

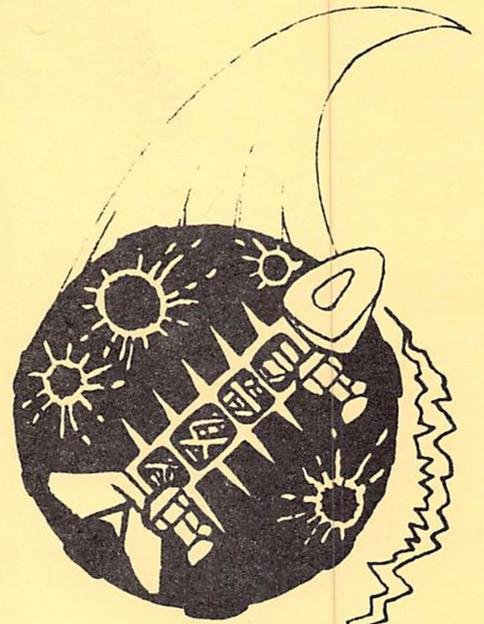
# KNIGHTS



# Spaced:

WAIT, COMMANDER CORNEY. THERE'S

..A MESSAGE FROM BEAGLE 1!



COME IN, COMMAND BASE ALPO!  
COME IN! WE ARE ON A COLLISION  
COURSE WITH ALPO BASE.  
LOOK OUT, ALPO. LOOK OUT!

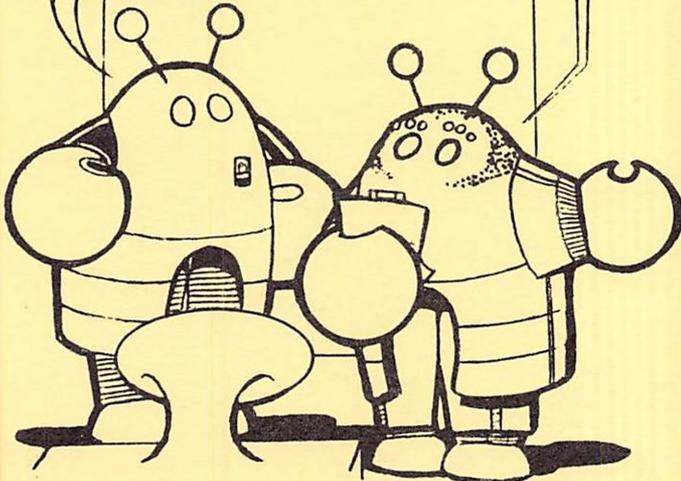
JOHNN!

LATER...

MYLAR, HOW IS HELLANAH? I MUST KNOW---

WELL, COMMANDER, SHE SEEMS TO BE PARALYZED FROM THE NOSE DOWN...

THANK GOD SHE WASN'T INJURED!



WDL 76



IN THIS ISSUE YOU'RE  
GONNA FIND THE  
FOLLOWING STUFF!

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# BRACKEN'S WORLD

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I'm back in the saddle again. Or near enough. After a year out of fanzine editing and publishing, and with minimal self-initiated contact with fandom during that time, I'm coming back in what I hope becomes grand style. Within a very short time I published issue 17/18, attended and sat on a fanzine panel at my very first convention, and reestablished contact with most of KNIGHTS' previous contributors. This issue is coming out very close to the quarterly schedule I long ago set for myself, contains work by some new and some old contributors, and is, at least, a solid average issue of KNIGHTS (though not quite what I would like it to be).

A year in the making, last issue was the first I've published that sold-out within a few weeks of publication (with a print-run of 300). Because of that, I've increased the print-run this issue. Unfortunately, I still don't have the financial ability to return to the slick covers, and I'm not exactly thrilled with the printing of this cover (by one of those "quickie" presses). Other things in this issue don't sit quite right with me, but, at least, I'm able to return to 24 pound mimeo paper for the interior pages (as opposed to the 20 pound paper I used last issue with all of its inherent show-through problems).

While last issue I was satisfied with a "simple" design, this issue I've tried a few new--to me--elements of design. The artwork, as always, is varied: from Derek Carter to Delmonte and back again.

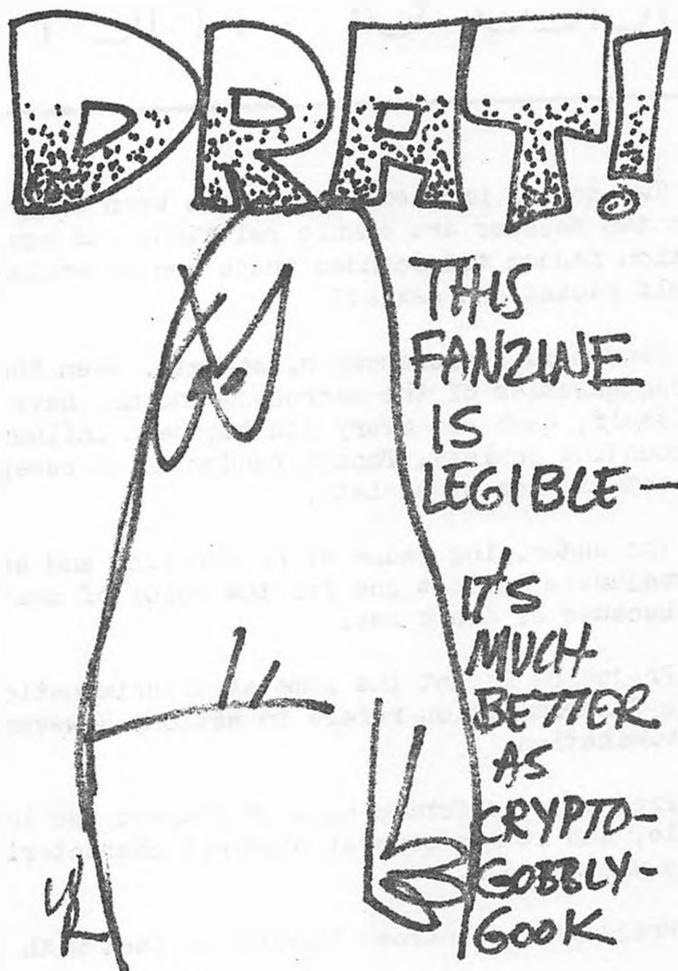
The contents are more varied than last issue, and come closer to achieving the kind of balance between serious sf criticism and humor that I like to see in a fanzine (last seen here in issue 16). The issue begins with Wayne Hooks' examination of sexism and racism in sf fandom and I find it, like Tom Monteleone's piece last issue on the same general topic, to be considerably different. Where Tom's piece was totally and undeniably subjective, Wayne has handled the topic from a much more objective viewpoint. He has questioned a number of fans and come to a conclusion based on their observations and their opinions. This is the first time I've seen the subject of sexism and racism in fandom handled in this manner. Following this is a short piece of

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my own on the topic of women and sexism and how it may affect KNIGHTS as a representative of fandom.

The interview with Algis Budrys was conducted by Michael Stern at the 1976 Windycon in Chicago. Budrys was the Guest of Honor there and it was Michael's first convention. Michael is a former staff writer for the campus newspaper at the University of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana) and while at school here (Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville) he wrote an article for the ALESTLE about the convention. I've known Michael since shortly after I moved here and, even though he's transferred back to U of I, we remain friends.

"Stomping Tom" is Robert Bloch's reply to Tom Monteleone's column last issue, and "Grateful to the Dead" is Grant Carrington's poetic tribute to the Grateful Dead. I had hoped to include it last issue to accompany the interview there, but space limitations worked against me. Charlie Grant interviews Gothic author Deborah Lewis, and he and Tom Monteleone both contribute their regular columns. The issue wraps up with an examination of Philip K. Dick's A SCANNER DARKLY by Rod Snyder and a lettercolumn  
(continued on page 65)





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# LILIES OF THE FIELD

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Two social problems which have been of primary concern to many Americans in the past two decades are ethnic relations and equal rights for women. Has science fiction fandom transcended these controversial social problems or, rather, is fandom itself racist and sexist?

Fandom is a microcosm of society. Even though fandom may not display all the characteristics of the macrocosm and may have developed several institutions peculiar to itself, each and every fan has been influenced and shaped in some manner by the surrounding society. Though fandom is an escape from society, it retains most of the characteristics of society.

The underlying cause of both racism and sexism is the same: prejudice. Racism is prejudice against one for the color of one's skin; sexism is prejudice against one because of one's sex.

Prejudice is not the same as discrimination. Prejudice refers to judgement while discrimination refers to action. However, prejudice can lead to unconscious discrimination.

Prejudice is formed against stereotyped images, rather than against actual people, and it has several distinct characteristics. Not only is prejudice learned, it is unconscious.

Prejudice is learned through contact with prejudice. Peer group pressure and

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# WAYNE HOOKS

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socialization contribute more to prejudice than any discernible action on the part of the minority. Prejudice is unrelated to reality since prejudice bears no relation to what people are really like. It is based upon second hand opinions, rather than first hand experiences. Prejudice may be held against a group, yet known individuals are often exempted from such generalizations and looked upon as exceptions.

In society at large racism has been very well documented, but in fandom there seems to be a lack of racism. There is also a lack of minority fans. Overt racism is not one of the causes. As a matter of fact, most fans appear to be as politically liberal as they are white.

Throughout the research for this article only one unsubstantiated incidence of racism in fandom was found. In the lettercolumn of the August 1974 issue of *AMAZING*, Craig Strete, an American Indian, reported that he and two of his friends were turned away from a science fiction convention when a man refused to sell them tickets. Strete quoted the gentleman as saying, "Like hell, no fucking Indians are coming in here." Strete was not available for further comment.

Outside of this one incident no cases of racism in fandom, real or imagined, were found. However, there were a couple of cases of fans being discriminated against because they were considered racists--a nice example of reverse discrimination and just as wrong as racism in the first place.

But why are there so few fans who are members of ethnic minority groups? There

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are several reasons. One is economic. Members of ethnic minority groups are more likely to be poor than white Americans. For example, in 1969 the average median income for a black family was half that of a white family. With the high cost of most science fiction books it is impossible for many minorities to afford them.

Another factor is education. Minorities on the whole have a lower educational level than white Americans. Minority members who are fans are middle class financially and socially, and are generally college educated. People who are unable to read at a functional level are unlikely to join fandom.

Another reason few minority group members are fans is because of their ethnic pride and ethnic self-identity. They don't need fandom; they have their own thing. Many fans become fans in order to gain a niche in society, to redefine their societal roles. Minorities have no need of this since their very race gives them impetus for solidarity. Gerard Houarner, editor of KABALLAH, comments:

Blacks and other minorities have other problems on their minds: survival in ghettos, money (no black bourgeoisie--no black fandom around sf writing), rising to positions of authority...Basically, minorities are too involved in asserting themselves to involve themselves in a leisure-class activity like fandom. Fans don't exclude blacks, it's just that blacks boycott fans (a delicious irony).

The nature of science fiction and fantasy literature itself may be another reason why science fiction fandom is not appealing to minorities. Science fiction and fantasy are inherently racist forms of literature. Both blatantly and covertly, racism is evident in these genres' derogatory depiction of minorities.

In his article "Die, Black Dog!", which originally appeared in TOADSTOOL WINE, Charles Saunders discusses how the writings of H. P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, and Clark Ashton Smith are "steeped in racism." The following excerpts from Saunders' article serve to illustrate a few examples of racism in the writings of these authors.

It is true that Lovecraft's stories rarely dealt directly with blacks, either individually or as a people...The few references he does make are telling. In "Rats in the Walls," the name of the protagonist's black cat is "N[redacted]man." The Louisiana Cthulhu cultists in "The Call of Cthulhu" were a melange of "low mixed-blooded type, negroid and mulatto." In the other Mythos tales, those worshipers of the Great Old Ones who are not New England "white trash" more often than not have a "disgustingly negroid" cast to their features...

Consider next Robert E. Howard, he who is credited with unleashing upon us a plague of homicidal mesomorphic barbarians. On the surface, REH would appear to be a worse racist than Lovecraft. Two Conan stories, "The Vale of Lost Women" and "Shadows in Zamboula," are typical antiblack hysterics. Reading them is like having a front-row seat at a Ku Klux Klan rally. In their depiction of blacks as savages, cannibals, and slaves, these stories deserve a place of dishonor beside Edgar Rice Burroughs in the lowly annals of racist literature.

Third and last, consider Clark Ashton Smith. Compared to Howard and Lovecraft, Smith comes off as a broadminded liberal--almost. Though Smith made typical use of the stock savage-cannibal-slave stereotypes, he also managed to write a few stories that depicted blacks in a less patently racist manner. "The Venus

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of Azombeii" is a typical white-adventurer-in-Africa yarn. It is noteworthy in that it portrays the Africans as noble rather than ignoble savages. This nobility he attributes to an ancient influx of Roman blood.

In a letter Charles Saunders presented his views on racism in science fiction, as opposed to "Die, Black Dog!" which only dealt with fantasy.

In the past, sf blacks were either stereotyped or absent. A good example of this was the stereotyped black character in "Human Pets of Mars" in Asimov's "Before the Golden Age" collections.

A good example of modern sf treatment of blacks would be two recent books: Brunner's THE SHOCKWAVE RIDER and Williamson's BLACK LANTERN stories. In THE SHOCKWAVE RIDER, one of the major characters, Freeman, is black. Brunner handles him in a realistic, non-stereotypic manner. Actually, Freeman is one of the book's heroes; he is converted from the programmed philosophy of Tarnover to the freedom offered by Nicky Halflinger, the title character.

Williamson's effort, on the other hand, is nothing but "refined" racism. The hero is a black man from a primitive planet. He gets involved with a white girl from an advanced planet and the miscegeristic fur flies!

Determining the reasons for the lack of minorities in fandom is purely a subjective matter. A more concrete matter is how minority group members have been treated in fandom. Firsthand information was obtained from two black writers. First, Diane Bogus relates her personal experiences in fandom.

Now, as far as having personally run into any racist practices in the acceptance or rejection of my material, it is not something that I feel I've experienced. All of the editors at the major fan magazines with whom I've corresponded have never rejected me because of my color, nor have they sent material back because they accept only men's work or the like (stories with dynamic male heroes).

I've had several pieces accepted by various members of the fandom community, and I've had a lot rejected, but, through it all, I don't feel they're doing me any favors to accept, and I certainly don't feel they're doing themselves an injustice to turn down anything that even I come to see as not quality or at least entertaining literature.

Charles Saunders has had similar experiences in fandom, as he writes:

When I first broke into the fandom biz, I had few illusions and lots of apprehensions. This was because so much of the fantasy and science fiction in circulation today is reprint material, stuff originally published 25-50 years ago and more. Reflective of its times, this material contained a large amount of racism. Not only were blacks put down; also Orientals, American Indians, and "swarthy" people from the Mediterranean. The stories obviously mirrored the views of most of their readers, or they would never have sold.

Ergo, I believed the same thing to be true of today's readers and editors. So, when I first started submitting my "all-black" fantasies, I wasn't super-hopeful. However, I was pleasantly surprised. As far as I know, every editor I've

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submitted to has been white; neither the content of the stories nor the fact that I am black (which I never conceal) has been a negative influence. Unless somebody out there is fooling me, all my 20 or more fandom correspondents but one are white, and none of them is a racist.

As far as fandom goes, I haven't run into any racism personally. And believe me, I'm no Uncle Tom. If I saw it, I'd shout about it.

Now, there is the matter of the paucity of blacks in fandom. Fantasy and sf, for some reason, is not an overwhelmingly popular genre among blacks. To my knowledge, there are no black professional sf writers, and few active fans. This could be due to a problem in identifying with what could be viewed as a "segregated" genre. Also, many blacks who are heavy readers are more into political literature than escapist fiction.

Though the science fiction and fantasy genres are racist themselves, overt racism in fandom itself appears not to exist. Charles Saunders and Diane Bogus were the only two black writers available for comment. Therefore, the question arises: do their experiences illustrate a lack of racism in fandom? Could it be that fandom has not had enough experience with minorities to prove anything? Perhaps the few minority fans are accepted and tolerated as tokens. As illustrated by the following, most fans doubt the existence of racism in fandom and offer other theories to explain the lack of minorities.

Jessica Salmonson, editor of FANTASY AND TERROR, voices her opinions concerning racism in fandom.

At conventions, the absence of black fans is a puzzle. I'm sure skin color wouldn't affect someone's being welcome. A greater than average percentage of fans are lesbian or gay, another large percentage (especially among pros it seems) are bisexual, and most of the remainder are still naive and/or virgin. So genuinely straight fans are the minority, and it is my experience that fans are never anti-gay. There are individual fugheads. But individual fugheads are the exception in fandom. Bigotry against gays is very rare. Acceptance of blacks has never been rightly tested, as not enough blacks have shown an interest in mundane fandom for anyone to guess who'd get upset (a few tokens are wanted everywhere, so who can say what is genuine lack of bigotry and what is shallow liberalism).

Jodie Offutt, a long-time fan, denies the existence of racism in sf fandom:

I have never, ever, seen any racism or evidence of racism within fandom. I'm convinced it doesn't exist. I don't think fans think about it one way or the other. Racism, or lack of it, simply doesn't occur to fans. True, there aren't too many blacks or orientals among us. (Maybe fandom is being shunned?) I feel the fannish attitude would be the same were there more; fans are color blind. Fandom is made up of lots of Jews and ex-Catholics, both groups of above-average intelligence, good Christian up-bringing (yes, the Jews, too), and with tolerant, unquestioning acceptance toward their fellow fans.

Linda Bushyager, editor of KARASS, believes the culture is to blame for the lack of blacks in fandom.

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Many blacks were not given good education. Many come from poor economic backgrounds. It is logical that few blacks have the time, money, or inclination to read sf. As past prejudices fade and as more blacks move up the economic ladder and receive better educations, more will become interested in science and science fiction.

Is fandom racist? There is apathy in fandom and what could be termed racism by omission. Fandom makes little or no effort to proselytize blacks and other minorities. The average fan has no desire to be bothered with racism and other problems of society; that's what he joined fandom to avoid. Prejudice, however, is rife in fandom.

#### SEXISM AND FANDOM

Sexism is a form of prejudice and discrimination practiced against a person solely on the basis of sex. In general, sexism is against the female wherein the woman fulfills the role of the societal minority.

The woman's position in fandom is ambivalent, not so clearly defined as that of the minority ethnic group in fandom. Women are active in fandom, but they remain a minority. Many enter fandom due to the influence of a male fan, and remain in fandom only as long as their interest in the male fan persists. Fandom is becoming aware of feminism, but mostly because it is chic and fashionable. There is sexism in fandom, but, like racism, it is an unconscious, societally reinforced behavior, rather than a concerted effort against feminism.

Laurine White feels women are active in fandom and presents evidence to prove her point.

First of all, I don't think fandom discriminates against women...Some excellent fanzines are put out by women. Victoria Vayne's *SIMULACRUM 2* was nominated for a FAAn award, but didn't win. *KARASS* is an enjoyable, if somewhat opinionated, newszine, and if Linda Bushyager ever publishes the issue of *GRANFALLOON* she has been working on for the last 18 months, it should be as good as previous issues. Other fanzines I'll mention are *WILD FENNEL*, *DILEMMA* (Jackie Franke not only has an interesting fanzine, she's a good cartoonist), and *JANUS*. Juanita Coulson began *YANDRO* quite a few years ago, although Buck's personality emerges more strongly in all the issues I've read.

Women have been nominated for fan Hugoes: Wendy Fletcher and Alicia Austin for fan artist; Sandra Miesel, Lisa Tuttle, and Rosemary Tuttle for fan writer. Susan Wood won that one. Sutton Breiding has published poetry by Leah Zeldes, Karma Beck, and someone else whose name I can't remember. I think Karma Beck has her own poetry zine. Tina Hensel used to have a great humor column in *AWRY*. Mae Strelkov has been entertaining fans for years with her letters and articles. Sheryl Smith and Sandra Miesel can write critical analyses better than most male fans. Sheryl Birkhead is the most prolific femfan artist, but there are other good ones whose names I can't remember, or who contribute mainly to zines I don't read (like Sylvia Starshine). Several of the artists at the '76 Westercon artshow were women who had very good drawings of mythical beasts, a la Bonnie Dalzell, or complicated designs like Alicia Austin's. If women's contributions to sf zines have not been as great as you'd expect, the explanation could be that their fan-nish energies are expended in related fields like fantasy (Marc Helms, Paula Marmor, Bonnie Goodknight) or Star Trek fandom, which women dominate.

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However, the question is: do these examples constitute trends or are they exceptions? Tokens are always welcome.

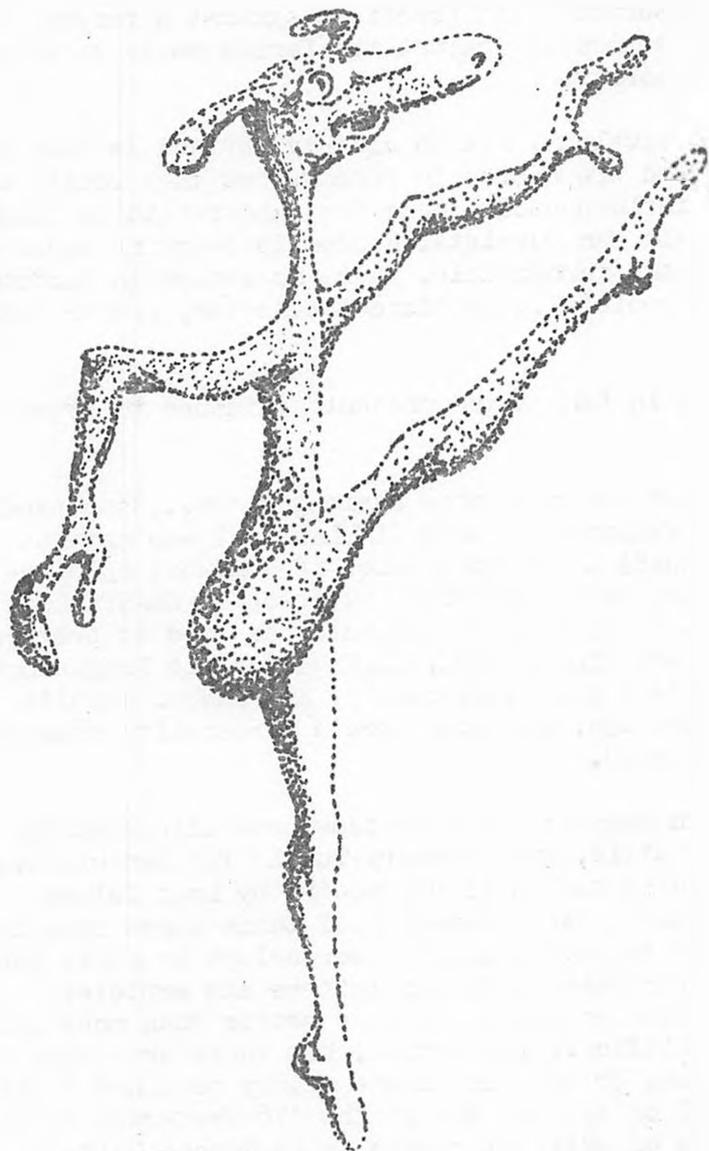
Not all women, particularly militant feminists, are welcome in fandom as seen in critical reaction to Joanna Russ's novel *THE FEMALE MAN*. Also, when Jessica Salmonson's article "To Sappho With Love" was printed in the October '75 issue of *THE DIVERSIFIER*, fan reaction was overwhelmingly negative. The attitude seems to be "do what you want to, but don't bother me". In this way fandom is politically liberal, but sexually conservative. For this reason there are few feminist radicals or radicals of any sort in fandom. Women fans seem to feel radical feminism has no place in fandom. Other female fans feel that the lack of proportional representation in fandom

for women is due more to societal reasons, as Linda Bushyager says:

Why are there more men than women and very few blacks? The answer should be obvious with a little thought. It is due to the very nature of the beast--the beast being sf. Up until 1949 science was considered almost entirely the providence of the male. So very few women read sf. By the '60s the sexism of the past was being challenged on most fronts, and more and more women were allowed to, wanted to, and were encouraged to enter scientific fields. More and more women read sf. Star Trek came on the air. And soon more and more women began entering fandom. So you could say that the sexism of the past and of the culture affected sf fandom, but I don't think fandom is sexist...

All I'm trying to get at is that the makeup of fandom merely reflects the makeup of sf readers, and the majority of sf readers are white males; this group is decreasing. As more women read sf, and as more blacks and other minority groups read sf, they will enter fandom.

Some people have comment-



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ed that there are few women fanzine editors, writers, artists, etc. This is true, but the numbers are growing. Again, I think this is due to the cultural roles of women which are changing. As women's lib affects more and more women, and as men lose their prejudices, the mundane world will change even more. Fandom reflects the mundane world to some extent. We are a microcosm with a specialized interest, but we are still affected by the culture around us.

In his article "An Article for Alica," (SELDON'S PLAN 41) Cy Chauvin ponders over the thought that he, himself, has unconscious prejudices toward women in fandom. He addresses the question, why women aren't active in fandom in a creative way:

Why? Perhaps (to make a sexist remark) once women get in fandom they find much easier and faster ways of getting egoboo and becoming well-known than editing/writing/drawing for fanzines (or even apa). I can't believe it's because of any conscious--or even unconscious--discrimination on the part of male editors when they produce their fanzines. (But--stopping for a second now--maybe it is; I would never have thought of asking Alica ((Madarasz)) for a review or article for SELDON'S PLAN, yet I have asked her husband for one several times. I always "assumed" she wasn't interested--maybe she wouldn't be, but I never asked to find out. And while I always loaded down her husband with fanzines and books and talk about cons and zines, I rarely mentioned them to her, thinking (again) she would be disinterested--and look who's producing the fanzine, friends.)

Jodie Offutt firmly believes that there is sexism in fandom, however, she does not believe that males are the cause of it.

Funny, I think there is more sexism in fandom than in other groups of our population. However, I see very little of it emanating from males. The sexism that I see comes from females--the ones most "into the movement," as they say. The more militant they are, the less tolerant they are--and the less sense of humor they possess. Some of the female sexists I have seen are very quick to take offense, wasting no time in jumping on somebody with accusations of male chauvinism (usually pronouncing it improperly). They go around with shoulders squared for a fight, looking for someone to use a wrong word or utter a compromising phrase, so they can jump in the ring and bring an unsuspecting opponent in with them.

But there is some justification to ask about sexism in fandom. Some generalizations may be made about the feminist movement. Sexism is a form of discrimination or prejudice which is unique from racism. In racism the majority imposes its preconceptions upon a distinct minority. In the case of sexism, a minority imposes its preconceptions upon a majority since women numerically outnumber men in the general population. In many cases, women themselves help reinforce social sexism and actually are responsible for a great deal of it since women are primarily responsible for the early socialization of children of both sexes.

In the cases of race, religion, and ethnicaliyy, minorities often unite in a common front to combat prejudice and discrimination. But, so far, women have shown an incapacity for uniting in a common cause on the basis of their sex. Racial, ethnic and religious conflict in the drive for equality does not affect the basic family unit. Because women live in intimacy more with men than with other women, there is frequently conflict when women press for equality. The demands are primarily upon males. Most women do not fight sexism because they fear the potential conflict or

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they enjoy their favored, sheltered status, economically dependent upon their husbands. The movement toward sexual equality is restricted by the fact that, in general, the most intimate human relationships usually take place within the confines of a heterosexual marriage. This impediment is not present in other social inequalities since marriage in general is endogamous in respect to class and race.

#### INDIFFERENCE AND INSENSITIVITY

Gerald Houarner and Jessica Salmonson both point to the indifference and insensitivity of fans as the source of sexism and racism in fandom. Houarner is very critical of fandom for its egoism and insensitivity.

The problem with sf fandom is not that it's "reactionary, sexist, or racist" (although there are these elements in fandom), but that it is adolescent. Sublimation abounds: collecting is a fetish with many. People are competing to become BNFs (big fish in small ponds), win Hugos, impress others with their trivial knowledge, etc. Perfectly harmless, except when it becomes an obsession, and I have met too many FLAWOLers (I was even one for a few months) not to see that such an attitude is very dangerous. Fanatics are always adolescents, and adolescents come in all ages (the Golden Age of sf is 9 or 11, as someone Famous once said). They look out for themselves, not for others (which is the difference, I think, between fanaticism and dedication: concern for one's self vs. concern for others).

Fandom is insensitive, period. A quick scan of a convention floor tells me that most fans are white, middle-class. Some are trying to prove themselves rite of passage (my view when I was heavy into fandom), others are into it for the family feeling. Whatever the reason, it is personal. The outside world, the realities which minorities and women trying to be individuals instead of type-cast roles (roles set down by either male or female chauvinists) face, simply does not enter into fandom. Fandom is an escape from this reality, and people fail to see that reality and fantasy can be integrated, indeed, it must be in order to lead any kind of productive life. Fandom is pretty complicated--it is a microcosm of the world--and it is pretty depressing. Women have difficulty getting into this sort of thing, though I must admit this is changing. I think some women, as they are assulted by liberal/radicals to take their responsibilities and positions of power in life are instead escaping into fandom...

Jessica Salmonson, too, is critical of the indifference of fans.

Right now, fans are as oblivious of feminism as they are of the black man... Probably the most subtly damaging enemy of equality (feminist and radical) is ignorance and/or indifference. A great many fans live in their sheltered little worlds, unaware of the sexism and racism all around them. Most any Moose lodge will tell you, look around, do you see any sexism or racism in here? And if you check the by-laws of liberalized lodges, there are seldom any overt rules against minorities or women. Of course, fans can't be WASPs in the literal term, as, indeed, a high percentage of Jews are involved. But the WASP intellect may be there nonetheless--I'm not sure.

Fans may be more biggoted than your average American, and finding too few blacks around to sneer at, they invent their own term for "n[redacted]" and call it "trekkie." Check out the elitist attitude toward trek fans versus trufans, sf

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fans, regular fans, or whatever the "rest" of fandom considers its supreme self to be. But that's a minor aside.

For women--though not for racial minorities--the situation is changing. Joanna Russ, Kit Reed, Ursula Le Guin, Virginia Kidd, Vonda McIntyre, and quite a few others, are bringing a stark, new level to science fiction. They are feminist authors, sometimes to such an extent that a large percentage of a fandom dominated by males and male-intellects cannot even understand their writing (FEMALE MAN is the most obvious example--a "right-on" book for feminist readers, an incomprehensible tract to most fans. Unfortunate.). These gifted women are still a vast minority of the total number of sf writers. The number of men's works on the sf rack, at any given time, is dozens of times larger than the number of women's works in print and on the same stand. As long as white males write over 90% of the available sf, almost the same percentage of white males will comprise the reading audience (and how many femfans are fans because of husbands, boyfriends, or the anachronist society).

Richard Geis, editor of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, agrees with Salmonson and Houarner regarding the insensitivity of fandom.

Since fans are 99.99% liberal and right-thinking, racism is not readily apparent. I've never noticed any of that awful stuff in zines or letters. Sexism--well, what is it exactly? Sure, I guess there has been and is sexism extant. Almost always unconscious. About six years ago--or five, maybe, in SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW I said the readership was about 75% male and 25% female. Since then, I note a creeping up of the female percentage, in new subscriptions, anyway. But it's hard to be exact. Male editors still like to use illos of women as sex objects--naturally. Female fanzine editors are not yet as overtly sexual as the males, in editing. But maybe someday...Insensitivity to minorities in fandom? Yes, because fandom is 99% white lower middle class, and doesn't have the minority experience in its young lives. I hope you are not thinking of females as a minority--they outnumber males.

#### A SELF-MADE GHETTO

In seeking to determine whether or not prejudice toward minorities and women exists in fandom, it seems that this has not been a definitive survey, but rather a broad subjective overview of fandom. However, there seems little doubt that fandom does not have a great many minority fans nor a proportional representation of women fans. The reasons for this, touched on earlier, include socioeconomic, educational, and ethnocentric factors for minorities, and sociocultural factors for women in addition to the mere nature of the science fiction genre itself which lacks appeal for these two groups.

It is ironic that fandom is so prone to proselytize, yet remains ethnocentric. Minority fans and women fans are not victims of any overt policy of discrimination, but the fact remains that fandom is largely white and male.

It seems that fandom is not interested in minorities and women, but is content to remain in its own self-made ghetto. Failure to attract women and minorities does not in itself constitute sexism or racism. Perhaps by its very nature science fiction will never appeal to minorities and women. However, if the nature of science fiction does not change it will stagnate, and in its stagnation will continue to fail to at-

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tract minorities and women. This loss of new people and new ideas in a cliché-ridden genre will ultimately be fandom's loss, and not the loss of minorities and women who have already proven they can exist well without fandom.

The question is: can fandom continue to exist without them?

-- Wayne Hooks

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SUGGESTED READINGS (contributed by Joanna Russ):

"Images of Women in Science Fiction" from Warner Modular Publications, Reprint 714, 1973.

"Outta Space: Women Write SF" MS, January 1976.

THE WITCH AND THE CHAMELEON, a feminist fanzine, Amanda Bankier, 2 Paisley Ave., S., Apt. 6, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

Interview with Joanna Russ in QUEST: a feminist quarterly, summer 1975 (Diana Press, 1909 Q St., N.W., Washington D. C. 20009).

KHATRU 3 & 4, a symposium on women in science fiction, Jeffery D. Smith, 1339 Weldon Ave., Baltimore, MD 21211.

Introduction in MARY SHELLY'S TALES AND STORIES, Greg Press, a division of G. K. Hall & Co., Boston, 1975.

Review of "A Boy and his Dog" by Joanna Russ in FRONTIERS, Fall 1975, Univ. of Colorado, Women Studies Program, Boulder, CO 80309.

Pamphlet, "The Great Bitch and the Poison Maiden" by Susan Wood Glicksohn, T-K Graphics, PO Box 1951, Baltimore, MD 21203.

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Lindenfeld, Frank. RADICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL PROBLEMS. New York: The Macmillan Company, Second Edition, 1973.

McDonagh, Edward C. and Simpson, Jon E. SOCIAL PROBLEMS: PERSISTENT CHALLENGES. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. Second Edition, 1969.

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# THE MALE CHAUVINIST FANZINE

MIKE BRACKEN



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KNIGHTS is a male chauvinist fanzine.

The last time a woman's work graced the pages of this fanzine was in issue 16 (June 1976) when a letter from Pauline Palmer appeared in the lettercolumn. The last female artist to appear in these pages was Sheryl Birkhead in issue 14 (December 1975). In fact, Sheryl is the only female artist to appear in these pages since my mother (credited M. A. Bates) did an illustration for issue 8 (July 1974). In terms of articles by female writers, this fanzine has fared rather poorly: nothing by a woman writer has appeared in these pages since Jodie Offutt wrote "Taking a Bath" for issue 12 (April 1975).

Before I looked at my mailing list I expected to find a healthy mixture of male and female readers. I was wrong; male readers dominate the mailing list as much as male writers and artists dominate the pages. What few women there are on the mailing list fall roughly into three categories. Either a) they edit and publish their own fanzine and don't have much time to contribute to others, b) they subscribe, and subscribers on the whole don't tend to contribute to, or loc, fanzines, or c) they are my personal friends--many of whom have not yet figured out what a fanzine is, and none of whom would be seeing KNIGHTS if they weren't.

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Although I've sent sample copies of KNIGHTS out to nearly as many female sf pros as I have male sf pros, I can't honestly say any of them have ever responded. On the other hand, male sf pros damn near dominated last issue's lettercolumn.

In short, it appears that KNIGHTS is almost exclusively a male province. However, it would be hard to say this was consciously planned. I think I can honestly say that I've printed every article with a female by-line I've received, and most of the artwork. At the same time, though, I can't really remember actively soliciting much from female fans.

It might be safe to say that the fanzine shapes the audience, and the audience shapes the fanzine. When KNIGHTS first began as a "science fiction magazine" it didn't appear hard to capture female talent. The first three issues alone contained five short stories by women. It wasn't long after that, though, when KNIGHTS began the gradual change from "sf magazine" to fanzine. Somewhere in that transition the female contributors appear to have been lost.

In the previous article ("Lilies of the Field"), Wayne Hooks says that fandom will stagnate without the influx of women. If that is so, then KNIGHTS may have already stagnated, especially since it doesn't seem to attract many women. On the other hand, it could simply be that the fanzine I am most interested in publishing, while not necessarily stagnate, just isn't attractive to those women who are fans, and is unknown to those who might become fans.

The question for me, as a fanzine editor, is this: how do I attract a representative cross-section of female-fan writers, artists, letterhacks, and readers without drastically altering either the type of fanzine I wish to edit or my editing style?

Perhaps it isn't possible.

-- Mike Bracken



AA, YES, YOU SHOULD  
FOLLOW ME EVERYWHERE!



When I met Algis Budrys, I knew only one word could completely describe him.

Overwhelming.

It isn't just his height (easily six feet) or his portliness; I've met tall, heavy people before. His personality actually fits his huge appearance, as though he were one of his own carefully devised characters (you always expect fictional characters to resemble their personalities; in real life you don't). As we talked, the richness of his experiences as a writer, editor, and human being became more vivid than any attempt at characterization. I realized that were he only a puny five foot seven inches, as I am, Budrys would still dominate any gathering.

Born of Lithuanian parents in Konigsberg, East Prussia, in 1931, Budrys came to the U.S. at the age of five. Since receiving a degree in creative writing from Columbia University in 1952, Budrys has published almost a dozen novels and hundreds of short stories, most of them science fiction, as well as several other works--including a biography of Harry Truman and a bicycle repair manual. His best known novel is probably ROGUE MOON; other works include WHO?, FALLING TORCH, and the short stories "The Executioner" and "Walk to the World."

Budrys is married, has four sons, and at various times has supported them as

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# ALGIS BUDRYS

## AN INTERVIEW

MICHAEL STERN

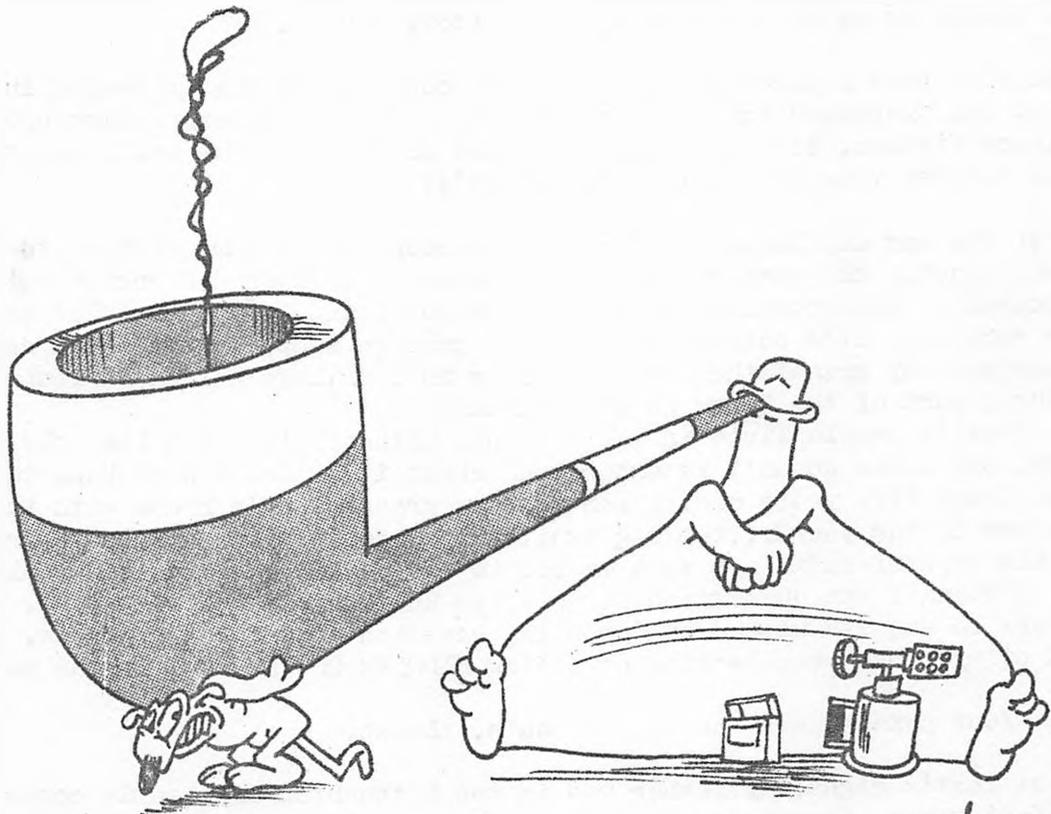
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assistant editor of GALAXY and Gnome Press, editorial director at Playboy Press, one of the founding editors of CARS magazine, product publicity supervisor for International Trucks, and as a free-lance writer.

Though much of Budrys' science fiction can be described as technology-oriented, it is people-centered. As Ajay tells us in the interview, he is mainly interested in the way human beings react to, and deal with, social or technological changes or scientific phenomena. This fits as a definition of much of science fiction, but Budrys, more than most sf writers, is intensely interested in the people in his stories.

Comparing ROGUE MOON, for example, to Arthur C. Clarke's "The Sentinel," which formed the basis for 2001: A SPACE ODDYSEY, the reader can see a similarity of subject and a total dissimilarity in approach. Clarke writes about the wonder of discovering an alien monolith on the moon, and what it may mean, in relatively abstract terms, to the future of mankind.

In ROGUE MOON, Budrys also describes a lunar artifact. But, unlike Clarke, he writes of the attempts of several characters to penetrate and return from the object, the personal assets and liabilities they bring to the task, and what they discover about themselves by entering it. As a result, the final trip through the labyrinth within the artifact seems anticlimactic by virtue of its intended unimportance. Of



SCHIRER '76.

primary importance to the story is the reaction of the characters to the challenge of understanding that they must die--repeatedly--to successfully complete the alien obstacle course. Of primary importance to Budrys is what makes people tick.

In the interview, recorded at Windycon III (Chicago, Ill, October 15 - 17, 1976), Ajay discusses his interest in human motivation: from whence this interest came and why he uses science fiction (rather than the mainstream) as its vehicle. He also touches on polemics, the Good Doctor Asimov, and how science fiction reflects "an underlying reality."

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Stern: To start this off on an entirely trivial note, how do you pronounce your full name, and how did you get the nickname Ajay?

Budrys: Okay, my full name is Algirdas Jonas Budrys ((ahl-zhir-das yo-nahs boodrees)), which, in its shortened form in English, come out as Algis Budrys. But about 25 years ago across a poker table somebody named me Ajay and that's what I've been ever since.

Stern: Was this a science fiction poker table?

Budrys: Yeah, it was in Hoarace Gold's apartment in New York. Jerome Bixby, who was a pretty good friend of mine from the days when I was writing letters to PLANET STORIES and he was its editor, brought me in there and introduced me to Fred Pohl, who became my agent and sold my first story for me.

Stern: I've read a piece you has written about Asimov that appeared in ANALOG in which you discussed the influence of his Eastern European Jewish upbringing on his science fiction. You came from that part of the world as well. Are there any parallels between your upbringing and Asimov's?

Budrys: Yes and no. Isaac and I come from roughly the same part of the world and we share roughly the same cultural background. The major difference between us is that Lithuanians put crumbled bacon on their kugel and Jews don't. But they make kugel the same way; it's potato pancakes and cabbage soup, and it's the same kind of landscape. My grandfather is the tailor in a village called Marienpole, and is obviously part of the Greek Russian culture.

Isaac's people lived in the Ukraine. Lithuania's a lot like the Ukraine in many ways. But Isaac doesn't remember much about it. I do. I went back to Lithuania once when I was five years old. I remember my grandfather's house with the tin roof and the cow in the yaerd...the big excitement when an airplane flew over...the mystery of the crystal radio set that my cousin had...that was a peasant culture.

I think I can understand Isaac. I've known him for a long time. I wrote about "where he was at" with John Campbell, based on my knowledge of him, of Campbell, and of my close recollection of seeing FIDDLER ON THE ROOF in the movies!

Stern: Your parents were hardly peasants, though.

Budrys: That's right. My father was in the Lithuanian diplomatic corps and I was born in Konigsberg, East Prussia, a highly cosmopolitan center. We lived on a triangular park one of whose sides faced a cathedral where Immanuel Kant is buried. We went on vacation to the U. S. and I went to a private school on lower Manhattan. The first

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year in New York the consulate general of Lithuania was located at the corner of 11th Street and Fifth Avenue which was a pretty damn good neighborhood. Many years later one of the buildings in that row was blown up. It was a Weatherman bomb factory and is now a gaping hole in the ground.

Stern: Some sf writers say that they incorporate events of their lives into their fiction. Do you?

Budrys: In a way, and I think it's probably the way most people mean. As I'm going to say in my speech this afternoon, I'm a very character-oriented writer. When I start a story, a scene occurs in my head and I get the feeling that I'm pregnant. The scene has a person or persons in a conflict situation--or an intriguing situation. Then I have to work out how they got there, what they do about it, and how it's going to change them to something more attractive or less attractive.

In order to make it work, in order to make the story take on significance, I'll put it in a science fiction situation.

In my guest-of-honor speech, I'll define science fiction as human drama made more relevant by social extrapolation. Social extrapolation can be something as simple as a .45 caliber pistol dropped into a caveman village. The whole world changes on the spot for my protagonist when he comes across this artifact.

That's roughly analogous to what happens when an abused and miserable 12½ year old farm boy learns to drive a pick-up. The whole world changes; you've got mobility, power, something you can do better than anyone else in town. ((By the time the Lithuanian consulate general closed in the early 1940's Budrys' family had already moved to a small farming community in New Jersey.))

Another time I discovered that I could get straight A's in English no matter what the hell I did. It was simply my big talent. Another time I opened my mouth at a fan gathering and began to sing (It isn't that I've got such a great voice, but it's mistakable for a pretty good voice on some occasions). Later on I wrote WHO? in which a teenage boy finds himself in roughly the same situation with respect to physics. It was very easy for me to write that scene.

Stern: Is there anything, and one event, that particularly spawned your interest in characterization?

Budrys: Yes, one incident always comes to mind. When I was three years old and Adolf Hitler rode past our house in East Prussia and 80 thousand people threw fits. Real fits. It completely contradicted everything I had ever been told about people. It contradicted the legend that they were naturally gentle, naturally decorous, naturally well-mannered. I was watching grown men and women shitting in our bushes because they could not contain their bowels--all because this funny looking little man was going by in a black open car with his hand sticking up (braced against his biceps because he had to hold it there for hours). It wasn't the straight arm salute that you'd always see in the photographs. Because when he wasn't on camera he'd try to be as much of a slouch as he could be.

I was about four years old and I watched another one of those motorcades. Watching grown men and women clawing at each other and fainting on the ground. And I said, somebody's been telling me a lot of lies about the world and I better find out in a hurry what it works like.

I saw the same phenomenon again years later. I was working at the American Express office at 65 Broadway in Manhattan. Harry Truman fired MacArthur, who went up Broadway in a big welcoming ticker tape parade and the Establishment of Wall Street decreed that there would be lots and lots of ticker tape.

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We were given time off from work to cut up paper and throw the stuff out the window. And it got to the point where everybody was shoulder to shoulder on the sidewalk. To the point where people were being pushed down subway station steps. A friend of mine was standing on a bunch of crumpled newspapers. Somebody set fire to it and he wasn't given time to get off. Somebody else got so enthusiastic that he dropped an ashtray out the window and fractured the skull of somebody a few floors below.

People are not as described. And I think that if you look in the history books, you will see that people are not as described. But I had these concrete examples of the Hitler case right in front of me. There went half the rules I'd ever heard. I had to have explanations. You have to assume that your loved ones don't lie to you. So you then have to assume that their powers of observation are not good. So you then decide that you will have to pass the information on yourself. That's how I became a writer.

Stern: Even some sf writers admit that the level of characterization in sf is usually way below that of mainstream fiction. With your interest in character, why do you choose to write sf instead of naturalistic fiction?

Budrys: I don't really think I have a choice any more. My mind is set in certain formats. When I was a kid and made these choices consciously, it seemed to me there were a lot of people out there who were writing straight fiction, exploring human nature in that medium; in sf you can introduce variables into the experiment. For instance, if you wanted to explore the effect of death on a man's personality--if you had a machine that could kill him repeatedly....

Stern: As in ROGUE MOON.

Budrys:...you might be able to talk about death in a somewhat different way than if you wrote about death naturalistically.

Stern: You've written about the lowering of standards in the publishing industry, including sf publishing. What do you think of the situation today?

Budrys: It's a lot better than it was seven or eight years ago. What I'm told, though, is that there is a whole new bunch of brand new editors in the New York publishing houses and it may start all over again. There is also a growth in the compulsion in the field to have sf comment, not on human nature, but on social causes. For which I think sf is singularly unequipped. And the attempt to make polemacists out of a lot of young writers. The attempt is usually fostered by young editors who are fresh out of college and have read an awful lot of texts and listened to an awful lot of lectures, and inevitably feel they really have a lock on what's wrong with the world and what should be done to fix it. Unfortunately, most of these problems aren't really defined and many of their solutions won't work.

Stern: You've done a lot of different kinds of work to keep bread on the table, everything from sf editor to PR work. Does your interest in different lines of work stem in part from a desire to experience these things that you can write about--as well as from a desire to eat?

Budrys: Both of those reasons you mentioned, and I also have many other interests which have led the way into many different fields.

For instance, my interest in trucks led to a very plush job right down the

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street here for four years as an automotive PR man, which meant I got to travel all over the country and have all kinds of experiences to which I wouldn't be entitled by traditional standards.

Most people live in a rut. I think we could all live wonderful lives if we went with the flow of the current. If we didn't deliberately throttle opportunities for unconventional unemployment. I think it's very hard work to keep the world mundane. It's easier to live a dramatic, science-fictiony sort of life. I think the main reason that there is a science fiction market of major proportions is because there are so many people out there who have deliberately chosen mundane lives, but are hungry to be reminded that there are other possibilities.

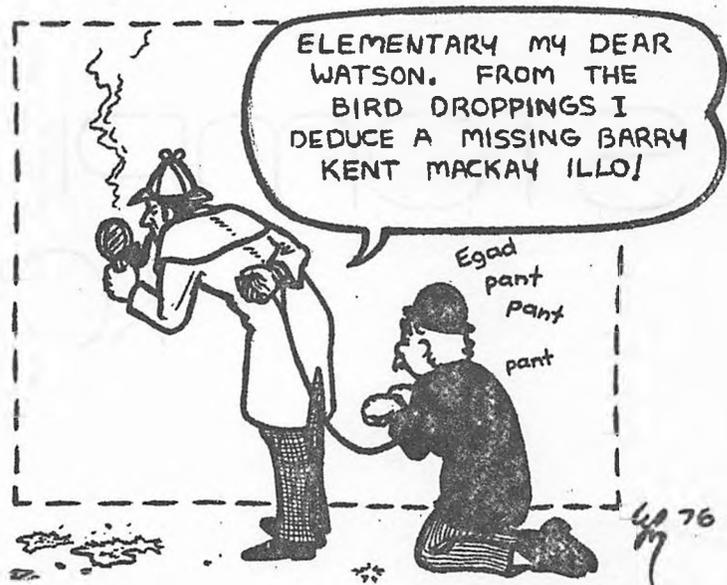
I don't think fantasy and fantastic drama reflect unreality; I think they reflect an underlying reality that is conscious or subconscious.

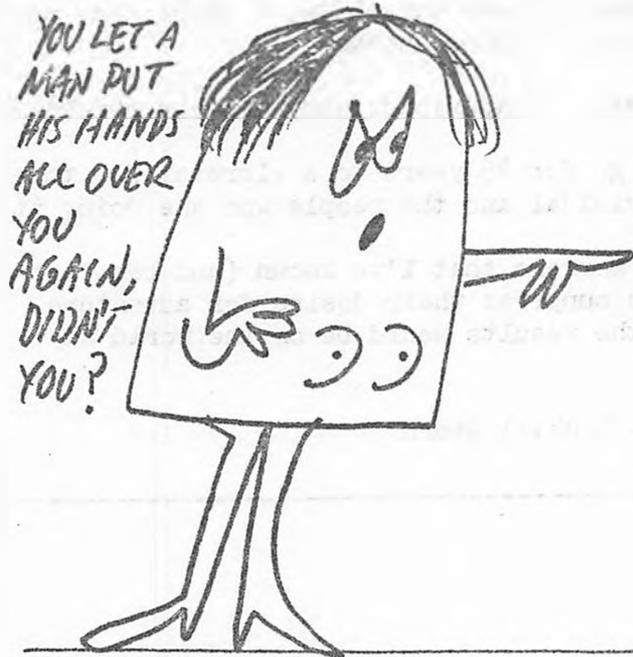
Stern: Do you think that most people are afraid to experience what writers experience?

Budrys: No. I think it takes more courage to go for 45 years to a clerical job than it does to do almost anything else. It's suicidal and the people who are doing it know it.

Some of them, particularly blue collar workers that I've known (and been one of), are really having to work very hard to suppress their desire for adventure. They do it because they're afraid of what the results would be on the world at large if they let themselves run wild.

-- Michael Stern





YOU LET A  
MAN PUT  
HIS HANDS  
ALL OVER  
YOU  
AGAIN,  
DIDN'T  
YOU?



# STOMPING TOM

## ROBERT BLOCH

KNIGHTS 17/18 delighted me, and I'm most grateful to you for it; while I don't agree with all of the controversial opinions expressed, the spirit in which the opinions are offered shows a commonality of concern for sf, and gives fresh dignity to the much-maligned "sercon" label.

All, of course, save for Thomas F. Monteleone's views on the Feminist Movement in sf.

Monteleone, you are a male chauvinist pig.

Why, in your alleged examination of the role of women in sf, did you entirely ignore the sad fate of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelly, who was so persecuted that she had to abandon her own identity and go on to writing poetry under the name of "Percy" Shelly?

Where were you when WEIRD TALES editor Farnsworth Wright had his seizure upon discovering that "C. L. Moore" was a woman and tried, unsuccessfully, to have her change her byline to "C. L. Grant"?

Aren't you aware that Leigh Brackett sold her work solely on the basis of her status as Mrs. Edmond Hamilton; that Andre Norton would never have made it as "Andrea", and that publishers believed Marion Zimmer Bradley to be male because she had the same first name as Marion Hargrove, author of SEE HERE, PRIVATE HARGROVE? Don't you know that Dorothy McIlwraith, Mary Gnaedinger, Bea Mahaffey, Cele Goldsmith, Judy Merrill, Cylvia Margulies and others had to undergo cruel and barbaric sex-change operations before they were allowed to become editors? Aren't you aware that even now Betty Ballantine and Judy-Lynn del Rey live in fear and trembling lest publishers discover that they are females?

True, there are some few score of women writing sf, but as any loyal, patriotic American knows, we have long since discarded the quaint, outmoded (and probably Communistic) conceit that their status should be determined by their ability. Today we believe in equal rights--determined solely by the sound scientific principles of mathematics. And since over 50% of the population in this country is female, we must never be satisfied until over 50% of all science fiction writers--or all writers in any genre, for that matter--are women.

It's the blind, fanatical attitudes of macho bullies such as Monteleone which forced a dedicated, sensitive artist like Roberta Heinlein to change her name to "Robert A."

So let's show a little tenderness, a little understanding, a little compassion; for a starter, and as a token of our sympathy, let us stomp Tom Monteleone to death.

-- Robert Bloch

(( "Stomping Tom" was originally a letter. It is used as an article with the permission of Robert Bloch. ))

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# GRATEFUL TO

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Riding down I-95 on a half-tab of mescaline  
getting off on Richmond  
and wondering how I got myself into this  
time-tripping through college  
while Mark redlines the Falcon  
on acid

Hey, Mark!

Don't murder me!

Virginia frozen stalks of year-old corn  
marching past us  
as I time-dream  
becoming a BIOC  
because I'm not what I was  
knowing what stock to buy  
to pull in dividends  
knowing what athletes to bet on  
the Pirates  
the Mets  
Ingemar Johanssen  
and Cassius Clay  
and training  
striving my young body  
to become a long-distance hero  
and knowing  
where the action will be  
to set myself up  
in Haight-Ashbury  
to meet and become part of

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# THE DEAD

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Ken Kesey  
the early Dead  
and the early Airplane

In Richmond  
still on the ground  
I end my time-tripping  
and Larry tells me  
to suck on the other half-tab  
Truckin on down the road to Williamsburg  
I lean back  
the concert for Bangladesh  
on either side of my ears  
s silly putty grin on my face  
Hey, Mark!  
Don't murder me!

By the time we stop at Hardy's  
in Williamsburg  
I'm wiped out  
wasted  
utterly  
and so is Larry  
as well as half a million  
other freaks  
time-tripping to Williamsburg  
and Hardy's

It's just like any other day that's ever been.

---

# GRANT CARRINGTON



despit Mark  
our rolling-mill man  
And while the Dead played  
Tennessee Jed  
I looked down the smoke-filled air  
sparks of cigarettes passing trthrough  
and time-tripped again  
to the smoke-filled New Haven Arena  
and the crash of hockey bodies  
and the rattling of the wire mesh

If you're coming down  
the Dead will let you down easy  
Mark and Larry wandered out  
came back with boxes and cups  
we shared the popcorn  
we shared the coke  
More cups floating past  
shove into my hand  
I drank deep  
Ed refused  
and parancia struck again  
What was in that cup?  
10,000 micrograms of LSD  
burning deep into my brain cells?  
It was too late to worry  
so I washed it out  
of my thoughts and nothing happened

We were all wired up on Bob  
filled with Lesh  
gerrymandered by Garcia  
and God chalks another one up  
for that great  
pigpen in the sky  
Oh! My dreams of ever playing bass  
were shattered  
as Lesh soloed on reverb

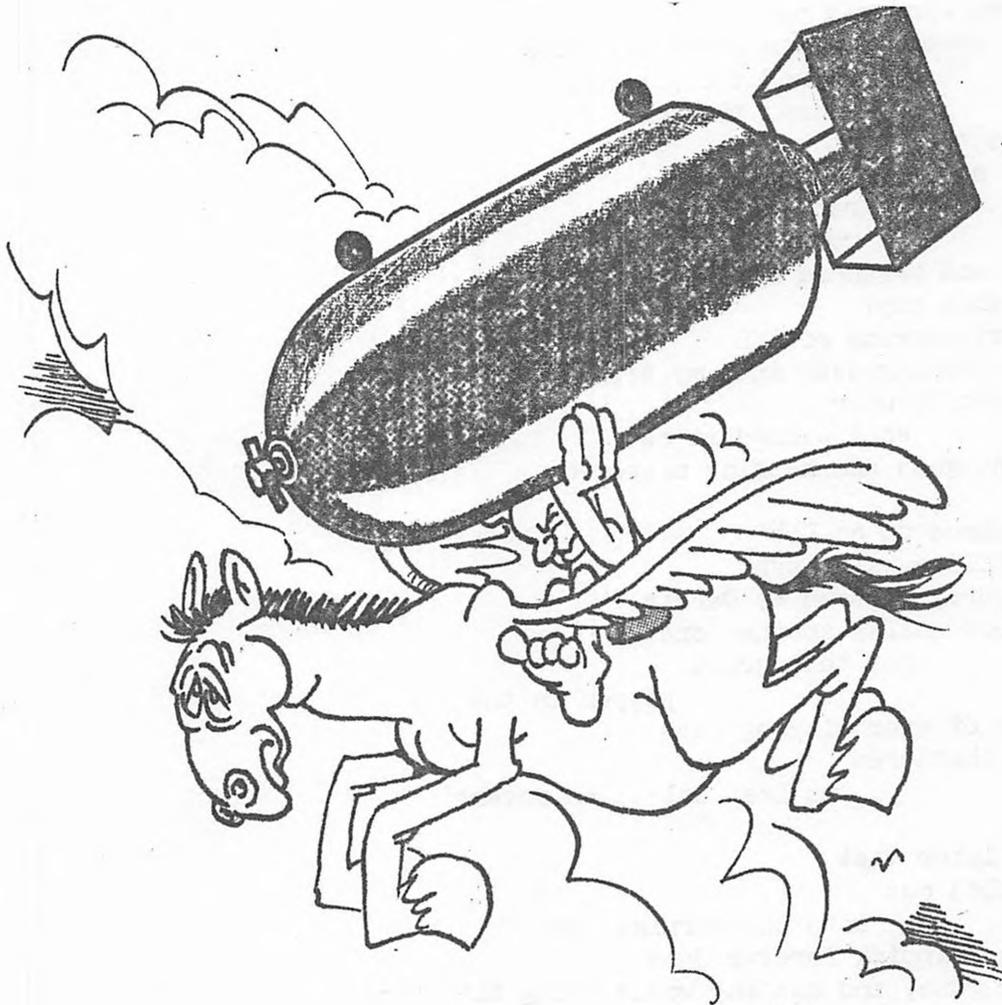
It was hours later that  
we stumbled out  
into the morning dew  
all time-tripping forever done  
The Dead were gone, and nothing would bring them back

All that was left  
was another Mark ninety-mile-per-hour drive back  
to the  
four o'clock  
Krispy Kreme  
and  
grateful

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thanks  
to  
The Dead.

-- Grant Carrington



SCHIRIM 76.

# Charles L. Grant

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## From The Fire On The Mountain



Copyright 1977 by Charles L. Grant

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Two topics in one this time. And yet they are not entirely unrelated.

In MYTHOLOGIES 12, Don D'Amassa says:

"The ghost story as a form is possibly the most rigidly formula-ridden. That fact makes it even more perplexing to discover just why ghost stories continue to be written, and why readers continue to devour volumes of them. I'm no exception. A well written ghost story is frequently better than a well written science fiction story.

"I'm at a lost (sic) to explain it. Possibly it's because the development of mood and suspense is more important than the actual plot. Certainly it is the little details rather than the major plot elements that hold our interest."

Yes, and no, Don. And I think I might be able to offer an answer. But first a couple of qualifications so's I can talk without spitting my foot out: first, I'm confining my comments to the short material, not novels; I think they are an entirely different class altogether in this discussion. Second, I want to emphasize now, so I don't have to keep repeating it, well written stories. And third, I'd like to take your "ghost" and turn it into my "horror", which will include ghosts, plus other types of supernatural phenomenon. I'm definitely not talking about psychological type horror stories which are a different breed altogether.

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So. Having made those few openers, I would agree most heartily that a well written horror story is not only frequently but almost always better than a well written science fiction story.

What means well written? Aside from style (which is a matter of taste for the reader and development for the writer), a story that has successfully created a mood (atmosphere, whatever that Lit prof called it where you come from), has given us more than stereotypical characters (given the limitations of length of a story), has created suspense in terms of the outcome (no matter what we may suspect, we don't really know), and has a solid plot framework to hang all this on...this, I believe is what makes a well written piece of fiction.

The problem with most science fiction stories is evident, I think. While the best contain all the elements of good fiction and, like good fiction, each of the elements are dependent upon one another for the successful end product, the weak link has traditionally been the development of character. I don't believe this is because science fiction writers are less skilled, less wise, less aware of what real people are (despite charges here and there to the contrary); the reason is, the most important element in a science fiction story is...the science. Whether it is "hard" science and in the foreground, or "soft" science and makes up the background, the science has to be there. All the time. And it has to be right, a logical extrapolation of what idea the author had in the first place, the base for his story. The science is the framework, then, around which is constructed the plot, which then generates the mood, and in which works the characters. But the characters, no matter how hard they strive, laugh, love, whatever, are not the primary elements, even if the focus is on them in a given piece of material. A solid foundation of fascinating extrapolation will transcend weak characters, and most science fiction writers know that, and so (consciously or not) do most readers, and they forgive the writer the weak character in order to appreciate the extrapolation.

When the science fails, the story fails. More so than if character fails.

Horror stories, however, are a different breed altogether. I'll assume that the reader, in coming to a horror story, is willing to suspend his disbelief in the supernatural for the sake of the story's enjoyment (as long, of course, as the writer doesn't lay it on so damned thickly that suspension becomes virtually impossible). If that assumption can't be made, there's no sense in reading the story in the first place.

More than science fiction, a well written, successful horror story depends less on the supernatural element than it does on the character(s) involved. If they are not, within the confines of the material length, drawn well enough, strongly enough to promote reader identification (though not necessarily reader sympathy), then everything else falls by the wayside. The point of a horror is..the horror; the aim of the writer is to give the reader a moment or so of fearful tension, hopefully great enough at the end to cause a "shudder" reaction...and aftertaste, if you will, that lingers in a nervous reaction. A look over the shoulder, to the corner of the room, at the door, in the bushes...whatever. It doesn't last, naturally, but it's there, and if it's there, the story worked. Why? Because we believe in the supernatural situation that the author created? Only partly.

Primarily, however, it's because we accepted the characters in the story as being

real enough to temporarily populate our universe. And in being real, they take on dimensions we can easily understand. And in being able to understand, we become involved, involved enough to react. It is more than emotional manipulation, because we know there's no such thing as the supernatural, right? We know that ghosts and werewolves and vampires and other nightbeasts don't really exist...but the author's skills in giving us characters we become involved with take that knowing and bury it for a while. We react. We shudder.

It isn't shock I'm talking about, either. Here and there in various publications I've said this a dozen times already this year...shock isn't fear. THE EXORCIST isn't frightening, it's shocking. JAWS isn't frightening, it's shocking. Shock for the sake of shock. But THE HAUNTING (OF HILL HOUSE) is another piece of cake (don't anyone dare say devil's food) altogether. So are moments of THE THING (until Carrotman pops up at the end in all his Arnessian glory), and BURN, WITCH, BURN. In print, to keep on the subject Grant, I reccommend Shirley Jackson's "The Sundial" for one hell of an ending, or "Conjure Wife" for a handful of scene that are downright classics. Little blood here, no gore, no decapitations, mutilations, pea soup vomit and Mercedes Mc-Cambridge. Real people involved in situations that are literally extraordinary, and it is because of those characters that we react, not because of the supernatural that threatens them.

Are you trying to say, sir, that science fiction writers do not concern themselves with people?

Nope. George R. R. Martin, Roger Zelazny, Lisa Tuttle, Ursula K. LeGuin, Kate Wilhelm, Theodore Sturgeon, \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank) are proof positive that sf writers care about people. But just as a horror story isn't a horror story without the horror, a science fiction story isn't sf without the science...and when it comes right down to the characters involved, the horror story people are, by necessity, stronger. They have to be. There's nothing left to fall back on if they fail. In sf, if the characters fail (as I said) there's always the science framework to move the story along.

I think, too, in peripheral thought here, that one of the failings of the reader when he judges a work for its success is his sometime ability to confuse the elements we've been discussing with style. Style (primer time, here) is merely the manner in which an author strings his words together. His style may be unique or derivative, depending on his growth as a writer and the strength of those other writers who influenced him in the first place. The style may be spare or poetic, "hard-boiled" or ambling, and very often a reader's adverse reaction to a story is really a reaction to the writer's style, not his skills. Taste. Some like their meat lean, others with a bit of extra thrown in (god, that's a lousy analogy). The reader may recognize intellectually that this particular writer certainly has the skills to be good, but the style turns him off. It's for this reason, I think, that the style of a horror story has to be very carefully chosen so as not to smother the reader before he has a chance to become involved. I myself admit to an intense dislike of Lovecraft and Smith and a few others of that particular generation, not because I don't see the skills involved in the creation of their material, but because their style absolutely turns my stomach. Those that continue to write in that manner (not vein, and no puns, please) are, I think, doing themselves a disservice, a grave one, because they've allowed their influences to bury their own writer's talents.

At their best, then, if you're looking for examples of the best horror stories to compare to the best sf, I would look into stories written by Dennis Etchison, Ramsey Campbell, David Drake, Fritz Leiber, and Russell Kirk.

Another sidelight, if I may.

Which, then, is the more difficult to write? Tom Monteleone and I have had numerous discussions about this over the past few months, ever since I got him to write a fantasy for me to put in SHADOWS (an anthology of original horror stories, Doubleday, July '78; right, a plug). Conclusions? Well, perhaps. Intellectually, I think sf is harder because, even though the focus may not be on the hardware, it has to be worked out nevertheless, plus the social, economic and psychological tangents, all to give the story the necessary "real" background; but I think that in all other respects, a horror story is more difficult because: 1) you've got to have a horror somewhat different from all the horrors that have gone on before you, assuming you're not going to rest on the traditional; and 2) you've got a lot more work to do on characters, for the reasons I've mentioned above. In sf, you create a new world; in horror, you work with the world you have and give it a twist just the other side of reality.

Actually, I suspect it's six of one, half dozen of the other.

And that, through an absolutely shameless wrench of logic that is completely non-existent, brings me to STAR WARS.

Why haven't you seen it yet?

Is it, as some critics have suggested, the greatest thing to happen to sf since sliced bread? Or is it, as others have muttered, a shameful regression to Saturday afternoon matinee serials, an insult to our collective sf intelligence, and a rip-off of the highest order?

Gad. Damn. There are some people you can't satisfy no matter what you do. Aside from the fact, however, that I thoroughly enjoyed every moment of STAR WARS--from the second those first spaceships hauled into view and I heard, on the sound track, the roar of jet planes, I knew I wasn't going to take anything I saw seriously. Once done, it is a hell of a movie. It will, along with CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND, give sf a shot in the financial arm that I, for one, am not going to sneeze at. Studios are taking second, third, and fourth looks at their sf properties, they are (if my agent is correct) more inclined now to look upon sf as a viable means of making money. Crass, but that's the way it goes; if it don't make loot, then it don't stand a chance of being repeated. That's why CLOSE ENCOUNTERS... is so important now, moreso than before...if it goes anywhere near the way STAR WARS is going, you and I aren't going to be on the outs anymore. I am convinced, for example, that "A Crowd of Shadows" would not have been really seriously considered for a TV-movie, possible pilot for an anthology series, if it hadn't been for STAR WARS. That's what you call dropping in a news item with great aplomb.

But that's not the most important thing about STAR WARS, in my opinion. Coupled with 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY and (hopefully) CLOSE ENCOUNTERS..., STAR WARS proves that there is room in sf media for all kinds of sf, not just the "heavy" stuff. Which is why I'm fairly annoyed at those critics in the field who dump on STAR WARS because it is Saturday afternoon at the movies. So what? It's well made, exciting, a damned fun

movie (understatements all, and I know it), and if we can't have fun, tco, what's the sense? 2001 gave me a long time of healthy literate discussion; STAR WARS gives me a grin. They are not mutually exclusive, and the sooner the 2001 intellectual snobs realize that, the better off the field will be. Is this, by the way, inconsistant with my last column? Nope. Because the movie is well done, it's not junk, it's a good story. ATTACK OF THE CRAB MONSTERS is junk. I hope like hell that I am not above enjoying myself on an elemental level; God help me, if I am--there's no hope for me at all.

Onward, then. Fun and shivers. Love it. Peace.

-- Charles L. Grant



THAT OLD  
HOUSE ON  
THE HILL  
IS REALLY  
A TIME  
MACHINE

By Charles L. Grant

This interview took place over the Fourth of July weekend in Randolph, New Jersey. Deborah Lewis is a close friend of my family, though she doesn't visit as often as we would like, and I took the opportunity presented to me by your editor to see just what writers in other fiction genres were doing, especially as it concerns the fields of fantasy and science fiction. Ms Lewis is twenty-five, a teacher in a Connecticut public school, and (at the moment) decidedly unmarried. By the time you read this she will have had her first two novels published, with several more either in production or in the typewriter.

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Grant: What, in heaven's name, ever made you decide to write, of all things, Gothic novels?

Lewis: They're fun. No, really, I'm not kidding you. They're really quite a bit of fun to do. And believe it or not, they're something of a challenge, too. I mean, everyone has an idea of what a Gothic is. The innocent young girl and the spooky old house and the handsome mysterious young man and the evil owner, something or someone locked in the tower room...things like that. What most people don't realize, though, is that a good Gothic isn't as easy as it looks. First of all, you have to have a flair for writing that kind of thing, just as you must have a flair for science fiction or fantasy or mysteries. And if you have the flair and can really understand the basic formula, then you have to write something that's just a little different.

Grant: Different? Aren't they all alike?

Lewis: To some extent, yes. So if you don't experiment a little, you're only one of literally thousands of women and men competing for what is, after

all, one of the largest markets going. By experimenting, I mean altering that formula just enough so that your book stands out from all those on the racks, and on the editors' desks. For example, most heroines in Gothics are, frankly, addleheaded. They wouldn't know enough to come in out of the rain in a hurricane, for crying out loud. I'd like to think that my women, though, are somewhat more sensible. Sure, they get themselves into situations no sane person would allow, but that's part of the formula. Otherwise, though, they don't depend on the good-looking hero to get them out of the mess they've created. They can think for themselves. Refreshing. They even manage a bit of derring-do for themselves, too; they just don't sit on their butts and bemoan their fates.

Grant: What was your first book?

Lewis: VOICES OUT OF TIME, for Zebra Books. With, I might add, one of the best-looking covers I've ever seen. All the elements are there--the house, the girl, and so forth--but it's so well done it's fantastic. It also has interior illustrations, something I wish some sf books would have. The trouble there is, people picture their own characters, and it's hard for an illustrator to please everyone. The next one, as long as I'm talking about them, will be called EVE OF THE HOUND, also for Zebra. I have two more in the works at the moment, either for Zebra or Popular Library, depending.

Grant: Depending on what?

Lewis: Depending on who buys them.

Grant: There are a number of people who call Gothic trash novels, fit only for sneaking in at night.

Lewis: Lots of people think science fiction is trash, too. I suspect your audience is prejudiced toward the lat-

AN  
INTERVIEW  
WITH  
DEBORAH  
LEWIS

ter, but nevertheless, they couldn't deny that a lot of poor stuff comes out each year. The same with Gothics. You have to learn which authors are to be trusted for a good time and which to avoid. Gothics, by the way, are only part of a larger genre called romantic fiction. That includes the books by Rosemary Rogers, Jennifer Wilde, as well as Norah Lofts, Victoria Holt, and so forth. As a matter of fact, there is in the works an association of romantic writers that will, if it works out, be sort of the same as MWA or SFWA, protection for the authors and all that. I admit, going back to your question, that there's probably more room for so-called serious literature in science fiction than in Gothics or Romance Literature, but that doesn't mean that a reader has to buy it, does it? Most Gothic readers are women who only want some excitement, a romance, a few chills and such, a couple of hours a day. Gothics fill that need quite nicely, thank you.

Grant: You said that men and women write Gothics. Isn't it true that most of the Gothic writers are really men?

Lewis: A fair number, yes. By the same token, though, I understand from what you've told me that one of the best science fiction writers today is a woman using a man's pen name. So what? If it's good, who cares?

Grant: Do you read a lot of science fiction? If so, who do you like?

Lewis: I read as much as my classes and my own writing allow. which isn't much, I suppose. I've read Bradbury and Ellison and Sturgeon, mainly because they have stories in our text books. Outside, though, I like Kate Wilhelm and C. J. Cherryh and Frederik Pohl. Oh, and some of the fantasy writers like Graham Masterson--he wrote THE MANITOU and THE DJINN--and Dickson and Tolkien. A lot more. Fritz Leiber. Yes, Fritz Leiber. And Robert Bloch.

Grant: What about me?

Lewis: Next question.

Grant: If you like sf and fantasy so much, does it influence your Gothic writing at all? With the formula you've mentioned, doesn't it hinder your experimentation, that you said has more flexibility in sf?

Lewis: Actually, that's easier to answer than you'd imagine. Yes, sure, my reading in science fiction carries over. Especially my fantasy fiction. A lot of Gothics deal with simple intimidation. You know..poor little girl stumbles on a terrible crime committed centuries ago and the folks are trying to cover it up. She's endangered, is saved, and the villains are given their comeuppance. Well, I'd rather make a pseudo-fantasy of my novels. VOICES dealt with a girl, and a rather athletic one at that, who has to handle the possibility of an ancestor trying to come back from the dead and replace her. Lots of neat things in that--ghostly horsemen, a seance, disappearances and tons of blood. EVE OF THE HOUND deals with a Baskerville-like creature that haunts a Mississippi plantation around 1838 or so. KIRKWOOD FIRE, the third one, has an obscure African god of hate as its villain. Unfortunately, in a Gothic, the fantasy has to be explained away as machinations by the earthly bad guys. But until those things are taken care of, the reader hopefully doesn't know..or at least isn't sure. That's where the fun comes in, making sure the reader isn't really sure that this one here, this book, is really going to

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adhere to the formula.

In fact, I would very much like to write a Gothic sf novel, but that's damned hard. I mean, you have an audience already conditioned to a certain type of writing, and an sf gothic would require an awful lot of explanation that readers just won't go for. If you compromise too much, then you've lost your Gothic audience, and your sf audience as well. One of these days, maybe. Maybe during this summer when I don't have papers to grade.

Grant: Do you consider yourself an artist?

Lewis: If you mean, do I take pride in what I do, sure I do. The writing may not be up there with Hardy and Mailer, but it isn't any worse than a lot of things I've seen. But if you mean, do I consider myself as someone who creates Beauty and Universal Truths...no. I'm a craftsman. I'd like to think, a pretty good one.

Grant: You said "craftsman". Now, I know you fairly well, Deborah, and I know you're into women's lib and all that. Shouldn't you have said craftsperson?

Lewis: What? Hey, look, I work with the English language, right? And there's nothing I despise more than some neurotic females who aren't at all secure in their own lives trying to change the language so they can feel more safe. Person. That's garbage. I'm a woman and I don't care who knows it. I don't need to hide behind a linguistic smokescreen.

Grant: All right, you've made your point. But since we are in an sf magazine here, I'd like to find out more about your sf leanings. What is there about sf that you like? What makes you read it more than, say, mysteries?

Lewis: Science fiction...I don't know. A lot of it I don't understand, perhaps because I've not read enough in the field. But there's a lot of poetry in it that I like very much. In the prose, that is. Sonya Dorman is beautiful; so is Raylyn Moore. It's also exciting. I mean that in an almost literal sense. It stirs you, emotionally and intellectually. Even when it's really "down" stuff, it...well, I'm repeating myself. But I like it a great deal and want to read more. And yes, there is that flexibility there that I envy sometimes. I would hope, then, in my Gothics, to try to bend the formula more each time, chip away at the old modes and add a few fillips of my own. Let the young couple kiss once in a while, for god's sake, and maybe even collapse on the bed. I mean, it's like watching a 1940s movies sometimes, when married couples had to sleep in separate beds, and like that.

I'm not talking about blatant sex, by the way. In a Gothic, who needs it? For that matter, who needs it in sf? I know, I know, if it's integral to the plot...bull. I mean, I know the hero has to go to the john at least once during the time-span of a novel, but I don't really give a damn when and where because it sure doesn't help move the plot along. So why should I have to read about someone going to bed with someone? If they do, great. Big deal, though. Everyone does it, and if it's only an interlude and not a plot portion, why bother? To sell more copies? I notice it doesn't help sf in that way. To be more realistic? Just tell me they shacked up and spare me the details. I know what it's like.

Grant: You were talking about bending the Gothic formula.

Lewis: Sure. Okay. Well, I'd also like to see some of the fantasy stay fantasy. Not

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have it be mirror tricks and secret passages and other devices to scare the heroine witless (which she generally is, anyway). I'd like to do a few that have real ghosts and monsters and reincarnations and other things and let the heroine deal with that.

Grant: Why heroine?

Lewis: Reader identification, pure and simple. Women like to read about women. At least, the women who buy and read Gothics. So they have to be women. Besides, I don't think I could write well about a man. I'd probably overcompensate and have him disgustingly macho. An ugly word for an ugly kind of person, I think. Is all this relevant to this kind of magazine? I read those you have, those magazines... fanzines, that is. Really interesting, but kind of sad, too. I mean, sf is such a little teapot for all those tempests. The community of science fiction, I mean. A lot of words about graphics and conventions and beer-drinking and gelatin and things like that. The serious articles were pretty good. Strange, but good. But the language! Lord...reading that femlib article in that KNIGHTS you showed me, the one by Monteleone? Is that all he knows, four-letter words? I guess he'll get letters, won't he? I gather that a lot of these letter writers are young, not all, but a lot. Some of them are pretty dreadful, they remind me of my students. Students, hah!

Grant: You're trying to get me fired, Deb. I gather that, while you like to read science fiction and some fantasy, you don't much care for the community (as you put it) that's grown up around it. Would you, sometime in the future, like to write some science fiction? Or non-Gothic fantasy?

Lewis: I really can't speak about the community, because I've never been to a convention, never met a writer other than yourself, and know it only through these magazines. But write science fiction? You know, it's very tempting. After a while, the Gothic tends to be binding. I'm breaking, or bending, the rules as I've said, but I'm also very impatient. I don't want to have to wait. I want to do it all now, but I'm afraid that, should some editor buy it, it would give readers too much of a shock and my name would be mud in the marketplace. Slow and easy, for the time being, I suppose it will have to be. But if I ever get a chance to write a real, science fiction novel, I'd jump at it. I can already imagine the work that has to go into it, but I think I would like to at least give it a try. The trouble is, my ideas are probably out of date by now. I would have to do a lot of reading of new things to find out what's going on, and I don't have all that much time. Well, maybe that's copping out. Maybe I'm a little nervous about it. I mean, these people take everything so damned seriously! Don't they ever enjoy themselves? In print, I mean. Besides those silly little cartoons and that high school humor stuff. Don't they ever write funny stories? Maybe it's like Gothics, I guess. You have what you have, and that's an end to it. I don't know. Maybe I'll try to write a funny Gothic, but I'll bet you ten to one it'll never sell to a Gothic editor. On the other hand...

You know, I've been thinking. Gothic writers have a lot in common with science fiction writers. Both of them deal with tilted reality of a sort. You work in the future, I work in the past and present; but neither of us works in reality. Not like Bellow or Roth, people like that. I think, in the long run, that's a good thing. You can stand just so much reality, can't you, before you have to pick up a book or turn on the television.

I would like very much to put some depth into Gothics, like science fiction has

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here and there. I knew that was your next question, that's why I said that. Mad-  
dening, isn't it? It all has to be entertaining, of course, but sf sometimes seems  
to work harder at being meaningful...sometimes to the point of excruciating dull-  
ness. Gothics don't have to worry about that at all. They just roll along getting  
in and out of trouble and selling more copies than sf ever did. I take that back.  
Not the words, the tone, it was nasty. But isn't it strange that I get more in my  
advance for a Gothic than you do for a science fiction novel, and I'll get more  
royalties than you, on the average? Why do you do it?

Grant: I like it.

Lewis: So do I. That's why I do so much of it. Not nearly as many hours as you put in,  
I know. Just a few in the evening a couple of days a week. It takes longer, but  
there you go. I have a "normal" job, too. If my principal ever found out that I was  
really not doing papers in the teachers' lounge, but actually working out plots for  
a new novel, I wonder what he'd say. Never mind. I know. "Why do you write that  
trash?" Oh well, it all works out. Oh. Wait a minute, before you turn that thing  
off, I just thought of something. We were talking about heroines before, and how I  
wanted to make mine a little more realistic, at least in their attempts to get out  
of their problems. Why doesn't someone in sf do that? More of it, I mean. Maybe  
it's true that men can't really write about women properly, and since most sf  
writers are men, it would follow...and like that.

This talk is getting depressing. Can't we talk about something more cheerful?  
Let's end it this way, all right? Here...Gothics are serving a purpose in enter-  
tainment for a certain reader who wants a certain type of reading material. I'm  
lucky enough to be able to provide it. I would very much like to do other things as  
well--yes, sf, too--but I need to practice more before I get there. And I'd like to  
put in all those things in Gothics that I've said before. I'm doing it now, and  
will keep on doing it. Maybe it will rub off on some other Gothic writer, or they'll  
come to the same idea independently. To improve the field is the important thing,  
and to entertain the reader. You can't have one without the other. Science fiction  
is the same way.

-- Charles L. Grant

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# The Mothers And Fathers Italian Association



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***Thomas F. Monteleone***

THE EXODUS OF WONDER: OR WHAT'S ALL THIS SHIT ABOUT THE MAINSTREAM?

Correct me if I'm wrong but I would be willing to bet that something perverse happens to virtually every science fiction writer sooner or later in his chosen career. That perverse something goes quite a bit like this: your average sf author grew up reading the stuff, loving it, never getting enough of it to satisfy his craving, and dreaming of someday making a living actually writing it. He does become an af author, becomes proficient enough to be fairly successful, and then it strikes. Science fiction starts to lose its shine; the glamour and the mystery and the wonder start to leak away like air in a party balloon.

It is as if, by cracking the secret code, by gaining admission to the sanctum sanctorum, by becoming the source of what was once your joi de vivre, the thrill is suddenly gone.

Now this is a very bad thing, but I would imagine it happens to every one of us to some degree or another. It has been happening to me for years now, and I have been trying to ignore it, to repress it, to rail against it. But the inescapable truth is that I find it harder and harder to find stories that thrill me like they used to. I don't think it's because "they ain't writing the good stuff like they used to", either; on the contrary, I feel the level of competently written, ingenious science fiction is higher now than ever before.

So what's the problem?

I don't think there is any one definite answer, but rather a combination of them. Foremost, I think--at least with me--is the Overdose Factor, i.e. you can read so much sf that you kind of burn out on it (especially if you are wracking your mind by trying to write it too). After a while, it becomes too much of an effort to work to get into a story--the way you must work to understand and appreciate good sf. You simply get tired, and you must read something else, think about something else, at least for a little while. Then go back and pick up that "classic" sf novel you've been reading about in the critical press for years but never got around to reading. (You inwardly hope it will be so good that it will get you back into reading the genre again...and 90 percent of the time it is damned good, and you do go back with renewed vigor.) ...until the next time.

The second contributing factor is the Lure of the Mainstream. Most sf writers start out wanting to be sf writers and they write nothing but sf for years and years. And for most of those years--the dues-paying years--the writing of sf is damned hard work. It takes a lot of rehearsing to be able to write publishable sf (unless you are some kind of prodigy, and if you are, what the hell are you doing reading this column?). Now, what happens after you have mastered the sf form to some measure of success is this: some sf writers will read the occasional mainstream book--a "best-seller" perhaps--and then say, "shit, I can write as good (or better, some of us are quite vain) as this guy!" And so they eventually get around to trying a mainstream book--maybe a formula job, like a thriller with some name like THE MANDELSPIEGEL MALEFACTION, or perhaps a historical romance with a name like TASTE THE SWEET SAVAGE YEARS, or even a glamour-world sexual fantasy a la Harold Robbins with a title like TAKE ME NAKED. Or...well, you get the idea. The real point is this: some of us try to write an other-than-sf novel and make an astounding discovery. Which is: mainstream is damned easy to write. At the risk of sounding like an elitist, I say this

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only after granting the following assumptions. Mainstream is easier to write than sf only if the writer has already acquired the necessary tools and techniques of writing in general. By that I mean the discipline to apply the seat of your pants to a chair in front of a typewriter for three to five hours a day; I mean the ability to write coherent, interesting sentences; I mean the desire to want to be a writer. If you've got all that behind you, you will find that mainstream is a snap.

The reason? Because so much of your story is what the mathematicians call "given". That is, you don't need to spend chapters of carefully constructed background to describe a special culture, alien race, planet, or society in some future, past, or alternate world. You don't have to bother about getting esoteric facts correct--by esoteric I mean really tough things like the difference between Physics and Chemistry...things like that.

What you discover is that in mainstream fiction, character is everything, and that plot, circumstance, tension, everything develops out of character. And this is simply not so with sf. So the temptation is to write a mainstream book because it is easier, and because of the third factor, which is...

Money, of course. It hardly seems fair to break your ass on a unique, complicated, carefully extrapolated, logically consistent sf novel and get three or four thousand dollars for it, when you can get ten to fifteen thousand dollars for the same amount of wordage (and half the work) for a book about Nazis, Nymphomaniacs, or Nostalgia. And if you reach a sympathetic editor, you can make hundreds of thousands of dollars; and, friends, it's the rare sf book that will do that for you.

As I write this, I am currently involved in a mainstream novel which is loosely known in the publishing industry as a "saga novel". It covers several generations of families and describes their lives in a series of seemingly endless soapy vignettes. People are buying this sort of thing like their lives depended on it, and the writers producing it are getting filthy rich while people like Fritz Leiber struggle to pay the rent each month. Anyway, my saga novel is being written in collaboration with my best friend. It will eventually run to at least 1,000 pages. Our proposal was almost 200 pages, and we wrote that in a little over a month. It is well-written, it is interesting, and most of all...it was obscenely easy to write. It takes me four or five times as long to write a comparable amount of salable science fiction.

All right, that's three reasons why sf can lose its appeal for even the most dedicated and long-standing afficianadoes. Anything else? Yes, unfortunately, there is. And its name shall be called fandom.

When I first got into science fiction as a professional, I had my first contact with fandom, having read the stuff for almost twenty years without knowing that the fan empire even existed. I was confounded by it all, and later on attracted to it because of the close contact it provided, and the feedback from the readership that most writers never have. I was also attracted because of the ego-gratification, the chance to be on panels at conventions, and to be a general bigshot...or at least a medium-sizedshot.

But the longer you stay involved with fandom, the more of its seamy underside you see. The more of its petty quarrels and silly rivalries come to light. The more conventions you attend, the more you discover that a majority of the hardcore fans do

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not come to the conventions to enjoy science fiction, not to talk with the authors or the artists or the editors. It seems as if the hardcores come to parade amongst themselves in all manner of garish, adolescent, mufti. Some of the more terminal cases come for the sole purpose of insulting authors for whom they seem to carry personal vendettas.

Lots of fandom's higher profile members--the "actifans" as they like to call themselves--appear to share similar personality and physical characteristics. Let me list some of them: they are physically unappealing--either quite obese, or Dachau-thin; they are ungainly, clumsy, acne-stricken, bespectacled. Some of them compound this by being unwashed, thereby projecting a noisome kill-radius in the neighborhood of ten feet. They are usually loud and boorish, compounding this by the fact that they have little substance in their words other than the psychologically plaintive cry: "Look at me! For Chrissake's look at me!" They are social and cultural cripples. They are the outcasts from every other social circle; they are partners in misery who, phoenix-like, have risen from the ashes of their outcast-status to form a seperate society. A society where it is acceptable to be physically unattractive, unstylish, ungainly, unwashed, and unfetterd by social grace...and very intelligent. Yes, if fans have anything going for them, it is indeed their intellect. As a group, I would think they would rank very highly in any survey of IQ's per organization, ranking light-years ahead of such notable outfits as the VFW or The Young Republicans.

The fans, then, are a good group of people, who are simply unconventional (no pun intended), good-hearted, but afflicted with a singular kind of tunnel vision. They see everything through their own perceptual set, and the hell with the feelings of people who don't understand them. Well, upon reflection, I guess that's not so bad--at least you are not likely to be mugged, raped, or stabbed to death by a science fiction fan.

And the most likely question you may wish to ask of me is: why do you keep going to the conventions if you don't like the fans so much? Okay, here's where the contradictions and hypocrisy come in, I guess. I don't think I'm saying that I don't like fans, only that I see them as different from myself. And since I see them as different, I feel uncomfortable in their presence. The fact is I go to very few conventions--Philadelphia, Washington, D.C. Balticon, and an occasional Worldcon. The reason I go now is to see writers that I would normally not get a chance to talk to, or to meet with my agent or an editor.

But I seem to have gotten off the subject.

I was talking about loss of innocence, ennui, and science fiction...I think. So yes, fandom is one of the contributing factors to my periodic loss of wonder in the genre, but it is not the only one. Another seems to be that yearning that is probably buried within all of us to remain young and wide-eyed forever. That is part of science fiction's appeal, and it is definitely one of the joys of writing it. If you are a science fiction writer, and you are making a living and a career out of it, you never find yourself thinking about pensions and retirement and leisure time and all the other bullshit cliches that permeate our age-fearing society. If you are a science fiction writer, you know that you will never really stop writing it, and, therefore, you will never be old.

I don't want to talk about STAR WARS, but I will say that I think that's part of

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the film's great appeal. You come out of there feeling like you did when you were twelve. You feel like there is still wonder in the world, that the world can be made fresh and clean and new again. Science fiction can do that to you. It feels good.

And when you are older, and you sense that sf is not doing it as consistently and with such brilliance as it used to, well, I guess you get depressed, if only on the subsonscious level. I know that I will keep writing science fiction, although in the past year I have felt myself leaning towards fantasy--not sword and sorcery, but rather the kind of thing that Bradbury and Ellison and Sturgeon have done so well.

It is indeed a strange kind of career the writer of science fiction chooses for himself. But it is a career that is not without its great benefits...despite those days when the wonder seems to be leaving you and you feel your age and your best enemy just sold a book called NAKED CAME THE RUNNSTADT FILE ON THE SAVAGE WIND for \$100,000,000.

#### PROMOTION AND PUBLICITY DEPARTMENT

September and October are jolly months for me. I am proud to announce the publication of my first anthology. It is called THE ARTS AND BEYOND, published by Doubleday. There's a good chance that SF Book Club will pick it up and it has already sold to British rights. There are original stories in it by Harlan Ellison, Charles L. Grant, J. J. Russ, and myself--all very good stories--plus eight other reprints. The theme is art and science fiction, and, as an extra bonus, all the stories are illustrated by artists from the School of Visual Arts in NYC where Leo Dillon is an instructor. Please pick up a copy, read it, and let me know if you like it or not.

In October, Popular Library will be publishing my new novel, THE TIME SWEPT CITY, which I like to think is a very good book. The publisher sent out galley copies to some big name writers and some of them responded so favorably that Popular Library used their praise as blurbs on the back. Spring for a \$1.50 and read that one, too.

I normally resist hyping my own stuff, but in this case, the temptation is simply too great. It's been a long, dreary summer, and I need a lift.

Thanks for all those cards and letters on last issue's column. There have been no letter bombs yet, so I suppose I didn't rankle too many tail-feathers after all.

And by the way, Bob Bloch, I love you too.

-- Thomas F. Monteleone

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COMING NEXT ISSUE: an interview with Robert Chilson, author of such books as THE SHORES OF KANSAS, AS THE CURTAIN FALLS, and THE STAR-CROWNED KINGS; regular columns by Charles L. Grant and Thomas F. Monteleone; artwork by Delmonte, Barry Kent Mackay, and William Rotsler; as well as many things too numerable to mention, and, with luck, an index to the first 19 issues. Why not subscribe? One issue costs only \$1.25, 4/\$5. Make checks payable and mail to: Mike Bracken, E-3 Village Circle, Edwardsville, Ill 62025.

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# ROD SNYDER

A SCANNER DARKLY, Philip K. Dick, Doubleday & Co., 1977,  
220pp. \$6.95

Philip K. Dick, whose work I enjoy so much usually, makes the mistake in A SCANNER DARKLY of lecturing his readers. Maybe he's done it before but I haven't noticed it. Listen:

His protagonist is Bob Arctor/Fred. The Bob Arctor part is a "head", a junkie done in on Substance D, dubbed "slow death" by people who ought to know. "Done in on" because, in 1990, when this happens, most junkies of his type accept that they're goners if their stash of "death tabs" goes dry or gets gone. Arctor's is a microcosm waiting for death and cheating it for as long as their fear instincts function.

But we know that kind of culture, right? Try Fred's. Fred is a scramble suit. You wear a scramble suit if you're narking for the Orange County Sherriff's Office, doing set-ups and buying into large amounts of dope in order to work a bust and need to avoid being identified by the wrong people. Wearing one, you instantly blur into a thousand different physical characteristics. One minute you appear as a doddering old man with rotten teeth and a cleft chin, seconds later a young Chicano with a manchu mustache--or some twisted, vague combination of both. You're impossible to spot in a crowd, say, or get fingered for vengeance by a drug heavy after you've helped bust his number one street pusher. Of course, you can't wear a scrambler if you're setting up a buy or infiltrating Substance D traffic--nobody deals with a guy who changes shape like an electrified kaleidoscope view.

And that's why Fred/Arctor has one big problem. Arctor, you see, is a junkie posing as an undercover nark named Fred. His life is a sort of mean-minded jungle arrangement, where his friends think of him as Arctor, comrade, part-time assembly-line man at a stamp-making company, and he busts them later as Fred the nark. For money. For his next fix. Because he wears a scramble suit on surveillance duty, neither the Sherriff's Office nor his friends know his dual identity, and they're both getting burned by him. For a while.

At least, he's sure of it. The reader is less sure his ruse works during the final 75 pages or so. Arctor's always

DONE IN ON DICK

on Substance D, even when he's Fred the nark, so his mind keeps getting eaten and charred and sent through strange wash cycles. A macabre kind of dichotomy forms and progresses inside Arctor/Fred. It undermines his alter-ego trip.

Not a bad bit of plot, muffled as I've kept it; in fact, the first few chapters reveal little of it and they are the finest, most enjoyable bad-trip rides in the book. Yet this is not cool, technically. These chapters, featuring mostly minor characters, reveal more about what Dick means to say with SCANNER than almost any portion featuring his main characters. Which suggests that this shouldn't have been a novel at all, just a half dozen short stories.

Read the first two chapters closely, scan the next three, and skim the rest.

Dick's advantage in stretching his rambling plot-curves and introspections into this novel was so he could soak readers into his heavy-handed psycheprobos and keep some shred of storyline momentum going on the side. Momentum is something nice to have because you think you can cruise right past things that give you trouble. Like sub-plots, pacing, and believable characters.

Dick tells readers time and again here that drug abuse is a one-way joyride toward faraway chasms. Nobody comes back all right. Do we need to be told that? Like he himself states, drugs are not a disease; they're a decision, like stepping out in front of a moving car. You do it or you don't. If you have the marvelous sense of wonder Dick had in the mid-sixties, you step in front of that car, and, adeptly, sentiently, dive back to safety so you can tell about it. It's too bad, I mean really, that Dick no longer has the sense of wonder that motivated THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDITCH. That's a genuine loss.

Dealing with drug-induced schizophrenia, Dick serves up pages and pages of self-examination, real-self versus unreal-self, debates between delusion and perception. (Dick's health did fall victim to his drug habits, incidentally.) Substance D (Substance Dick, or just Substance Death?) rots the percept cells of the brain, leaving just cognition to carry the load of being a living human being. And as one character comments, think of being alive and not being able to move your eyes and when a leaf floats over them, they don't move to see other things, they just see the leaf. No choice. Being undead like this is the same sensation as being addicted, right Mr. Dick? Do I get a good grade on this book? I've listened to all your lecturings, and I must say: self-pity, Mr. Dick, doesn't hold a book together with much solidarity.

It took little stretch of my imagination to think about Dick himself whenever he he pointed out Bob Arctor's motivation for being a part of the drug culture:

That life (in suburbia) had been one without excitement, with no adventure. It had been too safe... (I)t was like, he had once thought, a little plastic boat that would sail on forever, without incident, until it finally sank, which would be a secret relief to all...Now...a tiny wondrous thing spilled out at him constantly: he could count on nothing.

And I think, so what if Philip K. Dick terminated his drug abuse days with permanent pancreatic damage? He, like Arctor/Fred, didn't pull out in time, didn't dive from the path of the moving car nimbly enough. There's an art to it all, like anything else, and it has to do with sloughing off gullibility, with being cynical enough to extricate yourself from the rubble of human folly just in time.

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The best of the New Journalism personal-experience writers see it this way. Where was Hunter Thompson in the mid-sixties? Ganging and banging with Hell's Angels, enduring risk yes, but detaching himself from that trip in order to give a balanced, fair-enough account. He sure as hell was not thinking it was playtime, and sure as hell not fucking up his insides to get groovy with friends.

It's some consolation that Dick wasn't ever gullible enough to ignore the jungle ambience of a civilization in decay. He writes about it well, as when his character Charles Freck comes close to being knifed by a girl on the street whom he calls to when he recognizes her:

You got to be careful, he thought, when you come to a strange chick on the street; they're all prepared now. Too much has happened to them.

Bob Arctor/Fred's girl, Donna:

Everybody bangs me. Tries to, anyway. That's what it's like to be a chick. I'm suing one guy in court right now, for molestation and assault. We're asking punitive damages in excess of forty-thousand.

Charles: How far'd he get?

Donna: Got his hand around my boob.

Charles: That isn't worth forty-thousand.

Dick gets caught up in his streetwise narration, though, to the point where his characters stay stillborn from lack of exposure. Freck is a vehicle, like a car, fated to clack and sputter into an appropriate equivalent of death. Bob's friend Luckman is shapeless, a dialogue-blob. On another front, Donna, Bob's girl, makes such astonishing character transformations without warning that the reader wonders if he overlooked any earlier scenes.

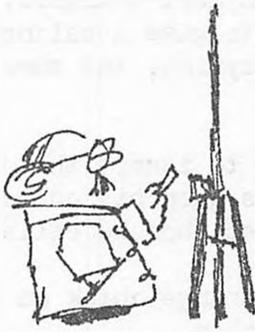
Only Arctor/Fred and his nemesis, Barris (sort of a seedy, counterculture version of Nabokov's Professor Pnin), hold reader interest to the end as dimensional figures.

But then, other personae are rather busy getting offed.

Flaws in Dick's story structure do not mean, however, that his prose misses. He remains one of the innovative, powerful stylists of modern fiction. A new lexicon for stream-of-consciousness, used adroitly in SCANNER, has his characters "flash on" to an idea rather than get it; they "roll a fantasy" when they daydream. So simple, this, yet it illuminates character thought in delightful ways. Writers take thought and mind static for granted so much that Dick's mischievous account of it seems to betray creative genius.

Thusly does Dick the writer help shoulder the burden of Dick the moralist. If you can tolerate his Chayefsky-like sense of message and appreciate his adventurous stylings, do A SCANNER DARKLY. It leaves you in better shape than Substance D.

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-- Rod Snyder  
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William Rotsler, Los Angeles, CA

7/1/77

You have gone and done it. You have committed an excellent fanzine! I must say that I get tons of fanzines--usually with requests for art implied or literal--and read very few of them, or parts of some. I read KNIGHTS 17/18. It was extremely readable, from Wilber's Master's thesis on Heinlein to Jerry Pournelle's "article" letter. I like Jerry's letter, as it explained rather well, I thought, some things that non-writers aren't always aware of. Since fans think all pros are RICH they sometimes wonder why they write certain things or take certain assignments. They just don't understand you and your family have to eat and that Art is nice, but the butcher doesn't give a damn.

I liked his comments on writing characters that people can associate with, that it isn't a crime to write for someone other than the steeped-in-sf fan.

And I liked very much Tom Monteleone's article on women in sf (and women in general). I, too, think the excesses are a pain in the ass, but can (I hope) understand why they feel it necessary to push way past what is "fair" just to feel good about it, rectify wrongs, and establish a "safe zone". But people like Joanna Russ are a pain in the neck--they preach, not write. The first rule is: Thou Shalt Entertain. Without the entertainment you ain't gonna get anyone to listen. Even God had to burn a bush to get Moses' attention and Christ had to pass out free fish and buns and do magic.

But, in the end (whenever that might be) I hope it will all even out and we can all be ourselves. Only--I trust--the best possible us. That isn't easy at all. We are not only our own worst enemy, but our own worst friend, counseling erratically.

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Cy Chauvin, 320 Harper, Detroit, MI 48202

7/14/77

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Tom Monteleone's column may elicit a lot of mail, but it isn't really controversial, just "loud." He overstates vastly what little complaints he has, and lards his

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# LETTERS

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column with insults. Is it so terrible that women find the word "lady" (or "chick", "broad") demeaning? I don't think it's so hard to be considerate. I'm sure Tom Monteleone would not want to be called a "sci-fi" writer.

"Sexism" (like racism) is bad because it reinforces stereotypes: the individuals in a group are assumed to all have the exact same characteristics of that group. Sexism ("bouncy breasts and all") is bad in sf because stereotypes replace real characters. Descriptions of bouncy breasts replace attempts to describe women as real people; one reviewer in F&SF (male), for instance, counted up the number of times Silverberg described bouncy breasts in TO LIVE AGAIN. It was approx. 25 times. If Tom read 25 different descriptions of dangling penises, perhaps he might understand. At best, it's boring.

It does seem unfair that stories by male writers would be uniformly rejected from an anthology of female-oriented sf, without even being read (I'm assuming such was the case, since this is not made clear). It seems unlikely, however, that a man could say much about the female experience, even in a story set in the future. Even James Tiptree has turned out to be a woman!

The tone of Thomas Monteleone's column seems most defensive. I wonder who he hopes to convince? Even neutral readers are likely to be put off by his anger. I don't think women have wronged him enough to have deservedly provoked it. I don't think there should be "quotas" in sf, and I don't believe any serious writer would disagree. But over half of society is female, wouldn't it make for more realistic sf if women were treated more often? And as more than cardboard stereotypes? Sf should take into account advances in sociology and culture, as well as in the physical sciences.

Your editorial is sort of like an iceberg, I suspect: just the top 10% of the trials you've gone through shows. We thought you might come to the convention in Chicago (Windycon), but you apparently just moved around then. I enjoy personal editorials; I think fans write more honestly now. You seem to have escaped from a dead-end in Tacoma, and I hope you make lots of good friends where you like now.

((Were I to give you the entire iceberg, not only would it have filled the entirety of last issue, but it could have provided icecubes for all the drinks at the next worldcon. You're right, though, I wanted everybody to catch a hint of what I've gone

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through without boring them.))

Neil Kvern, Box 258 Route 1, Cataldo, Idaho 83810

7/11/77

The Carrington interview is fascinating--or at least somewhat thought-provoking, in a way. His final statement--about the things that apparently make him satisfied--is incredibly difficult to accept. Obviously he meant these criteria as sarcasm, but, Jesus, how am I to be sure?

I found Jerry Pournelle's letter rather disquieting; but maybe I'm basing my opinion of his article on personal dislike of his work. His attack of (and, God, the quotation marks make him sound very snobbish, very stupid, very "professional") (no, not stupid, just reactionary, as I'm being here) intellectuals is brought down by generalization. It isn't true that all commercially successful authors should be apologetic; it is true that there should be some over-riding reason why these authors are popular. I can't see any reason for Jerry Pournelle to be popular other than the fact that he writes for a specific, rather middle-of-the-road type of audience. I would much rather remember J. G. Ballard twenty years from now than Jerry Pournelle. And I probably will.

In any case, vented spleen doesn't sound good at all. Whether that spleen vented is Pournelle's or mine. I don't think that "junk" should be condemned, because, granted, it would be ridiculous handing a ten-year-old Thomas Pynchon's GRAVITY'S RAINBOW, just as it's ridiculous for Pournelle to defend "junk" with the defense that it's fun. It is, certainly, but I think that most of the "junk" Grant is talking about is only fun to ten-year-olds. And not even most ten-year-olds, sometimes. As for men of action always being simplistic, I think Pournelle is extremely wrong. A complex man-of-action is always more interesting than a simplistic or "cardboard" one. Pournelle is a good author, I'm not arguing that; I don't particularly enjoy his stories, but I found INFERNNO...fun. Conversely, I found the characters in THE MOTE IN GOD'S EYE dull, simple-minded, and, gak--dare I say..?, cardboard. But apparently there were reasons, or preferences, or whatever, and I'm not one to condemn anyone for anything written in our field or any other. But, as I said, there are preferences.

Now, to Monteleone: I agree one hundred per cent with the idea that everyone should have freedom to write what he/she damn well wants to write. The quota system should be studiously avoided; likewise, so should the repression of certain factions. And, Thomas, you had me going with you all the way until you made your comments about homosexuals and women with "a good pair". "If you earn it, you deserve it" is true, well and good, but, fuck, if someone "earns" it and doesn't get it--what then? What if the person isn't yet known to publishers, or doesn't have the correct sex or skin color (though these things are generally no longer happening, racial and sexual discrimination, but they could, notice: the anti-ERA vote recently in Washington state): how can they "earn" it without a hell of a lot of help? They can't. I think in this sense Thomas Monteleone is rationalizing and not quite thinking straight.

However, I agree with his basic idealistic premise: that one reaps what one sows, that one gets what he works for. It isn't exactly that way, but it sure as hell would be nice, just so damn nice, if it was.

((The very fact that Jerry Pournelle writes for a "specific, rather middle-of-the-road type of audience" is a very good reason for his popularity. He knows his audience and writes for it. Is that bad? Personally, I would prefer to be popular now, while I can enjoy my popularity and, while I might like to be remembered through the ages, it doesn't really matter. Shakespeare wrote for a specific audience and he's been remembered through the ages. He was also popular during his life. So who's to say whether Ballard or Pournelle will stay remembered and popular the longest? And what does it really matter?))

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Grant Carrington, North Augusta, SC

7/9/77  
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Meanwhile, we have KNIGHTS 17/18, and I regret to say, Michael, that it's not up to the standards of your previous two issues. I had an immediate disappointment when I felt the heft of the package, and thought, ah-ha, Mike's sent me three copies! Sigh. Only one, big mother and a bargain for your subscribers, however.

Artwise, except for the cover, it just wasn't up to snuff. Not bad, nothing really crummy, but nothing outstanding either. The best stuff came from Jeeves (you should have had them on facing pages) and some fella by the name of Brackish or something like that.

Your editorial rambled quite a bit, and I found it rather boring, but then I knew a lot of what you were talking about, so to other readers it may have been more interesting. Even so, it was no worse than a lot of Ted White's editorials, and better than any I've read by Jim Baen. Wilber's thesis is the only thing I haven't read all the way through--I won't judge his writing ability by the thesis. It's as dull as most theses but no worse. Not his fault. Or yours. Some people get off on this kind of thing. By the way, who is this Heinlein fellow?

Chauvin's article on Gerrold was ho-hum, even though I agree with everything except his rewriting of "In the Deadlands," which shows why Gerrold was correct in writing it the way he did. As far as I'm concerned, he's all wet in that particular analysis.

Tom's column was a bit of a disappointment, since I'd expected something far more inflammatory. Even Tom seemed to realize it: "I thought I would have a lot more to say on this subject than what has actually come down." So did I. And I still do. But it ain't here. But, again, people who don't know Tom as well as I do will find it more interesting, I'm sure.

Pournelle's letter/article rambled, as was to be expected, but was the best article in the issue. Strange, though. Like so many writers, it seems that Jerry's ideas of writing conflict with his way of writing. I agree with most of what he says about writing, but his stories don't seem to be written the way he talks. The same is true for Charlie Grant, although the roles are switched. If Jerry wrote the way he thinks writers should write, I'd love his stories. But I don't. If Charlie wrote the way he thinks stories should be written, I'd be bored to death by him. But I'm not. And, as I said, this seems true of a lot of other writers as well.

Which brings us to the interview. I can't tell whether or not what I said about

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Jerry and Charlie applies here, but I suspect this writer is just as guilty of the above. Anyway, I still don't understand why you interviewed this stubborn, pigheaded, opinionated old fart. I've heard it all before. (And I bet you're beginning to wonder why, yourself, about now.)

The high point of this issue of KNIGHTS was the letters, and I have nothing to add to the fuels or the fires. I think I've stuck my neck out enough.

Sorry to be so negative, Mike. It's not really as bad as all that; certainly plenty of fanzines exist (probably about 90%) that make yours look like a vintage issue of the ATLANTIC or NEW YORKER or whatever magazine turns you on. And, admittedly, I'm not much of an intellectual, and I prefer to be entertained to being educated. And this issue of KNIGHTS was a bit heavy on the intellectual side. It's not all that bad, of course--I still enjoyed KNIGHTS more than any other fanzine I see regularly, more than ALGOL and more than NICKELODEON (to pick two extremes of the serious-ridiculous spectrum), but not as much as your last two issues.

Hope you can keep it going. I want to hear more from Tom and Charlie, and a "real" article (as opposed to a thesis) from Rick Wilber. And more cartoons from Mike Brackish or whatever his name is. And I'm curious to see what (if any) response the interview (and Tom's column, as well) elicits.

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Michael Shoemaker, 2123 N. Early St., Alexandria, VA 22302

7/11/77

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Chauvin's criticism of WHEN HARLIE WAS ONE for lack of physical description of characters or setting is merely his personal bias. Jane Austen has virtually no physical description of characters or setting in EMMA and in PRIDE AND PREJUDICE (the only two I've read, though I suspect her others are the same), but that does not keep these from being very great novels. What Chauvin (quoting Blish) refers to as "phony realism" sounds like the very thing that is the basis of the subtle power of most of Kafka's work. Therefore, I can't see this as a cut and dried objective fault. Chauvin should substantiate the weakness of its use in this novel. Chauvin himself seems to concede that this novel is "mainly cerebral or intellectual in intent." Yet, Chauvin addresses himself entirely to the mechanics of the novel, never discussing the quality of the novel's intellectual content. Therefore, it is accurate to say that Chauvin has ignored the intent of the novel. Though I don't consider an author's intent to be of overwhelming importance in evaluating a work, I cannot take seriously any critic who ignores it completely.

Wilber's article is a thorough rehash of what's been said before. Though he asserts at the beginning and at the end of his article that his thesis applies to Heinlein's early stories, he chooses to ignore the vast majority of these stories in the body of the article (the very stories that established Heinlein's reputation as a giant). My own view is that Heinlein followed much the same course as Wells. He wrote a lot of highly imaginative entertaining stories early in his career, then degenerated into unentertaining didacticism in his later work.

((While Wilber's thesis may or may not be a thorough rehash of what's been said before, I think you and I have read two different theses. I don't remember any assertion in the thesis that says it applies to Heinlein's early work, and at a quick

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skim I can find none. What it does say is that it will define and discuss the "major and important minor characterizations in Heinlein's writing" and then will show "how the same types are used for similar purposes in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND". To me, that says that a number of Heinlein's works, from different periods in his development, will be looked at. And I think they are.))

David Taggart, Chandler Road, White River Jct., VT 05001

6/26/77 and 7/3/77

Cy Chauvin's "With A Finger in my Gerrold" did not impress me at all. First off, he states that WHEN HARLIE WAS ONE was Gerrold's first novel. It wasn't; both YES-TERDAY'S CHILDREN and SPACE SKIMMER pre-date it, as does Gerrold's collaboration novel with Niven, THE FLYING SORCERERS. Chauvin mentions none of these books.

It is obvious to me that any study of David Gerrold's writing must begin with his most popular work, "The Trouble With Tribbles" screenplay from STAR TREK. Chauvin says that Gerrold's major weaknesses are "lack of strong characters, and over-dependence upon dialog to carry the story along". An astute critical analysis would have shown how these weaknesses of Gerrold's novels are turned into strengths in a screenplay.

And "In the Deadlands" is Gerrold's best work to date? Well, Chauvin is entitled to his opinion. My opinion is that "a motion picture technique done in prose that genuinely works" is actually a cheap typewriter trick, and that the biggest mystery is not that it was nominated for a Nebula Award (the Nebulas get strange oft-times), but that it was ever published at all.

I would question Richard Wilber's failure to go where others have gone before in "The Themes of Robert A. Heinlein". As I glance through the 150 footnotes which follow the article, I find that most of them come from Heinlein's own works, while previous works about Heinlein are pretty much ignored. The only about-Heinlein sources that Wilber uses are the OUI interview (5 times), the Sturgeon review in NATIONAL REVIEW (4 times), TIME (once; the Charlie Manson-read-STRANGER article, I believe), and Alexi Panshin's HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION (once). HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION is the standard. Panshin's idea of the "Heinlein individual" and his three stages of development relates directly to Wilber's "Heinlein mentor-protagonist." Also, while both Panshin and Wilber agree that Heinlein's characterizations are limited, Panshin states that this may be a strength rather than an indication of a "lack of growth," for the "balance of unfamiliar backgrounds and familiar people may well be a considerable factor in Heinlein's noted ability to provide lived-in futures. The futures seem lived-in because we can see people we readily recognize living in them. Since the hardest thing to achieve in science fiction is credibility, Heinlein may well have been distinctly ahead by keeping his characters restricted." (HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION, p. 130).

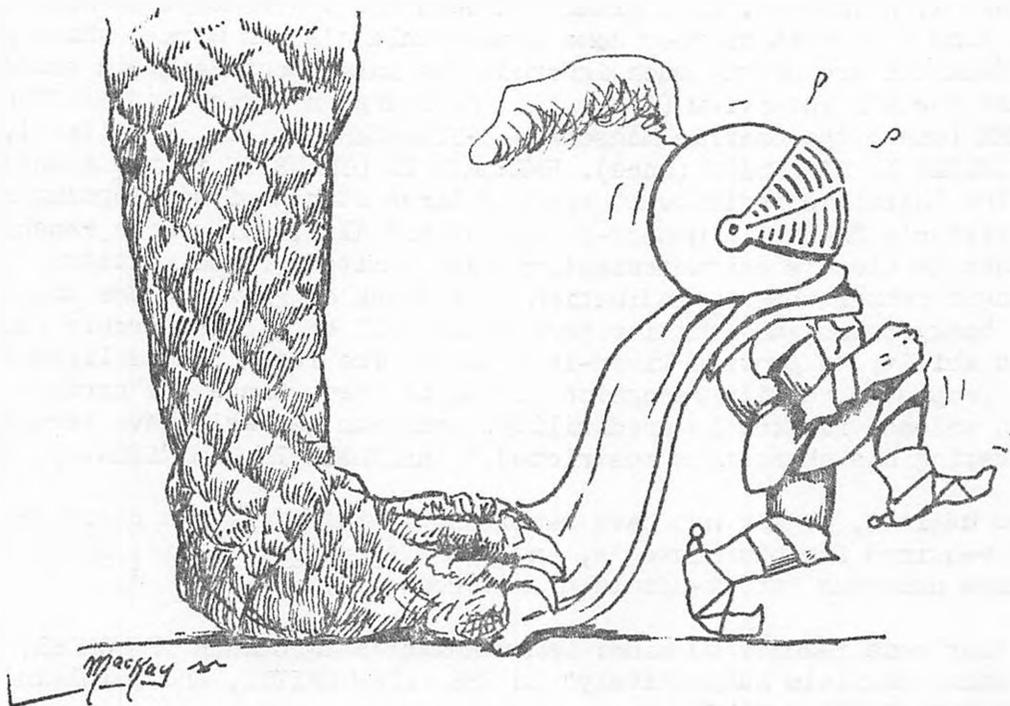
((One thing you neglect, or may not have realized, is that Wilber's piece was a primary thesis, as required for his master's, and not a secondary thesis, as it would have been had he used numerous "about-Heinlein" references.))

Other sources that come readily to mind: Damon Knight's IN SEARCH OF WONDER, Panshin's article "Reading Heinlein Subjectively" in THE ALIEN CRITIC, and Heinlein's own essay in THE SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL.

The greatest attribute of Wilber's article is its relating of STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND to the main body of Heinlein's work. Certainly Jubal Harshaw is the ultimate Heinlein mentor. And I think that Wilber satisfactorily proves that Mike is the ultimate Heinlein protagonist--and this may be the novel's central weakness. Mike is the one true competent man. He can do anything, and as a result of this we really know nothing about him. Mike is God; which is not particularly informative, although it does make an interesting story. Science fiction is known to be a literature of ideas. Mike is God, and his ideas are right. Disagreeing with him is wrong by definition; agreeing with him is right-thinking, and is also pretty pointless in the long run.

I was glad to see that Wilber included Heinlein's animals as "minor characters." I find this to be appropriate. Dammit, cats are people!

Typographical errors caught: in FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD, Farnham has twin sons not daughters (p. 6 & 8) and Barbara is his daughter's friend, not his son's (p. 7). And is Farnham truly competent? Sure he survives everything the universe throws at him. Farnham survives, but without style. "It may be better to be a live jackal than a dead lion, but it is better still to be a live lion. And usually easier." (TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE, p. 260) If Farnham were truly competent, he wouldn't let the universe shit all over him. I would have to say that Farnham is not a mentor either--he tries to dispense his wisdom, but he has no followers. I did a quick reread of the beginning of the novel, and was not too impressed with Barbara's competence either--the survival kit she carries in the trunk of her car contains a loaded gun and a can of gasoline (p. 7), which are not the safest things to have there.



Another minor error: Page 19, paragraph one; it should be "radium", not "thorium." (HAVE SPACESUIT, p. 240.)

Wilber's comments on PODKAYNE OF MARS strike me as a bit off-base. If Uncle Tom is a mentor-figure, then he represents many of the dark sides of that character, for a lot of what happens to Podkayne and Clark is his fault. This also raises questions of his competence, for allowing it to happen. And as for Clark being a Heinlein protagonist--well, he's young and smart and willing to use violence. But compare the statement of another Heinlein protagonist, Sam, at the end of THE PUPPET MASTERS, with what Clark has to say at the end of PODKAYNE OF MARS. Both protagonists have used violence to achieve their goals. Sam says, "Puppet masters--the free men are coming to kill you! Death and Destruction!" (p. 175) Clark says:

I'm taking care of that baby fairy because Poddy will want to see it when she gets well enough to notice things again; she's always been a sentimentalist. It needs a lot of attention because it gets lonely and has to be held and cuddled, or it cries.

So I'm up a lot in the night--I guess it thinks I'm its mother. I don't mind, I don't have much else to do.

It seems to like me. (p. 176)

Clark is not a nice person. He is clearly maladjusted, on par with the protagonist of "All You Zombies..."

And I was completely put off by Wilber's final paragraph. Yes, Heinlein has driven home the same themes and ideas consistently over the years. The key phrase is "over the years." As for the "flood of talented writers whose modern work has helped make science fiction a genre that merits serious study," well, let's see what we think of this flood of writers in another thirty-five years. Heinlein is still where he was thirty-five years ago. At the top.

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Charles L. Grant, Randolph, N.J.

8/11/77  
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To George Flynn and others: so just because there aren't enough of us to drive out "junk" in one fell swoop means we shouldn't try? That's like saying your vote doesn't count in an election. The hell with that noise; it's defeatist, and no one ever got anywhere by sighing loudly and clucking at the passing parade without doing anything about it. Good Lord, whatever happened to just plain trying? Or is that too difficult simply because the end result might not be what we want.

To Rick Wilber: go ahead and write your sports story, damnit, but be sure it's good! I never said competent was bad. Writing competent, entertaining fiction is not selling out; writing trash is.

To Brett Cox: I differ with your differing. Try teaching high school English and see if a growing number of students don't "cry out against literary experimentation and 'hard' books". They do. And they do it in college, too. And they damned well reject fiction (of any kind) simply because it's hard. Why? Because they're too intellectually lazy to do otherwise. I'm not advocating all sf be "hard", obviously, but it certainly shouldn't be driven out just because it is, either.

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And yes, there will always be "Junk." But does that mean we have to tolerate it?

To Mike Glickschn: Bracken is strange, right? When we met in Kansas, didn't I say to you the same as Mike did in his response? I wasn't being intellectually lazy, just saying that you are, in my opinion, perceptive and clever and it has nothing to do with the fact that you don't regularly review sf. Period. I still think you're neat.

To Robert Runte: "...our approach should be through education, rather than boycott." Cop out, Mr. Runte. Both. And do I think we shouldn't question one's right to read Perry Rhodan? Damn right I do. Especially if it's a contributing factor to the continuing decline. Censorship? Right again. Sorry about that, all you freedom-in-education types, but I've been in education too long to forget what a hellish trap it's becoming for my son, and your sons. The trouble is, we (being human) tend to forget that there will be generations after us; it's the nature of the beast.

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George Flynn, 27 Sowamsett Ave., Warren, R.I. 02885

9/18/77

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Tom Monteleone shouldn't be surprised that he gets more response from his articles than from his stories. After all, when writing non-fiction one is making statements with which the reader can agree or disagree (especially in the case of overly provocative statements like this column!). But it's rather hard to argue with a piece of fiction, unless it's so poorly constructed as to contain out-and-out lectures. You can like or dislike it, find the premises plausible or not, the style effective or not, and so forth--but to go beyond that and give reasons why these things are so requires a certain amount of analysis. In short, to give an intelligent response is work. And if criticism were easy, everybody would be doing it. In contrast, when the author comes right out and makes firm statements about the real world, any fool can jump up and make counter-statements. Plus of course the fact that the author is automatically the world's greatest expert on his own fictional world, but on the external world his opinions are no (well, not much) better than anybody else's. Finally, the fact that he polishes his fiction but just tosses off the columns should in itself tend to make the latter less well thought out and thus more provocative.

Having said all that, I suppose I should find something in the column to be provoked by. Well, an inconsistency maybe. How come it's OK to have organizations (Cub Scouts, etc.) restricted to one sex, but it's terrible to have an anthology defined the same way? And I'm not putting down the distinction: my own immediate reactions run the same way. So what is the difference? I suspect it's that the formation of single-sex social organizations (presumably) doesn't do any harm to those left out, while excluding a writer from any market directly hurts him (pronoun correct in this case) financially. In short, it's because money is involved. But that immediately raises the question of whether the social groupings are really harmless either. There are plenty of arguments that they're not, that what appear to be purely social arrangements do have real discriminatory effects in the "real world" on those left out. (Blatant example: business deals made in clubs from which women are excluded; the relation is obviously much more tenuous for something like the Little League, but it's hard to say that it's nonexistent.) The trouble is that "freedom to choose" never exists in pure form. To take his example of public toilets, nobody is about to in-

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stall "Anybody" toilets because there's no profit in it, and not enough demand to override the profit motive. People's time, money, interests, tolerance of complication are all limited, and the mere existence of a given social arrangement makes it harder for competing arrangements to exist. Which brings us back to the anthology: in a hypothetical state of complete freedom one could combine stories in any arrangement one liked, and get them all published; but in actuality only so many books can get published (or bought), and the existence of any exclusionary market does not hurt those excluded, even if only marginally. I'm not sure that this argument has gone anywhere, but maybe it will at least illuminate some aspects of the issue.

As a matter of fact, some of what I've just been saying also applies to Jerry Pournelle's article. "In this house there are many mansions, and can't we all just find one in which to be comfortable?" I thoroughly agree: not just in sf, but all over. I'm constantly irritated by people who say in effect, "This is not to my taste, and therefore it shouldn't exist!" I'm all for libe-and-let-live...but dammit, they do have a point! Given the limited amount of people's time, money, etc. (see above), it is true that the existence of junk tends to limit the amount of worthwhile stuff--completely independently of how one defines "junk" and "worthwhile". What's worse, the more people are exposed to the "junk", the less they'll be able to appreciate the "worthwhile"; because ideas do have consequences. There is no solution to this problem (or rather, there are lots of solutions that are worse than the problem--censorship in all its forms), so we might as well learn to put up with junk anyway.

Charlie Grant's column tends to be consistently the most interesting item in KNIGHTS, but I don't have much to say about it this time. Well, maybe the matter of the booing of Heinlein. I was there and I found it distasteful, but it's hard to construct a solid argument for that position. If it's all right to express agreement with what a speaker says by applause, then why not also express disagreement openly? Are there really "better ways to voice those disagreements"? Perhaps not, if one wants to be sure that the intended recipient will become aware of them. But as I say, I wouldn't do it, at least not where the speaker is in some sense my guest (a political rally might be another matter). My own response to a speaker I thoroughly disagree with is to applaud politely when he appears, but not to respond at all to what he says. But I think it's a point on which one can reasonably differ.

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Don D'Amassa, 19 Angell Drive, E. Prov., R.I. 02914

7/15/77

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I think that if Tom Monteleone reads through the famous feminism issue of KHATRU he would learn of several cases where sf editors rejected or altered things from women writers strictly because they were women. It seems to me that Kate Wilhelm mentioned them in one of her letters. I do agree with him, however, that in general editors don't care if the author is male or female. The prejudices are in subject matter and treatment rather than author. I also agree with him that a quota system is bad, at least in this application.

I read an article somewhere on MISSION IMPOSSIBLE that said the popularity of the show was because the heroes were essentially Robin Hoods, flaunting the law in favor of "justice". The other night I fell into watching my very first episode of CHARLIE'S ANGELS. The police broke several laws and acted unethically throughout, using an elaborate plot to trap a suspected robber that was totally unnecessary, getting him

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through enticement and then refusing to admit it, and along the way they caused substantial financial lossess to a number of innocent bystanders. Pfui.

I think I was imprecise in my comments about INFERNO. Please inform Jerry Pournelle that I thought INFERNO was minor when compared to the original. As I think I pointed out, there are some lovely scenes in the updated version, and the book was enjoyable.

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Laurie Mann, 5501 Elmer St. #3, Pittsburgh, PA 15232

8/25/77

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Charles Grant's article of ramblings...about his Heinlein comments. I was sitting in the music hall in KC, and Heinlein walked in. Like everyone else, I stood up and applauded. I have disagreed with the philosophy expressed in some of his books, but I still respected him as a writer. Gradually, though, while listening to his speech, some friends, my fiance, and I were stifling urges to kill the man. I don't know when anyone has offended me as badly as Heinlein's general attack on everybody. I don't think I booed. Like Charlie Grant, I was brought up with the idea that you don't boo for someone even if he was offensive. But, when the speech was over, we just sat there in stunned silence, glad that it was finally over. Like about one-third of the audience, we neither rose for him nor clapped. We looked around and saw an author we really liked and respected doing likewise, although most of the rest of SFWA was jumping up and down like Little Leaguers cheering their coach after winning the big game.

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Jim Mann, 5501 Elmer St. #3, Pittsburgh, PA 15232

7/7/77

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I'd like to comment on Tom Monteleone's column in KNIGHTS 17/18. On the whole I find myself agreeing very strongly with him. The women who accuse writers of being sexist for writing about characters and/or societies that are sexist are comparable to those who called Sturgeon gay for writing "The World Well Lost." A writer does not necessarily believe or support the society he/she creates. Also, I don't consider it at all sexist for a male to be physically attracted to a female or to admire her body. (Or vice versa) This doesn't mean that he's considering her any less a person, but that he is also attracted to her sexually. I am strongly attracted to my wife in a very physical way, but I still love and respect her as a person. Many feminists, however, seem to feel that a male is sexist if he admires a female's breasts. This just isn't so.

The one point with which I disagree with Tom is on the issue of all-woman anthologies. I think one or two of these is a good idea simply because it will give some of the women writers more of the exposure that they need. It will also help introduce some feminists to sf and may be a useful marketing tool. However, I think this is only legitimate if done once or twice. If the procedure continues it would no longer be a novel marketing idea but would be descrimination against male writers. Actually, the only two all-women anthologies that I know of are both reprint collections: WOMEN OF WONDER and MORE WOMEN OF WONDER. As such, they are not really removing a market from the male writers. Such an all female reprint anthology is not essentially different (or at least when they were released I didn't consider them different) from

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volumes made totally of stories about robots, stories of space travel, stories by scientists (Was Conklin being bigotted against non-scientists when he put together this collection?), etc. AUROA, an all-new collection of stories on feminism, featured both male and female writers.

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Stella Nemeth, 61 Zornow Dr., Rochester, NY 14623

9/28/77  
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Of course you made it! Did you really believe you wouldn't? You have been listening to the wrong people. Your "male relatives" may think they know you, but I believe that almost anyone in fandom who has seen KNIGHTS knows you better. We've read your editorials and gotten a glimpse into your heart. There really wasn't any doubt of your ability to survive and grow into adulthood.

I've met one or two others like you. A late adolescent who comes across acting much older than his years. That's easier to see in print than in person and a lot easier for a stranger to recognize than a relative. (I'd like to give your family some points--they produced you, after all.)

This is a rather magnificent issue. I'm not heavily into art or graphics so the lack of any great amount of either doesn't bother me. What you have used is excellent. The basic readability is there. That goes for the art too. But you know that!

Richard Wilber's Heinlein article made me think. I didn't like what he has to say. I've always enjoyed Heinlein. But I have to admit that he made his point. There is a part of me that won't stay convinced about Wilber's thesis on Heinlein's use of women in his books. He proved his point with lots of examples. And he's right about those examples. But there is something missing. Or maybe something just isn't being given enough emphasis.

I haven't been this sure of something being wrong without being able to explain it to myself (or anyone else) for a long time. It's intuition, I think. But the last time that intuition was so right. I think I'll wait for the reasoning to come up to the surface.

Of course he's right about STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND being a mainstream Heinlein book. I had no trouble accepting that. And Smith is probably the most violent of Heinlein's characters. After all, he is able to kill people without being in any danger himself and no one has any defense against him. That is a lot different from a shoot-it-out (whether on a personal or an inter-stellar level).

In any case I enjoyed reading the article. It made a very good lead piece.

I have to disagree with Cy Chauvin's article completely. Mostly because it is unfair. One of the problems anyone has who reviews books is reviewing the book in its own context. A critic, who is doing a much harder kind of writing, has to be even more careful. No one should review or criticize from a position of dislike. If you dislike something before you criticize it, you are in no position to say if it is a good example of its kind. Chauvin obviously dislikes most of Gerrold's work.

The question shouldn't be whether or not WHEN HARLIE WAS ONE is wordy. The ques-

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tion would be, having been forced by the plot into a wordy technique, how well did Gerrold use that technique. Chauvin admits that you can't have a lot of violent action when one of the main characters is a computer who can't do anything except talk. Anyway, the novel isn't about what people do but about how they manipulate one another. There's plenty of plot action.

It seems as if Gerrold can't do anything right. In WHEN HARLIE WAS ONE he used too much dialog. In THE MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF he didn't have enough characters. And in "In the Deadlands" Chauvin says that Gerrold, who was playing (experimenting) with typography, shouldn't have used his new "toy" quite so much. I can't remember reading that story, but the example that Chauvin gives as misuse convinces me that Gerrold prob-

ably did just fine with it. I don't like Chauvin's version. It feels chopped up and truncated. Gerrold's may be a little fancier than it needs to be, but over all it feels right.

David Moyer, 630 Shadywood Dr., Perkasie, PA 18944

7/24/77

Both my parents are high school teachers, so I know many of the problems that they must face during the course of a school year--many of the problems that those not connected with the educational system do not know of. Yes, I know that we were all students of the system at one time or another, but let's put that face aside for the moment or even longer.

Rights, everybody seems to be fighting for them. Students too, or at least the parents of the students. At one time the parents condoned the strict disciplinary actions that the teachers could take. Those were the times when the students respected and/or feared the teachers. But because of student rights, teachers can do little other than sending a kid to the office, not allowing him/her to talk to friends, et cetera. Today's teachers cannot place a hand on a kid without the threat of getting a law suit thrown into their faces. This has led to, in many cases, a situation in which the teachers are more interested in maintaining discipline than in the information they are expected to convey to their students.

There are many cases in which those who bitch at the teachers or the system are right in doing so, but I also believe that the major cause of the educational slow down is not the fault of the teachers, the system, or both. The system supplies the teachers and students with the necessary material, the teachers present the students with the information. It is the students who must want to absorb the information, and the prodding to do so should come from the home. Yes, the true culprit is the home, and education will remain an exercise in futility until those at home begin to real-

ize that they too play a major role in regards to the education of their children. It is the responsibility of the parents, not the teachers, to teach their children to respect the rights of others and to tell them, and get their children to understand that their education will not be spoon fed to them. The parents must also be the ones to motivate their children or, at least, they should be the ones to build the base of motivation that the teachers can build upon. This, I am sad to say, is not being done. Many students in school have no respect for the rights of others, or, if they do respect the rights of others, it is only for a select few. Also, outbreaks in the classroom are frequent, thus causing loss of classroom time and sometimes a sense of frustration and futility in the teachers. Another contributor to the educational slow down are those students who are not motivated enough to learn the material as fast as the teacher presents it. They cause the teacher to repeat much of what was already covered, thus more lost time.

Since Don D'Amassa is an ex-English teacher, he should understand what I have said. Don comments that only three of his students in one of his classes had ever read anything by Shakespeare. I wonder if Don had them read anything by Shakespeare? How about George Bernard Shaw, Anton Chekhov, Eugene O'Neill, ... I'd also be interested in knowing just how interested his students were when he gave them such reading assignments. Did he slow the pace down do that those students who were not motivated would not flunk out? Ask Don these questions if you get the chance and can find the time. His answers should prove to be interesting since he has taught high school students.

I'd also say ask Mike Glicksohn the same questions but in regards to math. Unfortunately, Mike states in his loc that he has no desire to participate in such a debate.

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D. Gary Grady, 318 Forest Hills Dr., Wilmington, NC 28401

7/22/77

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Don D'Amassa says that I "overlook the pragmatic problems with the manned spaceflight program as we are used to thinking of it." He implies he believes me to be one of "those who favor manned space programs in an unrealistic manner."

One of the points of my KNIGHTS article was that manned spaceflight in the future will not be "as we are used to thinking of it." It will be even more fruitful and less expensive. The Shuttle will save money not only because it is reusable, but because, by making possible service calls, it will reduce the cost of satellite construction and maintenance.

Opposition to manned spaceflight in the next decade will have to be opposition to the least expensive form of spaceflight.

Don criticizes "NASA's crewcut, characterless astronauts, with their deadly dull dialogue and public relations man image." The point is well-taken, but somehow it doesn't seem like a good idea to include a screentest as part of the astronaut selection process.

When Don suggests energy shortages will call a halt to the space program, he loses me completely. Communication satellites use orders of magnitude less energy

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than a comparable microwave relay system or solid cable. The same goes for resource analysis satellites, weather satellites, navigation satellites, etc. in comparison with Earth-based equivalents.

Let me be more specific. Dr. E. S. Gilfillan estimates that if we were to embark on a vigorous manned space program aimed at colonizing space, our space-related energy consumption (from both fuel and electricity) would total about 14 megawatts by 1985. By 1990 this might jump as high as 225 megawatts.

In other words, space research in ten years will probably account for between 0.0007 percent and 0.008 percent of projected total U.S. energy consumption. This is the energy "sacrifice" Don says the "great unwashed" (Congress?) will vote down.

When it comes to money, it might bear repeating that, even without the Shuttle, space exploration has been pretty cheap. For example, the most recent trans-Atlantic cable cost about \$200,000,000 to lay and carries only 4,000 voice circuits. The current generation of Intelsat IVAs each costs only \$50,000,000 (none of which comes out of the Federal budget) and carries over 6,000 voice circuits. This makes trans-Atlantic telephony six times cheaper via space. And the Shuttle-era Intelsat Vs will not only cost less, they will carry some 12,000 circuits.

Of course, not all spacecraft are as obviously beneficial as Earthward-looking ones. But even Carl Sagan's proposal for a major, highly expanded planetary studies program would cost less than \$3 per American per year.

Finally, let me point out that the expensive, high-pressure, and (in my opinion) mismanaged Apollo program--spread over six years--cost less than we spend every two months on direct benefit payments alone to Americans. (Direct benefits do not include aid "in kind," such as free education, free public health care, state supported hospitals and homes for the elderly, public housing projects, etc., etc.)

Space exploration so far simply hasn't significantly speeded up or retarded Terrestrial problem-solving. When it begins to have a significant effect, it will certainly be positive. But for it to help us in the next century, we must continue to support the foundation-laying work now.

I confess I don't know if all this will be lost on the Congress or not, but I don't think Don's emphatic pessimism is justified on the strength of the record, which has shown some restraint but a continued solid base of moderate support over three decades.

And even if Congress went totally gaboogie and cut off all space funding, there are other sources of money. Already a group of utilities and insurance companies (the main source of investment funds in the U.S.) are meeting to discuss space solar power stations. And interest in financing that kind of project is building in Saudi Arabia.

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Also heard from were: H.J.N. Andrushak, Richard Brandt, Bill Bridget, Brian Earl Brown, Jan Howard Finder, Lila Hankins, Craig J. Hill, Chris Hulse, Ben Indick, Fred Jakobcic, Terry Jeeves, Keith Justic, Marty Levine, George R.R. Martin, Dave McDonnell, Andy Porter, Neil Rest, John M. Robinson, Jessica Salmonson, Ronald M. Salomon,

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Lindsay Randall Stuart, John Tone, Mark Wakely, A.D. Wallace, and Terry Whittier.

BRACKEN'S WORLD

(continued from page 3)

that could have gone on much longer than I've allowed it to.

CONVENTIONS, FANS AND RICK

My appearance at Archon 1 was as much a surprise to myself as it was to anyone else. A number of times in the past I'd had hopes of attending a convention, but everytime I tried something came along to waylay me. When the organizers of Archon (basically made up of members of the St. Louis Science Fiction Society) asked me to sit on their fanzine panel, I accepted and then silently prayed nothing would come along to keep me from attending.

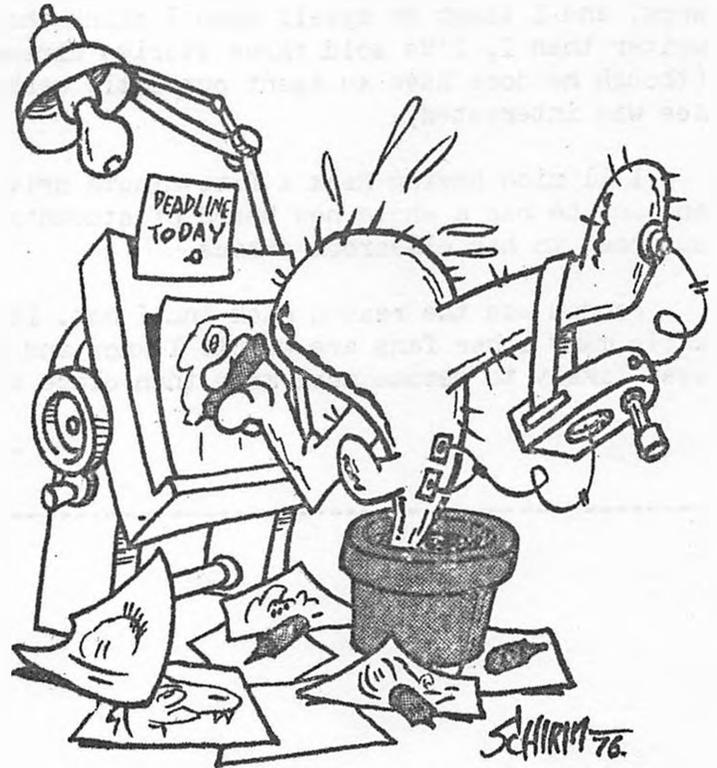
I understand the convention was a success, and I know the group is already preparing for Archon 2. I would say that I had an enjoyable time and would be

willing to do it again. Either typical convention reports are partially fantasy, or the authors attend conventions different from the one I attended in St. Louis.

I must say, though, that from my limited personal contact with fans (meetings of three different sf groups--Seattle, San Jose, St. Louis--and Archon) I find that most fans are not people I would associate with outside of fandom. Even so, I have met some very interesting people through fandom, and have become very close friends with at least one fan.

Rick Wilber, whose thesis on Robert Heinlein was printed in last issue, has been very influential on my life during the past year. Although he has moved away now, he'll probably still be an influence on me, and the things I've learned from him and shared with him will be with me for quite a long time.

I first met Rick in the pages of Donn Brazier's TITLE, and we began corresponding around the time KNIGHTS 12 was published. What began as an effort by me to gain Rick's thesis for publication, turned into an effort by Rick to get me to set higher goals. His encouragement led me to apply to Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville where he was an instructor of Journalism. I applied, was accepted, gave up about half my worldly possessions (which were the remains of a similar exodus from California



only a year previously), and moved here to Edwardsville.

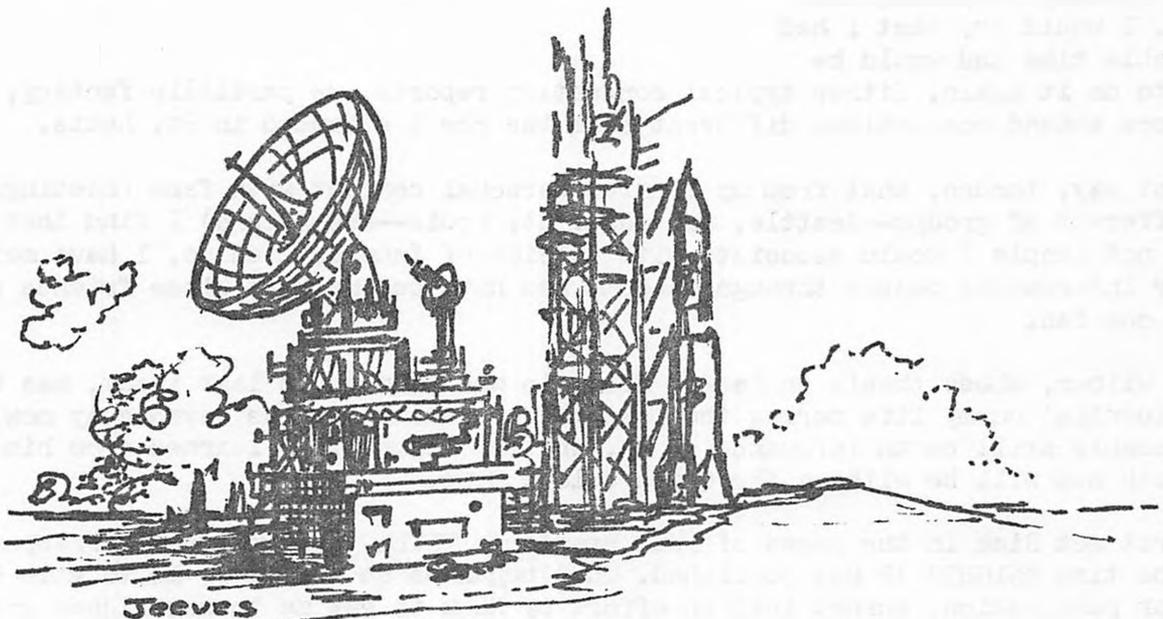
With help and encouragement from Rick and Nancy I survived my first year as a college student. Rick has also been quite a help in my development as a writer. Not only is Rick a free-lance writer of non-fiction, he also dreams of being as sf writer. We used to sit on his porch or in his office reading and criticising each other's work, and I laugh to myself when I think that, despite Rick being a much better writer than I, I've sold three stories already and he has yet to sell his first (though he does have an agent currently marketing a book idea he has--last I heard, Ace was interested).

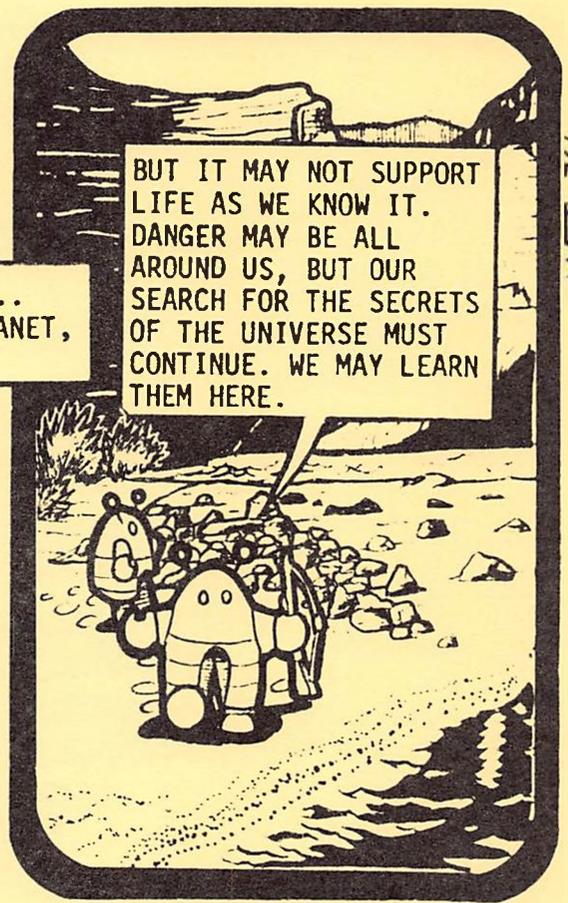
I'll miss having Rick a five-minute drive away, but life goes on without him near. And now he has a whole new herd of students at Mankato State University growing accustomed to his classroom antics.

Fandom was the reason Rick and I met. It was not the reason we became friends. While many other fans are people I know and like in the context of fandom, few are ever likely to become much more than close acquaintances--if that.

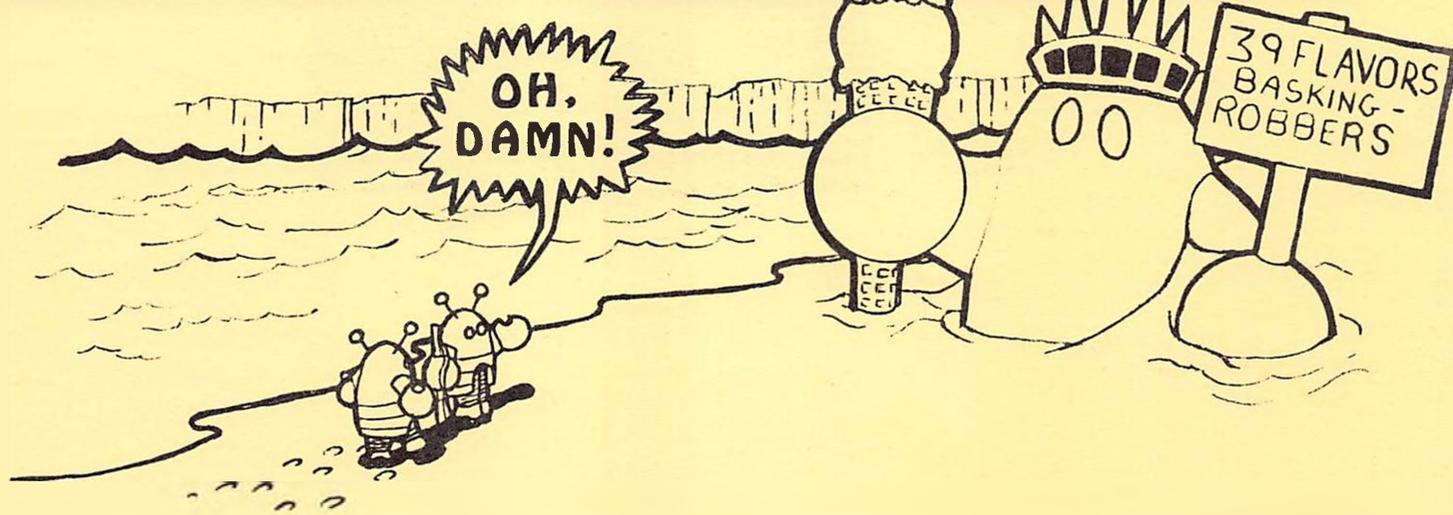
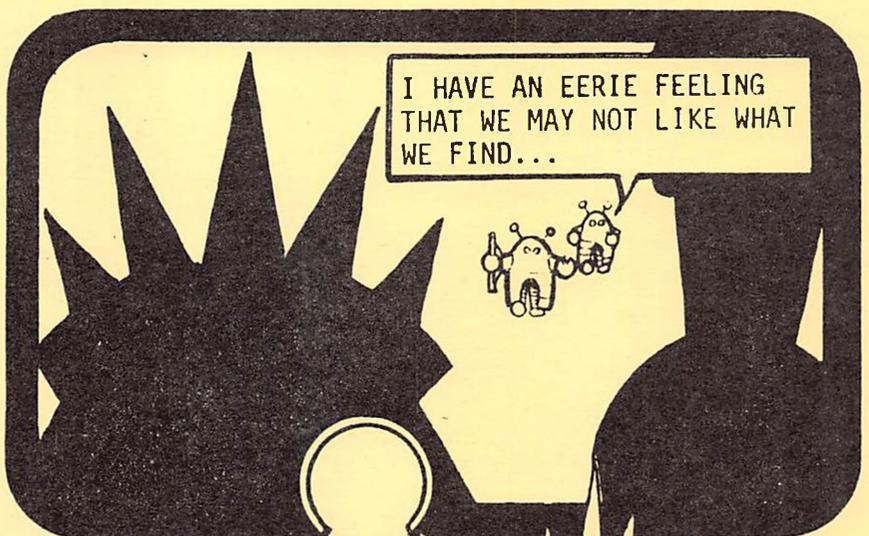
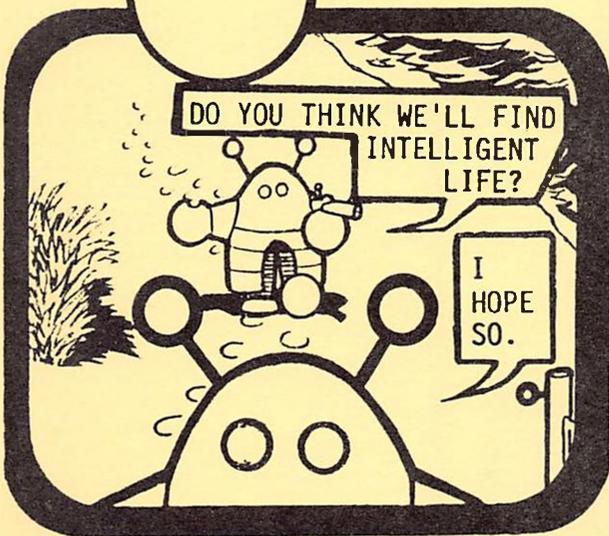
-- Mike Bracken

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WEL 76





... TO THE MACHINE ...

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