

# DISCORD

Edited by Redd Boggs

Number 8 / November 1960

## COGITO

### I BEAR MY CHALICE SAFELY THROUGH A THRONG OF IDIOTS

The movies will never die. The movie-going public will put up with anything, just to escape for an evening from the cold blue glare of the Cyclops in the parlor.

A few weeks ago I attended a matinee at Minneapolis' RKO Pan theater to see a double bill of what the trade laughingly calls science fiction movies: "Beyond the Time Barrier" and "The Amazing Transparent Man." This was an occasion to make P. T. Barnum blush for once, and assume the flustered mien of a man whose word has been almost too resoundingly vindicated. The last time I attended a science fiction movie was in 1932 when I broke faith with Ken Maynard and Tom Mix and went to see "King Kong." But here I was, duded up in my second best T shirt, with a carnation thrust nattily through the rip in the midsection (from the time Moskowitz had buttonholed me at the Cinvention), jostled on all sides by other movie patrons mesmerized by whatever subliminal allures the film makers had attached to those dismal titles and as eager as I to sit bewitched by Hollywood magic for a few happy, flickering hours.

I paid 85¢ admission and loped swivel-hipped through the inner lobby, which was chockablock with vending machines, only to discover, as I peered into the darkness, that "Beyond the Time Barrier" was just winding up. The hero and a fatherly old father image were spouting impassioned dialog at each other over the tastefully reclining figure of a blond future woman. In order to wring the last drop of pleasure from this afternoon orgy of carpe diem, I decided to wait for the start of the other film before I sat down. I noted with delight that soft drinks in the vending machines cost only 10¢ (most theaters have jacked up the price to 15¢) and happily fed a dime into the slot. A moment later my hedonic mood drained away, along with four fluid ounces of cherry Coke. The paper cup popped crookedly into place, and as I hastily reached to straighten it, most of my drink gushed over my hand and trickled away.

Moodily licking 6¢ worth of soft drink off the back of my hand, I carried the dram that hit the cup downstairs to the general lounge. The RKO Pan's general lounge is a cold grey room with a ceiling low enough to squash one with the nightmare of the birth trauma, and a horse (that can sleep standing up) would find it a delightful place to loll: it is furnished with two pay phones and a forlorn little machine that vends pocket combs and gimcracks but is not cluttered with chairs, sofas, ashtrays, or any furniture or decorations at all. I sat down on the lowest step, which was comfortably carpeted, to sip my drink; then I went into the men's room to wash the remaining 2¢ worth of cherry Coke off my hand.



By bracing my foot against the wall and wrenching the handle as far as it would turn, I managed to coax a few drops of rusty water out of the faucet. If it had been vended by the machine upstairs, the water would have been worth about 5¢. After getting my hands damp, I found that there weren't any towels in the containers. No towels at all.

Drying my hands on my T shirt, I walked upstairs and watched the double feature. Afterward I stopped at the ticket window. "Can you direct me to the nearest psychiatrist?" I asked politely. The girl looked at me as if I were crazy. "You're right there," I said, and I hurried out of the theater before something else miserable happened to me, such as getting locked in and having to watch the pictures again.

The movies will never die. The movie-going public will put up with anything. Anything!\*

### "ET COMME UN DIEU JE VAIS NU"

To come a cropper on the first page of your fanzine is a public act that ought to be exculpated by an almost equally public confession of guilt. Of course I do not have the foolhardiness of my convictions, and I will spot this deposition on an inner page, but I'll come clean as Nixon's hound's tooth. It is no good to say that that was in another issue, and besides it's out of print; the evidence is still around to show that I misspelled at least two words on page 1 of Discord #7. One of them was nothing less than the first word in the body of the text; the other, the penultimate word on the page.

The first misspelling was, I believe, a simple transposition that I failed to catch; I think I know how to spell "brethren." But I did the other one the hard way: I was unsure how to spell "Excalibur," looked it up, and still misspelled it. To turn that page into almost a complete botch, I made slighting reference to "the bishops of the Southern Baptist church," which doesn't even have any bishops. "The Baptist church does not have a hierarchy, each church being a unit unto itself," Boyd Raeburn tells me, and I believe him because Boyd was born and bred in the Baptist faith and obviously would be a bishop today if the Baptists had bishops. The thing that worries me, though, is -- how is the new administration going to suppress and destroy the Baptist church (as I have been very reliably informed that it intends to do after 20 January 1961) if there is no hierarchy of ruling elders to clap behind bars?

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\* Shortly after I wrote this item, RKO Theaters of New York sold the Pan theater to a local theater chain headed by one Ted Mann, who said that he plans to spend \$350,000 in modernizing the Pan and another theater he bought. It's too bad that he didn't wait till this report appeared, so I could take credit for the transaction.

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THE HATE FOR THREE AVOCADOS

The room wavered around me in green ripples. I found myself standing over my cringing hi-fi set with a chair uplifted over my head. "What am I doing?" I asked myself wonderingly. Then I heard the ripe, fruity voice mushing out of the loudspeakers, "My -- deah -- children," and the ripples started again. It was the third time during the weekend that I had heard "Peter and the Wolf" on FM, each time with a narrator who irritated me more than the last. I stood there summoning strength to smash the hi-fi properly. That voice, that music, seemed to drain my life force like a thirsty vampire. I felt myself twitching.

Hastily I switched off FM and threw on my tape recorder to play the pride of my collection: 2400 feet of Irish mylar polyester Double-Play tape that is utterly and completely blank. Four full hours of blissful silence! I calmed down slowly; the symphonic swish of empty tape rubbed my frayed nerves so soothingly that in less than two hours I felt the snarl leave my face. I set the chair down tremblingly and seated myself on it. My nerves twanged like a corset stay.

"I can't relax in a world where I'm menaced by Serge Prokofiev," I screamed to myself, tearing my hair. "I don't think I can stand to hear 'Peter and the Wolf' once more in the next 50 years...." I snapped my fingers as an idea struck me. "That's it! That's it! I'll ban that music from my hi-fi set and not listen to it again till November 2010. And for good measure I'll ban all the other music that has been torturing me by being played over and over and over again." I seized paper and pencil and made out this list, showing the selections I have banned from my earshot and the year I will listen to them again:

1965 - Haydn, Symphony No. 45 ("Farewell"); Schumann: "Carnaval"; R. Strauss: "Ein Heldenleben"; Mozart: "Ein kleine Nachtmusik"; Enesco: "Roumanian Rhapsody No. 1"; Brahms: "Academic Festival"; Grieg: Concerto for Piano; Adam: "Giselle"; Mendelssohn: "Midsummer Night's Dream."

1970 - Handel: "Water Music" and "Royal Fireworks Music"; Debussy: "Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune" and "La Mer"; Tchaikovsky: Concerto No. 1 for Piano; Falla: "Ritual Fire Dance"; Chopin: "Les Sylphides"; Ibert: "Escales"; Rachmaninoff: "Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini"; Ravel: "Bolero" and "La Valse"; Brahms: "Variations on a Theme by Haydn."

1980 - Stravinsky: "Firebird"; Tchaikovsky: "1812" Overture; Meyerbeer: "Les Patineurs"; Weber: "Der Freischutz" and "Invitation to the Dance"; Delibes: "Coppelia"; Rimsky-Korsakov: "Scheherazade"; Ippolitov Ivanov: "Caucasian Sketches"; Smetana: "The Moldau."

1990 - Tchaikovsky: "Nutcracker" Suite and "The Sleeping Beauty"; R. Strauss: "Till Eulenspiegel"; Grieg: "Peer Gynt" Suite; Moussorgsky: "Night on Bald Mountain"; Saint-Saens: "Carnival of Animals" and "Danse Macabre"; Sibelius: "Finlandia"; Wagner: "Magic Fire Music" and "Ride of the Valkyries"; Delibes: "Sylvia"; Beethoven: "Moonlight" Sonata.

2000 - Bizet: "Carmen" Suite; Moussorgsky: "Pictures at an Exhibition"; Chabrier: "Espana"; Copland: "Billy the Kid" and "Rodeo"; Offenbach: "Gaité Parisienne"; Suppe: "Light Cavalry Overture"; Villa-Lobos: "Bachianas Brasileiras" No. 5; Khachaturian: "Gayne" Ballet Suite No. 1; Dvorak: Symphony No. 5 ("From the New World").



2010 - Prokofiev: "Peter and the Wolf"; Respighi: "The Pines of Rome" and "The Fountains of Rome"; Copland: "El Salon Mexico"; Gershwin: "An American in Paris" and "Rhapsody in Blue"; Britten: "Young People's Guide to the Orchestra"; Dello-Joio: "Air Power" Symphonic Suite; Dukas: "The Sorcerer's Apprentice"; Grofe: "Grand Canyon" and "Mississippi" Suites; Rossini: "William Tell" Overture; Rodgers: "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue" and "Victory at Sea."

I put down the pencil, wondering if I was being too hasty. To listen to "Peter," "Pines of Rome," and "Victory at Sea" next in 2010 A.D.! The thought of it frightened me. Fifty years would pass before I heard Richard Hale's pear-shaped tones again. I picked up the pencil again to change the date to 2020 A.D., but then I thought, "No, I'll just make a note to keep my hearing-aid tuned out during 2010. This will isolate me from the world (aside from Moskowitz), but it'll be worth it. It'll be worth it!" And then I had a happier thought. "Why, I may not even live till 2010 A.D.!"

At peace with the world at last, I switched on KWFM. Music washed out and filled the room with swirling green waves. I swam toward the chair I'd been sitting in and picked it up. "Sixth time in ten days I've heard it!" I screamed, frothing. "I forgot to list it (under 2000), but this is one time Schubert's Symphony No. 8 is really going to live up to its popular title!"

#### THE ROUND FILE SMASHED ALMOST FLAT

Giovanni Scognamillo (who Bob Smith suspects is a hoax) has a new address: Beyoglu, Istiklal Caddesi; Postacilar Sokak, Glavani; Apart.No. 13/13; Istanbul, Turkey. # George Scithers writes: "Let it be known that neither Amra nor the Hyborian league are having anything whatsoever to do with that ridiculous 'petition' on behalf of "Conan the Colossal" reported in Discord #7; in fact, they're trying to discourage its use.

#### WHEN THE HICPING HAD TO STOP

We admit it -- we're pushovers for Xmas spirits. "Don't do it," our associate editor pleads. "Get drunk on the stencil money, and we can't afford to give Discord away anymore. We'll have to sell subscriptions." But our eye goes past her luscious figure to the distant corners of the land. "Readers straining budgets to introduce Galaxy to friends and relatives won't have enough scratch left over to subscribe to Discord," we hiccup. "Discord must bear its share of the burden! And not only that -- by the Lord Horace, we'll even wish Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to everybody who has written in or traded for Discord during 1960!" Out slinks our associate editor. "All right, but they'd better get their letters in if they want the next issue." So rush in your acknowledgment today!

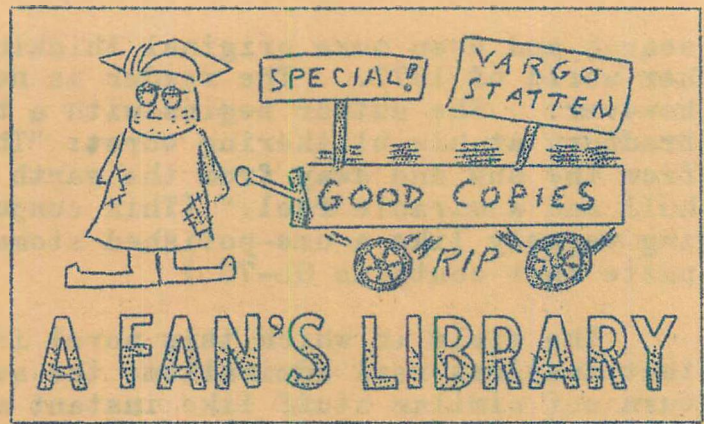
Name.....  
Address.....  
City.....State.....  
I want next issue ☐  
I don't want next ish ☐  
Druther have Xero ☐  
Druther have.....

EVERYBODY who wishes to receive holiday greetings\* from Discord should fill in and mail the coupon. You'll be crogged to learn that it's for your convenience, not ours, but you wouldn't really cut up your copy of Discord, would you? Would you? Why not write a letter instead?

\* Sent verbally, of course; keep your windows open.



ODDLY ENOUGH, this is a first rate science fiction novel.\* I think it is best to come right out with it, and to put it in the form of a lefthanded compliment because we all know Judith Merrill's ambiguous reputation in the field. As an anthologist she has kept her dreadful "SF"-annual series sailing high by manufacturing more hot air than a Sunday school teacher in a Hell's Kitchen gospel mission; as a writer she often exudes the damp sour atmosphere of a diaper laundry. And yet her devotion to science fiction as a genre is legendary, and Theodore Sturgeon, nobody less, has paid tribute to her absolute integrity as a writer. So it really isn't strange after all that Judy has hauled tail to the typewriter and delivered herself of a hunk of science fiction twice as alive and kicking as anything west of Sturgeon himself -- except that she has never done so before. (That is, unless Shadow on the Hearth is better than I suppose; I've never read it, but after reading the present novel, I'd like to.)



## THE ESTATE OF MAN

The Tomorrow People is by no means a perfect work of art, but it's good enough to deserve better than original publication in a slightly obscure paperback series. I suppose Judy was aiming, as she should have, at hardcover publication; that she didn't make it is a commentary on the sad state of science fiction and no reflection at all on this novel. Outside, perhaps, of some things by C. L. Moore, this is the best science fiction novel by a woman ever published, and I am sure that it is the finest space novel written by a woman except for Marion Zimmer Bradley's magnum opus, still unpublished. Few women have written of the conquest of space, an adventure that doesn't interest most women; few women have written sf novels of any sort, simply because a novel demands more than emotional intensity to make it move. Women writers rely largely on emotion, but sheer emotion can't be prolonged to the length of a novel.

But this is a novel anyone, man or woman, could be proud of. Judy has done her homework on this one, and the background in all directions looks -- and feels -- right to me. It is only at second glance that it fails to convince in places. For example, I find it hard to believe that by 1977 -- 17 years from now -- space travel will be advanced to the point where moon trips can be taken casually by pregnant women and hung-over businessmen. (Travel in airliners is touchy enough for such people in 1960.) The political background -- involving, apparently, a single government for all the Americas -- is also a bit premature.

The technology -- distinctly novel for a woman's story -- is solidly built, and it is by no means a tinted façade badly extrapolated from a couple Blish and Heinlein novels; I think Judy did some firsthand re-

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\* The Tomorrow People. By Judith Merrill. New York: Pyramid Books, 1960. Paper covers.



search and even more original thinking while she was whacking together her world of 1977. The reader is not assured of this at the beginning, however. The author begins with a brief "prologue" that reads like Bradbury at his blithering worst: "They shot two men off the Moon -- out from the sun and away from the earth -- in a great new ship with a shiny hull and a miracle fuel." (This conjures up a vision of something looking vaguely like a use-polished stomach pump powered by the only toothpaste that contains GL-70.)

The style in which this novel is written seldom reaches a point that inspires real admiration; the average McCall's hack can, I suppose, turn out similar stuff like instant mashed potatoes. The reader is too often asked to swallow, smiling, such lines as "The woman was positively glowing at him," which inspire me to little yips of dismay. Plunked on top of this women's magazine style are a number of affectations that the author probably thinks of as art; the result is sometimes embarrassing, like listening to a counter-tenor singing "Drink to Me Only." Nevertheless Judy writes with fine control and at no point does the story slide away from her entirely. And when she succeeds, she succeeds resoundingly, as in the scene where Christensen confronts Johnny and Lisa at Rockland. This scene, far and away the best in the book, is something of a technical triumph; it is told in segments from each of the three viewpoints in turn, and mask under mask peels away in a psychic strip-tease. The method -- Judy uses in all at least five people as viewpoint characters -- sometimes bewilders, especially in the final chapters where we are asked to jump from viewpoint to viewpoint in short takes of a page or so, but usually illuminates splendidly. The author knows her characters down to the last convolution, and seldom fumbles even momentarily.

The characters are all of them highly introspective and much attention is devoted to their mental cringes at each faux pas and the endless hypocrisy of being polite when you hate it. They are also nice people, decent to the point of sentimentality; nobody ever hurts anybody, however they may growl and groan in their own minds, and thus they are, as story characters, just a bit boring, no matter how pleasant they are to know. The interplay among them is done with great skill, however, and the reader closes the book feeling that he has not only known some real people but watched them act pretty much as such people would act under such circumstances. (A small point: the story takes place in 1977, but the characters converse in 1960's juvenile beatnik jargon: "Man, you dig me the most!" I hope such expressions don't last for 17 years.)

This is a space yarn, and the plot kicks off from the mystery surrounding the first trip to Mars: Doug Laughlin disappeared into the Martian desert and Johnny Wendt came back alone. What happened to Doug? Why won't Johnny talk? The first part of the mystery is solved, though of course the solution isn't half as satisfying as the mystery itself, but I'm not at all certain why Johnny can't or won't talk or think about Mars or why he "wakes up screaming" on occasion. While under investigation, however, the mystery churns up a lot of fascinating responses from everybody concerned.

This is a space yarn, but it is also a woman's story. Among other things this means that it is a commodity-ridden story ("palest-gold martinis"... "anachronistically solid-comfortable leather chair" ... "gray

(Concluded on page 9)



FOR ALMOST AS LONG as I can remember John Campbell has been attacking the United States patent office with all the ferocity of a thirsty mosquito dashing its fangs against an alligator. Asleep in the warm mud the alligator, of course, doesn't even know it's being attacked by a tiny winged fury, and this makes the mosquito more venomous than anything.



Clearly Campbell's headlong enthusiasm for dianetics, the hieronymus machine, and the Dean drive has been motivated, less by any rational desire to advance science or to improve man's lot on this dust-speck, than by a foaming need to rip back at everybody who has frustrated him, not condescending to notice him at all or dismissing him as that crackpot editor of a laughingstock pseudoscience magazine. Sooner or later, obviously, one of these wild ideas will pay off, and who'll be laughing then?

If Norman Dean did not exist Campbell would have found it necessary to invent him. The Dean drive affair sums up and underlines everything that Campbell has been preaching for years: (1) that today, not the future depicted in science fiction, is the age of miracles, and that any achievement pictured in science fiction is within our reach at this very moment, if we have the wit to recognize good ideas when they are presented; (2) that total breakthrough, when it comes, will come through a single stroke of genius made by someone trained in science but working as a hobbyist or private experimenter, not by professional scientists; (3) that the development of this epochal idea will be retarded, if we aren't careful, by the chuckleheads in Washington, particularly those in the patent office, who can't recognize a good idea even when it is explained (with equations) in a leading science fiction magazine.

Awake or asleep Campbell seems to dream of little else but Armageddon, when a vast paroxysm of vindication will prove the truth of these three theses and ignite a star over the Analog office. Awake he writes his editorials and convention speeches; asleep he edits the fictional content of the magazine. Many stories published in Analog seem to have been designed to be read aloud to Campbell in a soft crooning voice while he parks his feet on the desk, closes his eyes, smiles beautifully, and trails his fingers through imaginary streams of rose-water.

Such a story is "The Crackpot" by Theodore L. Thomas, a story that tells how an authentic genius invents "a real, operable, fully developed and functioning matter transmitter" plus other things and, as if this weren't enough, makes monkeys of all those smug bureaucrats in Washington. Dr Singlestone, the protagonist, is, like Norman Dean, a miracle man, but in the Gernsback era would have been familiar only as a fictional stereotype: the independently wealthy, misunderstood genius who confounds the world with gadgets created out of his magician's hat of a private lab in a remote corner of Long Island. The author has updated



the character; he is now a scientist (misunderstood but not wealthy) who is employed by a university and the U. S. government. The relationship between Dr Singlestone and his employers is told with a good deal of feeling and authority, but of course the story is meant only as a parable. Campbell and Thomas don't really believe that any Dr Singlestone (= Einstein) will singlehandedly bring forth such an array of gadgets; they are saying only that if he did, he'd be frustrated by governmental red tape and ignorance, which is true, but the ham-handedness of the satire is infuriating. Dr Singlestone is smarter than anybody and he wins out; he is rewarded by being able to return to quote "his beloved research" unquote, and -- as lagnappe, I suppose -- he receives "a royalty amounting to two million dollars a month." Dream on, moon river!

It took me years to work up even a cool appreciation for such early Hal Clement stories as "Proof" and "Attitude," and I find it Significant that, at this late date, a Hal Clement story, "Sunspot," looms up as the only solid and admirable performance in a whole issue of Analog. The whole topography of the magazine had to change before such hard gaunt rock jutted up as it does now. As is usual with Clement the story hangs on a couple technological points that are miles over my headbone, but I have the feeling that these problems haven't been solved by recourse to the three wishes. Of course Clement, poor fellow, has a stone ear, and he writes in a style that sounds like Arthur Clarke leached of mysticism and pipsissewa and flavored with ashes. His characters sometimes have bile, but no blood; they are people because Clement believes in them, and his confidence is affecting and almost persuades me. Clement still lives in a basement laboratory with whitewashed cement walls, and I don't think he will ever move upstairs to consort with that crew of "tame messiahs" living in the garrett.

The only story in the previous issue of Analog I managed to mush through to the end was H. B. Fyfe's "Satellite System." Here was "Locked Out" twenty years after; the title should have been "Pushed Out." It was still lots of fun, nothing new, but a little more skilful than Fyfe/1940/. # Fritz Leiber's "Deadly Moon" is a not-very-successful boiler-maker concocted from a mixture of dream and chronicle. The latter -- given to us in author-omniscient synopsis form -- reads like an old Edmond Hamilton cosmic-catastrophe yarn, and I wonder if Leiber's story will prove as hard to read in 1988 as "The Conquest of Two Worlds" is today? # "Mariwite" by Charelsfon (Charles L. Fontenay) starts out, "Singing, at least, was to be. So Artaperi sang." Since the story concerns the necessity of full harmony, the dangers of discord, on the Van-guard -- well, this time it's the Spore, and a mere 400 years out from Earth, but it's another variation on "Universe" -- this sentence states the theme. Nothing else in the yarn is such a happy stroke, but I'm a sucker for this type of story.

Arthur Porges' "A Diversion for the Baron" isn't really fantasy or science fiction, and so the Cameron numbers assigned to it don't quite fit. It's odd to find another story based on this venerable allegory/gag/cartoon idea (one caveman to another: "I call this a bow-and-arrow; it'll make war obsolete"); this time it's gunpowder in medieval France. Porges has read a book about the middle ages, but that's all the preparation he made before sitting down to a blank page in his typewriter. # The switch Poul Anderson pulls at the end of "A World to Choose" is almost as anti-romantic as the famous one in "Journey's End" (--get out).



i hate your bloody guts.--) but carries less shock because it comes only after Poul has romped through 20 pages of the derring-do that he writes in what Atheling called his "thane of Minneapolis" facet. I'm not sure whether even the author himself is sympathetic with Kendrith's odd preference for twentieth century America, even though Poul himself may be a Kendrith-in-Greenough's hide and not vice versa. At least I once heard Poul/1948/ remark, as we passed a table tennis game at the Minneapolis Y after an MFS meeting, "Whenever I feel like exercising I lie down till the feeling goes away."

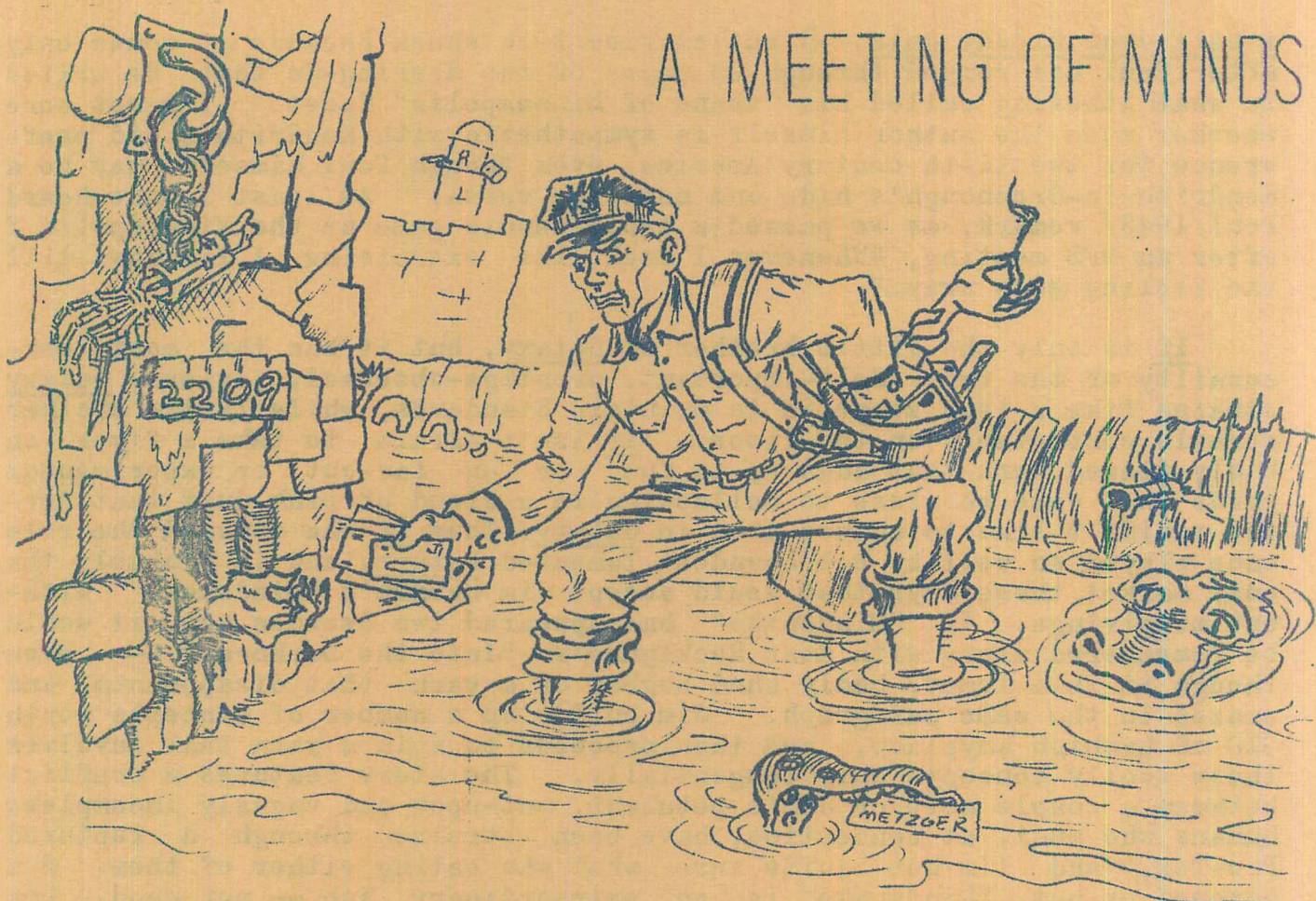
If is only the little brother of Galaxy, but it has the most personality of the two. Self-important, prestige-obsessed, joyless, Galaxy strains like a lead zeppelin to maintain Standards, while little brother sprawls comfortably on the floor. If isn't afraid to take a flyer on badly flawed work that adds up to fun, or on far-out or experimental yarns that come so close to collapsing in a cloud of pink dust that Horace wouldn't like to chance them in Galaxy. Thus If has assumed the role once played so well by Bob Lowndes' lamented Future, and is probably the only market these days that would accept Jim Harmon's "Mindsnake" without misgivings. If "Mindsnake" had appeared two decades ago, it would be remembered along with Ross Rocklynne's "Into the Darkness" — even though it is a lumpy, badly shod Hogben of a yarn that disappoints and amazes in the same paragraph. Jim builds up a number of concepts worth \$10 of hashish anyplace, and then proceeds to spin a yarn that involves these woolly concepts only tangentially. The story features a conflict between a couple more of Jim's petulant, put-upon and vaguely incomplete humans who must, at conception, have been strained through a ruptured Pro-Tex, and I'm not quite sure what was eating either of them. But botched or not, "Mindsnake" is an extraordinary job -- not good, but tremendous! -- and impressive enough to daze the reader and intimidate him into doing something desperate, like writing a fan letter to If: "Come home, Horace; all is forgave."

"The Crackpot" (Thomas)	63.8+61.8nndgax	<u>Analog</u> , November 1960
"Doadly Moon" (Loibor)	01.1:36.7bfa(h)eax	<u>Fantastic</u> , Novombor 1960
"A Diversion for the Baron"	70.+64.agdorr	<u>Fantastic</u> , November 1960
"Mariwito" (Fontenay)	54.2aficax	<u>Fantastic</u> , November 1960
"Mindsnake" (Harmon)	63.8+11.1bgiaax	<u>If</u> , November 1960
"Satellite System" (Fyfe)	54.3abaox	<u>Analog</u> , October 1960
"Sunspot" (Clement)	54.7bcbiax	<u>Analog</u> , November 1960
"A World to Choose" (Anderson)	21.1baucag	<u>Fantastic</u> , November 1960

## A FAN'S LIBRARY concluded

dacron shoulder" -- all on one page) and shows that snobbish fascination for the Westchester set that is peculiarly female. It also means a pre-occupation with love, sex, and pregnancy. This sequence of course reads anticlimactically (like "For God, for country, and for Yale") to anybody but a woman writer; nobody else will quite believe what a mystical state pregnancy really is till he reads this novel. John Campbell must have crogged into purple spots and reached shakily for the camphor bottle. But it also means, finally, that this is a space story narrowed down to the particular, invested with honest emotion, and centered square on the human element in a way that few male writers have ever managed. The Tomorrow People is a nice noncommittal title, but it puts the emphasis right where it belongs. Judith Merrill has written, to put it as plainly as possible, one of the best science fiction novels in ten years.





#### BETTY KUJAWA

Of course the big big thing in issue #6 for me was the "Hermie and the Vampires" episode. I have taken this here and there in the neighborhood, casually flashing it before the eyes of various husbands and wives. The effect is always the same -- startled looks, close scrutiny, and cries of joy and nostalgia. About half of 'em burst into humming "Valse Triste" and bonging like clocks. I can assuredly say now that just as many femmes as men remember their days of listening to "I Love a Mystery." And they all seem to recall that their fathers and mothers were just as avid as they were -- the program was on here at suppertime (called dinnertime in Indiana) and the radio was right smack there on the table. Now we get reactionary view-with-alarm articles about mesmerized families eating before the TV set. Har har, have we forgotten so soon how it was in the days of "Amos 'n' Andy"? Even movies had to stop the feature film while that radio program was piped in.

The Nuclear Fizz recipe moveth me not, being an abstainer due to a duodenal ulcer some time back. I'm the beer type anyway -- in fact, a month ago, after eight long years I actually had a beer. It was delicious.

Enjoyed the letter column, but didn't find anything in particular to comment on. I did especially enjoy Peggy Sexton's letter. (South Bend 14, Indiana)

#### BOB TUCKER

I suppose it is because I've known you for so long or because I take you for granted, or something, but I've missed the sneers a few others seem to see in your writing. I saw nothing wrong in your crossing the Woolworth picket line while seeking a camera angle from the inside, nor do I believe either you or I are mentally using that camera as sym-



bolic license for defiance. Had you made a purchase and then boasted of it in print, I'd be ready to give you back to the Indians, but as it was -- well, some people simply leap too quickly to conclusions which are nonexistent. The retail clerks union is now conducting a boycott of the Sears Roebuck stores; I have yet to see a picket here, but as a matter of principle I stopped buying there. If I see something in the window (or the interior) which interests me, I'll probably walk in and examine it, but I don't intend to buy until the issue is settled. The matter can be handled as quietly as that.

I also voted for The Sirens of Titan [in the Hugo balloting]. I devoted a couple of thousand words to the book in a Yandro column (as you may have read), but I found myself in the minority. However much the body of fandom decries the present sickly state of science fiction, they seem to be totally unprepared when a really new and different piece of sf comes along. Sirens appears to be suffering the same fate as The Twenty-fifth Hour, published 20 years ago. In years to come, a few shoddy imitations will appear and be hailed as "classics." Bah. But I got off the track. What I want to see done with the Hugos is, first, a sseparate category for novels (whether hardcover or paperback) -- original novels. And then, second, magazine serials which later appear as books are to have a category of their own and be judged as serials. In short, the place of original appearance determines which category shall apply. Too many books are being overlooked because fans read only magazine serials.

I wish a hundred people would do as that one fellow did, and write "Protest" across the face of their ballot. A hundred protests would wake up someone. But it may not be wise to include me among the judges, as Les Nirenberg suggests. You may see from the above how my votes would be distributed, and I'd again probably find myself in the loud-mouthed minority. At present the Hugo awards are as farcical as the Academy awards in Hollywood. The most worthy picture does not win. I'm beginning to sound like Ed Wood. (Bloomington, Illinois)

#### DONALD A. WOLLHEIM

I must agree with the letter writer in issue #6 who said that Retrograde is not a fanzine but really a Little Literary Review, because in all truth that seems to be the way it stacks up. In fact, that seems to be the way a great many fanzines have worked out in practice. As such, though, it is at least humanly less pretentious than the magazines that know they're "little magazines."

The Hugo discussion should be continued until this thing is forced to the front attention of all fans, because the recent Hugo awards are certainly demented. Not merely on what was left out -- and why indeed were they left out? -- but on what won. Starship Troopers as a Hugo winner is a real insult to the novel field. It implies either that the sf novel field is stone dead or that the votes were somewhat less than honest. Heinlein has a perfect right to preach his views; he is after all a graduate of an armed forces institution and made the armed forces his career. But is his book really a work of science fiction or is it just a projection on an imaginary field of politics of his pro-military philosophy? I say it's the latter -- and therefore sf only by the thin line of the canvas he used as a backdrop. Even if you agree with his philosophy, is such a book the best that can be found in a year's crop of science fiction or science fantasy?

Further, can anyone honestly suppose this book will be remembered on any list of favorite novels of ten years from now? Aldiss' Starship might be on that list. So might Vonnegut's remarkable book The Sirens of Titan, but the Heinlein? It's significant that Scribner's, publishers of all Heinlein's previous juveniles, flat-out rejected the Troopers book, even though it meant losing his option. Their juvenile book editor decided this was not the kind of philosophy to give children and still hold your head up in respectable society -- and the firm backed her up. (Forest Hills 74, New York)



JOE PATRIZIO

Since getting Retrograde #6 I have read "Starship Soldier" in F&SF and have also obtained a copy of Amazing containing "Transient" (this I haven't read yet). After reading Heinlein's story, I don't agree with Jim Harmon's opinion of it. I thoroughly enjoyed it -- it held my interest all the way through. This doesn't mean that I agree with what Heinlein was trying to put over; on the contrary, I personally find his philosophy repulsive. I'm sure that Harmon has let his revulsion get in the way of his enjoyment of "Starship Soldier" as a story. While I've been writing this letter Ted Forsyth has read "Transient," and some of his comments are as follows: "I've read 25 pages, and I still don't know what it's all about...it's full of irrelevancies, except that I don't know what they're irrelevant to...it's a psychotic fantasy...if Redd Boggs said he liked it, he must be psychotic too... 'Transient' may or may not be good, but it's definitely required reading."

I must say I was very surprised at you, taking all those insults from Ray Nelson; fancy letting him say that you published a Little Literary Review without answering back. You have, of course, struck him from the mailing list. (London SW4)

ANDY YOUNG

Gee. Harmon really sent me back, back to the days when I would occasionally be allowed to go back to my father's room and listen to a late radio show, scrunched down in his bed and fascinated with the yellow glow from the radio dial. One could do a whole series on such radio shows (I remember once hearing a story called "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper" on the Molle Mystery Theater, which avoided most of the weaknesses of the fixed-cast-of-characters shows), except that they were so much alike that a parody of one parodies them all.

"The Lone Fan of Turkey" sounds interesting. It's nice to see someone with educated general tastes entering fandom -- as opposed to the beanie-bearing hordes who know of naught but science fiction.

I like James Blish very much as a critic, and can't stand him as an author. I agree that The Sirens of Titan was highly original; I must admit that my main liking for the book was the religion of God the Utterly Indifferent -- cf. end of Ray Nelson's letter -- and I found a lot of the plot difficult to follow and unexplained, almost as if it had been invented by van Vogt.

I think Blish's remarks about science fiction and jazz are partly the result of being so close to the forest that he can't see the trees or some such. Jazz and sf are significant contributions to modern culture; but perhaps Blish meant "Significant contributions to modern Culture" which of course they are not. Science fiction, bad as it has generally been, has in fact done a lot to make the spending of millions of dollars on space travel acceptable to many, many taxpayers, just as its very badness acted for years to cause reputable scientists to turn pale at the idea.

Likewise, jazz has had an effect on western culture which Americans (to whom the stuff is local and commonplace) do not appreciate. I was amazed at the value Europeans place on jazz, especially American jazz. You might as well say that Paris fashion designers have made no significant contribution to modern culture; to assert such a thing requires restricting the meaning of "contribution" to little other than the release of nuclear energy, the development of polio vaccine, or the work of Ernest Hemingway. Modern culture is what surrounds us on the street, what blares forth from the mass media, what we buy in the stores. And in this sense both sf and jazz occupy positions of significance; life would not be the same without them.

Note that I am not saying that sf is Great Literature or that jazz is Great Music -- although both fields have their moments of minor greatness. I'm simply saying that these things have their effect on people, and a rather large effect at that. In talking about the effect on the general population we are not dealing with critically perceptive people who see the hackwork of most science fiction or the medi-



ocrity of a lot of popular music. A bad book can have as much impact on the general population, make as much contribution to modern culture, as a good one. Jazz has a lot of emotional content which gets through to people readily; science fiction, by its very strangeness, strikes a sense of wonder even in the absence of a sense of literature. (Somerville 43, Massachusetts)

#### RUTH BERMAN

The Oz comicbook series was unknown to Martin Gardner and Russell Nye when The Wizard of Oz and Who He Was was written. Their book came out in the spring of 1957. At the same time, August Derleth discovered the comic strips and wrote to Bob Patrick about them, and the two of them spread the news throughout Oz fandom. Dick Martin managed to get copies of them and told Reilly and Lee about the strips, and finally the book The Visitors from Oz came out. But Gardner and Nye's book came out just too early to hear anything about the strips.

Curiously enough, we in the Twin Cities are able (or were able) to see some of the originals. Some of the Oz comic strips appeared in the St Paul Dispatch, and the Minnesota Historical society has those issues. Two years ago I went over and looked them up. A few months after, I went back with my father to get reproductions of them (he was going to photograph the pages). They weren't there. The Historical society had had enough of yellowed, brittle pages, falling slowly to pieces, and they were having their papers put on microfilm. I've checked since then, from time to time; I think the last was about six months ago. But the issues of the Dispatch with the Oz comic strips were not yet back from being microfilmed. Sigh. (Minneapolis 17, Minnesota)

#### JAMES BLISH

Wow. I read "Reviewing Stand" in Discord #7 with great glee, not only for all the fat compliments, but for the bounce and crackle of the writing itself. The first line is especially great. It's hard to comment on the content of a piece which, among other things, accuses me of seeming to know everything (except to rumble, "Nonsense!"), but I do have a few scraps.

Among other things I have the impression that you do not realize that "And Some Were Savages" [Amazing, November 1960] was written around the cover. Now nobody has a higher opinion of Ed Emsh than I, but I've observed that sf artists in general have very little story sense, and when you turn them loose to paint a fantastic scene which is to come out of their own imagination, the result is usually either corny or else a cartoon (for instance, the moon swallowing a spaceship). It is then the writer's chore to redeem the situation if he can.

In this instance we have a spaceship being surrounded and attacked by what are plainly Indians, mounted on six-legged horses. Just to pound the analogy home, Ed wrote "Conestoga" on the side of the ship. If you can possibly wipe my story out of your memory under the circumstances, just look at that and ask yourself what you would do with it as a writer. If you take it to show what it seems to show, then the story has already been told by the picture in the first place.

The choices involved for the writer are not very great. The simplest and most desperate is to write the scene out of the story entirely (for instance, by making it a scene in a dream, having nothing to do with the action). Though Larry Shaw, confronted with an abomination by Luros, once actually did this, it's a method no editor would let you get away with more than once.

Secondly, you can use the old Futurian system of assuming that the scene depicted is the direct opposite of what it appears to be. The Indians seem to be attacking the ship? Okay, let's make it that the ship is actually the attacker. The ship looks like a spaceship? Okay, let's make it an airplane. And so on. You can see that I did this to some extent in "And Some Were Savages." Its main flaw as a method, though, is that it's completely mechanical, and the reader very easily



catches you at it; from that point on, predicting how the rest of the story will go becomes as easy as adding a column of figures.

I know of no way around this problem, particularly if the scene in question is more or less unyielding (as Ed made it with the legend on the ship), except that of imbedding the intractably corny elements of it in sufficient new or unusual material to reduce their importance. Sometimes this can be done by a little simple research; for instance, the "Conestoga" legend turned out to reinforce my assumption that the vessel was really an airplane. Usually, however, new stuff has to be imported into the situation in wholesale lots before its implications can be sufficiently changed to make it worth reading by the reader who's already seen the cover.

Working with the writer is the fact that such a painting can usually be counted upon to contain one or two inconsistencies, and as I learned at Hank Kuttner's knee, nothing so quickly generates a plot as a good howling inconsistency. In this instance there was one large one -- four-limbed men on six-legged horses -- and one small one: the word "Conestoga" on a ship bearing the UN herald on its empennage.

Well, all this may explain (though it shouldn't excuse) some of the qualities of which you complain in "And Some Were Savages." It doesn't explain why the same complaints should apply to my stories in general, though, since very few were written around covers; and I am going to have to ponder a while before I admit that they do so apply. At the moment, I'll grant at least that it's a good description of the poorer ones.

I'm surprised by your high rating for Get Out of My Sky. As for The Triumph of Time -- which I think very susceptible to the complaints you make about "Savages," yet you call it a "near-masterpiece" -- there is no Secret about it except in Schuyler Miller's mind; he seems lately to be smelling forthcoming sequels in everything I publish. (Milford, Pennsylvania)

SALLY KIDD

My driving desire is to address Bob Farnham, found for the first time in your pages. "My dear Mr Farnham: Your logic and reasoning are so magnificent that even that of Mr Nixon (described by the Republican Time as having 'the intellectual consistency of toothpaste') pales beside you. Among these closely reasoned arguments against the Negro you state that 'some are outright lazy, most of them will work and work good.' This is a truly marvelous statement. Sit down for a moment, Mr Farnham, if you will, and name for me an ethnic group, a race, a religious group, a tribe, a nation, a sex, a baseball team or a crowd standing at a bus stop about whom this statement could not be made.

"I live now, and have lived for the past four years, in the so-called 'black belt' of Chicago. On my street (Kimbark, two blocks from 63d street) live Negroes, professors, students, Puerto Ricans, and us. By and large we are a lazy lot who find it lots easier to throw the garbage into the can for the janitor to collect than to carry it all the way out into the street. We do have grass, though I will admit that I destroyed some by digging it up to plant flowers. We also have trees, except for those we lost to the elm blight. How do Negroes destroy the trees, by the way -- break off the branches when they swing from them?

"You say that there are no slums where you live. Having driven through that state, I wonder if you live in a cave? Isn't that nice. And where do the Negroes of Georgia live?

"And to make it perfectly clear that I'm not really trying to be nice, may I say that you're exactly the type that I have always thought of as the classical bigot: those who are so prototypically inferior themselves that they must create someone over whom they can feel superior. Pathetic man. I hope you're happy."

I'm glad that you published Farnham's letter, even if it did cost me a night's sleep. We live in the University of Chicago community and work with intelligent people, and it's very hard not to forget about people like our friend. We need to be reminded that there are thousands -- millions -- like him and that it's much too early to get smug. (Chicago 37, Illinois)