 'When in the course...', at least one TFH story became a Paratime one with little difficulty. As will be mentioned in a moment, Piper combined the two series in an anecdote.)

The TFH is at least 5000 years long. In his eerie story, 'The Edge of the Knife', a professor of history is able to see into the future. He keeps files on what he observes and gradually constructs an impressively detailed plot of the coming Federations and Empires. Piper also kept detailed files. He planned, it is said, to write one novel set in every century of the TFH.

Piper, like Toynbee, believed that history was cyclic, and some events in the TFH would parallel or duplicate events in the past. Unlike Toynbee, Piper believed that history was shaped only by the actions of men. Religion plays little part.

Shaping requires power, if not force. Piper wrote about those who held power and influence. Sometimes it was royalty, sometimes it was the military, mostly it was those with ambition and will. 'Self-seeking' applies to most Piper heroes and heroines. This emphasis on the individual is matched by a distrust if not outright condemnation of socialism: socialist governments are portrayed as inept and conservative - unwilling to adapt to circumstance or to initiate change. Only those with purpose succeed.

Piper's tales are about process. Sometimes they are almost anecdotal in plot (e.g., 'A Slave is a Slave' or 'Omnilingual' or large parts of LORD KALVAN OF OTHERWHEN) and little happens except the gradual understanding or unfolding of a situation.

Piper was certainly well-read and whatever he had done in his lifetime, he understood politics, economics and social patterns well. He also understood people.

His created societies come alive because of the background knowledge he displayed so subtly. It is difficult to examine subtlety, since to remove it from context is to defeat its purpose, yet a good SF writer must be able to create alternate worlds by the subtle introduction of alien concepts. It must be done in such a way that the reader is instantly aware of purpose and function, but in a way that shows the protagonist considers it perfectly normal, that it has been used many times before. Piper's societies are densely packed amalgams of alien facts.

The following excerpt is in an aside in 'Ministry of Disturbance':-

"they have a republican government..a very complicated setup. Really, it's just a junk heap. When anything goes badly, they always build something new into the government, but they never abolish anything. They have a

president, a premier, and an executive cabinet, and a tricameral legislature, and two separate and distinct judiciaries. The premier is always the presidential candidate getting the highest number of votes. In the present instance, the president, who controls the planetary militia, is accusing the premier, who controls the police, of fraud in the election of the middle house of the legislature. Each is supported by the judiciary he controls. Practically every citizen belongs either to the militia or the police auxiliaries. I am looking forward to further reports from Amaterasu..."

Though this seems comedic in its complexity, there's little doubt that Piper would have fuller details of the planet and could probably have written a story based on the planet. Piper didn't drop such details in without thought, every place mentioned, every name, formed part of the political systems in conflict



This complexity is as nothing compared to the complexity of the entire TFH. Only in the early 'The Edge of the Knife' was any overall view possible, and it transpired, by the end of the story, that the observer was already part of the historical process. Every other story, based on the rise and fall of political systems, the establishment and ruin of Federations and Empires, is told from the inside and so the background has to be derived from attitudes and details given. (Because Piper's characters alter history, they are individual examples of the political systems of their time, or of the coming political structure.)

Piper's second series is the Paratime. Parallel times. Parallel Earths, worlds alongside our own whose history diverged at some point and created a massively different or confusingly similar world.

Jerry Pournelle tells an anecdote about Piper. Piper had published the story 'He Walked Around the Horses' in 1948. A man does what the title says, but fails to come out on the other side. He finds himself in a parallel world. The sad consequences are traced rationally to their conclusion. At a convention, Piper was talking to Pournelle, whom he had befriended. Piper said that the story was based on fact - something he knew because it had happened to himself in a previous life-time. Parallel worlds and reincarnation. Pournelle believes that Piper believed.

Many of Piper's earliest stories are about the Paratime. ('Time And Time Again' can be said to resemble the series while not being in it.) There comes a gap of about five years until a complex series appears, and then it is another nine years, in the final works published in his lifetime, before he returns to the concept.

As the final work, LORD KALVAN OF OTHERWHEN (the story based on one in the TFH), demonstrated, the complexities of Paratime are minimised in its tale of an ordinary, if

talented, Earth policeman's introduction into a barbarian society, a society held in stasis by religion, and shattered by his arrival. The story, like almost all other Piper stories, is as much a study in character as in process. It matters who Kalvan is, and what he believes.

There are moment of poetry and insight even in the slightest of Piper's works, comments that make the reader think. Argue perhaps, but think.

In 'Oomphel In The Sky' he wrote:

"...He defined truth as a statement having a practical correspondence with reality on the physical levels of structure and observation and the verbal order of abstraction under consideration.

He defined truth as a statement. A statement only exists in the mind of the person making it, and the mind of the person to whom it is made. If the person to whom it is made can't understand or accept it, it isn't the truth."

You can, then, explain reality to someone, yet if they know you are wrong, they won't accept it.

In 'A Slave Is A Slave' the following appears:

"...'Nonesense!' Erskyll declared. 'Who ever heard of slaves rebelling against freedom?'

Freedom was a Good Thing. It was a Good Thing for everybody, everywhere, and all the time. Count Erskyll knew it because Freedom was a Good Thing for him."

Erskyll has made the classic mistake, as Edith will make in 'Oomphel In The Sky', of judging other societies relative to his own. In his view, of course the slaves are virtuous innocents and their masters heartless exploiting villains; in Edith's eyes the Shoonoon are hypocritical liars, too intelligent to believe in what they propose as truth.



The lesson Erskyll and Edith will learn is that everyone is shaped by their society. It would be simplistic to say that Piper never considered the 'Nature vs Nurture' argument an argument at all, but his lesson is precise: a good observer watches, and only then draws conclusions.

Erskyll, like the reader, will suddenly be made aware of this. Finding himself confronted by murderous slaves, he threatens them in pure fury; Piper's aside is almost laconic:

"So the real Obray, Count Erskyll, had at last emerged. All the liberalism and socialism and egalitarianism, all the Helping-Hand, Torch-Of-Democracy idealism, was merely a surface stucco applied at the university during the last six years. For twenty-four years before that, from the day of his birth, he had been taught, by his parents, his nurse, his governess, his tutors, what it meant to be an Erskyll of Aton, and a grandson of Errol, Duke of Korvoy."

Again, it matters who Erskyll is, and what he believes.

(Even language cannot be trusted. In 'Ministry Of Disturbance' the representative of the now Commonwealth of Aditya - from 'A Slave Is A Slave' - speaks about his world. After each of his

sentences, a retired admiral makes caustic comments on what the representative really means. The words we take for granted - class, work, tax, secret police - have been redefined by those in power. Nothing can be taken for granted.)

It is character which raises Piper's work above much that was published in the 1950s and 1960s, above much that is being published today in imitation of his work.

One aspect is humour. 'Lone Star Planet' is a broad black farce, fast and amusing, (the light tone is shattered by the violent climax - again, probably symptomatic of the time he wrote within). There are the amusing misunderstandings in 'The Return' and 'Naudsonce', and the sudden asides in almost everything else. This humour alleviates determinedly black stories such as 'A Slave Is A Slave', or the cruel errors in LITTLE FUZZY. It occurs in the way Piper names worlds and characters: the sword worlds, the worlds in COSMIC COMPUTER. It runs like a silver thread through his work, drawing the reader into the story by recognition and shock.

Its second aspect can best be exemplified by speaking of LITTLE FUZZY.

The Fuzzy books were the best known (for various reasons) of Piper's work for many years while his estate was in disarray. Even now, they are still highly regarded.

The first book has a classic dilemma: how do you define humanity? Once before, Piper solved it almost humourously in his unpublished 'When In The Course...'. That story may have influenced him to consider expanding his mention of the Fuzzies in 'Ministry Of Disturbance'. It could be otherwise - that Piper had always planned the Fuzzy concept as part of the TFH.

How to define humanity? What makes people 'people'? Piper created another species and tried to determine which of its attributes would unequivocally define them as 'people': the capacity to make tools? Language? Emotional response, like grief? Religion? Humour?

The Fuzzies are small, but humanoid. They live in organised groups. They use weapons and tools. They seem to plan ahead.

Such a problem could have been written didactically, simply exploring the possibilities, but Piper added a time limit by employing his knowledge of politics and economics.

The Fuzzy world, Zarathustra, is rich in minerals, and a charter has already been granted to exploit its resources. Should the Fuzzies be 'people', the charter will be revoked and the company will lose billions.

It is now in the interest of the company's representatives



on-planet to prove, if they can, that the Fuzzies are mere animals.

Here Piper's work diverges from many others. None of the representatives are villainous. They are self seeking and ambitious, but not true villains. It is almost impossible to discover any real villains in any Piper work - if they exist at all. Even the murderous enemy in SPACE VIKING, who kills the hero's bride on their wedding day, is not a villain. In their own judgement, the representatives are protecting their own jobs and the livelihood of others. Like the Shoonoon in 'Oomphel In The Sky', they truly believe in the actions that they take.

The Fuzzy problem must be resolved legally - yet how to take it to court? Piper's solution is heartrendingly obvious: a Fuzzy dies violently. A court is convened: was it murder? If it was, then the Fuzzies are people.

The man who kills the Fuzzy seems deliberately cruel, the blackest of villains, yet, quite suddenly, with the court case well under way, he is revealed in two heart-breakingly explicit paragraphs to be both caring and capable of tragic repentance.

It is this compassion, this understanding, which makes Piper's work outstanding. His insight into behaviour enables him to picture clearly the parade of personal decisions that become political realities that shape power and alter history.

This has been only a short introduction to Piper's work, considering only what seem to be his major preoccupations. Other readers' interpretations may differ. I have, for example, made no mention of how Piper used women as both major and minor characters long before fashion dictated it. I haven't mentioned the melancholic message of 'The Keeper' (where a man's duty is to be true to himself; tradition is strong, but it is alterable - fidelity to self is not), or the splendid logic displayed in mysteries like 'Naudsonce' or 'Ministry Of Disturbance'. Others may concentrate on the view Piper gives to religion.

H. Beam Piper would undoubtedly have become one of the major writers of the 1960s, 1970s and probably longer. The current revival of his work - and the sudden marvelous discovery of the lost third Fuzzy manuscript - provides many opportunities for appraisal.

For myself, I find I have not mentioned the mystery of H.B.Fyfe - the unfinished aspect of Piper's stories seem to have an effect...

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#### CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF PIPER'S PUBLISHED WORK.

- 1947 - 'Time And Time Again', in ASF, April.
- 1948 - 'He Walked Around The Horses', in ASF, April (Paratime story); 'Police Operation', in ASF, July (Paratime story).
- 1950 - 'The Mercenaries', in ASF, March (in F.); 'Last Enemy', in ASF, August (Paratime story); 'Flight From Tomorrow', in Future Fiction, September.

- 1951 - 'Operation R.S.V.P', in Amazing, January; 'Dearest', in Weird Tales, March; 'Temple Trouble', in ASF, April (Paratime story); 'Genesis', in Future Fiction, Sept.
- 1952 - 'Uller Uprising', in Petrified Planet (Anth.), August, (in F.).
- 1953 - MURDER IN THE GUNROOM; 'Uller Uprising', in Space SF, February and March; NULL-ABC with J.J.McGuire, in ASF, February and March.
- 1954 - 'The Return' with J.J.McGuire, in ASF, January (in E.).
- 1955 - 'Time Crime', in ASF, February and March (Paratime story).
- 1957 - CRISIS IN 2140 (aka NULL-ABC, 1953); 'Omnilingual', in ASF, February (TFH story, in F.); LONE STAR PLANET with J.J.McGuire, in Fantastic Universe, March; 'The Edge Of The Knife', in Amazing, May (TFH story, in E.); 'The Keeper', in Venture SF, July (TFH story, in F.).
- 1958 - A PLANET FOR TEXANS (aka LONE STAR PLANET, 1957); 'Graveyard Of Dreams', in Galaxy, February (TFH story, in F.); 'Ministry Of Disturbance', in ASF, December (TFH story, in F.).
- 1959 - 'Hunter Patrol' with J.J.McGuire, in Amazing, May; 'Crossroads Of Destiny', in Fantastic Universe, July; 'The Answer', in Fantastic Universe, December.
- 1960 - 'Oomphel In The Sky', in ASF, November (TFH story, in F.).
- 1961 - FOUR DAY PLANET.
- 1962 - LITTLE FUZZY; 'Naudsonce', in ASF, January (TFH story, in F.); A Slave Is A Slave', in ASF, April (TFH story, in E.); SPACE VIKING, in ASF November to February '63.
- 1963 - SPACE VIKING; JUNKYARD PLANET (contains 'Graveyard of Dreams', 1953 - aka COSMIC COMPUTER).
- 1964 - THE OTHER HUMAN RACE; 'Gunpowder God', in ASF, November (Paratime story).
- 1965 - LORD KALVAN OF OTHERWHEN (contains 'Gunpowder God', 1964, and 'Down, Styphon'); 'Down, Styphon!', in ASF, november (Paratime story).

# WORKS PUBLISHED POSTHUMOUSLY.

- 1981 - FEDERATION - collection including 'When In The Course..' (items noted as 'F.' above).  
EMPIRE - collection of stories noted 'E.' above.  
PARATIME - collection of Paratime stories.  
FUZZY BONES - third and presumed final of the Fuzzy books, written by William Tuning (who died shortly afterwards) from (it is reputed) notes supplied by Jerry Pournelle.
- 1982 - FIRST CYCLE - a Piper manuscript 'fleshed out' by Michael Kurland.  
GOLDEN DREAMS - by Ardath Mayhar -contents uncertain.
- 1983 - THE WORLDS OF H.BEAM PIPER (edited by John F. Carr) a collection, contents unknown.
- Due - FUZZIES AND OTHER PEOPLE, the lost third Fuzzy manuscript.



# **DARK THINGS AND LIGHT: Personal Reflections On Ecstasy In Literature.**

**by Nic Howard**

Life is the pursuit of ecstasy, gained through its accompanying emotions, and the best fiction deals with life.

My dictionary defines ecstasy as 'an exalted state of feeling, mystic trance, frenzy'. Quite so. The experience of ecstasy is a very personal thing, each of us requiring different feelings, insights and catalysts to bring on a state of ecstasy.

There is the realisation of the presence of God. Being in love. Great and well-remembered music. Certain smells. The remembrance of things past. Superb food and company. And Literature.

With Literature, like ecstasy, each of us requires something different to bring on the state of exultation. Thus, only those writings that can give a feeling of ecstasy can be called 'Literature'. And because literature is one of those things, like love, music and food, the enjoyment of which is a totally personal one, this definition of literature is a totally personal one, too. It works differently for each individual. No apologies can be made for that. All definitions of subjective things are open to question; so the above definition seems to me to be as good as any other.

Having said all that, the notion that Literature and ecstasy were connected was first set down over eighty years ago. Arthur Machen (1863-1947) wrote a whole book (HIEROGLYPHICS, 1902) setting forth his thoughts:

"Yes, for me the answer comes with the one word, Ecstasy. If ecstasy be present, then I say there is fine literature; if it be absent, then, in spite of all the cleverness, all the talents, all the workmanship and observation and dexterity you may show me, then, I think, we have a product (possibly a very interesting one) which is not fine literature."

I totally agree.

Having now defined my position, I have a happy excuse (and an ulterior motive for writing this in the first place) to discuss a few of my favourite books, bearing Machen's definition in mind. The connections I found surprised me.

August Derleth (1909-1971) is probably my favourite writer. Between 1934 and 1971 he wrote or edited some one hundred and sixty books, of which fifty or so fall into his 'Sac Prairie Saga', a series of novels, story collections, journals, autobiographies and verse collections chronicling life in his native Sac Prairie, Wisconsin, from the late 1700s to the 1960s.

August Derleth lived. He made his land live. Because the things that brought Derleth to ecstasy were very much the same things that bring me to ecstasy, I have a special regard for his work.

"Winter came suddenly, swiftly; all in one night the aspect of earth changed; darkness crept upon the prairie from the east one December night, striking purple shadows into the west where the sun sank in a cold, pale lemon haze, and the new moon lay in a white glowing; dawn came grey through a wall of quietly falling snow, already four inches deep on the prairie; the river flowed blackly past the village and among the islands; high on the hill, the Pierneau house was invisible behind the flakes, appearing only when the snow ceased falling the following day, like a medieval castle silhouetted against the winter sky. Trees, bushes, shrubs: all hung heavy with soft snow, sifting earthward with every wind."

(from RESTLESS IS THE RIVER, 1939)

That is describing an aspect of life in the raw: another definition of Literature, and one which has a lot to do with Machen's argument. For living itself can be ecstasy.

Reading Derleth, I'm not sitting alone in my home in the middle of an English city; it's as if I'm outdoors in the countryside. The place doesn't matter. Now there's damp earth and autumn's dead leaves beneath my feet. Trees whisper in the wind as the sky slowly darkens...another time it is April, with the sun climbing the rim of morning and a mild wind blowing, releasing the new scents of growing things...then a blazing July afternoon with a haze as of cobwebs over all the land, and the horizon merging greyly into the sky.

And as well as the ecstasy of the living land, the outdoors, Derleth plumbed the dark heart of man, the great inside, and brought out a strange, dark ecstasy that looking into someone else's mind can sometimes produce.

"She spoke to no one of her hopes and dreams, but pursued her solitary way with undivided persistence. It did not seem to her that life and romance could exist in such a little town as Sac Prairie; love, passion, heroism, tragedy, comedy, courage, eternal hope, faith, hatred, jealousy, violence, murder, perversion, irony - all burned and shone and smouldered all about her, but she saw them not, she saw only the train that brought up from Mazomanie the promise of romance and adventure, the train - old 1040 and the orange coaches of the Milwaukee Road - that held out to her twice every day save Sunday an invitation to some new experience, some untouched emotion, the fulfillment of a dream."

(from WALDEN WEST, 1961)

This is akin to the 'abyss-plunging' that so fascinated

H.P. Lovecraft for most of his life. And even death, which is at the bottom of the abyss, in the dark, can be transformed into something almost religious:

The hallowed word,  
the word:  
death

death -  
and death's eternity,  
her life's death the life of shadows:

her dying's death,  
her immortality.

(from ELEGY: ON A FLAKE OF  
SNOW, 1939)

It is the sheer interesting-  
ness of life, and the love of  
life, that is the distinguishing  
characteristic and basic theme of  
Derleth's work. That produces  
ecstasy in me, for living itself  
can be ecstasy. And if the dark-  
ness in our minds and lives can  
be written about in the same way,  
then that is one more way in  
which, like life, they can be  
more easily conquered.

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The writings of different  
authors must be taken on their  
own terms, even if there are  
apparent contradictions in doing  
so. Walt Whitman wrote: 'I am  
large, I contain multitudes'.  
That is often no more obvious  
than in an individual's literary  
tastes. Since literature and  
ecstasy are connected, on a  
personal level, and that  
personality is a multitude of  
desires, feelings and differing  
tastes, then it follows that the  
works of apparently dissimilar  
writers may produce the same  
feelings of ecstasy in the same  
person.

Jack Kerouac (1922-1969) wrote two novels (out of a total  
of some twenty-odd books) that work as Literature for me.

ON THE ROAD (1957) is a leading candidate for the Great  
American Novel, covering as it does a great part of that huge  
and diverse country, and capturing the essences of those  
parts, and creating a strong impression of the whole at one  
particular time in its history.

August Derleth is on record as calling Kerouac's novels  
'sloppy'. And compared (in construction only) to Derleth's  
own novels, they are. But each writer and his work must be  
treated on its own terms. Yet even then the connections are



apparent. Each wrote about different people, in different ways, but the result, due to ecstasy, is the same. Literature.

If ON THE ROAD reads like it was written in three days on a teletype machine, that's because it was. Everything is immediate. It is happening now. It is life.

"At dawn my bus was zooming across the Arizona desert - Indio, Blythe, Salome (where she danced); the great dry stretches leading to Mexican mountains in the south. Then we swung north to the Arizona mountains, Flagstaff, cliff towns. I had a book with me I stole from a Hollywood stall, LE GRAND MEAULNES by Alain-Fournier, but I preferred reading the American landscape as we went along. Every bump, rise, and stretch in it mystified my longing. In inky night we crossed New Mexico; at grey dawn it was Dalhart, Texas; in the bleak Sunday afternoon we rode through one Oklahoma flat-town after another; at nightfall it was Kansas. The bus roared on."

By Derleth's method of thinking, the other novel, DOCTOR SAX (1959) is an utter hash, an incoherent mass of ideas, story, half-forgotten yearnings, and dreams in the present. But Kerouac captured the human mind:

"The other night I had a dream that I was sitting on the sidewalk on Moody Street, Pawtucketville, Lowell, Mass., with a pencil and paper in my hand saying to myself 'Describe the wrinkly tar of this sidewalk, also the iron pickets of the Textile Institute, or the doorway where Lousy and you and G.J.'s always sittin and dont stop to think of words when you do stop, just stop to think of the picture better - and let your mind off yourself in this work'."

The mind, unless you're a god, is an incoherent mess of odd thoughts and ideas, jumping from one track to another, for longer or shorter lengths of time, like a needle on a damaged record. DOCTOR SAX is written from the mind, in such a way that it reads like truth. Which is another definition of life...

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Arthur Machen was a disillusioned country- and city-mystic who wrote of the ecstasy and wonder that could be found in everything in all places:

"Here, then, is the pattern in my carpet, the sense of the eternal mysteries, the eternal beauty hidden beneath the crust of common and commonplace things; hidden and yet burning and glowing continually if you care to look with purged eyes."  
(from THE LONDON ADVENTURE, 1924)

In his pursuit to capture in print the feelings of ecstasy that his life in Wales and London suggested to him, he produced some of the most intense and ecstatic work - autobiographies and fiction, although the dividing line between the two is often very vague indeed - in English. That was to be expected. HIEROGLYPHICS (quoted at the beginning of this article) is a book-length attempt to rationalise the feelings of ecstasy caused by some of the world's 'classic' books, and to justify why they can be regarded as literature. So, too, he

argues why some 'classics' fail.

Like Mary Webb (the fourth author in this discussion), Machen wrote of the bright and dark ecstasies that underlie life, if we only opened our eyes to it. Both were mystics in that they tried to write of the little-glimpsed secrets that they thought were behind everyday existence.

It sometimes seems that Machen wrote of an alternate world:

"The wind blew wildly, and it came up through the woods with a noise like a scream, and a great oak by the roadside ground its boughs together with a dismal grating jar. As the red gained in the sky, the earth and all upon it glowed, even the grey winter fields and the bare hillsides crimsoned, the waterpools were cisterns of molten brass, and the very road glittered. He was wonder-struck, almost aghast before the scarlet magic of the afterglow. The old Roman fort was invested with fire; flames from heaven were smitten about its walls, and above there was a dark floating cloud, like a fume of smoke, and every haggard writhing tree showed as black as midnight against the blast of the furnace."

(from THE HILL OF DREAMS, 1907)

But it is just the sunset seen through the eyes of someone who loves, as love is one form of ecstasy.

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And that is the 'pattern in the carpet', the connection, the thing that all the world discussed here have in common. It is love. Perhaps works that seem to differ vastly from each other are also related in the light of love, as well as ecstasy in general. After all, love is (in my opinion) what the majority of people think about for the majority of the time. Creative writers are no different.

August Derleth loved his native place. Jack Kerouac loved America and the experiences and mystical longings it combined to give him. Arthur Machen loved Wales and romanticised London, as Mary Webb wrote of her beloved Shropshire. All found beauty through association. They all saw the dark things and light. Love has both of these.

I must stress again that this is a purely personal definition of literature, and that all definitions of this kind are personal. Again, no apology can be made for that. Machen's argument is as good as any other, and, as I don't know of anyone else using it, I've been pleased to perhaps revive it here.

Of course, ecstasy in literature comes through in the work of other writers. I chose Derleth, Kerouac, Machen and Webb because they are perhaps the most immediate to me. But works by Jack London, Sinclair Lewis, John Cowper Powys, Balzac, H.P. Lovecraft, Thomas Hardy and Colin Wilson (to name a few who, at first sight, would seem to have little or no connection with each other) compare in their intensity.

So, too, the personal feelings of ecstasy that some works by these (and doubtless still more) writers can cause - an exalted state of feeling, a mystical experience.

Nic Howard

An experience is not always the means to an end, but can be an end in itself - a combination that helps to find what life is.

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I have left Mary Webb (1881-1927) to last, as she sums up best what I have been trying to put across. In her novel SEVEN FOR A SECRET (1922) she captures that strange nagging feeling, that hint of the mixture of darkness and light that can be discerned everywhere, but particularly in the rural places where life is lived closer to the core of being.

"Is there more? Out in the early summer morning, listening to the silence, you know that there is more, that in and beyond the purple earth and silver sky there is a mystery so great that the knowledge of it would be intolerable, so sweet that the very intuition of its nearness brings tears. Every sigh of the mystic, every new word of science, is fraught with it. Yet its haunts are further away than time or space or consciousness. It may be that death reveals it. Certainly life cannot, for if we learnt that secret, such is its glory and piercing beauty that it would kill us."

It isn't necessary to go as far as death: the pursuit is the thing, the purpose of life. And life is the pursuit of ecstasy, gained through its accompanying emotions; and the best fiction - Literature - deals with life.

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# The Vogons Are Coming!

In AD NAUSEAM 2, Kev Rattan commented that he saw the written word as his prime cultural influence. That set me thinking about what went into the make up of my cultural world-view, and I realised that books were only slightly more important to me than other media, like music, films, radio or the visual arts. That led me to wonder how other people felt about the relative importance to them of the different media. So, let me see if I can get some feedback on this by means of a little scenario.

Let us imagine that Doug Adams' Vagon Constructor Fleet arrives one day, with the intent of building that famous hyper-space by-pass right through our solar system. Fortunately, you are one of the lucky ones, for you discover that your best friend is really Ford Prefect, who gives you one minute to select three items from your home to take with you as 'cultural anchors' while you journey round the Universe. What items would you choose?

By limiting it to a mere three, I find that I can make a choice quite easily - more than that and I'd go crazy trying to make up my mind, and end up a whiff of gas!

First of all, I'd grab my LORD OF THE RINGS, since that is a book I know I can rely on for a variety of stimuli. Within those covers are many facets of human life; good and evil, freedom and oppression, fantasy and reality. I could spend time learning the languages or the poetry, or working out the background more fully. It is possibly the only book that could provide such variety for me.

Then I'd pick up my worn but serviceable copy of Van Morrison's great album, ASTRAL WEEKS. It is a delightful fusion of rock, jazz and blues, with elusive lyrics that still fascinate me after fifteen years. The record's diversity and superb musicianship would make it possible for me to live with it alone for a very long time indeed.

Finally, I'd select my video of KAGEMUSHA, Kurosawa's epic film about 15th century Japan. That is visually beautiful and mentally intriguing. It illustrates many aspects of the predicament of life, such as the struggle between change and tradition, or the way a person's station in life determines their perceived value as opposed to their real value. Above all, it gives a picture of a civilisation on Earth that was very different to my own, showing the adaptability of man - in the context of a 'hitch-hike across the Galaxy', that's a point to be kept in mind!

All three items would make a composite package that would be of supreme value to me - with these three items, I think I could face the Universe with a reasonable anchorage in my cultural past. How about you? What would you need to give you the necessary stability to survive?

John D. Owen

# By-ways Of The Galaxy.No.2: Larix

by Allan Jones

Two Royal Commissions and a galactic working party report have evidently been insufficient to stem the sillier rumours concerning the present state of the planet Larix. It may be timely, therefore, for me to recount the facts, such as they are, in the belief that this will do more good than attempts at concealment.

Unlikely though it seems, I must begin with the work of the distinguished twentieth century mathematician and theoretical physicist Johann von Neumann. In 'The general and logical theory of automata', (reprinted in volume V of JOHANN VON NEUMANN: COLLECTED WORKS, Pergamon Planetary Printers) he discusses the possibility of constructing a machine which could make a replica of itself, given access to a store of necessary components. Von Neumann was not in the least concerned with how to build such a machine - which would in any case have been beyond the technological possibilities of his day - nor with why anyone should bother to make one. He was concerned solely with whether such a device was theoretically possible, and he showed convincingly that, indeed, it was. Other thinkers developed the idea. For example, one concluded that a machine might be built that could work directly with raw materials, rather than finished component, in order to reproduce itself. There was even a popular novel, of a genre called 'Science Fiction', which used this very idea, though even the author's name has been lost to us now.

The idea virtually died, but was revived some decades later when people were seriously thinking of ways of indicating to extra-terrestrial life that there existed life on Earth. Most of the ideas proposed were pretty hopeless and, with hindsight, seem curiously naive. The idea of using a von Neumann-type machine, though, had a certain elegance, and I'd like to spend a little time outlining it.

A moment's thought will show that if one were to send a single probe into the galaxy in the hope of its being intercepted and correctly interpreted as having originated from an intelligent population on Earth, the venture would be bound to fail. Even a thousand probes would be lost in the vastness of the galaxy. Suppose, however, one launched a single von Neumann machine, capable of reproducing itself from any raw material encountered en route, be it inter-planetary dust or deserted planets. Each offspring would be capable of reproducing itself, and in a relatively short time, the exponential growth of these contraptions would ensure a thorough penetration of the galaxy.

Well, this is not just a plausible theory. One such machine was actually launched and although it was in many ways a very crude device, it did have some sophisticated



features. One of these was a procedure for checking the soundness of the replicas, for the designers of the original machine realised that it was quite certain that, from time to time, defective versions would appear. Within the central control of each machine, therefore, was a testing program by which each machine tested itself. Any that were faulty were automatically directed (by themselves) onto a path that plunged them straight into the remote star Cercis. Any reader who has stayed with me this far will not need reminding that Cercis is the star about which Larix orbits. And this brings me back to where I started, namely the present state of Larix.

The first of the major galactic surveys described Larix as 'uncommonly rich in most of the standard minerals, but too remote for profitable working'. Much later, at the time of the second survey, it was found that Larix was virtually exhausted, though no licence had been granted to anyone to work it. How the depletion of Larix came about is a complete mystery, though many guesses have been made. It is, for example, entirely possible that some unscrupulous entrepreneur chose, for unknown reasons, to excavate it covertly without bothering to get formal permission, and if I had to plump for a hypothesis, this is the one I should go for. To suggest, as some have, that a rogue self-replicating machine, instead of plunging into Cercis, came down on Larix and fabricated numerous simulcra of itself which are now malevolently roaming the universe, spawning more of their kind, is merely irresponsible speculation and must be discounted at this stage.

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#### REVIEWING A FRIEND, continued from page 13.

and as a 'fantasy' (that by the Guardian SF reviewer, who's ability to recognise SF is thus put in grave doubt), but GW is neither of these things. The Le Guin quip doubtless comes from a rather cursory reading, for the similarities between GW and THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS (the Le Guin novel that comes closest in concept to Mary's work) are really very few, and the uses to which the common themes are put are very different. To call GW a 'fantasy' is laughable - it is very solidly based in the SF genre, and its whole ethos is SF-based, rather than fantasy. To a casual glance it might seem as if the society of Orthe was just another medieval set-up, but nothing could be further from the truth. Mary's alien society is well-realised and cunningly wrought, with deep roots and finely designed reasons for its existence and form. It is perhaps closer to Vance than to Le Guin in this respect. Indeed, if I really had to give a pedigree to the book, it would be very much a combination of Vance and Wolfe, with just a dash of Le Guin. It would, however, be much more accurate to recognise that it is the work of an original mind that has absorbed the lessons of its predecessors, and is building mature works on their foundations.

GOLDEN WITCHBREED can be read on a number of levels, with equal satisfaction at each subsequent reading. I have no doubt that it is a work I shall be coming back to again and again, simply because there is so much in the story still to be coaxed out. Mary Gentle is now writing a sequel, which should expand on the excellent foundations of this first book. Take my advice - buy a copy, if you want to read one of the best works by a new author to be published in the past few years. And believe me - there are no scales on my eyes when I say that. GOLDEN WITCHBREED really is that good!

# RIPPLES

\*Sigh\* - I suppose I should have expected it. I mean, you print an epic 14 page article and you're going to get lots of long locs coming in the door, aren't you? As a result RIPPLES is bigger than ever this time - there won't be much from me in it, since space is at a premium - so let's get straight on with it.

LILIAN EDWARDS,  
1, Braehead Road,  
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Glasgow.

The most immediate aspect of CS is withoutdoubt the externals; the beautiful production, crisp, thick paper, perfect columns and decorous and appropriate art. As far as all this goes, you are untouched in my fanzine experience and I'm glad to see that someone can aspire to this sort of production in SF fandom (it's not so uncommon in comics fandom, whence I hailed originally) and be met with critical success. But because your format is so lovely, you set high standards as to your content, which I'm not sure were, at least in my mind, absolutely met this time, a result which is paradoxical and unfair I grant you.

Take your lead article, for example. Or to be more exact, your lead three articles, which seem to have inexplicably been mixed up in manuscript form while in the post and printed rather confusingly as a single opus. There are lots of good ideas in it, and some surprisingly lyrical phrases for someone who I think of basically as an informative nutter rather than a stylish writer - the concept of the past being 'as dead as diamonds' and hence polishable with platitudes is one I must remember to plagiarise. But out

of the morass of contrary cross-currents of thought, potted biographies of favourite authors, and distracting cartoons..., no single message leaked out to provide a satisfying end, and my nett memory being of a rambling article which I cannot face re-reading. The piece, however well attempted, must be counted as a failure. Still, it's the sort of failure I could see attempted more often

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MARY GENTLE,  
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Dorset.

...Many kind thanks for the Coleridge quote...Under the laws of coincidence, I happened to have this particular Romantic poet thrown at me by the English tutor at college at just about the same time that I received CS7. A threatened discussion on the 'Ode to Dejection' was more profitably diverted into a discussion of SF and fantasy (the woman isn't all bad - she cherishes a secret enthusiasm for LOTR). A child has to go somewhere to find the infinite in it's reading, I grant you; and the trail we all followed is bound to look a shade familiar. I seem to recall being struck down by the virulent Gollancz yellow covers around l1 or l2; in particular their collections of H.P.Lovecraft stories - and people wonder why I'm warped! It's the eldritch forces. I tell 'ee... I can't say I ever had a thing for reference books though. I don't have the engineer mentality; provided a thing works, I don't care how...but I do want to know why, which is a different

question. (I heard a lovely quote the other day...it said that the man who knows how will always have a job - and the man who knows why will always be his boss. I'm inclined to add that the man who knows who will probably own the company, but that is just natural cynicism.)

...What exactly is 'An Age Without An Aim' about? (And no, the answer is not 'about 14 pages') The by-ways are interesting, but where the hell is the road going? I can put up with digression on account of I like his style, but ...I am inclined to nit-pick along the way. For example, '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'. Well, that is to ignore the large part played by oral literature; SF has a good deal of the folk-tale about it in theme and structure (for very good reasons), and the folk-tale did not confine itself to the literate classes.

There are other points here and there, but I don't think they're worth arguing. Who knows what motivates Simak, Silverberg, et al? If it's money vs literary worth, that's hardly a new dichotomy; we guess at how various people cope with various pressures, but so what? The climate is always in favour of conservatism (small c). There are always exceptions. This we can be sure of. If we can be sure of nothing else, we can be sure of uncertainty... I think. Well, I take Arnold's article finally to be a state-of-the-nation on SF: and as to his conclusion - that it's riding off in all directions - I agree. I would not be so sunnily optimistic about it, for all that. There are, at any given time, good books around, (I think of such disparate recent productions as Wolfe's and Donaldson's). There are truckloads of rubbish. But the rubbish can always be sure of finding a lowest common denominator to appeal to (it manages to appeal

to mine, ok?), whereas good books require a minimum level of - what is the phrase I'm looking for? Readership quality? A Common Reader who is slightly uncommon? A few broad-minded readers who turn into editors, publishers, accountants? Come the recession, depression, right wing backlash, or whatever we're currently calling it, that's the factor that vanishes into thin air. Frightened people cease to care.

...I somehow distrust arguments on SF that drag 'evolution' into court. Evolving into what, and (more important) why? It implies some grand linear progression that culminates magnificently in Today...or at least, Tomorrow. It's simple, not to say simplistic; because after all it's far more complex to say that there are recurring cycles, spirals, degenerations, responses to social phenomena, reactions of individual psychology (tick your choice). Evolution implies that this is the best of all possible worlds so far. Other theories put SF - or anything else, for that matter - in a far more precarious position: we are where we are because of chance and effort, and instead of climbing an evolutionary ladder, are walking a tightrope without benefit of a safety net.

Putting it briefly, it's the tone of complacency that I object to. Which brings me on to 'Death On Two Legs...'. It puzzled me a little: it seems to be a history of recent terrorism, but without any real interest in what terrorism is. One man's terrorist, as they say, is another man's freedom fighter; and history's verdict will depend on who came out the winner. Terrorism is more than a protection racket, or a method of keeping governments in power, or a means of getting attention, or even a last-ditch attempt to overthrow a government - and yet it can be all of these. Is terrorism guerrilla warfare (and if not, why not?). Clauswitz said war was merely the last phase of an economic struggle 35 - how does that apply to terrorism?

The examples quoted in the article would seem to indicate there are as many kinds of terrorism as there are terrorists. And if the word is terror-ist, then are the nuclear powers terrorists to their own and each others population? They scare me! Rather than a strung-together list of incidents arbitrarily called terrorist, I should have liked some analysis of why this is seen as a method of exercising power, and if it's effective; and at what precise point does 'legitimate dissent' turn into terrorist violence. And if the answer to the last is 'when they start killing innocent people' how does that differ from war or revolution, or doesn't it? I ask because, until you have some kind of theory, how can you suggest methods of stopping it? When I read a concluding sentence that says '...countries could reduce terrorism from a menace to an irritant by employing the computer against the terrorist', I think What? How? That is no place to leave an article. The computer is no magic wand. I take it he means use it for identification, but even so...

CS reduces me to a state of gibber, as you can see. Let me turn rapidly to things I wholeheartedly liked - 'By-Ways Of The Galaxy', for one. I do hope 'No.1: Catalpa' means that you've got some more lined up for future issues. At the moment, I am definitely in the market for 'academic' comedy (I'm sure that all 12 volumes of THE HISTORY OF BETULA: A MARXIST PERSPECTIVE are on my college reading list somewhere...) Is academic absurdity the phrase I'm looking for? Very funny, anyway, an educational article on the perils of education.

'Innocence 2000' also appeals: a different kind of humour, this, and subordinate to a number of awkward questions. Perhaps one should plead innocent but insane? If I were forced to describe this, I'd call it whimsical Kafka; but I think I'd sooner just appreciate it. And I liked 'The Dreams Up

There' better than I usually like Dave Thiry's stuff, but all the same I have the feeling there are sharks below the surface here. If I could work out quite what he was saying, I wouldn't like it. It's a story that's highly ambiguous about 'female qualities'.

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MIKE SHORROD,  
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USA

Re: Aristotle : To do is to be.  
Descartes : To be is to do.  
Sinatra : Doobe, doobe, dooo.

...As far as Gumbo's V. goes, I would like to add my 'damn, you remind me of me' to the list I am sure is growing daily.

Also, as far as your final paragraph on religion goes, I'd like to share a phrase that has been attributed to everyone from Plato to St. Tommy Aquinas, but actually originated with Cato Senex: "I don't understand how one priest can meet another in the marketplace without breaking into laughter".

NIHIL NOVUS SUB CAELO rools, OK?

Aside from (Akien's) rambling and circular arguments, I found his commentary on Americans to be both funny and truthful to some degree. However, I think he may have missed an important point.

Assuming that Darwin's theories are not merely a tautology (those that survive, survive), Akien's 'American Dream' is not merely societal, but also strongly genetic in character, having manifested itself now for about ten generations.

After all, any pioneer who did not demonstrate these traits generally ended up being incorporated into the food chain, or as a counted coup.

Thus, the success of pulp fiction, and the popularity of Heinlein's 'competent man' (and others) is not due to personal fantasies of being a cultural

ideal, but an expression of self-love (sorry, self-satisfied men are not part of the American Ideal).

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IAN COVELL,  
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Berwick Hills,  
Middlesbrough,  
Cleveland,  
TS3 78P

...I think there's a misapprehension early in (Akien's) article on what makes good fiction. Akien decries the competent man, yet to portray anyone else is to slant the story to fit current social needs. Most people are competent. Take the horror film: when one person has been brutally murdered and a threat hollowly uttered that others are to follow, normal people are competent enough not to say things like "You stay here while I scout around". The point being that life requires competence, it needs a modicum of intelligence, of insight, even of empathy. To say that SF often fails because it portrays those people who can cope is to deny the majority of the human race the right to a voice - are only those who crumble easily worthy of investigation? This literary trash is symptomatic of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, who would write three hundred pages on someone dithering which tie to wear, but the majority of real people just get on with things. The odd fact about life is that disasters are generally the things people can cope with, it's the day-to-day small irritations that break you. Akien declares that WAY STATION, with its portrayal of a lonely man doing what a man's gotta do, was somehow 'better' than either what had been or what is now. Personally, I've always seen the protagonist of WS as a failure - not at the beginning, but at the end, where he renounces 'humanity' (the girl) and 'love' for the fulfillment of the outside. I say he has renounced his birthright, I say that he is following that Christian trash about 'to a higher marriage', and I say the hell with

it. There's only love, all else is lie.

...Did you ever read that invigorating work, LOVE AND DEATH IN THE AMERICAN NOVEL, by Leslie Fiedler? His basic argument on the history and development of American literature is somewhat at odds with Akien's. At root, he says that America was the last refuge of man - the trek to the uttermost west, the dark and uncertain continent. Essentially, 'class' was dropped as the subject of literature - though it remained the staple of all European sentimental fiction, and still does - and was replaced by the mythic confrontation of the sexes, and man's desire to escape woman and be united with his more innocent (ie, savage) self. That's where the myth of the West comes from - the love of the white man for his Indian brothers/lovers, later replaced by the myth of the white man's escape with the black man and consequent rejection of women and marriage. I've no doubt that, like me, Fiedler's book would remind you of, and make you ponder on, many other books of today... The point I was trying to make was that the individual such a literature gives rise to is the eternal adolescent, the bad boy, the man with no home, that everyone admires. Quintessentially, he is Huckleberry Finn, forever leaving on his barge, condescending to take along the larn'ed Tom if he'll just keep his mouth shut, and exclude poor Becky because she's a girl and girls don't count now. Of course American literature was wish-fulfillment fantasy; it was a young boy's idea of how grown men should act. I don't believe this aspect of US literature has altered (by the osmotic effect, and having to have a field to sell to, it also affected UK and European writers) and the only essential difference visible is a counter-attack by feminists who now also declare that it's best the sexes part and get on with their own lives. US literature, being juvenile, portrayed women either as mothers - warm, 37

accommodating, gentle, haltingly appealing - and monsters - strange eldritch creatures who weakened a man's parts with their incomprehensible attractions.

The basic fault is that the feminist counter-blast has failed signally to deal with the fundamental points. All it does is bolster the feeling that the sexes have nothing to communicate to each other. Charnas' characters consider it more attractive to fuck horses than men, Russ' think its best just to kill men, Alice Sheldon's characters think its best to run away, and Wilhelm's get married just long enough to have a divorce. All in all, they propose no solution to this sociological disaster...and thus the schism grows and hatred deepens.

...What also puzzles me is Akien's belief that Simak was ever anything other than a despairing writer. What is CITY is not an elegy to failure and death? What is THE CREATOR if not the realisation that life is a joke? Whatever Simak used to write about was always tinged with melancholy and sadness; that this has become overt in the last decades is traceable to Simak's age and - I have said elsewhere - the probability that Simak is now writing for his estate rather than pleasure: he is turning out, at a fast clip, superficial (intendedly) mythic works about his beliefs in religion and in people. I don't think Simak ever trusted the great majority of people at all.

All in all, this argument supports the many arguments I have heard that Sf, and fiction in general, is a diminution of human life and experience, a retreat from 'total reality' to a simplistic (stylistically and otherwise) construct of shallow perceptions. It portrays life as easy where it is complex. It attempts no innovations, seeks no new paths, and cannot scale the heights of true literature. This is absolutely accurate. Mainly because few people like to read  
38 real literature, which is generally boring, insular (concentra-

tion on one personality may be the required stuff of academic attention, but not popular attention) and too easily placed (such literature has no mythic content because it removes all resonance; by insisting that an individual is different to the common herd, you leach that character of interest for the great majority of readers). The point being, I presume, that people turn to fiction to escape such complexity, and to find themselves confronted with low-key life is anathema

DEATH ON TWO LEGS...: hm, CS really is different, isn't it? I don't know much about terrorism or politics, and indeed I find the fundamental idea of nations and frontiers very funny. ("This side of the river is mine, that side is yours, and you're a foreigner, my brother.") I will say that I think the term 'assassination' is elitist propaganda (as if the life of VIPs is somehow of more moment than that of 'ordinary' people), the correct one is 'murder'.

Ken Mann makes a cogent, comprehensible precis of what terrorism is about, how it is accomplished, why it is done, why its aims falter or are defeated, why certain types arouse sympathy and others do not. His point about nuclear blackmail makes a kind of sense, but I can see an instance where a terrorist group would plant a bomb and then explode it - figuring that. If they can't have the land they want, nobody else should occupy it either!

It strikes me that there is no crusade on which I would go if it followed terrorist tactics. I am (I think) an idealist, but if the omelette requires breaking eggs, even one, then I am not sure the object is worth it.

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ARTHUR HLAVATY,  
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USA

...Once again I see the article

on the Death of Good SF. Maybe there's something about it that makes it seem as though I've seen it dozens of times when I've only seen it a few. This time it's by Arnold Akien, but it's the same message. Once there was exciting and innovative SF (the New Wave), but now there's been a retrenchment and the hacks (Niven, Varley, the Newest Silverberg) are burying the good and innovative serious writers (invariably Christopher Priest).

Synchronistically enough, today's mail also brought the current LOCUS, with word that Christopher Priest has been the beneficiary of a major publicity campaign which is putting his writings in demand, and not only that, but through a combination of good fortune and business shrewdness, he's managed to reclaim rights to his books, and thereby get a much better deal than publishers usually give their writers.

Well, I'm glad to hear it. Not only is it a victory for Good Serious Literature, but the next time somebody writes the Article, they'll have to find another example.

One thing about Akien's article: the idea that "Silverberg knows that the massive fee that he commanded will mean less money is available for new writers". Really now, Silverberg got the money from Arbor House - a hardback publisher which has done virtually no SF. Assume for the moment that Silverberg's advance was ten times what a new author would get. Are we to assume that Arbor House would have found ten deserving new writers of SF to shower their benevolence upon had it not been for greedy old Bob, or is it more reasonable to say that the money would have gone to some other author, maybe a mainstream figure who turns out thrillers or sexy historicals? There is no reason to assume that some sort of fixed sum has been set by God or a personified Publishing Biz, and if the bad writers get it, the good writers won't.

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Ah well, I suppose the sanity couldn't last. Sometime or other I had to let the crazies in. Look who's first in line!

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

...People do, quite rightly, make allowances when their 'heroes'/idols/whatever you want to call them slip and slide into senility, or simply jack it all in. But to defend, to a certain extent, the starvation of new writers because a dodgy old hack may finally produce is definitely a 'no-no' in my books...I'm not going off at Arnold here, this is just another (sweeping) comment.

VAL'S CASTLE, BEAST, the second three COVENANTS - can you believe how much money these have vampirically sucked out of the market? They got to make a living? Then why don't they do it by writing, as opposed to just rewriting (and badly so - Donaldson's prose, or so I'm led to believe, has been outlawed by the Geneva Convention (and who did the Conreport of that one, fanhistoryfans?)).

Alright, so maybe I do support the New Wave (as was, but never more shall be so), but only because it provided a decent alternative to rehashed American pulp. But even that, with apologies to PKD followers, has died the death. Defend, if you will, the recent (only a couple of years ago, if memory serves correctly) printing of LORD TEDRIC, or the Tubb DUMAREST saga (which, although I enjoy as light reading, are hardly staple fodder for the brain). Take your choice of weapons, sir. I take Holland's FLOATING WORLDS, and B.B.'s NOVA EXPRESS. We meet at daybreak at a place of our second's choosing.

...Alas no, kind sir (says he eating dust and licking the stiletto heel that so nearly removed his reproductive

equipment) I did not make an automatic assumption that anything excluding Ballard is therefore Space Opera. Far from it. And I refuse point blank to define SF as well. But (he whimpers, wriggling in the dirt like a sidewinder) as I've said before, I feel that too much pulp is being produced in the name of SF, and being accepted as such (hence the refs to American covers and DUMAREST/LENSMAN). Okay, so you don't like JGB, but at least you state critically why not. To be serious for a moment, would he have been a better writer if he had stuck to his earlier style, and not gone down different paths? Whether JGB followed PKD, or whether the former led the latter I care not...Of course the conclusion of preclusion is, as you say, nonsense, but going to extremes may sow the seeds of doubt and get some people to re-evaluate.

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We can always rely on good ol' Chuck to go to extremes. Of course, whether it serves the purpose which Chuck intends it to is another matter entirely. You only have to read the following missive from Marty Cantor to realise that!

MARTY CANTOR,  
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California,  
91601  
USA

...This 'To Hell With This Literary Crap, Just Give Us A Good Story' fan found Arnold Akien's article, well, er, interesting. And simplistic.

I find SF from the thirties to be (except for Weinbaum) rather worse than Akien rates it, with improvements in writing during the forties, reaching a height in the fifties of a higher quality than Arnold says he finds there. The New Wave crap is merely a rehashing of the failed avant-garde garbage of the mainstream tradition of the early part of this century - crap is crap,

regardless of its pretentions.

...Anyway, as a person who published poetry in the little magazines of the late fifties, I find it upsetting to be considered a non-literati because I prefer that SF adhere to its story-telling traditions. My credentials as a literati are solid - it is just that I prefer 'art' to be where it belongs, and not ruining an otherwise delightful reading experience.

Let me end this by saying that there is no 'literary tradition of SF', there is merely a group of pseudo-elite snobs who mistakenly try to destroy SF in an attempt to inject inappropriate values into an enjoyable story-telling tradition.

The screenplay of BUG JACK BARRON is (or was, at the time I heard of it) being written by Harlan Ellison. I witnessed a shouting match 'twixt Ellison and Spinrad over the working title of the movie, both screamers missing the point that working titles are tentative, and that studios will final-title a movie whatever they damn well please regardless of the opinions of the authors.

Chuck Connor seems to be one of those people who jumps to specious conclusions from insufficient evidence. Just because I despise Ballard and the other New Wave twits does not mean that I consider the execrable Doc Smith to be a good writer. Crap is crap and all of that there. E.E. Smith is better than Ballard in only two respects, those being that Smith's plots are at least understandable, and his stories are (albeit primitive in extremis) SF. Other than that, Smith is as much a bore as Ballard. For Connor's edification (though he is probably too obtuse to understand this), there is something much more important to SF than the didactic and soul-destroying reason for its existence that he postulates. "...I thought SF had something to do with looking at the future and giving possible 'future pictures'



along different viewpaths." That, sir, is a very poor excuse of a thought; in fact, all that he is describing is a dry-as-dust treatise on possibilities, something conjured up by various intellectual think tanks. Poot.

Throughout history, the rough lot of humankind has been enlivened by story-tellers. In today's world, only some SF writers have that gift with the written word. And that, nincompoop Connor, is a far greater gift to the human race than all the inane twaddle peddled by Ballard and the rest of the illiterati New Wave twits put together.

Humph, Bernard Earp's loc was so sane as to give me some hope that the twits have not yet completely taken over fandom. More!

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There's over-the-top and then there's over-the-top, as you can see! Let's cool it a little with one of the more sensible fans around.

RICHARD FAULDER,  
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Yanco,  
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Your suggestion that the attraction of SF is that of the vast seems to be an attractive one. However, those who tell us that they know better, and to prove it make slighting references to Isaac Asimov, tell us that, however vast the stage, the players on it are tiny, shallow creatures, so that the action which takes place upon that stage is not really worthy of consideration. A worthier stage, they tell us, is cramped and gloomy, for it is only there that characters can grow tall and solid. (It occurs to me that such characters may simply appear to be that way by virtue of their surroundings.) Why, then, one can only ask, were they attracted to the literature of the vast in the first place?

Arnold Akien's article ranges so widely that it is hard to make an overall comment on it. In a

sense it is also difficult to come to a conclusion about his assertion that the preparedness of SF to mirror the human soul has also declined. I gather there has been an increasing production of works of fantasy, yet to dismiss these as universally a vehicle for the wish-fulfillment of the lazy (although his assertion that what he calls books catering for the New Ghettoes are a means whereby the inhabitants of those Ghettoes can have their Dreams affirmed without actually having to work for it has a loud ring of truth about it) seems to me to fail to sufficiently distinguish between the various works. By no stretch of the imagination, it seems to me, could the Thomas Covenant books be said to fail to examine the human soul. Indeed, these books probably do so more thoroughly than many of the books lauded by those who hold that the New Wave represents some kind of literary pinnacle. That some of the giants of the genre have turned from their former paths may be regrettable inasmuch as the total stock of works of stature is thereby diminished, but is not a total disaster, since the books are still available, if not continuously, as the works are republished...It is this very historical continuity that makes possible the smorgasbord offering which SF and fantasy now offers, and to which Arnold finally alludes.

Ken Mann echoes my own feelings on the subject of terrorism well. However, underlying his article there seems to be the assumption that the practitioners of terrorism are taking the course of action that they are through a rational adherence to a philosophy, however at variance with the real world that might be. That is, the philosophy dictates the action, not the reverse. However, I would contend that the reverse would be the case in many, if not most, cases, especially those which do not involve national liberation

movements. I remember a few years ago a psychologist being interviewed, and remarking to the effect that the proportion of psychotics in the mental institutions of Northern Ireland was lower than on the British mainland, because most of them were in the IRA. Apparently a similar reduction can be observed during any time of war, when most of the psychotics are fighting at the front. What seems to happen is that the naturally violent person casts around for a philosophy which can be used to justify the actions which he/she wishes to undertake. In this context the philosophy of Marcuse is of great value to such people.

...Bernard Earp, it seems to me, is confusing equality with identity (to coin a word). Certainly no two human beings are identical in every respect. Even if they are identical genetically, other pre- and post-natal factors combine to produce distinctive individuals. However, it seems to me that the appropriate line to take is that individuals are equal, yet different. To argue that differences mean inequality is to make value judgements about the worth of different characteristics and the extent to which an individual possesses them.

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JOHN FRANCIS HAINES,  
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Must confess that I found myself a little depressed by Arnold Aiken's article on the future (or lack of it) of SF. Much as I deplore the stratification of literature into the various genre fictions, it is, to some extent, inevitable. It does have one positive advantage - anyone new to the genre can find essential reading very quickly, without having to plough through reference books to discover what he/she should be reading.

Much more important has been the extent of crossover from the genre fictions into mainstream. This has given mainstream fiction a much needed kick in the pants, AND forced SF to look a little more critically at the way character, plot and presentation are tackled.

If it is to survive, any literature must evolve, but must also preserve the lessons it has learnt in its evolution. It is no use harking back to the good ol' days of fifties SF (good as a lot of it undoubtedly was), those days have gone. But in going forward, it is important to hang on to some of the past. The New Wave often threw out the baby together with the bath, soap and towel, producing a form of writing so experimental that the form swamped the content. This resulted in the mistake that unless it is experimental, it can't be good SF, which is codswallop. It also resulted in a lot of totally unreadable SF.

So where does that leave us? I think it leaves us in a potentially exciting situation. Mainstream fiction, which for a long time tried to ignore SF, together with every other genre, has been forced to acknowledge that it won't simply go away, but has developed to the point where it is as well written, and as worthy of consideration in its own right. As a result, some SF novels are now being marketed, not as genre SF, but as mainstream fiction. Russell Hoban's brilliant RIDDLEY WALKER springs immediately to mind. This will happen more frequently in the future, NOT because SF has 'sold out' to mainstream literature, but because it can compete on equal terms with it, having learnt FROM mainstream fiction how to give flesh to the bones of SF in the form of believable and developing characters, and more natural plots.

There will always be genre SF - there will always be genres, as Arnold pointed out, because of the 'new ghettos', each demanding its own literature,

but I think that the most important SF in the future will gradually cease to be actually marketed as a genre, and gradually merge with the mainstream. I suppose that losing the glamour of being a genre will hurt at first, but can SF afford to remain a semi-underground form of literature forever?

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HARRY WARNER, Jr.,  
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...The more I look at the cover of the seventh Crystal Ship, the more I like it. The cluttered appearance of the illustration is just right, somehow, for what I visualise as one of the illustrations in the original edition of Alice In Wonderland if that story had been written by Charles Dickens instead of Lewis Carroll.

Coleridge and you behaved differently in childhood from my reading habits. I learned to read before entering school, thanks to my mother, and so from the age of perhaps five until I was ten or thereabouts, I had no interest at all in fairy tales, folklore, SF or fantasy in general. Instead I wanted to read fiction whose characters and settings were familiar in the sense that they resembled my friends and neighbourhood on Hagerstown's North Prospect Street. I suppose it is too late now for even the most diligent psychiatrist to probe into my subconscious and try to dislodge the hidden reason why I suddenly began to enjoy science fiction when I was ten and then read little but that and other forms of fantasy fiction until I was in my twenties.

Now the circle seems to have been closed, because I find myself reading mostly Mundane fiction and worse yet, seeking out hard-to-find novels which are set in this general part of North America, or re-reading the fiction of John O'Hara, whose Pennsylvanians are

so similar to Marylanders that there's no serious difference.

Arnold Akien's long article is acceptable as long as it rehashes the versions of recent history that appear in the media: they have little to do with real history but it's much too early for the revisionists to do their thing with events of the past few decades. When it deals with the rise of SF, it is more suspect because of what it leaves out, like the basic fact that English language SF developed in the late 19th and early 20th century mainly as stories aimed at a youthful audience. But Akien blunders wildly when he tries to deal with specific cases. I think he borders on libel when he describes Cliff Simak as 'in his dotage'. Cliff is up in years, but bigotry against age is as unforgivable as bigotry against skin colour, because neither condition is rectifiable and neither implies any particular inferiority.

"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". That doesn't make sense: Bob is quite capable of answering spoken or written questions about why he decided to resume writing novels, and in fact described in considerable detail that decision in his FAPA publication several years ago.

But the thing that bothers me most of all about Arnold's article is it's similarity to so much of the material in the media nowadays. Everything, the reader or viewer is asked to believe, is the fault of those terrible people in high places. I think almost all the defects in modern SF can be traced, not to the publishers, not to the authors, but to the readers. The stories that are slight variants on other stories are the ones that sell best. The stories that sell the best are reprinted most frequently. It's as simple as that. I also think that crime is such an enormous problem today because so many

people are committing crimes, not because of the behaviour of politicians or wardens, and I think war is a constant threat to the world because so many millions of the world's people enthusiastically accept jobs involving the manufacture and maintenance of the materials of war.

The letter section is remarkable for the large amount of information it provides on a wild variety of topics. Normally you get lots of opinions and almost as many displays of bad temper out of a loc column in a British fanzine, but in this instance you've done more than your share toward proving the old theory that all knowledge is contained in fanzines.

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Well, maybe not quite all knowledge, Harry, and in any case the people who are really proving the case are the loccers, not me - I just put it all together and pay the bills!

TERRY CARR,  
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...CS is a worthwhile zine; I like your mixture of fannish and sercon pieces, and if there are a couple of pieces here that I don't care for, that's not because I object to their type... Well, with the exception of David Thiry's fan fiction. I understand Noel Hannan's desire to see amateur fiction have a chance at publication in fanzines, and indeed when I was new in fandom I both wrote and published a fair number of amateur SF stories. But few if any were much good, and I eventually came to see the truth of the adage that if an SF story's any damn good at all, some pro editor will buy it. I know the arguments about stories being too 'off-trail' or 'experimental' for the prozines, and these arguments may have some validity as regards non-SF stories, for which professional markets are notoriously

few, but the fact is that there are still too many editors of SF magazines who face deadlines every month and must fill their pages with something halfway decent come Hell or high water; when their inventories are low, which happens more frequently than you might expect, they face the choice of buying some 'sub-standard' ordinary stories or taking a flier on some very strange stories that many readers won't like or understand, but that they know are quite good. In such cases, most any editor will choose the good-stories-that-are-strange, because after all, some of their readers will love them, while if they publish the poor hack stories nobody will do anything but yawn. George Scithers is regarded as a conservative editor, for instance, but even he has published some very unusual stories, such as one by Carter Scholz and a long one by Avram Davidson. (Others, too.)

Arnold Akien's 'An Age Without An Aim' does, I'm afraid, fall prey to the pitfall Graham James mentions of trying to tell the history of SF in too small a space (even fourteen pages isn't enough to do justice to such a complex topic), but Akien does make some good points along the way. He makes a bad mistake, though, in stating that..."some of Silverberg's 'near-mainstream' novels were virtually mutilated as a precondition of publication, most notably DYING INSIDE". I checked with Bob on this to be sure, and he says there was never any such butchering of his books 'after my Ace days', ie, after the early sixties at the latest. Certainly DYING INSIDE didn't suffer such a fate, he says. Akien's source is evidently Peter Nicholls et al's ENCYCLOPEDIA of SF, in which a remark of Bob's that the publishers of his '70s novels had done badly by them was misinterpreted: Bob had meant only that the novels hadn't been packaged and promoted properly in their initial publications, not that the publishers had forced him in any way to

change his texts.

I found Jim Darroch's contention that the analysand in the famous JET-PROPELLED COUCH article by Robert Lindner "is almost certainly that of Paul Linebarger" almost equally questionable. One of the points Lindner made about his patient was that the patient identified so strongly with the future world of the unnamed SF series because his name happened to be the same as that of the hero of the series - a name that was very common, Lindner noted. Neither Paul Linebarger nor 'Cordwainer Smith' could be said to be a common one, nor were those of his heroes, so I believe that leaves him out of consideration in this context. I find it much more likely that the unnamed analysand was John Carter - a very common name in our society - or, more likely, John Gordon, the name of Edmond Hamilton's hero in THE STAR KINGS. Hamilton himself seemed to think so because when he wrote the sequel to THE STAR KINGS in 1964, he had the protagonists recapitulating the case study done by Lindner ten years before (THE STAR KINGS was originally in AMAZING in 1947, and its first book publication was in 1949).

Your fannish piece, 'In The Halls Of Meritocrassee', was amusing. But then, I've always been partial to utopian fiction.

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Utopian Fiction! Jeez, I sure did miss the mark by a long way with that piece! If I labelled 'Meritocrassee' as anything, it'd be a dystopia!

Not everyone agrees with Terry over the fan fiction question. Here's another distinguished American with an opposing view.

LEE HOFFMAN,  
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USA

...Re publishing fiction in

fanzines: when I was a young fan, there were generally only two types of fiction in fanzines: Fa-a-anish stuff (usually humorous, or intended to be so, with fans as characters and things like that) and prozine rejects. In those days, the prozine rejects were generally rejected because they just weren't good enough to sell. Nowadays, the market situation is very different, and so is the lot of the writing being done. There's a lot of very good fiction that can't be sold to prozines because the market is extremely limited. And there's a lot of good fiction that is of a nature for which there just isn't any commercial market. There's no place left for such material to be published, except in fanzines. So why not?

And if some of the fiction published in fanzines is not very good, well, some of the fiction being published professionally isn't either. Quality is less a criterion for professional publication than mass appeal is.

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RAY NELSON,  
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...Akien has certainly identified some of the things that place limitations on modern science fiction, but I feel he is unduly pessimistic about the power of these limitations to prevent the publication of unorthodox works.

In the same year that Kate Wilhelm's WHERE LATE THE SWEET BIRDS SANG took a Hugo and a Jupiter (1976) by dishing up for the millionth time the old post-holocaust pudding, two genuinely original and novel books in the SF field did burst into print. One was Dorothy Bryant's THE KIN OF ATA and the other was Ernest Callenbach's ECOTOPIA. Both found very receptive audiences outside of what we usually call 'fandom'. One, ECOTOPIA, actually added its title to the English language. Both were self-published

in their first appearance, though later issued by major paperback houses in mass format.

However wedded the old guard editors may be to the 'American Dream' and the 'Tech Fix', any author willing to do his own promotion and distribution can place his alternate viewpoint before the public and take the same chances as any mainline New York house does, though starting from a handicapped position.

Thanks to the development of good distribution on the wholesale level on the model of Berkeley's 'Book People' for small press and self-published books, literally any world-view can be cast in the form of a science fiction novel and placed in the marketplace.

Akien's attitude, ignoring the available alternate routes to publication, makes things look far bleaker than they really are, and I feel he also portrays the establishment presses as being more ghettoized than they really are. Also in 1976, the Big Boys published the really novel ILLUMINATUS by Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson, and even Harlequin, in their Laser incarnation, published my BLAKE'S PROGRESS, which certainly did nothing to promote the 'American Dream'. (I did not even conform to Laser's stated guidelines in any part of the work.)

An unduly pessimistic attitude, if some budding author buys it, can do a lot of harm, can make an innovator give up when there is no reason to give up. Akien's paranoia to the contrary, unusual and groundbreaking science fiction can find publication, both within and outside the normal channels.

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Enough of this slagging - let's have someone who actually liked Arnold's magnum opus.

NICK SHEARS,  
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High Wycombe,  
Bucks.  
HP13 5IN

...You have, perhaps, received letters from misguided individuals saying that Arnold Akien's article

was interesting but over-long and could have benefitted from editing. Don't listen to them. I'd like to thank Arnold for entertaining and enlightening me, and most of all, causing me to think. It seems ungrateful not to join in the debate which will probably ensue, but it just seems unnecessary.

I've always thought that education was a matter of training you in ways of thought, of showing you how and where to find things out, not of attempting to deposit facts inside you. The much-lauded 'Information Technology' should help to foster that attitude and assist in its implementation. Increased specialisation in all fields works in the opposite direction - to further the frontiers of a chosen subject now seems so much more difficult, requires so much tunnel-vision, let alone the time, talent, training and opportunity.

Perhaps we're going in the wrong direction. I visited the 'Centre for Alternative Technology' in Machynlleth recently, and was delighted by their welding of old and new. Unlike other Welsh 'back to the roots' communities, they've not renounced modern technology. Far from it. The electronics and solar power is pursued with the same enthusiasm as blacksmithing and organic gardening. Perhaps a little more of such attitudes would do us all good.

Graham James got it wrong about serious articles. I don't read such things in fanzines in order to research a subject. I do so in order to broaden my horizons, whet my appetite, open new channels of thought. Although not the right example to use, Allan Jones' piece on Catalpa sent me back to some old research on the lack of extant records of African cultural history. That research is leading to some interesting reading and has renewed an old friendship. Fandom works in Mysterious Ways!

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Don't it just, Nick. Glad to hear that the zine is stirring a few braincells into activity

out there, though not surprised to hear of it being in weird ways - nothing you fans can get up to really surprises me these days.

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

Gawdelpus, I expected a fanzine! Arnold Akien's article really needs far more attention than I've at present given it; I'm not sure, but I think it's far too longwinded for the point its making: I got to the end and there was a strange anti-climax. Is Arnold saying, after all that wordage, "well, it's all right, really"? He's making a lot of points I'd agree with, but somehow the whole is less than the sum of the parts. I'll pick on particular things to respond to, rather than a general thesis: - the constraints of the market... oh yeah; yesterday I attended a talk given by Tony Ross, the children's book illustrator/writer - this point (about constraints) came up. Just as your SF writer is getting more and more bound by conventions, so, apparently, writers for children have all kinds of constraints. Ross' German publishers, it seems, rejected a drawing of a lame kid with crutches for THE PIED PIPER because they don't like cruelty; similarly a picture of a rat scaring a baby in a cradle was declared a no-no. The US publishers loved GOLDILOCKS AND THE THREE BEARS, but were scared of the feminist lobby objecting to illustrations of Daddy Bear and Baby Bear watching TV while Mummy Bear does the housework. Hell, neat idea, that last - my wife wouldn't think so though. Basically, I'd say "screw the markets" - but I'm not trying to make a living out of writing books. As a reader, I enjoy those genre books which nudge a bit at the ghetto walls, or which are neither ashamed of being what they are nor using their genre status as an excuse for cynical garbage (...And the Voice said, "One man's cynical garbage is another man's High Camp")

Ken Mann's article was necessarily superficial, as well as offering some strange judgements: what an earth does he mean by citing the Nicaraguans as providing centres for destabilisation? Nicaragua is currently being destabilised by, it seems, forces which are linked to those which destabilised Chile. Also, I'd like to know just how we could "reduce terrorism from a menace to an irritant by employing the computer against the terrorist"? The point about political terrorism, it seems to me, is that it is the politics of despair, and however successful in the short term terrorists may be, the path they take means that much of the political terrain is denied to them. When you raise the gun to attack, can you really be expected to put it down when you've won - and risk a counter attack? It's a helluva subject to tackle, and I only wish there were some easy answers to trot out, but there ain't.

After that, it's some relief to turn to inspired pieces of wackiness like your 'In The Halls Of Meritocrassee', and Allan Jones' strange but excellent mini-essay, which obviously draws upon a wealth of scholarly expertise which should be further exploited.

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While we're on the subject of Meritocrassee again, maybe I ought to print some of the adverse comments here, like this comment from ol' DL himself.

DAVID LANGFORD,  
94, London Road,  
Reading,  
Berks.  
RG1 5AU

...The precise shade of disappointment (with ITHOM) must come from the fact that here, after all, is dear old John D. Owen whom we know and love, tossing off a piece all too like the traditional Paranoid Neofan's Reaction To The Appalling Discovery That Some Of Those Cliquey Bastards Don't Even 47

Like STAR WARS. Luckily you're more knowledgeable than that PN, but though it has its moments, the piece seems so earnestly, one-sidedly, critical, and the very viewpoint fails to ring true since, after all, surely dear old John D. Owen himself is a fan of some reputation (cf M. Taylor et al) and very much a denizen of the Halls he regards with such mock horror?

Arnold's bit was amazing, like reading a whole Akien letter without pain owing to the kindly intervention of merciful editors with typewriters and better spelling. It is difficult to know how to make such endless swathes of text look interesting on the page: here at Drilkjls, as you know, we simply try to type it nicely and leave the rest to the readers' opticians (what's the NHS for, eh?). The difficulties duly acknowledged, I think you made the wrong choice in using the grotty little Owen cartoons... But no doubt there wasn't time to try and commission something beyond the very lifelike picture of Arnold himself on page 13 (even if the ears are a trifle exaggerated).

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Yes, well, er, coff,coff - I don't happen to think that those grotty spiders were one of my better ideas, either. It was one of those last minute things where what I originally tried just didn't work out. The other thing came to me as a panic solution which I now bitterly regret, since they really were not meant to be an editorial comment on the article, as some people have construed it. Sorry Arnold!

As for 'Meritocrassee', well, I still can't believe how seriously some fans took that piece! It was only a mere send-up of the pontifications of folk like West and White, and the 'Media Wars' issue just happened to be handy to tie it all onto. I've had reactions ranging from the downright absurd ("that's just what we ought to do to Mediafen" sort of thing), to the shocked

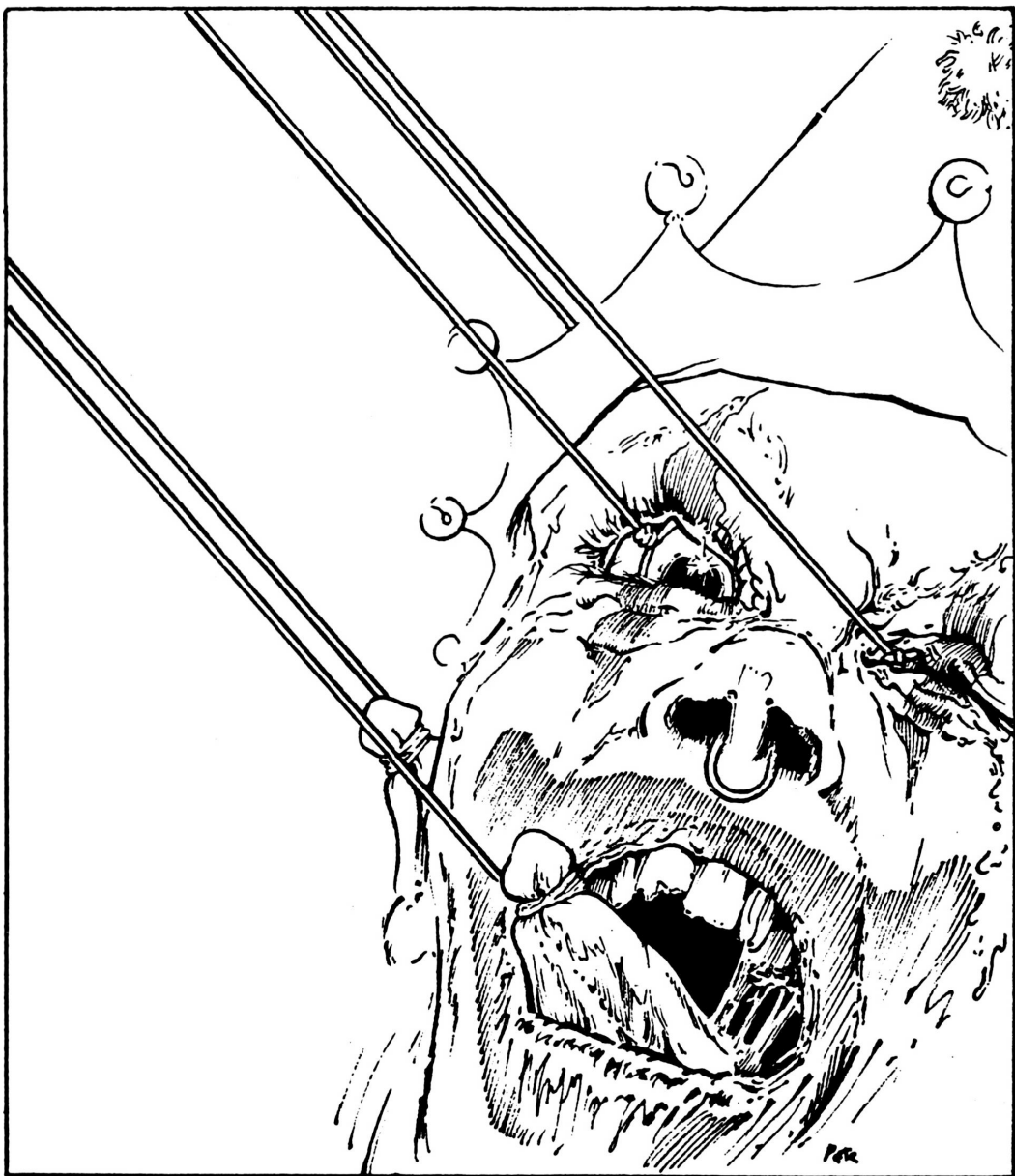
dismayed and angry reaction, such as the following letter from Pam Wells.

PAM WELLS,  
24A, Beech Road,  
Bowes Park,  
London, N.11

...On first reading, your article 'In The Halls Of Meritocrassee' struck me as a witty, vaguely amusing, jokey piece. Then I read it a second time, and it became altogether more sinister. Just what the hell are you suggesting? That the current 'fannish elite' (for want of a better term) are intent only on vile and deadly punishment of new writers? Or have you yourself received considerable amounts of 'bad press' which have warped your outlook? Some of the thinly-disguised characters are friends of mine, and if your tale was meant seriously, I think you are doing them a great injustice. Admittedly, I am only a relatively new fan, but I have seen no justification whatsoever over the past year and a half for your bitter comments. In fact, I would say the current emphasis is far more towards the encouragement of fan-zine involvement, particularly that of new writers. In the past year, I have joined the Women's Periodical (APA), the purpose of which is to encourage women writers; and SHALLOW END, the new genzine intended to help and encourage all new writers to contribute to fan-zines, and hopefully give hints and advice to anyone who wants to publish their own zine. I am also about to publish the first issue of my own zine, NUTZ. ((And an excellent first issue it was, too, boding well for the future.JDO)) At no time have I come across any negative/destructive reactions, although obviously the telling time will be after NUTZ is actually in circulation...

Basically, the feeling which comes across from your piece is that you want to be a one-man-against-the-establishment-figure. Isn't that a lonely place to be? Surely, if these people have given you a bad press, you could stop sending them your stuff??? There





must be quite a healthy number of fans who actually enjoy the sort of thing you put out - I mean, the production is excellent, and judging by the length of your letter column, you can't be short of customers!

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See what I mean? Pam was right first time - it was meant as a witty, vaguely amusing, jokey piece. But then, I find fandom such a weird place, sat as I am on the fringes peering at the postal debris as it floats past me, that my response to it is bound to be a little weird too!

Mmmm - while I'm on the subject of weird, I suppose I might as well print a David Thiry letter!

DAVID THIRY,  
8, Princeton Drive,  
Jacksonville,  
NC28540  
USA

...I'll begin by saying that, though CS7 was as excellent as it's predecessors (of course), it really seemed to lack something without a Helsdon centre-spread. This was like a copy of 'Playboy' without the chickie with the staples in her navel...

...A few weeks ago, a casual remark by a friend reminded me of exactly what sort of reading material I first caught on to. My sister taught me the rudiments of reading when I was three, and helped me to gain an effective reading vocabulary in the next year...Since she never gave a thought to what I learned to read from - and my parents didn't give a damn whether I learned to read or not - my first 'literary' subject just happened to be my father's nudist magazines.

Honest, that's the truth. Little Dave learned to read from sex magazines, and everyone who cared thought that it was real cute. My tastes have altered somewhat drastically since then; I find sex magazines offensive

actually. But I still like to top anyone's stories about their first reads by pointing out the unlikely, but genuine, literature of my childhood.

I like to think that set the tone for the rest of my life. Not depraved, exactly, but certainly colorful. 'Different' is a nice word.

...By now, I'm certain someone has told you that Mr. Greenland's reference to Chinese poetry was not a haiku, but a re-written I CHING proclamation. Shame, shame, John - here I was thinking you were an adept! And there were two other zennish references you missed, via Chuck Connor. The 'tigers' he mentioned are in a parable by the Buddha ((reprinted below.J)), and the Honda is from one of my favourite books, ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE. I'm certain someone has pointed all this out to you, but I wanted to show off, too. John, you're just going to have to catch up with the rest of us!

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For the unenlightened among the readership, here's the parable that Chuck and Dave have been referring to.

"Buddha told a parable in a sutra: A man travelling across a field encountered a tiger. He fled, the tiger after him. Coming to a precipice he caught hold of a wild vine and swung himself down over the edge. The tiger sniffed at him from above. Trembling, the man looked down to where, far below, another tiger was waiting to eat him. Only the vine sustained him.

Two mice, one white and one black, little by little started to gnaw away the vine. The man saw a luscious strawberry near him. Grasping the vine with one hand, he plucked the strawberry with the other. How sweet it tasted."

And I'm still not too sure that it was a Honda, either. The book doesn't actually say!

PAMELA BOAL,  
4, Westfield Way,  
Charlton Heights,  
Wantage,  
Oxon.,  
OX12 7EW

...I'm in complete accord with your views on the mixture of serious and fannish articles. I wonder if Graham James (I seem to recall an almost identical letter in another fanzine) feels threatened by other people's opinions? I read serious articles from the viewpoint that they are one side of the debate and if well enough written they will promote the other side of the debate, either in the lettercol, or in the shape of an article arguing from the same facts, or in the light of additional facts not presented by the first writer. The articles you have given us have been well written, and have produced debate on the subject, rather than the futile argument as to whether they should have been written in the first place.

'Innocence 2000' by David R. Morgan is a most powerful and chilling piece of writing. Chilling because we are only one half step away from the world he presents, powerful because he portrayed so much of the bigotry and confused attitudes of today without mounting a soap box or pointing a specifically accusing finger. The only reader who will be let off the hook will be the one who habitually closes his or her mind to the question of innocence when applied to self. It's not pleasant to be so disturbed, but I do hope that such disturbance will produce results in the shape of thinking about the effects or 'innocence' of actions. I'm not egoistical enough to believe for a second that I am the only one David reached, so that hope should be fulfilled.

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David's piece was very well received by all but the few narrow minded individuals who labelled it 'amateur fiction'

and presumably ripped it out of their copies (along with other items of the same ilk) for fear that it might sully their puritanical 'fannish' consciousness. That is their loss.

Another person to pick up the cudgel and pummel poor Graham James was Helen McNabb. She, I think, hits the nail on the head about the whole issue.

HELEN McNABB,  
The Bower,  
High Street,  
Llantwit Major,  
S. Glamorgan,  
CF6 9SS

...Wow! Graham James is comprehensively damning, isn't he? I like the sermon stuff. I find it interesting, stimulating and informative. Being at home with 2 kids under five (from choice, so I'm not complaining) tends to limit one's horizons, and many of the people I meet often have little in common with me except mundane matters, so that's what we talk about. I find the serious articles wake up my dozing braincells and make them take some gentle exercise, which can do nothing but good. Ok, not everyone attempts to be dispassionate about the subject on which they're writing, but many of them do, and I've read some very balanced multi-viewpoint articles. But surely if you feel strongly enough to write an article on any topic, you must have views which you want to put forward. Thus even if you detail the opposing views, the overwhelming view will be the one you believe in. If Graham James does not want to read the articles, he doesn't have to, but, dammit, it's your fanzine, it's your right to print what interests you!

Civilisation - re. Mary Gentle - is the art of living in cities, even my latin goes that far. What it means with semantic drift is anyone's guess. Is it culture, life style? What is the Western Civilisation? That of Los Angeles, that of the Scottish Isles, that 51

of Benidorm in July, the Austrian Alps in winter? What? You can no more sweepingly generalise on the 'western civilisation' than you can on anything else. What people tend to mean is the 'American Way' as perceived through TV and films. It is pervasive through the media, but it is not overwhelming - not yet anyway.

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Hmmm, I must admit I tend to fall into that generalising trap over what constitutes 'western civilisation' - the picture that always springs to mind is the way I live as a representative of that civilisation - and of course that's just representative of a tiny corner of that culture, really.

JOY HIBBERT,  
11, Rutland Street,  
Hanley,  
Stoke-on-trent,  
Staffordshire,  
ST1 5JG

...Either Arnold Akien wouldn't recognise feminism if he fell over it in the street, or I'm not a feminist. Rehashes of fairy tales are only any good when they show what the fairy tales meant (the relevance of first menstruation and first orgasm to 'Sleeping Beauty', for example). If feminists believed that there was any feminist SF, then Onlywomen Press (I think) wouldn't be asking for submissions and suggestions for their feminist SF anthology, and I wouldn't have been subject to more than a little condescension before things were sorted out for the 'women in literature' course I ended up teaching part of. Things that try and cross genres never get all of each, and many of the plot assumptions of SF confuse people who don't have a background in the genre. Assuming that by libertarian Arnold means anarchist, rather than the right wing libertarianism advocated by the likes of Heinlein, all of Arnold's examples, except Mankind's future in space, have only a few suitable SF books connected with their beliefs. And I should imagine they

would have similar problems with SF plot assumptions. SF still has a 'rocket ship' reputation, which is difficult for any thinking person to force their way through to find the odd one or two good stories on their theme. On anarchy, for example, there's only THE DISPOSSESSED, and Marge Piercy's WOMAN ON THE EDGE OF TIME. The problem with THE DISPOSSESSED is that it's set on two other planets, and in many ways it goes further than a lot of anarchists are capable of thinking (this is not a derogatory remark). For example, the desexing of names, and the totally equal treatment of gays. On the other hand, there are obvious things that shouldn't be there, but still are. Such as the monogamous marriage for the bringing up of children, the ownership of children by their parents, and the lack of facilities to enable gays to bring up children. But it's often the little things which are the most unexpected. In THE DISPOSSESSED, the obvious example is the belief on the other planet (the capitalist one) that baldness is attractive. Whether Le Guin put this in to show that the little things shock, or whether she saw it as an extension of the way women are brainwashed into believing that body-baldness is attractive, I don't know. I can't see a novel selling to any of the groups that Arnold mentions unless it's a utopia (DISPOSSESSED, FEMALE MAN) or dystopia (STAND ON ZANZIBAR), so that narrows it down a bit. And I think also there are a few things Arnold should take into consideration while he's sneering at these special interest groups. The first is that they must be much bigger than the SF readership to have such an effect on the marketing. The second is that they are probably not special interest groups at all, but one larger group of people who want to see a better world, and be encouraged by fiction while they are working towards it. After all, assuming that the aims of the feminist, ecology and anarchy movements

could be achieved with a minimum of nastiness (ie, not many riots), surely no thinking person in their right mind would oppose them?

...I liked the Thiry story - but with reservations. It seems too gentle and dreamlike for its reality. Firstly, femininity has nothing to do with womanhood. When men are deprived of women, they usually designate a few small, young-looking men as women and use them accordingly. This would be more likely. Amani seems very innocent: "I could be rolling in social luxury". If she came down, she would be ripped apart by men wanting the use of her. Just as a matter of interest, can you think of any men-without-women stories, apart from the Cordwainer Smith one, and this one? It seems odd that there aren't any, when there are so many women-without-men stories, almost all of which imagine that women will do ok, even when they disapprove of such self-sufficiency. Are there so few men-without-women stories because it is imagined that men would do ok, and so it doesn't need mentioning, or because men know how emotionally dependant they are on women (or on individual women) and not want to think about it. I know that to some extent women are emotionally dependant on their man as well, but to a certain extent women expect widowhood or desertion, and are better able to be friends with other women. Very much liked the story, in a sad sort of way.

...I see that Bernard (Earp) is doing his typical trick of assuming that everyone's male except nurses. On the contrary, half the baby population should make a grab for the doctor, assuming the doctor's male, which under a sensible system he wouldn't be. I never said there was a time when everyone was equal regardless of gender. But since thinking people (which Bernard obviously isn't) accept that there was a time when the main deity was the Goddess, and when fatherhood was unknown, it seems reasonable to assume there was a time when motherhood was respected, or even worshipped, (which is what the

early representations of the Goddess show, a woman who is extremely pregnant). Time and time again, different societies give evidence to show that things that men do are considered to be more important than things that women do, which is why, in a society where women provided most of the food (plants and trapped animals) while men goofed off all day killing large animals which were a pleasant treat and not strictly necessary, and where men's contribution to reproduction was unknown, I believe that men were even as equal. But this is certainly not 'regardless of gender', but 'different but equal'. I feel very sorry for people like Bernard, who have to ignore even the claims of masculine science in order to still hide in his cosy little pretend world. But I suppose there's no harm in him pretending that's how things used to be if that's what he needs. Unfortunately, men like Bernard try to deny any ideas of past-equality for fear that to admit such things will legitimise women who want their equality back. A slightly different, but not much different sort of bloke would be quoting the bits out of the bible to the same effect, while ignoring the fact that the oppression of women stated in the bible is clearly stated to be a punishment (for eating of the tree) rather than an ideal state...

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Pheww - lawsuits direct to Joy please Bernard, since her's is the message while mine is merely the medium through which it passes on the way to you!

I can see that I'm going to have to watch out for these BaD guys in future - they tend to start things rolling which end up costing me money in the form of extra loccol pages, just to get it all in! Then when you do they write in to say that they were only kidding really!

Here's BaD ol'Rattan to keep the ball rolling for another round.

KEVIN K. RATTAN,  
23, Waingate Close,  
Rawtenstall,  
Rossendale,  
Lancs.  
BB4 7SQ

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...The best things in the zine in my view were 'The Dreams Up There', which is possibly the best piece of fiction I've seen in a fanzine, and the loccol, which amply justified omitting me by being full of interesting letters.

And so to responses to the letters. Glad that you put down Graham James, who seems to assume that being amateur automatically means that the individual does not take care over his article, and cannot shed some new light. I think that whatever we lose in some respects (and I would quibble with Graham's suggestion of how poor fandom's sercon articles are) we make up for in enthusiasm. The fact that you devoted so much time in doing your Asimov piece, and that you actually care about what it says makes it worthwhile, as well as being a well done article that made me see things about FOUNDATION that I had not before. Does Graham really believe that there's only room for fannishness in Fandom? How trivial it would be then.

...Bernard's ideal state is represented in his letter as being one with the ideal "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs", where there is a requirement that in order to win the franchise, the individual must do some service to the state, show his willingness to defend it.

Presumably, thanks to the inclusion of the "From each, to each" bit, the populace would be well-cared for in physical terms, and allowed freedoms, but if they wished to vote, they would have to perform some service to the state. Presumably the vote they would win would have some relevance. It is arguable, for example, that the current vote has little relevance in democratic states, some say because the various governmental bodies are no longer sovereign, some because all the vote really is is a choice

between two or more people selected for you by others - none of these could be true here for, remember, the votes of this caring minority are described as governing, and there would be no ideology in society which argued that the vote was meaningless, or ones which dissuade people from desiring to influence their own future. Hence, in order to ensure that there is the numerically small number that Bernard envisages, there must be some difficulty in performing this service. (If the service is easy it negates it's whole point for obvious reasons, largely because what service would it be if it were easy?) Otherwise everyone would apply, and become citizens.

If we assume that this is the case (ie. everyone desires the vote because it has relevance, and the state is sufficiently good that people understand this, and that voting is in their, and the general, interest), and that those who do not have the vote fail because of lack of ability, you have a slavery that is made all the worse by the fact that there is an obvious justification for its existence. The fault with slavery, however well kept the slaves are, is that they do not have any voice in the decisions affecting them - and how arrogant the voters would become!

If we assume that some people simply do not wish to vote (ie. that it isn't all a matter of ideology), what obligation is there on their part to obey the state and its laws? They have not entered into the obvious contract with the state, and have not been accepted as citizens, so, as they have no part in making laws, why should they be forced to obey them? If they are forced to obey laws with which they disagree, but over which they have no choice, is that not tyranny? (If one is to argue that they do have a choice, one goes back to the scenario above. And, if they can easily get the vote, how is that a

different state from our own, and why make a special point of it?)

Also, all this about earning a vote implies that the state is good (if the state is busily oppressing you, why the hell should you do it a service?). For you to owe the state service implies that it is doing good things for you. As it could only earn the right of you owing it service before voting by becoming the kind of state that Bernard talks about (from each, to each, etc) first, then obviously a society would be capable of being well governed by the mass-voters, hence getting rid of the whole point behind selective citizenship.

The problem with Bernard's ideal is that its a paper nicety. Presumably his idea is that the "From each according to abilities, to each according to need" society is brought about by the selective voting he advocates, but if the service that has to be done is one that is not formed of that ideal, it will be service that is not in that direction and hence by people not committed to that aim but to the state as it is, hence that society will not come about. The idea of a society with aims we would not find so laudable demanding service to those aims we would surely find objectionable, hence the idea of service before vote only comes in when the state is already worthwhile. And of course, if it is, why bother?

Bernard's ideal state is simply mismatched ideals thrown together with little thought as to how they would come about, or whether they belong together. If you're going to take more than one plank for your ideal, for god's sake make sure there's some nail to hold them together.

Also, what of the individual ideals? Define 'ability', define 'need'....

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Enough already! I know people keep calling me a bloated plutocrat, but it's letters like that which make my bank manager moan.

Still, I think I've got room for one last letter before I start wheeling in the WAHFs.

TONY TOMKINS,  
364, Great Clowes St.,  
Salford,  
M7 9ET

...About Eric Bentcliffe's letter, hmmm, yes, it certainly was fun for me as a child, finding out about Science Fiction.

This perforce had to be something I had to find out for myself; no fandom, no clubs, no-one to guide me. No fanzine to tell me about the latest paperbacks, no reviews of same, only the weekly trip to the stall in the local market hall, to peek inside the covers of the magazines to see if there was a serial (had to be careful about that because it might mean buying four issues of a mag and it meant not being able to try a different mag!)

Finding out for myself possibly explains my present wide taste in fiction. Membership of an SF society would have meant having the influence of other people, no bad thing for those who wish to learn from others; however, one should always remember the old Dutch proverb "people read so they do not have to think" - people also listen to others so they do not have to think!

...One thing has happened to alter the tastes of the SF readership, or rather I should, to be accurate, say many things have happened in the world.

Go back with me, to before the Second World War, yeah, all that way back!

Science Fiction was pure fantasy, rocket ships, ray guns, beams that could stop petrol engines from working, all these were commonplace, for the world was nowhere near as advanced as it is at present, in fact not fantasy.

Men landing on the moon? Well, that was hardly likely, was it? I mean, rockets only travelled a few miles. Jet planes? Well, that

was more of a theory than a practical invention. Ray guns? Pure Buck Rogers stuff or 'Skylark of Space'.

To a large extent, the sheer fantasy of pre-war SF no longer exists. We cannot travel back in a time machine and un-invent Science Fact. It's nice to dream of events that may never happen, but once that event takes place, perhaps a little innocence is lost. Can we ever dream the same way of rockets in space, when we know that this is no longer a fantasy?

When the US astronauts landed on the moon, for me, this was my boyhood dreams come true!

A younger generation than I accept such things as just something that happened, without, I feel, the deep sense of wonderment.

Can you imagine, then, how my mother was excited by the U.S. Space Programme? She has been to the USA several times in Jumbo jets, yet remembers quite clearly reading of the Wright brothers' first flight!

So, perhaps because of the vast technological advances made since World War II, the dream-like quality of SF has gone forever, overtaken by facts. When readers have seen so much themselves, then perhaps much SF is too simple for them, facts have got in the way of fantasy, and the dreams have gone forever.

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Phew, that's the lot, free of the letters, with only the wahfs between me and the finishing post. So without further ado, here they are.

John Alexander (who has paranoid visions of an international fannish underworld); Harry Andruschak; William Bains (who promises never to wear his phaser in public again); Elisheva Barsabe; David Bateman (if I ever have space, I'll print a Bateman loc one day - it's an experience not to be missed); Sydney J. Bounds; G.A. Bryant; Judy Buffery; Iain Byers (who prophesied KTF reviewers rising from their graves to attack CS7 - not a bad try, Iain,

not bad at all); Suzy McKee Charnas; Philip Collins; Mat Coward; Peter Crump (who has Peter Presford to blame); Benedict Cullum (who claims to feel guilty about receiving CS - maybe I shouldn't use those plain brown envelopes in future); Chester Cuthbert; Andy Darlington; Dorothy Davies (who has problems with her whistling parrot); Nicholas Davies; Mike Dickinson; Steve Duff; Keith Fenske; Steven Fox; Alan Freeman; Roelof Goudriaan; Colin Greenland (who sent a real hoc-hexagram-of-comment, that is!); Colin Grubb; Noel K. Hannan; Martin Helsdon; Terry Hill; Nic Howard (who picked up on Chuck's reference to Edmond Hamilton - Nic likes the guy); Kim Huett; Terry Jeeves; Mike Johnson; Mike Lewis; Steve Lines (who's artwork I hope to feature in a folio in CS9); Mary Long; Pete Lyon (who thought there was more content in Arnold's piece than in 'Performance' but didn't like it despite that); Matt Mackulin; Ken Mann; Jim Meadows III ("CS is the most elegant fanzine I receive" - elegant fanzines?); David R. Morgan; Alan Morris (who claims to be a Ballard fan but still likes CS!); Peter Muller; Frances Jane Nelson; He who shall not be named; David Palter (now gaffiating around in the wild blue yonder); Pete Presford; Dave Redd; Paul Skelton (who thinks CS is 'too forbidding' to respond to. Must be the white paper); Steve Sneyd ("ITHOM used the language of epic to describe trivia" - he's right, yer know); Joni Stopa; Martyn Taylor (currently producing offsprings rather than RAAs); Tom Taylor; Robert Teague; Sue Thomason ("What's an alligator doing in the hobbit inn on the cover?" Boozing, Sue, what else); Julie Vaux; Roger Waddington; Jon Wallace ("I'll agree with Bernard Earp if he'll let me join his elite"); Imelda Walsh; Dave Webb (yet another Milton Keynes fan to materialise out of the ether); Jean Weber; Roger Weddall; Carl Wilson III. That's the lot as at 31st October 1983. Ta to everyone who wrote in, and thanks for all the fanzines too. That's me lot!



