

Mike Scott '72

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MOEBIUS TRIP

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MAY
1972

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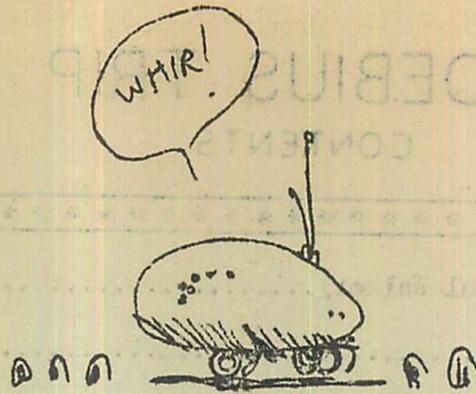
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AUSTRALIA IN '75

***** Edward C. Connor - 1805 N. Gale - Peoria, Ill. 61604 - U.S.A. *****

PAUL
WALKER
INTER-

-VIEWS
JAMES
BLISH



Walker: From what I've heard it seems that the mid-to-late-fifties were sf's "Dark Ages." Many writers left the field for greener pastures, and those who remained wrote books which inspired no one. In his review of Judith Merrill's fourth annual Year's Best SF anthology, Damon Knight commented: "What we are still calling "s. f.," it seems to me, is at an awkward transitional stage. Either that, or (more hopefully), the field has drifted as far as it can go in the direction of indifference to science, and in the next few years we can expect a resurgence of space stories written by men who can tell the moons from the comets."

Obviously the transition did not occur as Knight hoped it would, either for s.f. or for Knight himself: sf becomes a literature increasingly self-conscious of itself as literature and deals increasingly in the subject of literature itself -- mythology, theology, pulp heroes and plots, mainstream experimental techniques etc. Its emphasis shifts from the future, or possibility, to the present, or the concrete. The vision becomes darker, more introspective.

Blish: I think it is ridiculous to call the late fifties a Dark Age of sf. Those were the years when the sf novel (as opposed to the magazine serial) began to become an important phenomenon, and such novels shifted from small specialty houses like Gnome Press and Greenberg: Publishers to large, long-established firms like Putnam's. The names of the Hugo winners from 1956 through 1961 do not suggest any lessening of vigor or important change in orientation, and as I recall, the competition was stiff. To cite one example, this was the period in which Algis Budrys was flourishing, climaxed by his 1960 Rogue Moon -- the same year as A Canticle for Leibowitz.

Of course it's true that the period also saw work by writers like Evelyn E. Smith and Robert Sheckley whose interest in and knowledge of science and technology can only be described as minimal; they were sponsored by Horace Gold's taste for whimsy (and bear in mind, too, that science content has never been an essential ingredient for selling to F&SF). But there weren't a large number of them. (There are now.)

Since then, there's no doubt that the field has split into at least two parts: the traditionalists, who share (and in many cases were formed by) the late John Campbell's engineer's approach to any sort of problem, and his bias against stories with problems that don't get solved, and whose chief concern with technique is in plotting; and the Young Turks, who are generally anti-technology, very preoccupied with literary techniques except for plotting, and with an almost polemical concentration on the problems of the present. Needless to say, there are some writers with feet in both camps, among whom I count myself, but the schism is real and obvious, and it's easy to guess how it came about. The rebels, youngsters all, are growing up in the technology-dominated world which was so happily painted in the pulp era, and they don't like it. And why should they? In this they are abetted by their

very youth, for most beginning writers think that gloom and depth are the same thing. (I would recommend that they all go off and read Tristram Shandy if I weren't afraid the style would rub off on them.)

Nevertheless, I think the schism is likely to be self-healing. Writers chiefly interested in the problems of the present are not going to be happy in sf, where the interest remains centered on the future and hence the audience for their work is small (as witness the outcomes of the annual popularity award contests). They will tend to drift out into the mainstream. Not many will survive there. Those that do will have to survive the shock of discovering that the techniques they think radical are about 50 years old, that the public still prefers something that calls itself a story to have a story in it, and that the competition is a great deal stiffer. Not that the traditionalists will have everything all their own way, for the Young Turks inarguably broke down a great many barriers that are going to stay down, and the new editors coming up who have been through the battle are going to allow, and probably require, a lot more latitude, including more introspective approaches, more problems that don't get solved, and more attention to style.

Walker: What do you think of the sf of Orbit and New Worlds?

Blish: Orbit I think offers a taste of things to come; it already shows the wide editorial latitude which is likely to become the norm in sf. Knight was, so to speak, raised as a traditionalist, and he still wants a story to be well-made; if it is, and it's well written, however, he seems willing to entertain almost anything in subject-matter and approach. The same seems to be true of other editors, such as Silverberg with his New Dimensions.

New Worlds, on the other hand, shows by its history how small the audience is for present-problem oriented sf. I am aware that the demonstration isn't as clear-cut as it might have been; there may have been some potentially sympathetic readers who were put off, as I was, by the project's pretentiousness and shrillness; and the magazine's distribution troubles were serious and practically continuous. Nevertheless, I think that a larger audience could have been reached had such an audience existed. The success of Orbit is attributable to a good mix.

There is another problem inherent in publishing a magazine determinedly devoted to the experimental: more garbage gets through, it being in the nature of experiments in literature as in science that most of them fail. The more traditional magazines often present sad pictures of stultified mediocrity, but they have the advantage, within their narrower limits, of fixed criteria.

Walker: In your answer to my first question you said that in the late fifties the sf novel "began to become an important phenomenon and such novels shifted from small specialty houses...to large, long-established firms..." But I wonder if that wasn't a dubious victory. While I am more fond of the novel than the short story, I share Judith Merrill's and Joanna Russ's view that the short story is a more ideal form for sf than the novel is; and I suspect the seemingly unlimited demand for novels has depressed the quality and prestige of the short story, as well as depressing the general quality of the sf novel as well.

The short story market is very poor, and I know at least one sf writer who has suppressed his short story writing in favor of novels, although he is better at the former than the latter; and I suspect that many similarly talented writers are following his bad example, or worse, expanding their short stories into novels so that the genuine novel itself has become a rarity. I also suspect that the writer who did commit himself to short stories, even if he could make a living at it, would not rank in reader esteem with a lesser

novelist, although R. A. Lafferty seems the exception which proves the rule.

Blish: Writing sf short stories has never been a paying proposition, and I don't think most sf writers do it for that reason. In 1955, Cyril Kornbluth told me that he had for some time been concentrating on novels, and had come to regard the occasional short story chiefly as a more frequent means of keeping his name before the public. I came around to the same view soon after, and it's obviously the majority view now. Brian Aldiss goes so far as to declare the magazines geriatric homes for stories which in kind are decades out of date. I don't go so far, but it is quite obvious that much of what finds its way into the magazines these days are pieces of novels, or cut versions of novels, and that this has been true for a long time. What this means is that to a great extent the magazine and the book are simply different physical forms of the same market.

However, a great many short stories which aren't actually pieces of something bigger are still being produced -- as witness the immense list of nominations on the preliminary Nebula ballot. And the magazine market for them is augmented by the original anthologies.

I do tend to agree with the late John Campbell that the sf author needs more elbow room, usually, than a short story can provide, because he has to lay in background (and make it feel lived in) that the mainstream writer can ignore as given. On the other hand, some ideas are too frail to withstand 60,000 words or so of development, and we're very fortunate to have a place to sell those, too. I call your attention to the fact that sf is still one of the biggest markets for short fiction; the mainstream writer doesn't have one tenth the choices for submitting his short story that the sf writer has. This, I think, is healthy. And what about the writer who comes up with what turns out to be a novella? There is no mainstream market for those.

In recent years I've been paring my style a lot, trying to get the story down to its essentials, and have found both the magazine and book markets receptive to things which came to lengths as awkward as 37,000 words (Midsummer Century). In contrast, if a young Thomas Mann of today were to find himself with a manuscript like Death in Venice on his hands, he would find about three paying markets to which to submit it, and after that he'd have no choice but to give it away -- literally -- to one or another of the literary quarterlies.

(Lafferty, I must dissent, is not an exception that tests the rule. His idiosyncrasies give his short stories the bounce that have made him popular, and at the same time, make his novels, most of them, unreadable. He is not alone; neither James Sallis nor Barry Malzberg seems to be able to hold together anything longer than 10,000 words, nor do most of the New Wave people, Aldiss excluded, although he's got only one foot in the New Wave anyhow. The same holds true, more or less, for Ellison, Ballard, and Moorcock, all of whose reputations have been made in the short story and none of whom has turned in his best performance as a novelist.)

Walker: How do you feel about contemporary sf's apparent infatuation with classical mythology?

Blish: I do rather deplore the dependence on myth of such writers as Delany, Zelazny, Moorcock...even Petaja. I think the two forms -- myth and sf -- to be antagonistic, because they embody opposite metaphysical assumptions. Myth is static: the story of the rape of Persephone came into existence to explain the seasons, and did so to the satisfaction of the Greeks, so that they never got any deeper into the question; whereas we now know the cause of the seasons without any need to tell a story about them -- and we also know that the

question, like all other questions, is open-ended. Good sf accepts as its metaphysics the open-ended, scientific one, and so is incompatible with the frozen, mythological one.

For an exception that tests the rule, take Solaris by the Polish sf writer and critic Stanislaw Lem. Here Lem is not embodying or retelling or leaning on any given myth; instead, he is in effect creating one which will be compatible with the scientific assumption. The living ocean on Solaris provides him with a symbol of the human dilemma on just about every possible level, and a story which embodies most of our various ways of trying to cope with it. Solaris has all four of the aspects one finds in a true myth: literal, ethical, aesthetic, anagogic. But the anagogical aspect is scientific, in the symbol of the Limited God, who created but cannot control; in a universe in which accident plays so large a part (and pre-eminently in human life), there can be no ultimate justification for existence, only the hope of one.

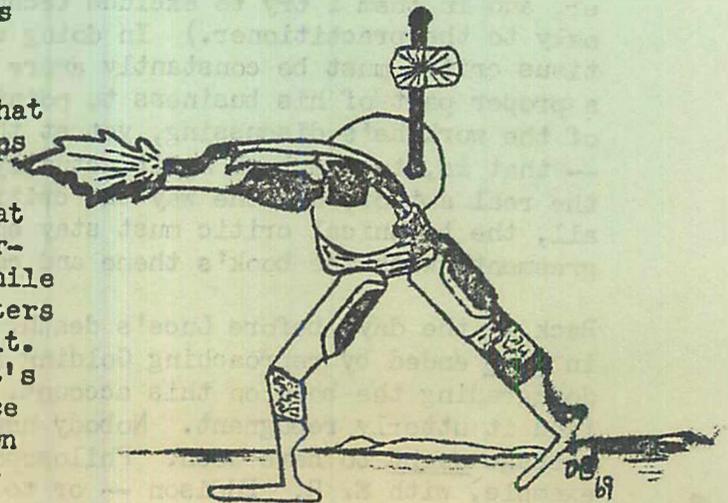
Joyce tried much the same thing. Eliot was wrong about Ulysses — it isn't based upon a myth, because the Odyssey isn't a myth, but a work of art. Joyce's novel is an attempt to create one. Finnegans Wake tries the same thing on an even vaster scale. All three attempts — Joyce's and Lem's — fail for reasons completely outside the author's control: the invention of printing, which insures that no single work can win the universal attention it needs to become a myth, even if it has all the qualifications, because it has too many competitors.

To sum up: it is possible and legitimate for an sf author to try to create a myth (or to write a tale which contains all the qualities of a myth) if it is anagogically open-ended; it is possible, but illegitimate, to use a pre-existing myth as a crutch.

Walker: You talk a great deal in your reviews about what is, and what isn't, a well-made story; you criticize the "fixed criteria" of the pulps, etc.; but it seems to me that the one, if not the only, "fixed" criterion of the pulps is their obsession with "plot."

By "plot" I do not mean "story" or "action": story implies drama, and drama can as easily arise out of the inherent dramatic qualities of the material itself even if it is stated plainly, while action can arise from the interaction of characters or ideas without either getting into a fist fight. "Plot," however, is something else. Inevitably, a formula which emulates traditional models. And I see this obsession with plot as the greatest obstacle to a better sf.

Blish: Plot is an essential limitation of fiction which an author either has to accept and master, or transfer his attention to some other field of literature. It's quite true that it was the only criterion the pulps cared about, which was wrong; but one can say with equal justice that writers trained in that school perforce learned how to manage it, while a lot of the new experimental writers don't even seem to have heard of it. The pulps didn't invent it, and it's not a formula, but simply a balance of ingredients which time has shown to be necessary to capture the attention of the maximum number of



readers over the longest possible time. You must have a central character with whom the reader can identify (either with love or with hatred); he has to be faced with a problem (any old damn problem, so long as it's not trivial); he has to make some attempt to solve it; complications — the main body of the story — must ensue, and it's more fun, and more compelling, if these arise out of his attempts at solution (the shorthand word for that is suspense); these need to reach a point at which the problem seems quite insoluble (crisis); and finally, either the hero solves the problem or doesn't, success or failure alike evolving from his own nature and his own efforts. Even the Odyssey, with its interfering gods — and the Illiad, where they're even more interfering — shows all these aspects, since the way the gods behave is so humanly unpredictable that they are essentially part of the normal cast of the story.

Nobody imposes, or has the authority to impose, these elements on a story like a strait-jacket, and they can be subject to endless variations (Kuttner alone employed dozens). For example, the standard New Yorker story, by a preference which I think must have been unconscious, consisted almost solely of the crisis; only a few hints were supplied as to how the leading character got himself into that pickle, and the reader was left to imagine how he got out of it — if he did; but all the ingredients were there, only the weighting was different. To play games with these elements, as Kuttner so gleefully did, you have to know what they are, and I wish more of the present generation of sf writers did. (For that matter, I wish more mainstream writers did, too. So many of their stories just sit there — even the simple pattern of an ordinary human event, stimulus/response/result, is ignored.)

The traditional models have become traditional only by reader acceptance, not by any professional process, or editors' dicta. There is nothing sacrosanct about them, and they have been subject to many variations since Homer's time; but they work, and the experimentalist can't even know what he's doing is really a valid experiment unless he's aware of them, as, for instance, Ballard is.

Walker: What is criticism?

Blish: There are many different kinds of criticism and to do them justice would require a book. I have practiced several different kinds in the literary quarterlies, but in science fiction, I've tried to confine myself entirely to one variety: the technical, which devotes itself to how stories are constructed, from minor questions like those of point of view to major ones like that of general plan or form. In this my intention was to address myself primarily to writers and editors, though if readers also find something of value, that's a bonus. (Book reviews, on the other hand, are addressed to the reader, and in them I try to exclude technicalities which would be of interest only to the practitioner.) In doing criticism of this kind the conscientious critic must be constantly aware that he is walking a tightrope. It is a proper part of his business to point out flaws or strengths in the execution of the work he's discussing, yet at the same time he has to stick to the text — that is, to the book as it actually appears on the page from the hand of the real author, not the way the critic would have written the book. Above all, the technical critic must stay entirely clear of his agreements or disagreements with the book's theme and conclusions, if it has any.

Back in the days before Luce's death, every notice of a William Golding novel in Time ended by reproaching Golding for his dark view of human nature, and downgrading the book on this account. This is moralistic criticism, and I find it utterly repugnant. Nobody has the right to tell an author what his message ought to have been. Philosophically, I am in utter disagreement, for example, with E. R. Eddison — or to use a better-known example, Lafferty —

but that should have nothing to do with my esteem or lack of it for their execution.

I do consider a story which has no philosophical attitude at all to be a waste of time, but a technical critic should bear in mind that his own world view is subject to continuous change and that the author being examined is under no obligation to agree with anybody but himself.

Walker: Should a critic consider the writer's feelings?

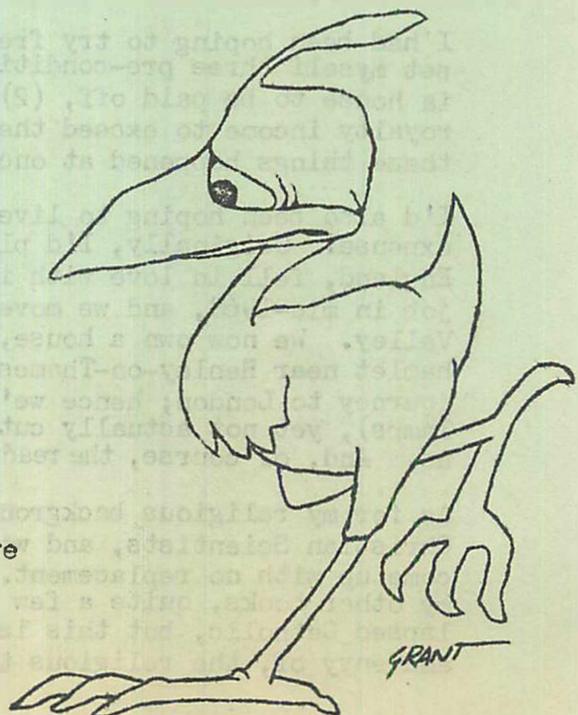
Blish: I still feel, as I have said repeatedly, that it is not an act of kindness to anybody to be kind to a bad book. It's inherent in commercial publishing (and even more so in state-supported publishing) that most books are bad and are written with neither conviction nor craftsmanship, but only to capitalize upon whatever happens to be the public or official taste at the moment, and the authors of such things (among whom I number myself, though not always) deserve no mercy. I do not except my friends, and I certainly do not except writers who may some day be my editors -- and they don't except me, either: I have been denounced pretty resoundingly for my "Star Trek" adaptations, and with justice.

If, on the other hand, it's evident that the book shows any dedication to the art of fiction, and any center of conviction, the technical critic is obligated to respect both, and applaud its success as eagerly as he deplores its failures (and he sees both) and never attack the author because the critic disagrees with him. For example, I consider Ezra Pound's "Los Cantares," even though it seems destined never to be finished, the greatest poem of our century, and for that matter far greater than anything written in the 19th Century; not a few of the individual cantos in it are virulently anti-Semitic, an attitude which utterly revolts me -- yet one of the most virulent of these is also so spectacularly beautiful as a work of art that I would be the loser if I allowed my prejudices to get in the way of his. (Much later in the poem, he recants, and equally movingly -- but not because he has moved closer to my own position, but because he does it equally beautifully. In contrast, I agree with almost everything I find in W. H. Auden, but all the same he bores me stiff -- there's a vast difference between poetry and rhymed editorials.)

Walker: What kind of mail have you gotten as a result of your reviews?

Blish: The critical book and my reviews have drawn very little mail, and most of what has come in has been devoted to pointing out factual errors. About the only solid indication I have that anybody likes the work is that The Issue at Hand has been a small but steady seller since 1964 and is about to go into a third printing -- and, of course, other people's reviews of the books, which have all been favorable but one, and that one also happens to be the sole instance of possible vindictiveness I have encountered from any of the people I criticized.

Walker: What special pleasure do you get from writing criticism?



Blish: I suppose the special pleasure for me in writing this kind of criticism springs from the fact that I have a technical turn of mind and enjoy seeing how things work -- or why they don't. There are certain obvious side benefits as well: the practice makes me a closer reader; and I learn things which I can put to use in my own fiction.

Walker: What about your background -- family, education, religion, how you came to write, to settle in England, etc.?

Blish: My background was middle-class; my father was an advertising space salesman for Macfadden and later for Esquire, my mother a pianist. They were divorced when I was about five and she got custody. We lived in Chicago up until my last year in grammar school, at which point we moved to New Jersey. Subsequently, I went to Rutgers where I took a B Sc. in 1942 majoring in zoology. I was drafted a few months after graduation and spent two years in the army, entirely in the States, starting out as the world's worst infantryman and winding up as a medical laboratory technician. I never did rise above the rank of Pfc.

When I got out I went to graduate school at Columbia, starting once more in the zoology department; but a year of this convinced me that I did not have the makings of a scientist and I switched to literature.

By then I had already been writing for some time. I encountered sf at the age of nine and started trying to write it in high school, making my first sale while a sophomore in college. For a while I wrote for all the pulps -- westerns, detectives, even sports -- but as these markets died one by one I perforce concentrated on sf, which was my first love anyhow. In 1948, a year after my marriage to Virginia Kidd, I began appearing in the little magazines as both poet and critic and have kept this up ever since. Until recently, except for two separate and unsuccessful years, I was a part-time writer, working days first as a trade newspaper editor and then as a public relations counsel for large pharmaceuticals manufacturers (and eventually, the tobacco industry). Most of this time was in New York, but I also worked in Washington.

In 1962, the marriage, which had produced two children, broke up, and in 1963, I married my present wife, the artist Judith Ann Lawrence. (We have no children, but three cats!)

I had been hoping to try free-lancing again, but out of previous experience set myself three pre-conditions: (1) the mortgage on the Milford, Pennsylvania house to be paid off, (2) the writing income to exceed salary, and (3) the royalty income to exceed the income from new sales. In 1967, all three of these things happened at once and it was time to bite the bullet.

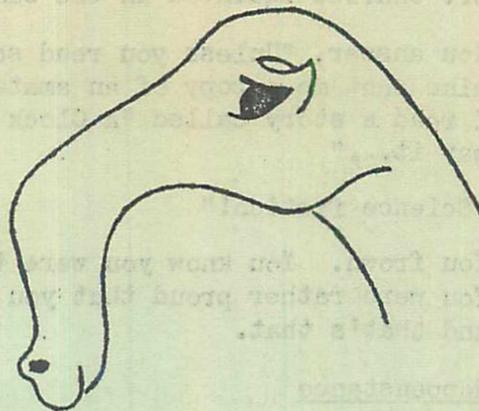
I'd also been hoping to live outside the United States, partly on grounds of expense. Originally, I'd planned on Italy, but then Judy and I twice visited England, fell in love with it, and saw no reason to look further. I quit my job in mid-1968, and we moved to Marlow, a small resort town in the Thames Valley. We now own a house, substantially remodeled by ourselves, in a tiny hamlet near Henley-on-Thames, about 20 miles from Oxford and a 70-mile train journey to London; hence we're physically isolated (not even any street lamps), yet not actually cut off from anything that's going on that interests us. And, of course, the ready accessibility of Europe is an additional benefit.

As for my religious background, both Judy and I were started in childhood as Christian Scientists, and we both left it as quickly as possible, and have come up with no replacement. Because of A Case of Conscience and several of my other books, quite a few readers have assumed that I am a practicing or lapsed Catholic, but this is not the case. I have a pronounced sympathy for, and envy of, the religious temperament but am myself an agnostic.

----(Paul Walker: James Blish)

THREE IN ONE

DONN BRAZIER



THE FIRST STEP...

You saw the magic man one day when you were young. In his hand a piece of paper flashed, bzzzt, and it was gone!

So you enter pre-med and don't make the grade in your favorite hobby-subject, chemistry. You switch to psychology; then get a master's in business and wind up working for a paper mill. And you see all that paper leaving in rolls like giant cannon barrels fouling up the country.

You plump for recycling until some busybody finds contaminants in food packaging the second time around. Over a beer or two you wonder what else can be done with the stuff. A frothy bubble rises in the beer and goes poof, and right away you start thinking of the magic man's paper.

You cultivate a friend in the paper company's lab, and he lets you come in once in awhile to tinker with test tubes. He smiles indulgently because you are one of the bright young men in purchasing, about as low as you can get in a chemist's eyes. But you use only a tiny bit of sulfuric acid, some white phosphorus, and other things like water. And you wear your goggles.

One day you think you're on the track. You think maybe you can make a paper that will disintegrate into the tiniest speck of powder without any fire danger. And you have had some luck in timing this event against the calendar so that papers with long-needed shelf time will not go too soon.

In the company cafeteria you finally get a seat next to the chief chemist. You broach your idea in most vague generalities, pretending to struggle with the idea as you struggle with your spaghetti. Through his pinched nose, Dr. Charles crushes you with, "Aren't you in corrugate purchasing?"

You switch to your other dream to get out of the dreary skies and snow of upper Wisconsin to the sun and sand of Florida. And Dr. Charles wipes his faded lips and walks away stiffly.

But at the picnic the next summer Dr. Charles is throwing horseshoes. You quit the softball game and pitch some leaners while letting the old man get the ringers. He is in a laughing mood. "Say," he says, "how's that paper disintegrator coming along?"

You know right away what he's talking about. "I gave it up," you say.

"I see. Run into a dead end?"

You want to say, just to fit in, "On the contrary." But you say, "No, I got it."

He huffs a shoe at the stake. "Well?"

You pitch yours a good two feet away from his. "I got it all right, but I changed my mind. I destroyed all my notes...the whole thing."

Dr. Charles squinted in the summer sun. "What for?"

You answer, "Unless you read science fiction you wouldn't understand. A friend of mine sent me a copy of an amateur magazine -- a fanzine -- called Moebius Trip, and I read a story called "A Clock Hummed in Benji's Chest", something like that. Anyway it..."

"Science fiction!"

You frown. You know you were the guy who had been about to take the first step. You were rather proud that you hadn't. But, what the hell! So you toss a ringer, and that's that.

Happenstance

The theory of chance, probability...how fascinating to the SF mind! Just to watch a boiling teapot turn to ice on the flame. I saw it happen yesterday. It happened at the time I was adding several rare cans of beer to my beer can collection. I save only empties. Let the rich display their shiny full ones. I'm not that crazy either!

Probability has its limits. Like, can you throw a seven with just one dice. (I hate the singular form of dice -- a sort of death phobia.) And can the sun really rise in the West -- someday? Or, and this is an old one, what are the chances of lighting a match on a cake of soap?

But within those limits the laws of chance tell us lots of funny tales. You know the birthday paradox?

It is possible, you know, that all the pollution in the skies of the world could settle on Tyler, Minnesota. A calamity, of course, greater than the tornado that blew the town down one day in grandfather's time. But if it should happen I do not toss out the window the law of cause and effect. Whatever sent that tornado there will have gathered pollutants for the BIG DUMP.

And so, proceeding, an author has an effect in mind. He must supply the cause. If he is skillful we react.

He ought not to be seeking confusion.

Is this too rational?

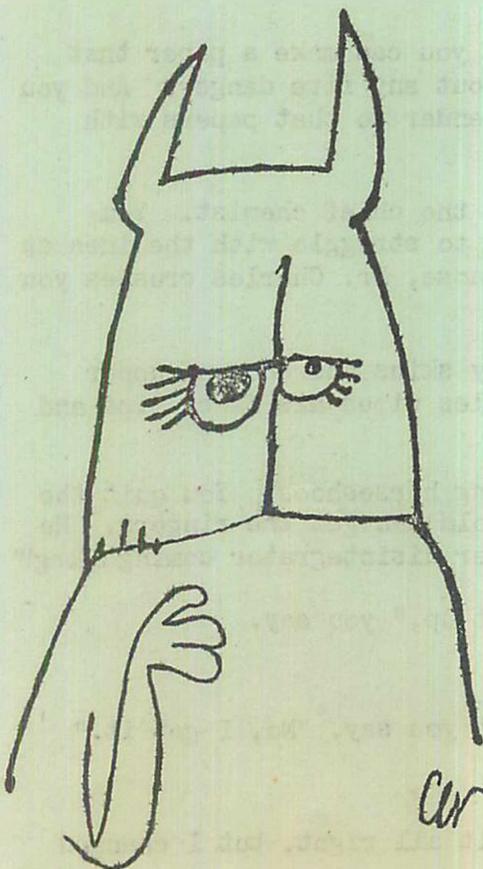
You say the shock of confusion is a worthy end?

That daubs and drippings on canvas communicate?

You have heard about the musician that painted a musical staff on a goldfish bowl, and then arranged his melody according to how the fish swam? Or splattered his music paper with an ink-dripping finger? Beautiful! The goldfish is now taking lessons on the trumpet...

You say, "Listen to him! Listen to Brazier -- he should talk! His THREE IN ONES are certainly examples of clarity in communication." Did you really say that? I agree.

Is it a happenstance that the happy stance of some SF authors rings with the clarity of a dirt clod?



When will they publish the SF story that begins:

Dvx gila oj frenoi &sd geterssjkiolp pifggs

And ends:

Sdftyuep terfgsh ju sehte hak.

A plea for simplicity or the three bears? No, just sense.

Or we might as well get those renowned million monkeys to work at the typewriters.

Only God Can Make a Tree

One time a fellow I know received an NSF grant to count the leaves on several species of trees. He'd pull off a leaf, one-thousand-and-one, one-thousand-and-two. He was the best damn leaf counter in the county. And didn't help the trees any. Some trees turned brown in embarrassment and withered away. When the conservation agent learned it was all for science he went back to work counting raccoons, etc.

I watched him, my leaf counter, for awhile. I finally, since I knew him only slightly, had to ask: "Do you read science fiction?"

"One-thousand-and-seventy-eight, etc."

I had known some odd people in my time, and they generally turned out to be readers of you-know-what. I'm one myself -- a reader, not odd! There was this young fellow who couldn't walk twenty feet without slipping and falling down. I won't mention his name, for he may be rich now and know the ropes in the lawsuit business. I often wondered which came first -- the falling down or the science fiction reading?

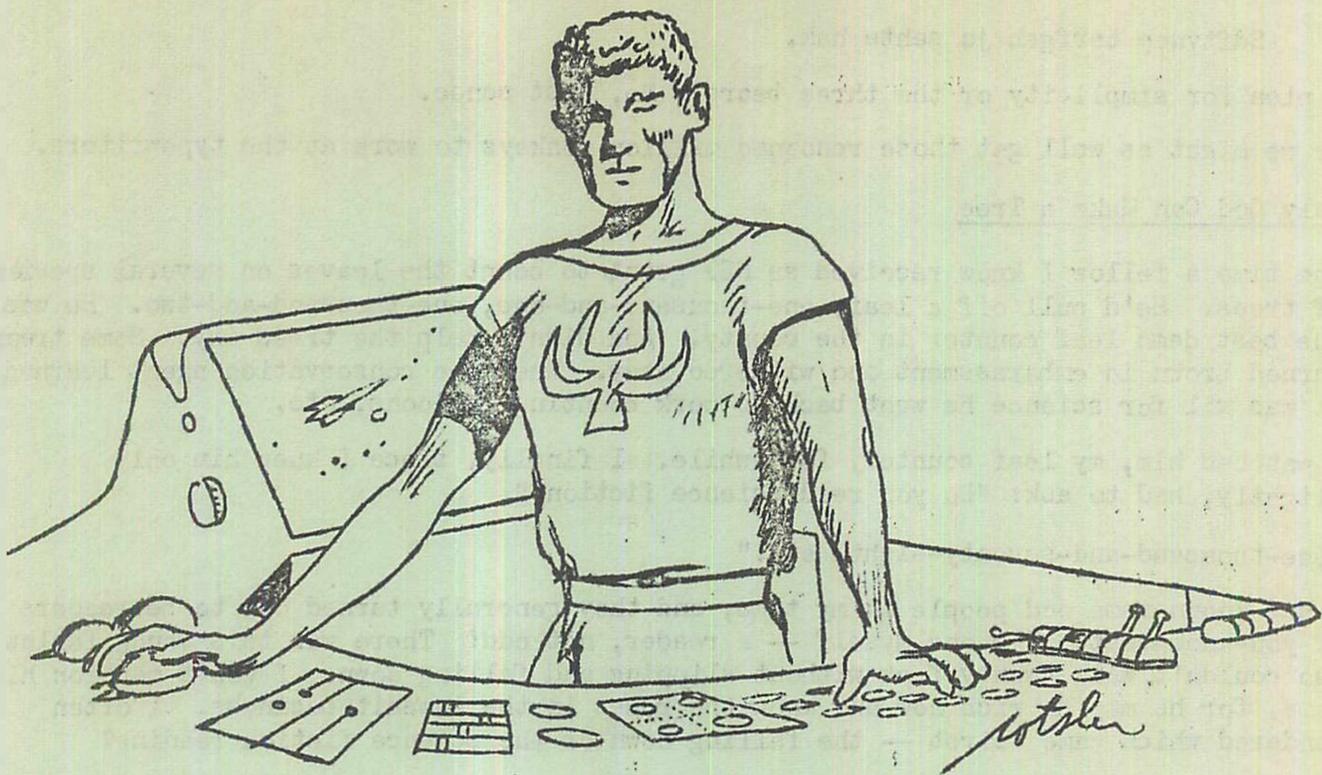
Then there was the fellow who would stop his car, get out and stand on his head. This was rather disconcerting to me, the puzzled passenger. Finally I just had to ask the meaning of his strange behavior. "What the hell are you doing?" is the way I phrased it. From my tone of voice he could have answered in kind, "None of your damn business!" Even Stephan, or is it Even Steven? Well, when he stood upright once more he confided that it was the only way to inflate his right lung that now and then collapsed on him.

His remark was a turning stone in my career. I had wanted to be a swing band drummer with an exotic name on the drum, like Don Carlos, but this event made me consider a medical career. I discarded that idea when I realized my perfect penmanship would flunk me out of Prescription Writing 201a.

Let me skip the fans and go to Fredric Brown. (I won't even mention Robert Bloch.) Since I was a very young person at the time, and thought I might write science fiction, I committed a sin and took a story of mine for Fred to read. Since I had never met the man, I'll say this much for him: he was great! He read my story and shook his head in the "it-stinks" way only a head of a professional author can shake. Where's the odd part? Well, before he read my story he had to finish playing his flute. You know that doesn't sound odd now, but it sure seemed that way at the time. Hell, I figured that pro authors never even ate meals or went to bed, let alone carry on with all those other functions we mortals struggle with. Then, to avoid any further comment on my story -- for posterity, called "The Violet Death" -- he asked me to accompany him to a tavern to have a beer. He spent most of the time talking to a shabby drunk with a shaggy dog.

Getting back to the leaf counter.... As he stuffed the leaves in a barrel I noted that some had holes in them. Here's a tree, made by God shall we say, and covered with holy leaves. Ah, the mystery and beauty of the imperfect perfection!

And so she overplays that wide, innocent stare while giving you a song and dance. But you love her just the same!



SCIENCE FICTION: DEFINITIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

ANGUS M. TAYLOR

What is science fiction? An apparently simple question, and yet there is no commonly accepted definition of the field available today. The question of definition is an integral part of the continuing debate over the nature and direction of science fiction. Science fiction appears to be continuously undergoing a process of redefinition. It is often referred to simply as "sf" — a convenient designation with no objectionable connotations. The field is also often labelled "speculative fiction", in an effort to avoid the connotations which some find objectionable in the word "science". But despite all attempts at modification, it is the term "science fiction" which persists. It may become apparent from what follows that this persistence results from more than simply habit, that in fact the term is rooted in the nature of the field. The purpose of this article, though, is not to distill a single, ultimate definition from the mishmash of what has been proffered

by others, but rather to grope toward a consensus of some kind, leaving the reader to mull over the nature of that consensus. An interesting exercise at least, I hope.

Typical definitions are offered by Theodore Sturgeon, Sam Moskowitz, and Kingsley Amis. Sturgeon says, "A science fiction story is a story built around human beings, with a human problem, and a human solution, which would not have happened at all without its scientific content."¹ Moskowitz claims that "Science fiction is a branch of fantasy identifiable by the fact that it eases the 'willing suspension of disbelief' on the part of its readers by utilizing an atmosphere of scientific credibility for its imaginative speculations in physical science, space, time, social science, and philosophy."² According to Amis, "Science fiction is that class of prose narrative treating of a situation that could not arise in the world we know, but which is hypothesized on the basis of some innovation in science or technology, or pseudo-science or pseudo-technology, whether human or extra-terrestrial in origin."³ Amis claims that ideas in science fiction -- as opposed to fantasy -- are presented in a plausible manner.

Although these definitions have their merits, they tend -- especially in the cases of Moskowitz and Amis -- to emphasize technique over content, and thus serve more to identify science fiction than strictly to define it. Damon Knight comes closer to the heart of the matter when he says that the organizing principle of science fiction is the idea of science: of knowledge systematically obtained and rationally applied. "Science fiction is distinguished by its implicit assumption that man can change himself and his environment. This alone sets it apart from all other literary forms. This is the message that came out of the Intellectual Revolution of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and that has survived in no other kind of fiction."⁴

William Tenn says, "If there is one quality common above all others to both science fiction and the historical moment which has produced it, that quality is Change. Change in men's societies, men's technologies, men's attitudes. Change even in the very structure of men's bodies and minds."⁵ The present age has "produced out of its own grating necessities and future-mindedness a science capable of examining man in the various psycho-social arenas he can occupy -- and a literature which must, like all art forms, frequently outstrip the facts which birthed it."⁶ Science fiction, says Tenn, is the literature of extrapolative, industrial man.

Science fiction is thus seen as a literature whose essential nature emerges with the Industrial Revolution, although earlier approximations to the field can be discerned as far back as the True History of Lucian of Samos (160 A.D.), and in the seventeenth-century works of Francis Godwin (Man in the Moone, 1638), Johann Kepler (Somnium, published posthumously in 1643), and Cyrano de Bergerac (Voyages to the Moon and Sun, 1656);⁷ Sir Thomas More's sixteenth-century Utopia is a precursor of a different variety, but still essentially science fiction. Science fiction is the literary response to the processes of large-scale and rapid change in society initiated by science.

Science fiction, says Martin Green, reflects the scientific sensibility, oriented towards the species, towards individuals as specimens exemplifying laws of cause and effect, towards the larger features of whole societies.⁸ Referring to Pohl and Kornbluth's Search the Sky, he notes that the entire interest lies in political systems and their specimens, rather than in particular persons and their distortion by a system, as would be the case in conventional fiction. This is typical of science fiction, where there is a concentration on social machinery, in evoking a society, and a frank use of characterological cliché to the same effect. The science fiction treatment is marked by a manipulation of external reality, an element of large-scale literal change. Differences in treatment of

subject matter between science fiction and conventional literature, says Green, derive from the general difference in outlooks between readers and writers of the respective fields. What he calls the "literary" mind is oriented towards the individual, towards particular friendships and small group relationships; science fiction, on the other hand, is oriented in its field of concern towards larger social groupings. "It is because of this fundamental orientation of the scientific mind that science fiction, serving readers with scientific training, treats imaginative themes in the way it does; that it invents new forms of nature, new societies, huge sweeps of space and time, that it moves outward and generalizes, that it concentrates on social machinery and employs characterological cliché."⁹ Science fiction, says Green, examines an individual's environment with an inventiveness usually reserved for his personal relationships.

Under such terms it is possible to distinguish as science fiction a novel like William Golding's Lord of the Flies. Unlike George R. Stewart's Earth Abides, which it parallels in theme to a large extent, Lord of the Flies lacks many of the trappings usually associated with a science fiction story.

A definition of science fiction as a type of literature embodying the scientific sensibility or the scientific method implies that the field is not simply a sub-category of literature after the fashion of the detective or western story, but a separate category of literature in itself. As Reginald Bretnor says, "It is not a genre. Its scope is universal. It holds the promise of an entire new literature."¹⁰ Science fiction appears as a genre, or sub-category, only because the literary "mainstream" has failed to adapt to the scientific method.

Isaac Asimov sees true science fiction as essentially future-oriented, in that ideally it is concerned with technological advance, with fictitious societies themselves, rather than with reflecting current society. True, or "social", science fiction is differentiated from "social fiction plus science", the main purpose of which is to satirize, or comment on, present social conditions. As Asimov defines it, "(Social) science fiction is that branch of literature which is concerned with the impact of scientific advance upon human beings."¹¹ The work of a writer like Ray Bradbury is excluded from this definition of science fiction. "His 'Mars' is but the mirror held up to Earth. His stories do not depict possible futures; they are warnings and moral lessons aimed at the present."¹² Even more scientifically-plausible works like George Orwell's 1984 and Aldous Huxley's Brave New World are excluded by Asimov from his ideal definition on the grounds that they are really present-directed.

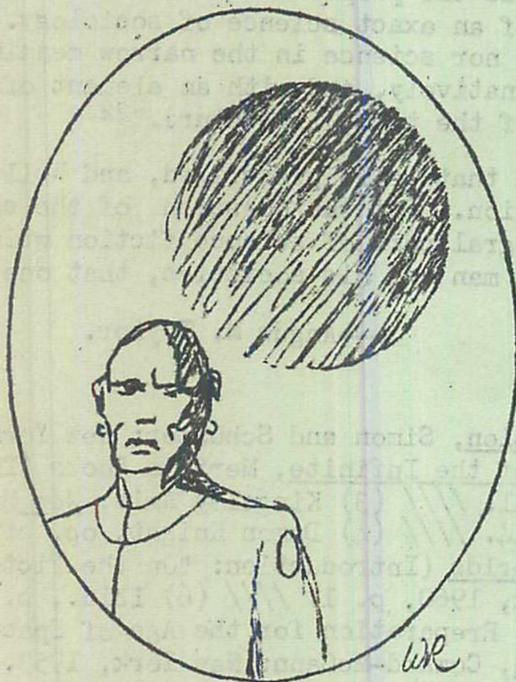
Classification under the categories of "social fiction" and "social science fiction" as defined by Asimov can be rather arbitrary, since many pieces of fiction are clearly both examinations of societies under the impact of technological advance and comments on present social conditions in the guise of technologically-altered societies. Returning to the assumption of technological change common to both these categories, Asimov allows a broad definition of science fiction in the following terms: "Science fiction is that branch of literature which deals with a fictitious society, differing from our own chiefly in the nature or extent of its technological development."¹³

Bretnor attacks as superficial the view that non-science fiction deals with the present and past, while science fiction deals with the future. While not directly contradicting Asimov, he argues that all fiction is invariably derived from what has occurred. "All fiction derives from the experience of reality. All fiction creates imaginary times, imaginary worlds, to be experienced only through acts of 'the imagination'."¹⁴ A hypothetical future is simply a convenient device in science fiction; it does not define the field.

Along these lines, H. Bruce Franklin says, "All fiction presumably seeks

to describe present reality, which includes the history of that reality, its implicit possibilities, and its ideals and nightmares, that is, everything conceivable. One may think of realistic fiction, historical fiction, science fiction, and fantasy as theoretically distinct strategies for describing what is real.... To put the matter in the simplest terms, realistic fiction tries to imitate actualities, historical fiction past probabilities, science fiction possibilities, fantasy impossibilities."¹⁵

As a technique, then, science fiction may attempt to render ideas in a plausible manner and work to ease the "willing suspension of disbelief", but the credibility of the fantastic state of affairs pertains ultimately to the perception in the fiction of the reality it interprets. This leads Robert M. Philmus to define science fiction as "a strategy of interpreting sectors of historical actuality through mythic displacement. That is to say, the fantastic state of affairs imagined by the writer of science fiction represents a deflection of reality into myth, and especially myth derived by dramatizing the metaphoric substance of various models of reality."¹⁶



Definitions set forth ideal types which particular pieces of fiction only approximate to various degrees. Franklin notes: "Of course pure examples of realistic fiction, historical fiction, science fiction, or fantasy do not exist.... In practice every piece of fiction is a combination of all four theoretical modes, deriving what we may call its nature from the proportions and arrangements of its elements."¹⁷ The same applies to any definition which stresses the field's use of the scientific method and its concern with larger social groupings as opposed to unique individuals and small group relationships. Works labelled as "science fiction" must take account of the fact that society is composed of individuals who are unique despite numerous shared characteristics, while "mainstream" fiction cannot separate individuals from the pervasive influences of their larger social environments.

Hirsch says: "Science fiction should be of special interest to the sociologist. It concerns one of the basic focuses of contemporary culture -- science -- and it may serve as a vehicle for social criticism and for the construction of social utopias and counterutopias."¹⁸ Edmund Crispin points out that "it certainly is all ethics, politics and sociology, is in fact a layman's textbook of vividly stated problems in those fields. In general the problems are implicit rather than consciously defined...but whether the author chooses to make them explicit or not, the problems are constantly there, because SF's subject matter compels them to be there..."¹⁹

Richard Ofshe has edited a sociology reader built around excerpts from science fiction works. In his introduction Ofshe remarks:

Relevance in sociology takes two forms. On the one hand is the question of the structure of social reality as it now exists; on the other is the question of the nature of this (or any) social reality. On the one hand is a need to create in the minds of a society's members some realistic picture of their

social world as it is now constituted, so that they may understand something of the true conditions of their environment. This kind of knowledge is immediately relevant, and like all descriptions of social systems it soon becomes an inadequate representation of current reality. On the other hand is a need to develop an understanding of, and to teach about, the principles by which social systems operate, so that members of a society may better understand how their environment is changing and, perhaps, act to shape it in a particular direction.

If this book is relevant, it is relevant in the second sense of the word. Sociology as a discipline has been concerned mainly with two issues: how a society arrived at a certain state, and how it functions now. Relatively little attention has been paid to the questions how social systems might be constituted, whether certain sets of arrangements could be used, and what advantages and disadvantages inhere in drastically different forms of social organization. These questions are relevant to the future.²⁰

As long ago as 1906, H. G. Wells said, "I think, in fact, that the creation of Utopias -- and their exhaustive criticism -- is the proper and distinctive method of sociology."²¹ Wells denied the possibility of an exact science of sociology. Sociology, he said, "must be neither art simply, nor science in the narrow meaning of the word at all, but knowledge rendered imaginatively, and with an element of personality; that is to say, in the highest sense of the term, literature."²²

Sociology was not to follow the path that Wells prescribed, and Wellsian utopias soon fell by the wayside in science fiction. But the question of the shape and direction of societies was to remain an integral part of science fiction writing. And today it is here, amid the potentialities of man and his societies, that one must seek the nature of science fiction.

---Angus M. Taylor.

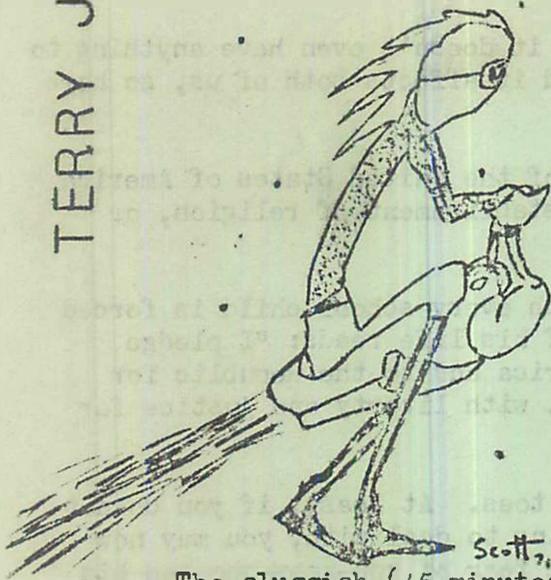
NOTES

- (1) Damon Knight, ed., A Century of Science Fiction, Simon and Schuster: New York, 1962, p. 10. //// (2) Sam Moskowitz, Explorers of the Infinite, Meridan Books (The World Publishing Company): Cleveland, 1963, p. 11. //// (3) Kingsley Amis, New Maps of Hell, New English Library: London, 1969, p. 14. //// (4) Damon Knight, op. cit., p. 11. //// (5) William Tenn, Of All Possible Worlds (Introduction: "On the Fiction in Science Fiction"), Ballantine Books: New York, 1960, p. 1. //// (6) Ibid., p. 11. //// (7) See Arthur C. Clarke, "Science Fiction: Preparation for the Age of Space" in Reginald Bretnor, ed., Modern Science Fiction, Coward-McCann: New York, 1953. //// (8) See Martin Green, Science and the Shabby Curate of Poetry, Longmans: London, 1964. //// (9) Ibid., p. 127. //// (10) Reginald Bretnor, "The Future of Science Fiction" in Bretnor, op. cit., p. 273. //// (11) Isaac Asimov, "Social Science Fiction" in Bretnor, op. cit., p. 171. //// (12) Ibid., p. 175. //// (13) Ibid., p. 167. //// (14) Reginald Bretnor, op. cit., p. 289. //// (15) H. Bruce Franklin, Future Perfect, Oxford University Press: New York, 1966, p. 3. //// (16) Robert M. Philmus, Into the Unknown, University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1970, p. 32. //// (17) H. Bruce Franklin, op. cit., pp. 3-4. //// (18) Walter Hirsch, "The Image of the Scientist in Science Fiction -- A Content Analysis" in American Journal of Sociology, March 1958, p. 506. //// (19) Quoted by Michael Maddison, "The Case Against Tomorrow" in Political Quarterly, April-June 1965, p. 226. //// (20) Richard Ofshe, ed., The Sociology of the Possible, Prentice-Hall: Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1970, p. xvi. //// (21) Quoted by Mark R. Hillegas in The Future as Nightmare, Oxford University Press: New York, 1967, p. 58. //// (22) Ibid., p. 58.

* * The next issue of MOEBIUS TRIP, 14, will be a special AUSTRALIA IN '75
* * production. At least four of the articles therein will be by Australians.

LITTLE-KNOWN SPACECRAFT OF THE 21ST CENTURY

No. 347. The Boeing "Banger"



An unusual ship in many ways, the Boeing "Banger" was designed to a specification for an orbital/landing shuttle to perform missionary work on frontier planets, and to double as a mobile canteen between services. (A later modification to permit operating as a betting machine was discarded owing to conflict of interests.)

The "Banger" was an enormous "bird", built on the lines of the great pulpit in St. Paul's, and powered by a 250 hp Slobbovastian thrust-jet. Distinctly on the small side for the take-off weight of 2,795 tons. This included the fuel load which consisted of a mixture of crushed match-heads dissolved in petrol. Specially low insurance rates were available on condition the craft was crewed by non-smokers.

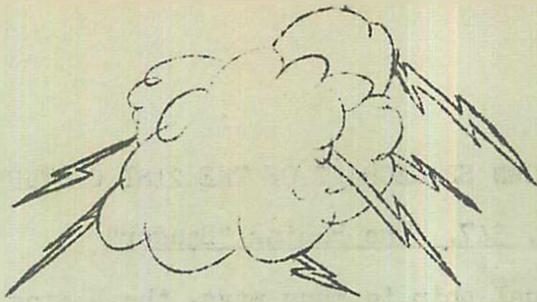
The sluggish (45 minutes) take-off was greatly improved by the use of an external booster system made from $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles of $\frac{1}{4}$ " flat rubber. It might have been improved even more by the omission of the lead-lined underclothes worn by the operating personnel.

One of the problems was the tendency of the nose cone to drop off under acceleration. A standard modification consisting of 500 yards of surgical bandage and six telephone poles was introduced to overcome this. Condensation on the stained-glass windows of the built-in chapel was never fully overcome, caused as it was by an overheated tea-urn in the canteen section. Similarly, bread and cake crumbs inevitably found their way into the fuel mixture with unfortunate results.

Many Boeing "Bangers" were built, but only one of them ever flew owing to a lack of frontier planets in need of spiritual guidance. Unhappily, after a forced landing which cracked the tea-urn and jarred the chapel organ out of key, it was barbecued and eaten by a horde of cannibal extra-terrestrials on "Whatsit IV". A sad end to a craft which might have reformed a galaxy.



Next month: No. 348, The MockDunnell Donut.



ONE NATION UNDER GHOD?

This isn't really a fannish subject, and it doesn't even have anything to do with fandom in general. But it interests me and it affects both of us, so here it is.

The first amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America reads: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...."

The so-called "pledge of allegiance" which every school child is forced to blindly repeat every morning for twelve years of his life reads: "I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands; one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Now, I'm not trying to tread on too many toes. At least, if you do not agree with the concepts that I am so foolishly daring to deal with, you may now leave the classroom. For the rest of you, lest the fear of you-know-who and his you-know-what drive you away too, remember the rest of the first amendment: "Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech..."

What I'm getting at is that although there is no set RELIGION here in these wondrous United States of America, it seems to be required that you must at least believe in something called a "god". I don't believe in a "god," or at least I don't THINK I do. But whether I personally do or do not is beside the point. There is only one word separating "under God" from "with liberty and justice for all," but which phrase has the priority? To my way of thinking, only one of them can be true.

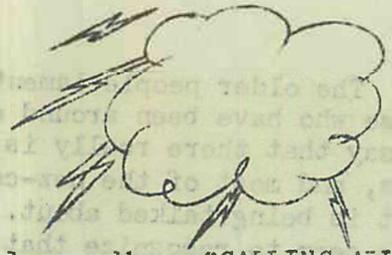
Item: Prayer in the schools. I can remember the morning ritual of Bible reading, where one poor student would be singled out to read a passage from the Bible, and afterwards the whole class would have to recite the "lord's prayer". This was in a public school, one organized under the same laws that were set down to protect the liberty of the people. We usually had at least half-a-dozen Jewish children in our class, but never the less, nine times out of ten the reading would come from the New Testament. This is supposedly all over and done with now, though some "patriotic" Americans claim that it merely signifies the beginning of the Communist takeover of their country.

Item: In court, the standard procedure in swearing in a witness seems to be to have him place his right hand on a Bible, and signify that he is telling the truth by swearing to this "god".

Item: In nearly every public or private ceremony, from the smallest high school graduating proceedings to the swearing in of the president of the United States of America, a prayer or two seems to be a standard part of the program, whether "god" has had anything to do with the proceedings or not.

Item: The coin of the realm, in this instance the penny that I have here, sports the slogan "In God We Trust". (But then, what's a dollar worth these days, anyway?)

JEFF SCHALLES



Item: I have here a flyer that came in the mail, reading: "CALLING ALL PATRIOTS *All who trust in God *All who repudiate the revolution *All who oppose Communist aggression...."

Item: Last Saturday, I sat through a college commencement where the featured speaker gave a long talk entitled: "Christianity and Free Enterprise". He attempted to show how White Christian Free Enterprise was going to be the only hope left for the world in the trying times to come.

Item: Christmas and Easter.

Item: Non-taxation of church property. Why should one company be set apart from another merely because it deals in worshipping "god" rather than in worshipping "money".

Item: Mass production of Bibles in order to have one to stick in the drawer of every hotel/motel room in the country, regardless of the moral feeling of the person paying for lodging in a public establishment.

I'm not trying to present a tirade against "god". I respect the right of my fellow citizens to believe in whatever they need to believe in, and to worship this need in any way that they wish. However, at the same time it would be nice if they would also respect MY right NOT to believe in this thing of theirs called "god," and to quit ramming it down my throat every time I turn around.

A few months back, a childless young couple were turned down from adopting a baby because they happened to let slip the fact that they did not believe in "god". The case has gone through various courts, and at the moment I am not really sure of the outcome. But the mere fact that a person must be required to believe in something as unbelievable as a "god" in order to lead his life in a supposedly free land bothers me.

I realize full well that this land of ours isn't REALLY the land of the free. I KNOW it has its drawbacks. I KNOW there are a lot of silly things that just have to be put up with. And, I KNOW that this "god" stuff isn't going to go away in my lifetime. But it doesn't hurt to bitch a bit now and then, does it?

One further note: The "under God" line in the pledge of allegiance was not in the original form, written in 1892. It (the pledge) never really had any legal status until Congress added the line "under God" in 1954, as a further foil to dirty commie ungodly people like me.

I wonder...should I add another lightning rod to my house? Or, better yet, another coil of barbed wire around the yard?

I'd really like to be able to lie and just say that I do believe in "god" and save myself a lot of trouble. But, you see, I can't. I'm not like that.

-----Jeff Schalles: June 9, 1971 A.D. (aghhhhh!)

The older people lament its waning, those who have been around a while seem to say that there really is nothing to miss, and most of the new-comers wonder what is being talked about. Oh, indeed, some seem to recognize that its heyday has passed; there was still at least some around as long as the great John Campbell was alive. Now he is dead, and does this mean that all hope is gone. No, not really; Sense of Wonder is very much alive, but like everything else that is great, no one can deliberately look for it and expect to find it.

Larry Niven wrote a book and titled it RINGWORLD, and lo, a new hope appeared. The fans that knew what they were talking about raved and claimed that this Sense of Wonder was not dead. For those that were not yet born when E. E. "Doc" Smith gave rise to Space Opera, or for those who are too old to remember the strange things his books did for their imagination when they first read them, RINGWORLD was like a reopening of a gradually closing door. This book employed the skill and/or techniques that make up the phenomena of Sense of Wonder. There was the magnanimity of space, the brilliance of uncountable stars, and most importantly, the superb handling of an entirely new concept.

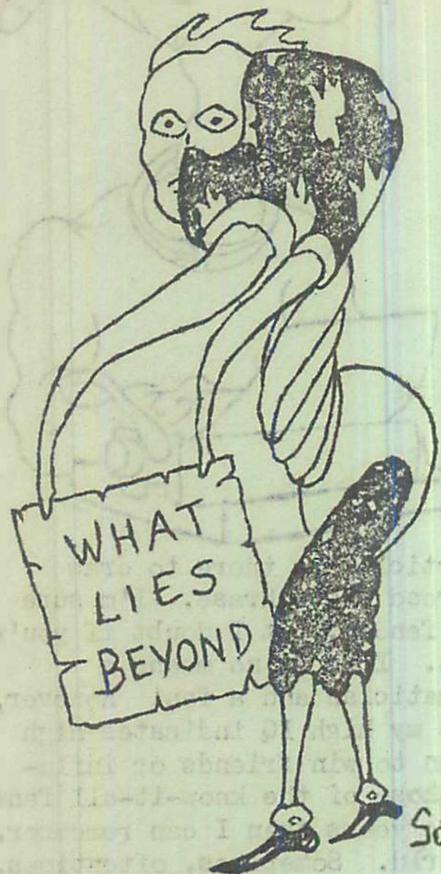
Maybe the real trick to this concept of Sense of Wonder is more than Space Opera with its wide open spaces, bright stars, and spaceships that go faster than the speed of light. More possibly it comes about from the discovery of something entirely new. For the new-found fan, a story of a ship that is round, can travel at impossible speeds, and can encompass a house, is a concept which is almost beyond many imaginations. And, this does something to the reader, it creates a sense of something spectacular, something wondrous.

This went on for years, the writing of things beyond the comprehension of anyone but a special type of author and reader. Eventually, it seemed that everything that could be written about had already been put down on paper. What else was there to write about? On went the writers, until something called New Wave appeared. To support the term there appeared a style of writing, one which many people claimed would fulfill its title. For, indeed, it was to be new, and like a wave, wash up and wash away all that was old, and replace it with the new. Many exclaimed that the precious Sense of Wonder was now lost, for this new writing would never have any. The readers of the new wave of writing seemed to wonder why they would ever need to experience this Sense of Wonder. They had reality, something they thought they knew about.

Yet, this too, had its Sense of Wonder. Harlan Ellison is one of the so-called prophets of this type of story-telling; he has written, among other things, a story

THE
ELUSIVE (?)
SENSE
OF
WONDER

ALEX VITEK



Scott

called "Shattered Like a Glass Goblin." This man wrote a story about demons and other creatures, the likes of which could only come from man's own mind. H.P. Lovecraft wrote many stories, and how many of them told of beings and creatures which come out of some dark recess of man's mind, his collective memory, out of something which would seem the very essence of being a man. Many claim that Ellison's story is one of drugs, and what their abuse can do to man.

Very rightly so, for "...Glass Goblin" is a drug story, just as "...Skylark" is a space story. If both stories are read for exactly what they are, and that is "stories" — entertainment, basically — then a whole new world can open up. It is the world of something new, something being experienced in a new way, something which the reader will never be able to duplicate in real life, or even read about, ever again.

In order to ever experience a Sense of Wonder, a reader has to look upon the story as a story. The reader's mind has to be opened up, freed from all prejudgements, and then the Sense of the spectacular, the wonderful, the immensity, the reality and non-reality will overcome him. Deciding that the story will be one of the many facets of Space Opera, or of the works of the New Wave, before hand, will start to put the walls around the reader's ability to experience. Sense of Wonder cannot be sought out. It has to "happen" naturally.

Looking for Sense of Wonder is like looking for any other true sense. It becomes very hard to find the true essence of whatever is being looked for. This thing, this essence, is something which has to occur on its own. Then the feeling of pureness, the true Sense will start to come alive. There are an infinite number of possible experiences each reader can ever encounter. As he encounters them, he will start to rediscover Sense of Wonder.

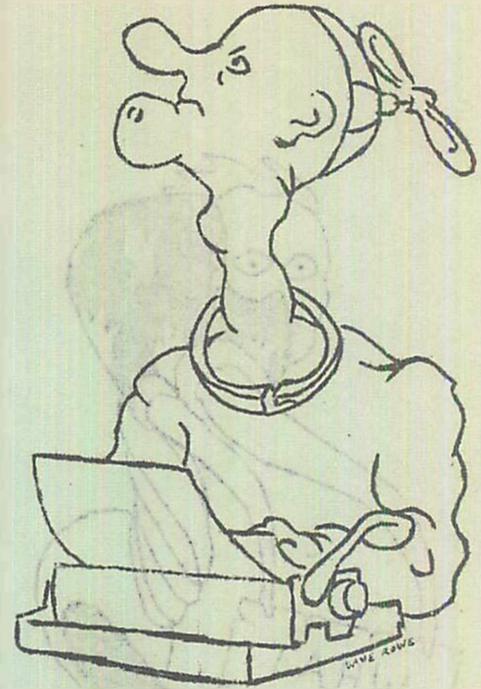
This Sense of Wonder is not dead, nor is it lost, it has just been pushed aside by many unsuspecting readers. They have placed criticism above all else, and they look, desperately search for the good and bad points, the purpose, and the essence of the story and what the author has to say. And, that can be the big mistake, the reason why the reader finds many books boring, dull, and poorly written. There is an old saying that the unpleasant things, the unhappy things stand out more in a person's memory. What happens if the reader starts off by looking for the bad and good. The noticeably bad can stand out more, and because it has been looked for, it assumes proportions that overcome all other aspects.

If the starting attitude is to read the story as a story, then the essence of the work of fiction will come out the way it is supposed to. By the time the book is finished the reader will know if it is good, or bad. Then, and only then should he read it to find out why; unless, of course, he accepts his original findings and doesn't want to bother. This way, possibly many readers will discover a whole new aspect of Science Fiction: the books read for escapism, entertainment, and other supposedly non-worthy reasons.

FANDOM IS A WAY

OF LIFE

ROBERT WEINBERG



The two words in larger letters in the title of this article are there to draw your attention to the emphasis you should make as you read that phrase. I'm sure you've seen FIAWOL before if you have been involved in fandom, but I doubt if you've ever read an explanation like the one I wish to present. I am by no means a psychiatrist or even a social scientist. I am a mathematician and a fan. However, I can read and think for myself and flatter myself that my high IQ indicates high intelligence. Whatever, this piece is not being written to win friends or influence people. I hope to bust some bubbles, especially those of the know-it-all fans and writers who have laughed and scorned fandom for more years than I can remember. Fandom serves a useful and important function in the world. Sometimes, oftentimes, I wonder if science fiction can say as much.

I will attempt to make no defining statement on the amount of involvement that makes a fan. Some people devote their body and soul to fannish activities. Others suffice with reading a few fanzines and writing a few letters now and then. Still others do even less. I am concerned that by fandom I mean those people whose interest in science fiction is more than just reading the material. By fans, I am speaking of those active in some sort of fannish activity. The actual activity is unimportant. I am concerned only with the reason for involvement.

That reason has been the topic of numerous articles, written from both sides of the fence, defended and damned by fan and pro. On one side we are told "It's only a hobby," and on the other side we are told, with a completely different meaning, "It is only a hobby." We are told by anti-fans that the people involved in fandom are looking for a crutch so that they can avoid being involved in life. We are also told that if fans weren't so busy writing letters and articles and stories perhaps they would adjust better to the world. On the other hand, we also hear that fandom is the only way fans can meet other people with similar interests and tastes. We are informed that they like what they are doing and that is what is important. Etc., etc., etc. The truth? It is a combination of everything.

In his book, Beyond Freedom and Dignity, Skinner presents a strong argument for the science of behaviorism. The author argues that man is a product of his influences and environment (the two are almost exactly the same). Skinner believes that neither freedom or dignity exist and talking about such concepts is both harmless and dangerous. Emotions are not some inner thing that causes us to act, but an

actual part of the action. Skinner develops the concept that the notion of responsibility is a myth. It has always been much easier to blame an individual for not having the inner strength to do something than realize that such a person is nothing more than a product of conditioned behavior. Skinner does not advocate forgiving everyone for every mistake. Instead, he wants a realization of the importance of behavior in governing actions and an effort made to make people behave differently. How does this tie in with fandom?

In essence, it proclaims that fannish activities are no more right or no more wrong than any other type of activity. Like any other sort of action, involvement in fandom can be either reinforcing or non-reinforcing (substitute good and bad for those words if you prefer). To rant and rave as have certain authors recently that fandom is a refuge for childish purposes while avoiding real issues is meaningless. Man does not have some inner responsibility to the world. The actions of man are easily explained by behaviorism. Giving credit to some inner force is an old dream fostered by those who want to lend man an air of divinity. There is nothing wrong with activity in fandom. If such behavior leads to other dangerous behavior, then it is wrong. However, I have yet to hear of a fan going berserk because of some fannish work. The psychiatric definitions of healthy and good are slowly going under drastic changes. In behaviorism, such terms as mental health and good and evil are meaningless.

Still, though we say that fandom is not bad or harmful, is it actually good? Again, I have to say: yes, it is. Fandom is an extremely useful example of man's attempt to adjust to "Future Shock". While such an idea is not new to fannish circles, I do not believe it has ever been stated in exactly these terms. I am surprised at this because fandom is such an obvious example of such adjustment.

In his book, Future Shock, Alvin Toffler is concerned with the effect of accelerating technology on man's sanity. The author argues that the increasing rate of change is making it almost impossible for man to adjust to his changing environment. Along with Skinner's argument on the effect of environment on man's action, Toffler's theories present strong evidence that the increasing rate of violent action (by this I do not necessarily mean violence as much as strongly reactive change) is due to our technological society. Toffler points out that ours is a rootless and constantly changing society. There is little to hold on to with shoddy goods made to last only short times, throw-away packaging, constantly changing landscapes, changing scenes through moving (as in changing jobs or schools, etc.). Toffler offers no pat solution for the effects of future shock, the terrible effect that this constant change is having on man. Still, he does point out some ways that the shock can be minimized. Man can fight to retain his sanity (or in Skinner's belief, behave in a way that will lead to personally reinforcing behavior) in several ways. Fandom is a perfect example of several of those techniques.

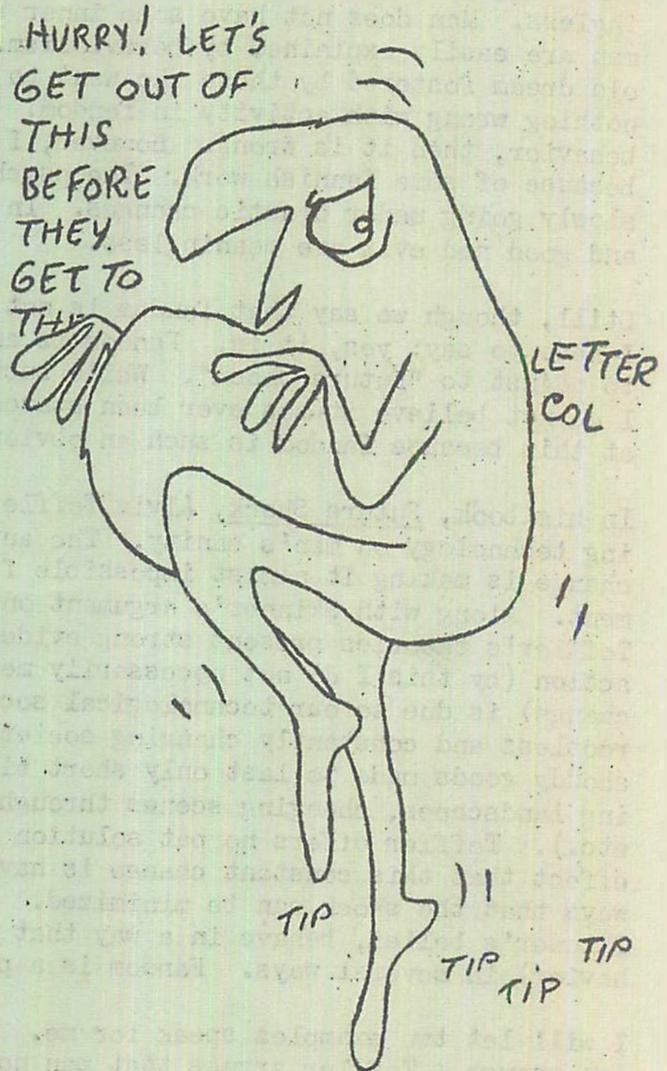
I will let two examples speak for me. There are others to be found but I think two are enough. Toffler argues that man no longer can adjust to the constant change in the world that has come about because of the acceleration of technology. Such a notion is not hard to see. Just listen to Walter Cronkite speaking about the space program and the landing on the moon. Most adults still have not been able to adjust their thoughts to the fact that man has travelled to another world. Lasers, masers, transistors, and the like have little meaning to most people. It takes most people years to adjust to new developments in science. Most individuals need the exposure to new ideas to occur over a long period of time because they cannot adjust quickly to these developments. However, look at the science-fct. fan. New ideas are constantly being thrown at him in books, letters, personal conversation. Moreover, he has had years to adjust his thinking to the marvels of the space age. I knew man was going to land on the moon ever since I was ten. Frankly, I was bored with the whole thing. Heinlein wrote it better.

Perhaps even more important is the fact that fandom provides a new type of roots for modern man. Toffler explains that our society is one without roots. Most people lose a good percentage of their friends through either their moving or the people themselves changing location, each year. There is not the same permanence of goods that there once was. Things are bought with the knowledge that they will not last for years, much less a lifetime. Buildings are torn down and new ones are constantly being put up. Little is permanent. Except fandom.

When I moved from New Jersey to Chicago I had a new circle of friends awaiting me here. All I had to do was make a few phone calls to local fans. Most of my friends were not left behind anyway. They are people I have never met in person and their location is unimportant. I write to them, and they are as near as a mailbox. Roots? I know that my car is only going to last a few years. I probably will move somewhere else in a year or two so my home is not permanent. Still, I take my roots with me. A huge collection of science fiction magazines are my permanent roots. A possession of which I am proud and on which I can always fall back on. Fans can never be cut off from society by their environment because they take their society with them wherever they go. Alvin Toffler would approve of fandom. In many ways, throughout his book, he advocates it for everyone.

In no way have I gone into any great depth on this topic. I just don't have the time to do more than just outline my thoughts on the subject. I have enough faith that fandom itself will do the rest. Skinner's book is worth reading. Toffler's is a must. Whatever, at least consider what I have said. Perhaps, just perhaps, you may be willing to concede that fandom is a way of Life.

—Robert Weinberg.



McGillahee's Brat by Ray Bradbury; (F&SF, January 1972), comprising 9 pages, with cover art by Ron Walotsky.

Copyright date on this story is 1970, and the blurb tells us it was originally in a publication distributed only on airlines.

How Bradbury must love Ireland! This is another moving tale of events and happenings in Dublin when "a writer" (ah! Ray himself!) returns after a fifteen year absence to again discover an old beggar woman grieving with babe wrapped in filthy rags. He's about to take pity on these pitiful creatures when he sees the babe, and then he freaks.

This is the masterful Bradbury in a similar casting to some of his odd adventures for WEIRD TALES. Highly recommended.

Nice Trees Don't by B. Mebane; (FANTASTIC, April 1972), comprising 3 pages.

(Is this Banks Mebane from fandom??) A vignette of wish-fulfillment in which a young girl overcomes her sexual fears. The debut story by this author has power, nicely constructed prose, and it moves.

Note of Interest: Well it seems I was a little premature in my predictions about GALAXY and IF magazines folding. I'm happy I was wrong. As it turned out, no magazine outlet in Bloomington (we have three) carried the March GALAXY with the first installment to Asimov's The Gods Themselves. (Uhhugh, frustrating frustrating frustrating!) Now I'll have to send the publishers some bread for that first installment. The only other time this has happened to me in Bloomington was when the March 1971 AMAZING failed to appear: I finally had to have my mother in Missouri send it.

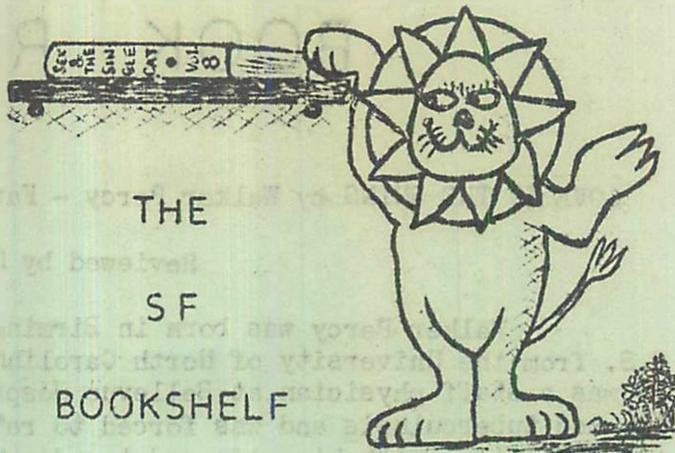
Pater Familias by Barry N. Malzberg and Kris Neville; (F&SF, March 1972), comprising 4 pages.

Odd yarn about a time device that enables sons and daughters to bring back their dead parents for a short while. Then all the "resurrected" parents kill themselves....

Everyone knows Malzberg writes strange stories, and everyone knows Neville does really odd yarns too...and I'm wondering just what it was that brought these two men together to write such an oddball story; sounds like something a couple of writers would dream up at a sf convention!

Yet Another Note of Interest: Maybe it's my old age setting with the sun, my jaded eye, or fragrant memories of youthful magazine-reading-days, or even a headache coming on, but it seems to me that THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION isn't as "personal" a sf rag as it used to be say in... '58.... F&SF never was a PLANET STORIES or STARTLING STORIES (and you better praise the Lord it wasn't!), but one senses their hibrow trip as an ego trip these days. The only really major improvement I can find in the past few years is the author special series (or is that Special Author series?). Does any other reader get this feeling, or am I weird all by myself? Why, it wasn't until the December 1958 issue that I read my first Fritz Leiber with a little chiller called Little Old Miss Macbeth; and I fondly recall those Richard Matheson stories. Or is it that I secretly pine for my sweet & golden youth and lower taxes? F&SF seems to have flown some emotional coop (or undergone some emotional coup?); it seems so dry.

Oh my Ghod, when ever are they going to revive WONDER STORIES?



BOOK REVIEWS

LOVE IN THE RUINS by Walker Percy - Farrar, Straus, Giroux - 403pp. - \$7.95.

Reviewed by PAUL WALKER

Walker Percy was born in Birmingham, Alabama in 1916. He received his B.S. from the University of North Carolina and an M.D. from Columbia University. He was a staff physician at Bellevue Hospital, NYC, for some years before he contracted tuberculosis and was forced to retire from medicine. He settled in Covington, Louisiana with his wife and two daughters and began to write. His first novel, "The Moviegoer", appeared as a "sleeper" in 1962 but managed to attract enough support to win the National Book Award. His second novel (1966), "The Last Gentleman", won almost unanimous critical acclaim and like his latest work, "Love in the Ruins", was both a Book-of-the-Month Club selection and a resident on the Times best-seller list for some weeks.

Unlike his second novel, however, "Love in the Ruins" got mixed reviews. The critics were bewildered, if not downright suspicious: what was Percy trying to pull? Satire? Social criticism? Science-fiction? Were they to regard the book as a mere intellectual lark? A minor comic effort? Or was this a cleverly disguised southern conservative variety of social protest? And what were they to make of the numerous literary and theological allusions?

Their suspicion is understandable, for we are in the twilight of the "Jewish Vogue" in mainstream fiction: the era that burped Philip Roth and Saul Bellow, while simultaneously we are in the midst of a renaissance of the black arts of James Baldwin, Leroy Jones, & Co. Where does a southern Catholic novelist fit into things?

The answer is (or at least was at the time) nowhere.

Percy did not fit any convenient category: he is not a southern writer as we are accustomed to thinking of southern writers with their gothic horror-ridden families, such as Faulkner or Flannery O'Connor; yet he is very much of the South. He is not a social critic as we are accustomed to thinking of social critics, with their right-thinking Left-wing indignation afire, such as Norman Mailer or Gore Vidal; nor is he a social satirist such as Joseph Heller or Bruce Jay Friedman, yet he is both a social critic and a satirist of the first-rank. And although he is a convert to Catholicism, he is not a Catholic novelist in quite the same vein as Graham Greene or G.K. Chesterton, for Percy is no simple moralist, no mystic, nor is he ever a propagandist. If anything, as a novelist, he is a working theologian.

Catholicism, medicine, and the South are the three major ingredients in his novels which are heavily seasoned with his expertise in language (he is said to be at work on a book on semantics), comedy, and literature. Of language, he is most fond of irony; of comedy, he is most fond of fools who reveal the universal foolishness of man, although he is not above telling a joke or drawing a cartoon character; of literature, he is most fond of the allusion for the reasons that he is most fond of irony and comedy: his symbols and allusions are as ironic, and frequently as comic, as his situations are.

He is a brilliant writer without any sense of plot or pacing, who so packs his sentences with meaning that, as good as the book is, it is a bit ponderous in the reading. But his perceptions of human nature, the most "incidental" subjects in

the novel, are what make the book great; for they are universal perceptions applying to all men at all times, and speak, if you'll excuse the expression, to the soul. Percy is a deeply compassionate man, but without sentimentality, without pity or contempt, without idealism. His perceptions of man are stark without ever being gutsy as in Hemingway or grotesque as in Flannery O'Connor. He does not write lyrically of love and beauty or flatly of pain and death; rather he writes of them all with a sense of wonder and a terrible acceptance that only a physician could know.

If I've given you the impression that I liked "Love in the Ruins", then you are perceptive enough to enjoy the book as much as I did.

I would like to discuss some of the aspects of the book, but I should caution the gullible reader that my ignorance of all the literary and philosophical works and ideas that Percy alludes to is considerable, and my interpretations should not be taken too seriously. My intention is not to educate you, but to stimulate you to read the book itself and form your own opinions.

The title, "Love in the Ruins", states Percy's two great themes. Firstly, love: sensual, spiritual and self-love. Secondly, the ruins: the fall of man from grace, the dispersion of the United States into factional enclaves, the breakup of the Roman Catholic Church, and finally, the "ruins" of a single man's life, Percy's hero, Thomas More.

The key allusion in the book is to St. Thomas More, the 16th Century philosopher-diplomat-counselor-to-princes, who was beheaded by Henry VIII for his refusal to condone Henry's renunciation of Rome and his subsequent "Act of Supremacy" which declared the king the head of the newly founded Anglican Church. More's most important work is "Utopia", his conception of a perfect world based on the abolition of private property and class differences. J. Hexter, the author of a popular analysis of "Utopia" says of it: "The Utopian Discourse is based on a diagnosis of the ills of 16th Century Christendom; it ascribes those ills to sin and primarily to pride, and it prescribes remedies for that last most distasteful infection of man's soul designed to inhibit if not eradicate it."

Percy's novel is also a "diagnosis", but of 20th Century ills — in fact, the hero is a physician, an unsuccessful psychiatrist, who has invented a device he calls a "lapseometer" which measures the lapse, or fall, of man from grace — and like St. Thomas, Percy ascribes the ills of the world to sin, primarily to pride, and prescribes remedies to eradicate it.

Like St. Thomas, Percy's More lives in a time of "principalities and powers"; a time near the end of the world: for St. Thomas' Medieval world was coming to an end, beginning to emerge into a new world, just as More's is collapsing into ruins which will serve as the foundation of a newer, albeit no better, world (the novel is subtitled: *The Advent. of a Bad Catholic at a Time Near the End of the World*). And like St. Thomas, More, with his lapseometer, wishes it to heal the wounds of the human spirit, but debates with himself the wisdom of giving counsel to "princes" who are only interested in their own self-interest. Like St. Thomas, he gives counsel only to see it misused and misunderstood.

(The allusion has its irony as well, but I do not know enough of St. Thomas More's life to appreciate it.)

The second key metaphor is Faust, or More himself, and Mephistopheles, or Art Immelmann, a dubious representative of the Ford Foundation who offers More world recognition for his lapseometer. A secondary allusion is to Don Giovanni: Immelmann arrives on the scene during a thunder storm while More is listening to Mozart's opera. Both Faust and Don Giovanni trafficked with the Devil and More does himself;

both were proud men who fell from their delight in "earthly pleasures".

The central motive of the book, the anti-life force which brings down men and their worlds in ruins, is pride.

But to begin at the beginning: "The center did not hold." "There are Left states and Knothead (right-wing) states, Left towns and Knothead towns, but no center towns." "Principalities and powers are everywhere victorious. Wickedness flourishes in high places."

Homicidal black "Bantus" inhabit the swamps, armed and waiting to rise against the whites. The vines, Percy's symbol of encroaching decay, grow in the streets of Manhattan. The Roman Catholic Church has split into three factions, one of which, The American Catholic Church, has installed its own pope in Cicero, Ill.: "it emphasizes property rights and the integrity of neighborhoods, retained the Latin mass and plays The Star Spangled Banner at the elevation."

And the people themselves are afflicted: "Conservatives have begun to fall victim to unseasonable rages, delusions of conspiracies, high blood pressure, and large-bowel complaints.

"Liberals are more apt to contract sexual impotence, morning terror, and a feeling of abstraction of the self from itself."

So, too, does More: "It is my misfortune -- and blessing -- that I suffer from both liberal and conservative complaints, e.g., both morning terror and large-bowel disorders, excessive abstractions and unseasonable rages, alternating impotence and satyriasis. So that at one and the same time I have great sympathy for my patients and lead a fairly miserable life."

Besides which, More is an alcoholic; a cuckold whose wife ran off with a phony English guru; and a believer in Catholicism who no longer attends mass because he can no longer feel guilt for his sins.

"I believe in God and the whole business but I love women best, music and science next, whiskey next, God fourth, and my fellowman hardly at all. Generally I do as I please. A man, wrote John, who says he believes in God and does not keep his commandments is a liar. If John is right, then I am a liar. Nevertheless, I believe."

Thomas More is a paradoxical man: he is the Center that will not hold.

The human situation is itself paradoxical: Man, we are told, is the Center of God's creation, caught between Heaven and Hell, Good and Evil, the Spirit and the Flesh -- half-angel, half-beast, torn between the extremes of his nature, yet inescapably "human": bound to the realities, the needs of the flesh and the limitations of his brain -- exalted and tormented, created and destroyed by both.

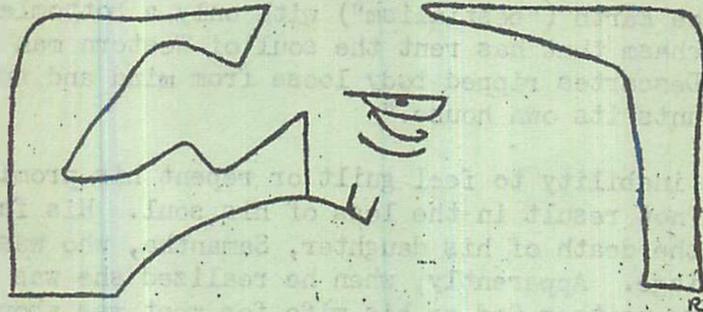
If man, if More, if you and I, are to remain sane -- to remain whole -- the Center must Hold. And if there is a Center, it is the human soul.

But what is the soul?

I think Percy defines it as the awareness of the consequences of our actions upon ourselves and others; not simply "conscience", but the core of our freedom, the source of our free will; for freedom is not license, but choice. Freedom is the will to become whom we choose to be, and the commitment to be whom we choose to become. Freedom is a deliberateness in being, and it defines us to ourselves: it tells us we are whom we think we are, that we are alive, and that we are human.

One facet of the soul is its capacity to feel guilt for the sins of its possessor, or in other words, to be aware of the adverse consequences of his actions on himself and on others; to register a violation of his freedom. Without a soul, a man cannot experience guilt for his sins, and therefore he cannot confess them (i.e. objectify them), and be forgiven for them (i.e. forget them). And if he cannot forget them, in Kierkegaard's words (as quoted by Percy): "...he will never amount to much." Indeed, if a man cannot forget, he cannot create, he cannot mature, but will be forever condemned to relive the past.

Percy's world of "Love in the Ruins" has lost its soul, and the consequences are effectively depicted in the interrogation of Father Smith, the local priest, who rose to deliver his sermon one Sunday and found he could not speak at all. Smith is confined in a mental ward of the medical center and questioned by the resident psychiatrist, More's friend, Max.



He tells Max that he believes "the principalities and powers" ("the two hierarchies of Devils") have won; and that Death has prevailed over life.

"Ah (says Max), you mean the wars and the crime and violence and so on?"

"Not only that. I mean the living, too."

"The living? Do you mean the living are dead?"

"Yes."

"How can that be, Father? How can the living be dead?"

"I mean their souls, of course."

Max asks him what he means, and Father Smith goes on to say: "I am surrounded by the corpses of souls. We live in a city of the dead."

"Are the devils here, too, Father?" asks Max.

"Yes. But you fellows are safer than most."

"How is that, Father?"

"Because you don't know any better."

Earlier in the book, More speaks to the same psychiatrist of his own nervous breakdown and attempted suicide. He tells Max that while he does not regard his extra-marital affairs as unnatural, he does regard them as sinful. Max asks him if he thinks it is sinful, then why does he do it? And More replies: "because it is a great pleasure," and Max retorts that if More feels it is sinful, then guilt feelings must follow, so how can it be a great pleasure?

More responds: "No, they don't follow."

"Then what worries you, if you don't feel guilty?"

"That's what worries me: not feeling guilty."

If he felt guilty he could confess his sins and forget them, but as he does not feel guilty or have any intention of making amends, he cannot be forgiven for them. And Max asks: "What does this mean, operationally speaking?"

"It means you don't have life in you," More answers.

The night he attempted suicide he became morbidly depressed: "It was Christmas Eve and there I was watching Perry Como."

Without a soul, life is a hollow, abstract thing. Without a soul, there is no Center to hold: More despairs, the world attempts suicide. Without a soul, man is torn between the two extremes of his nature, the spirit and the flesh, between an abstraction of Self from itself (what Percy calls "angelism") and a mindless habitation of the Earth ("bestialism") with only a bottomless chasm between them: "...the dread chasm that has rent the soul of Western man ever since the famous philosopher Descartes ripped body loose from mind and turned the very soul into a ghost that haunts its own house."

But More's inability to feel guilt or repent his promiscuousness -- i.e. sin in itself -- did not result in the loss of his soul. His fall from grace dates back to just before the death of his daughter, Samantha, who was the Center of his life and of his marriage. Apparently, when he realized she was going to die, he found he could forgive neither God or his wife for what was about to happen, so he left the church and refused communion. At the time the novel takes place, he still cannot forgive either one of them until the very end, five years after that fateful Fourth of July.

If the answer to the question of More's inability to feel guilt seems clear enough, there is still the question of his "satyriasis": aside from giving him "great pleasure", what essential need does his promiscuousness fulfill?

And I think a clue is supplied in Percy's second novel, "The Last Gentleman". Toward the end of that wonderful book, the hero, a youthful version of More, is reading from the notebook of Percy's tormented, defrocked "high priest", Sutter, who is also a physician and capable of "diagnosing the ills of the 20th Century" (in fact, the hero and Sutter combined are almost More himself). Sutter writes of his own promiscuousness: "Lewdness = sole concrete metaphysic of laymen in age of science = sacrament of the disposed. Things, persons, relations emptied out, not by theory, but by lay reading of theory. There remains only relation of skin to skin and hand under dress."

And later, "Man who falls victim to transcendence as the spirit of abstraction, i.e. elevates self to posture over and against world which is pari passu demoted to immanence and seen as exemplar and specimen and coordinate, and who is not at the same time compensated by beauty of motion of method of science, has no choice but to seek entry into immanent world qua immanence" -- or by means of "skin to skin and hand under dress."

Both More and Sutter are victims of "transcendence" or "angelism", and both seek to sustain their contact with reality (or immanence) through sex.

Neither one of them finds it a satisfactory solution, and both of them suggest the only real answer is the Church.

Sutter says, speaking to his sister, who is a nun serving poverty-ridden blacks in the wilds of Louisiana, through his notebook: "I do not deny, Val, that a revival of your sacramental system is an alternative to lewdness (the only other

alternative is the forgetting of the old sacrament), for lewdness itself is a kind of sacrament (devilish, if you like). The difference is that my sacrament is operational and yours is not."

So More claims that going to church kept him "whole"; that it made him more free, not less, for the Church represents a tangible manifestation of the Center, a balance between transcendence and immanence.

But Catholicism ("the only the church" according to Lenny Bruce) is in ruins -- secularized, Protestantized; its doctrines serving the self-interests of its various congregations, such as the American Catholic Church which celebrates "Property Rights Sunday". Its principles, ideals and dogmas have ceased to be representative of the Center, but are those of its constituents: liberal where they are liberal, fascist where they are fascist. The Church Proper -- represented in the novel by the gentle Father Smith -- has been reduced to its own hollow, sentimental Hollywood image: Father Smith reminds More of Ricardo Montalban as he appeared in "The Singing Nun" -- sweet and shallow, mouthing empty recipes for salvation, himself overwhelmed by the soulessness of the world, driven mad by it, and now content merely to play-act his priestly part.

(Percy is aware of the reflective-prophetic nature of the media; the way they reflect our secret fantasy images of ourselves, be they Ricardo Montalban as the kindly priest or John Wayne as American Manhood; the way they portend our future. We become what we pretend to be: our fantasy selves, be they the Church as Ricardo Montalban, or America as John Wayne.)

In "The Last Gentleman", Sutter criticizes his sister, allegedly a saintly outcast in the wilderness tending the wretched of the earth, for her solicitation of money and aid from the local businessmen; for her persuading a notorious Ku Kluxer to donate a seven-Up machine: "The reason I am more religious than you and in fact the most religious person I know: because, like you, I turned my back on the bastards and went into the desert, but unlike you I didn't come sucking around them later."

In "sucking around them" for centuries, the Church has been sucked in. "The Bastards" have moved in and taken over under the guise of respectability which their alms-giving gave them.

But why not? Why should man expect more from the churches than he expects from himself?

The failure of the Church did not rend the spirit of man. It does not perpetuate it.

What does?

Pride.

And what is Pride?

Pride is the need for the affirmation of others: their acclaim, their approval and respect. Pride is a slap on the back, a "for he's a jolly good fellow!", a Guggenheim fellowship, a Ford Foundation grant; Pride is the Nobel Prize: a delegating of one's own "sense of sovereignty" to others.

Art Immelmann, Percy's Mephistopheles, offers More the Nobel in exchange for his soul, specifically for his lapseometer, that "caliper of the soul", and it is More's secret wish to achieve the admiration of his peers: he goes from one to another demonstrating and arguing the worth of the invention only to be ignored or

misunderstood, and despite all his suspicions he is taken in by Immelmann's flattery, seeing his device used to destroy the remnants of civilization.

Remember that the original St. Thomas More ascribed the ills of his world "to sin, and primarily to pride" which he regarded as the most dread sin of all, the prime motive behind the injustice of class-structured systems: so Percy's world is corrupt with pride: his concept of America's, if not Western Civilization's, "original sin" is that of slavery.

We, the Great White Fathers, the Chosen People of God, instructed to be Lord over the Earth and all upon it, could not resist being Lord over men as well; so we invaded Africa, enslaved the innocent under the guise of saving their souls, and debased them to the status of animals.

Ironically, today it is the black man who is the only viable symbol of Christianity in America, and we stand condemned as Devils before the reality of his condition. As Uru, Percy's black militant, tells More: "The way you chucks sold Victor on sweet Jesus and he out-Jesused you. You beat him with Jesus but you beat him so bad that in the end he out-Jesused you and made liars out of you and that was the one thing you couldn't stand. So Victor won after all."

But did he?

More asks Uru what he's going to do if he wins in his war against the whites, and Uru replies: "...Take what we need, destroy what we don't, and live in peace and brotherhood."

More says he doesn't think they can make it.

In fact, when the white world collapses, the black does take over, and More is refused membership in the local country club and medical society, but is admonished by his black liberal friend to be patient -- they are working on it -- it will take "time".

Being "human", whatever that means, is an inescapable fact of life, and "people are crazy" is the best Percy can say about it. It is not really a matter of good men or bad men, but simply of being "human", and four hundred years of persecution does not give the black man any edge over the white man in the matter of "humanity".

But More does find salvation (or at least acceptance) in the humble state he is reduced to in the black-run world. He no longer wants the Nobel or recognition of his peers, but simply to love his wife (Ellen, his former mistress), his children; to work and to read and to fish. "Poor as I am, I feel like God's spoiled child. I am Robinson Crusoe set down on the best possible island with a library, a laboratory, a lusty Presbyterian wife, a cozy tree house, an idea, and all the time in the world."

"Strange: I am older, yet there seems to be more time, time for watching and waiting and thinking and working. All a man needs is time and desire and the sense of his own sovereignty..."

Percy seems to be saying that the only cure for what ails you is to grow older, to learn to accept yourself, to acquire humility; for humility is a sense of one's own sovereignty; a repudiation of the need for the affirmation of others.

Well, I have about exhausted my notes, but barely scratched the novel itself. I have said nothing of Percy's rich comic view of life; demonstrated none of his originality and inventiveness; presented none of his most brilliant insights.

I will have to ask you to take my word that Walker Percy's "Love in the Ruins" is a novel of greatness, of and about our times, with so much more to say than Updike or Mailer are capable of. This is indeed an important book and \$7.95 is not too much to ask for it.

----Paul Walker.

JACK OF SHADOWS by Roger Zelazny - Walker - 207pp. - \$5.95.

Reviewed by PAUL WALKER

If it were anyone but Zelazny, I would say "very nice", but Roger Zelazny's name means something very special to me as well as to the rest of the field. A Zelazny story or novel is something to be anticipated and discussed. And considered on that level, "Jack of Shadows" is a terrible disappointment.

It is set on an unnamed world, half of which lives in the light, and is ruled by the laws of science and civilization as we know them; and the other half lives in darkness and is ruled by white and black magic. The hero is Jack, a thief of the world of shadows who in chapter one is sentenced to decapitation, only to return to life again to seek vengeance against the men who condemned him.

I do not want to say more about the plot except that it is long and complicated, filled with incident and action, bizarre and human characters. Zelazny's narrative gift is here. The story moves swiftly, but to no apparent point.

Jack, himself, is not an interesting character. He is bold and brash, but hardly the leader of men or conqueror of worlds that Zelazny makes him. His cleverness and his courage are unimpressive, and by the last third of the novel his self-destructiveness becomes irritating.

The other characters, while they have all the trappings of fantasy heroines and villains, are not very interesting, either. Zelazny has not given them traits as colorful as their regalia, and his hero eludes them without style. Neither the characters nor the worlds of light and darkness have much flair. Zelazny describes very little, and he has chosen a flat narrative style rather than the exuberant poetry of "Creatures of Light and Darkness".

I suppose there is much to "Jack of Shadows" that I missed, but in my opinion it was a mistake both in conception and style, and I would not recommend it to Zelazny buffs.

However I would recommend the cover by Judith Loeser. Most effective.

----Paul Walker.

PECON 3

In Peoria at the Hotel Pere Marquette, July 7 - 8 - 9.

\$3.00 in advance; \$4.00 at the door.

Guest of Honor is Philip J. Farmer

All details available from: DON BLYLY - 825 W. Russell - Peoria, Ill. 61606. U.S.A.

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(Don Blyly can also furnish you with the great VAUGHN BODE - JACK GAUGHAN "Cartoon War" which has been/is being reproduced, complete, from the last issue of ODD. Price: 50¢. Supply will be strictly limited.)

Reviewed by Randy Powell

Harlan spent quite a lot of time bitching about how hard it is to collaborate with someone on just a short story, but I feel that not one of these stories needs an apology. No, not even the non-collaboration with Robt. Bloch, "A Toy for Juliette - Prowler at the Edge of the World," where Harlan's story (guess which one) is a spin-off of an idea he suggested to Bob.

Partners is a much better book than The Beast that Shouted Love at the Heart of the World, even though I usually prefer a book of short stories by one author. The various co-conspirators added their own pacing -- a relief from Harlan's machine-gun style which tends to wear one out.

One of the best things comes just after the half-way mark (and a good thing too, the story it follows is the Hensley collab., "Rodney Parish for Hire" about a gradeschool assassin). There, for non-fandom fans and those of you who weren't at St. Louiscon, is the Rotsler/ELLISON thing, "The Kong Papers" -- Rotsler fanart!

All in all, this is a fine book, and Messrs. Bloch, Bova, Budrys, Davidson, Delaney, Hensley, Laumer, Rotsler, Sheckley, Silverberg, Slesar, Sturgeon, Van Vogt, Zelazny, and Ellison deserve thanks.

Highly recommended.

-----Randy Powell.

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H.P.L.: A Tribute to Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937).

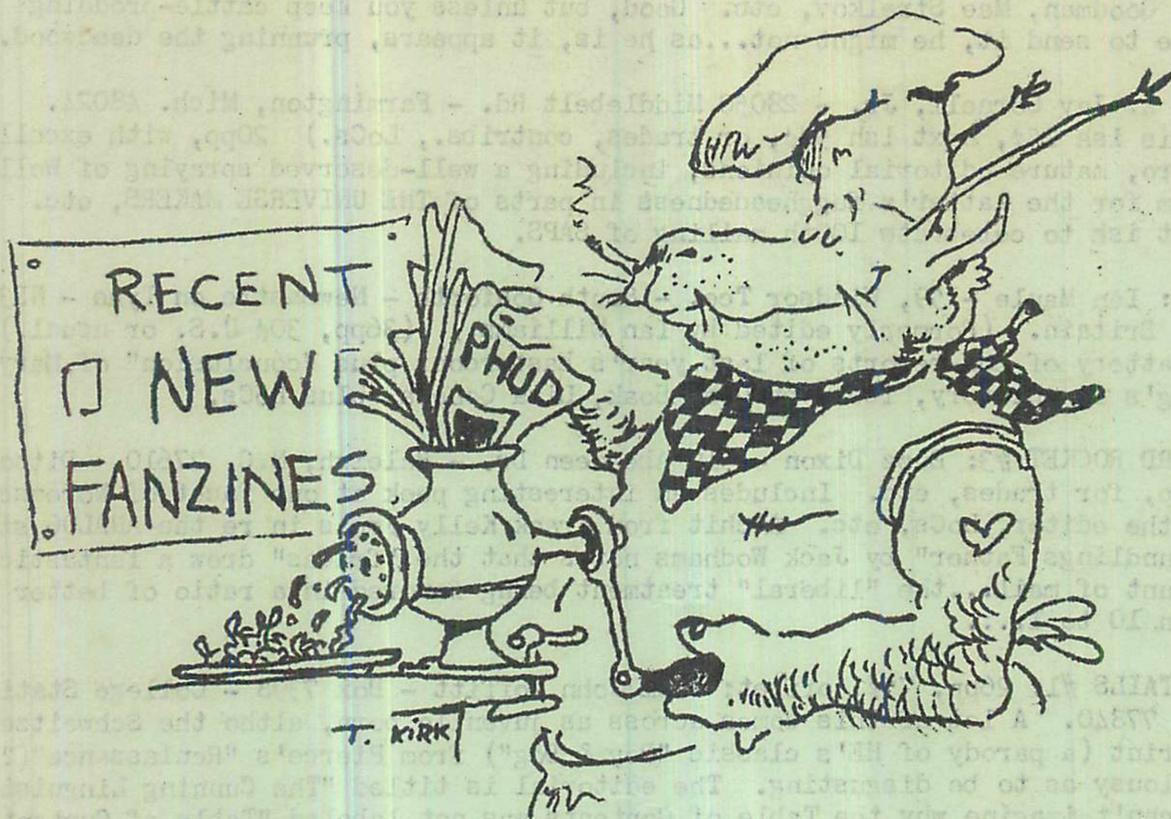
\$3.00 from Meade & Penny Frierson - P.O.Box 9032, Crestline Hts. - Birmingham, Ala. 35213.

Containing 144 pages in 8½" x 11¼" size, slick paper, elaborately illustrated, this volume is well worth its price. The range of material is wide, with Robert Bloch's "The Lovecraft Mythos" heading a parade of articles about Lovecraft, his work and life. Roger Bryant is present with "Stalking the Elusive Necronomicon"; Fritz Leiber has "A Few Short Comments on the Writings of HPL"; George T. Wetzel is present with both "Biographic Notes" and "The Cthulhu Mythos: A Study"; Bill Wallace notes "HPL on Night Gallery"; (that is just a sampling). Fiction is also profuse. There is just enough poetry of the proper sort to please connoisseurs.

The artwork includes a gallery of full-page presentations by such as Tim Kirk, Dany Frolich, Steve Fabian and Herb Arnold. Addicts of the Mythos can feast on illustrations of stories of Lovecraftiana, sometimes with two artists depicting the same scene; thus the front cover is by Robert Kline, the back cover by Herb Arnold, with both showing the same view: "The Haunter of the Dark." Terrific! Another duo is by Steve Fabian & Herb Arnold; side by side, on pages 78 and 79, they have visualized an enrapturing scene from "The Rats in the Walls." But that is not the sum of the full-pagers. Of the treasure-chest of smaller illos, the scope is incredible, with some directly illustrating accompanying text. Tim Kirk, for instance, has sketches of HPL's Providence.

If you don't yet have this fanbook, get it -- for Cthulhu's sake!

-----Ed Connor.



TITLE #1, 2: (10pp, 12pp, 4/\$1.00) from Donn Brazier - 1455 Fawnvalley Drive - St. Louis, Mo. 63131. Good material, exciting concept, very well done, & if you don't move fast you may very well be sorry you missed the early issues. A fannish approach to serconism or vice versa? You be the judge; write now & be pleasantly surprised.

SIRRUISH #9: (24pp, 50¢ or 2/\$1.00) from Railee Bothman - 1300 West Adams - Kirkwood, Mo. 63122. Dormant for almost 3 years, this zine is reborn. The staff includes Joe Butler, Leigh Couch, Donn Brazier, and Jon & Genie Jaffe. Certainly worth trading, buying, contributing to, etc., whatever pleases you. Chances are you won't be disappointed.

COWBOY ANGEL #1, from Dan Carroll - 407 College Ave. - Columbia, Mo. 65201. Nicely done personalzine by a self-admitted unambitious & greedy (for ego-boo, etc.) fan. He has almost convinced me that the second ish, if any, will be a long time in coming, but maybe the other Columbia fans will keep prodding him. No price on this but you can get it in the other ways.

THE TURNING WORM #1: (John Piggott - 17 Monmouth Road - Oxford OX1 4 TD, Gr. Britain.) For trades, etc., 4pp. Issued in "an attempt to get things done." The editor attempts to put spurs to dormant British fanzine editors & to increase the quality of the material being written.

THE PENULTIMATE BLIMP #1: (Ron L. Clarke - 78 Redgrave Road - Normanhurst, NSW 2076 - Australia.) Limited circulation planned for future issues -- to be available for LoCs. Thisish mostly written by Ron, featuring "The Australian Fanzine Explosion," with a piece by Shayne McCormack as an added bonus. No set publishing schedule; it may be issued sporadically, especially as Ron has been threatening to warp into gafia. (Also received after a record $4\frac{1}{2}$ months on the way was Ron & Shayne's WOMBAT #3, but it has been reviewed so widely here and abroad you should know all about it by now. Incidentally, they tell me that all copies are gone....)

AFAN 3: (Dave Hulvey - address p. 53.) Contains several excellent pieces by Dan Goodman, Mae Strelkov, etc. Good, but unless you keep cattle-prodding Dave to send it, he might not...as he is, it appears, pruning the deadwood.

PAPAYA 4: Jay Cornell, Jr. - 28050 Middlebelt Rd. - Farmington, Mich. 48024. (This ish 25¢, next ish 50¢, or trades, contribs., LoCs.) 20pp, with excellent repro, mature editorial opinions, including a well-deserved spraying of Wollheim for the latter's fuggheadedness in parts of THE UNIVERSE MAKERS, etc. Next ish to celebrate 100th mailing of SAPS.

MAYA 3: Ian Maule - 59, Windsor Tce. - South Gosforth - Newcastle on Tyne - NE3 1YL - Gr. Britain. (Formerly edited by Ian Williams.) (36pp, 30¢ U.S. or usual.) A battery of con-reports of last year's Eastercon, plus "conclusion" of Mary Legg's fan-history, items by Gray Boak, Lisa Conesa, plus LoCs.

BACKYARD ROCKET #3: Buzz Dixon - 519 Aberdeen Dr. - Raleigh, N.C. 27610. Ditto, 11pp, for trades, etc. Includes an interesting peek at one facet of Noreascon by the editor, LoCs, etc. A chit from Frank Kelly Freas in re the ANALOG story, "Foundlings Father" by Jack Wodhams notes that the "fracas" drew a fantastic amount of mail...the "liberal" treatment being favored in a ratio of better than 10 to 1....

WEIRD TAILS #1: 26pp, 75¢, offset; from John Moffitt - Box 7398 - College Station, TX. 77840. A lot of this comes across as juvenile porn, altho the Schweitzer reprint (a parody of HE's classic "Boy & Dog") from Pierce's "Reniassance"(?) is so lousy as to be disgusting. The editorial is titled "The Cunning Linguist." (I can't imagine why the Table of Contents was not labeled "Table of Cuntents.") You get the idea.

The editor would be well advised to not be so obvious. Best thing in the issue, by the way, is a letter from Dick Geis explaining why he can't contribute.

* * * * *

T R I - C L A V E in Johnson City, Tennessee — JUNE 9 - 10 - 11, 1972.

It will be at the Broadway Motel on U.S. 23. GUEST of HONOR: KEITH LAUMER.

Master of Ceremonies: andy offutt; in attendance will be Frank Kelly Freas. Memberships are \$3.00. Information may be procured from LEN COLLINS - Route #4, Box 148 - CHURCH HILL, TENN. 37642. If the info you desire concerns hotel or public carrier data, contact: H. Riggs Johnson - 1303 Woodside Drive - Johnson City, Tenn. 37601. The gentlemen named are co-chairmen of the event. An interesting and easy-going schedule has been announced.

EDITORIAL NOTES

To answer several queries: Most copies of #12 had an old crud-sheet placed over the cover illo to help absorb any excess ink that might still have had a tendency to rub off. (No, I can't tell you what the texts referred to, as sheets were taken at random from a large supply.)////

A number of witty readers sent in "book titles" to compliment McBarsoom's list. Most, frankly, were exactly what one might expect — so I won't list any of them. As for McBarsoom, he's been demoted to 3rd Ass't Book Reviewer and may be used again — when he gets through the stack of "discipline" pbs and leather-lovers' 'zines he's now on. //// I've been looking over a tear-sheet from "The Guardian" (English newspaper) of April 7, where, over the headline (brace yourselves for it), "FI IN THE SCI," a John Windsor expounds for one full, large page on "the international literature of today: Shakespeare in a space helmet." The story has remarkably few sore spots, giving a very thorough picture of SF today — particularly in Britain, of course. I'm tempted to pirate it & reprint all in MT, perhaps ish after next. A lot of you ought to find it very engrossing. Does anyone want to encourage such a reprinting? ////////////////

EDITORIAL NOTES

Over the course of the last year or so I've made it known to various people that I favored a schism of the Hugo award in the fan artist category so that "cartoonist" would be a separate consideration. Existence of such a goal, I propounded, would undoubtedly bring about a considerable increase in the excellence of the work submitted by established cartoonists, besides luring other talent to the fanzine medium.

In my chit in a recent Outworlds, however, I wasn't too clear in my comments concerning William Rotsler. Perhaps it sounded too much like I consider him to be a "cartoonist" only.

Nothing could be further from the truth. I've had the opportunity to study Rotsler's work (who hasn't?) and my feeling is that he can do just about anything in the creative arts line -- if he puts his mind to it.

His artwork is as excellent as that of anyone who has been awarded a Hugo in past years. You have only to examine his work in this issue. In quality of all material produced I think that only Tim Kirk has matched him. (Grant Canfield seems to be approaching this point.)

Consequently, I must vote Wm. Rotsler for Hugo this year, knowing that he is the best.

*

Stop yourself if you've heard this one: The Loch Ness "Monster" April Fool's Day joke perpetrated by a zoo employee actually fooled me for almost a day. As I entered the back of the house I heard the TV but paid no attention. Suddenly the last sentence of the news program being given by one of the better-known network reporters penetrated the shell of whatever I was thinking at the time. Evidently a dead body had been found at Loch Ness or somewhere which had been "identified" as Nessie; I was able to deduce that much. So after a period of consoling myself that, after all, there had to be a whole family of Nessies if there'd been one, I snatched next evening's paper, found the story (alerted by the headline, "Misfired Joke Touches Off Loch Ness Monster Search", which was itself a twisting of facts) and learned that the carcass of a deceased elephant seal -- a frozen specimen recently brought from the Falklands -- had been dumped into Loch Ness.

The guilty man, Shields, with seven others from the Flamingo Park Zoo of Scarborough, Scotland, had formed a group which had been cooperating with the Loch Ness Phenomena Bureau (see past issues of MT) in the search for proof of Nessie's existence. People spotted the seal's body in the Loch and alerted the team, which recovered the body, carefully wrapped it and loaded it onto a truck -- and were nabbed in a police alert. Shields, having had his moment of glory -- maybe he was just getting revenge, since April 1 is his birthday -- confessed.

*

Since I did get into mentioning the Hugo awards above, and since the time of decision is rapidly approaching, I fed all the available data into my computer and came up with the following:

Novel: "To Your Scattered Bodies Go" (Philip Jose Farmer)
Novella: "Queen of Air & Darkness" (Poul Anderson)
Short: "Sky" (Lafferty)
Dramatic: "L. A. 2017"

Magazine: Analog

Pro. Artist: Frank Kelly Freas

Fanzine: ENERCUMEN

and Fan Writer: Bob Vardeman.

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COL

TINA HENSEL

(Being a LoC addressed to Mike Glycer)....

Dear Unreconstructed Sercon Writer:

A very heavy article disguised as a flippant bit of fluff. Let us consider premise number one: Predicting the future is an aspect of Science Fiction inseparably united to the genre. It ain't S.F., if'n it don't predict something. It might be fantasy, but I seriously doubt it.

Speaking as one who has put a fair amount of time into analyzing the various literary forms and even tried her hand at writing (I even sold), I have evolved my own interpretation of the Purpose of Science Fiction. It is communication. And communication is an aspect of the ego trip.

I am mortally certain that the first words spoken by Ugh the Caveman were something on the order of "Hey, look at me. I just slaughtered that hunk of meat." I am also sure that the reply went "Shut up, you egotistical crud. Look at me."

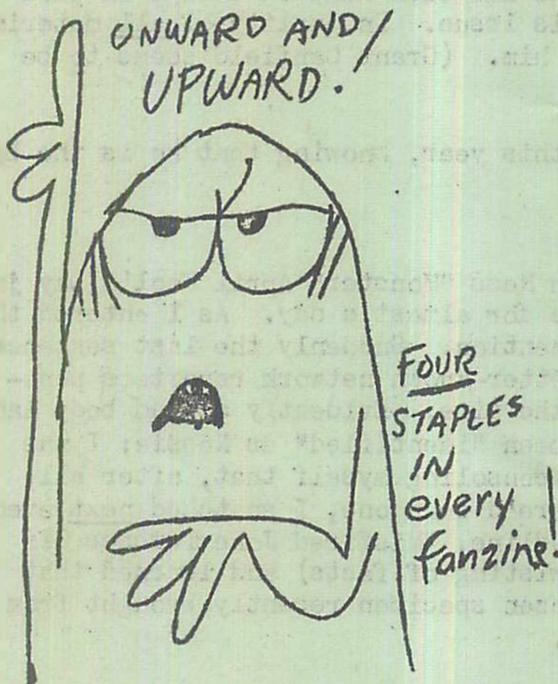
Ego has become a dirty word, since people have been using it as an insult ever since Freud. Egotism is neither noble nor ignoble. It is a human trait. And as such, worthy of study and consideration.

The desire to communicate is basic: we need it. If we are unable to communicate, we become disassociated from other human animals and are viewed as insane by our fellow men. Consider the early life of Helen Keller, if you doubt or disagree.

All four of the Purposes of S.F. mentioned in your article are valid, if all are considered as aspects of writer-reader communication. I'd like to take them in order and expand my thesis (also nitpick).

(1) The writer postulates a future development, in order to illustrate some aspect of character. At least, he does, if he is a competent craftsman. The purpose of the story is not to prepare the reader for the future. Of course, if you read a lot of S.F., so many possible developments will have been presented to you, you will probably be fairly open minded and therefore, capable of adapting to almost any future.

(2) The Science in S.F. stories is not sufficient to do any more than carry you through small talk at a cocktail party. Granted, to the mundanes you might present an illusion of a catholic education, but nobody else will swallow it. Besides, lots of mystery fans know good ways to murder in theory. How many actually get around to using the knowledge? About as many S.F.



fans utilize their esoteric knowledge concerning the composition of a neutron star. S.F. is a vehicle used by the writer for reader identification.

(3) There are 3 prime rules in writing. They are: An exercise of skill, Making a point, and keeping your readership. If it isn't entertaining, it won't get read. Very few people are willing to plow their way through a story that is nothing but boring, didactic verbiage. If it doesn't have reader interest, it won't have readers.

(4) Right on. The purpose of S.F. and mainstream lit. is the same. Communication, if you accept my premise.

Prediction is a tool used by the writer. Any speculative fictioneer wants to make a point. He has already learned, one way or another, that it is vitally necessary to have a rational background or base for his readers. They have to be able to relate. It is easiest for the writer to deal with a culture known to him. You lose internal consistency, if you haven't carefully plotted your culture. Since most of us aren't the Compleat Anthropologist, we use a base culture we are familiar with, in all its ramifications. Extrapolating is easier than inventing.

The old line "If you keep this up, you'll go to hell in a handbasket." is not particularly entertaining, or even interesting. Only a masochist can make a reader identification to that. Therefore, the writer sugarcoats with "What would happen if? This is the way I see it." and carries on from there; hopefully with a readership. If his sugarcoating isn't good enough, he'll lose his followers. And like the great gods of yesteryear (Dagda, Sheemy Weemit and James Joyce) disappear.

Every piece of writing, whether it be serious, dirty limericks scrawled on a bathroom wall, or LoC, is an attempt on the writer's part to communicate his view of reality. Enduring literature succeeds, be it Passion Play, fable, Hamlet, mainstream fiction or myth. Please note: all enduring literature communicates imponderables, philosophic viewpoints and ethics as well as simple human action-reactions.

My God, I seem to have filled up several pages agreeing with you and nitpicking. Ah well, it wasn't wasted. At least, now you know that your entire readership doesn't want to lynch you, only most of them.

Thanks again for the interesting article. (Naturally it was interesting. I agreed with your point of view. Therefore, you successfully communicated with me. Therefore, EGOBOOST!) Thanks again.

JACKIE FRANKE

...Wolfenbarger really switched themes thisish didn't he? Can't comment on his remarks about Gaughan's IF covers, as I haven't seen 'em, but I will say that I personally think there's a great deal of difference between an illustrator and a cover artist. To denigrate Gaughan for poor covers when his illo work is far more than merely "satisfactory" is unfair. A cover has to capture the eye with no other means than its own existence. An illo supports and is supported by the story it is tied in with. I wouldn't choose not to read a story because the illos fail to "motivate excitement" but that fault could possibly have a bearing on whether I bought the magazine in the first place. This would be far more true of the non-fan of course. The cover is the thing, unfortunately, in the marketplace. As evidenced by the Dillon's experience. But covers are not the be-all-and-end-all of an illustrator. The "sold out" comment is hitting below the belt. Gaughan is making a living from his art, is IS a commercial artist. Judging him on the poet's level or as a hobbyist, is not appropriate. By the way, my selection for best artist would be a toss-up between the Dillons and Freas. The Dillons for their (for want of a better term) Gallery work, Kelly for being the most consistently good commercial artist. (I haven't seen any of his serious works, so he could possibly top both categories.) I lean towards Silverburg, Brunner and about 30% of Ellison in the writer category. I'm eliminating the Old Guard from this, as a list headed by Asimov, Bradbury et al isn't really saying much....

BUZZ DIXON

...The movie you and Hank Davis are trying to think of is UNKNOWN WORLD. Two pictures of the "Cyclotram" appeared in Forry Ackerman's SPACEMEN once.

Mike Mumper may like to know that besides CINEFANTASTIQUE there exist THE MONSTER TIMES (a bi-weekly semi-pro tabloid), PHOTON (an irregular high-class film fanzine), GORE CREATURES (a bi-annual film fanzine, very fannish), BLACK ORACLE (the smallest fanzine in exis-

tence), plus numerous other zines....

...I congratulate you and Mike Scott on the cover for issue 12. It is the best artist's rendition of "The War of the Worlds" that I have seen. I've seen about six or seven other illustrations of Wells' story, but they all looked like they had been designed by Victorian engineers. Scott's illo looked alien. It fitted Wells' description of the fighting machines but looked totally unworldly at the same time....

...Mike Glycer's article makes less and less sense everytime I read it. Whereas he is correct in saying that the main purpose of SF is not prediction, he is wrong when he says that it cannot function without it. What about novels like The Eye in the Sky, which deals with several "fantasy" worlds created by some neurotic peoples' ids, or The Stars My Destination, which is flatly impossible (I'm not saying that teleportation is impossible, period, but that Alfred Bester's theory just ain't gonna work), or A Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah, which deals with an alternate world theme? None of the above novels dealt with prediction.

If you will permit me to quote from Frederik Pohl's introduction to THE SECOND IF READER:

The thing to remember is that science fiction should not be judged by how accurately it portrays the future, but by how lucidly, and entertainingly, it describes for you the possible varieties of future that lie within our grasp.

The prediction of gadgets is a part of this, to be sure. But it is only the smallest part. What is more important in a real sense, and what is a lot more fun, is the detailed imagination of the skilled science-fiction writer at work, building a future universe for you - and setting it up next to a whole spectrum of other possible universes in the same issue, or anthology, or group of stories, so that you can choose among them the kind of future you like best.

...No two of their universes are compatible, to be sure. Fred Saberhagen's blindly malevolent Berserkers would make mincemeat out of Hal Clement's thoughtful

and resourceful interstellar survey party....

There is but one purpose of SF or mainstream or any type of literature: To Entertain. Or, to state it better, To Satisfy an Emotional Need. If one wants to laugh, one is more likely to be satisfied by reading The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight than Love Story (though I know a few individuals who found the latter hilarious)....

BOB STAHL

Nice cover you almost had. I can sympathize on printing screw-ups as have had several happen to me. The blue touch was nice tho. Was it printed or hand-done? (Hand -- in a diluted purple.)

...As for Bill Bliss and Shaver's oddities, Shaver had a rather lengthy article in George Proctor's Citadel not long ago, in the last issue to be exact, and George and Steve Utley showed me some of the stuff that accompanied the article. Interesting, but a touch too much of paranoia (America's socially acceptable mental disorder) for me to take too seriously. I particularly like Bill's attitude toward the whole thing -- just a touch of tongue-in-cheek....

ROJE GILBERT

...I like Perry Chapdelaine stories. I also have some salacious stories about Perry when I met him at London in 1970. Willis McNelly bought a case of Double Diamond, and we sat about helping him to kill it off, along with a few others, including a pissed MP. Do you recall, Perry? Admissions, and heart-searching flew thick and fast (we were all in the maudlin stage of inebriation).

John Alderson is wrong about population control. He believes figures he wants to believe. The world population is increasing at 2% p.a. fact. That rate was also accelerating. Can't tell about it now, until accurate Chinese census comes through. We have no natural limitations. I know rats eat their young and rabbits resorb fetuses at high density, but we don't. Man is poisoning his planet because he is trying to cope with too many members of his own race. Halve the population of the developed countries, and pollution, subject to certain controls, will disappear. Also, get rid of this idea that everyone suffers in a population explosion. Wrong. The people

in the underdeveloped countries will starve to death, and we in the developed countries won't. When the large majority of people, i.e. people in the less lucky nations, have starved, the total world population will be just right, and everyone will have a wonderful time. I don't care to see this happen. Birth control in underdeveloped nations will help them develop; and it must be done now. Nevertheless, I thank providence I was born an Englishman.

The next person who says "ecological balance" to me will get Darwin's "Origin of Species" banged down his throat. "Ecological balance" is a self-incompatible juxtaposition of words. Not balanced, but evolving. Try and walk forward by keeping your balance, and you'll fall arse over tit.

STEPHEN FRITTER

...Mike Glycer's was the most interesting article. As the reaction in the lettercol indicates, he has hit upon a sore spot. I'm glad he elucidated upon his position. As stated in the article his supposition is totally true. There is no way to refute him. The only thing I question is whether or not it's a somewhat wasted effort in semantics. The whole anti-"Prediction" argument has arisen mainly as a reaction against the way in which peripheral critics outside the SF field have tried to explain SF. It is also a reaction to the old-time arguments of Gernsback, etc. which many of these peripheral critics have picked up on. It's not surprising that outside critics use a long-dead and specious standard. Indeed, by using that standard they can dismiss 99% of modern SF writings....

ROGER WADDINGTON

...I see Kilgore Trout as still living till Kurt Vonnegut passes on; maybe the writer that Vonnegut saw himself as being, if he hadn't brought himself out of the hack circuit and into the ranks of Literature (I understand he's being taught in a college course, and three of his books are planned for film production later this year or early next...) or his jaundiced view of the great band of sf writers, condensed into one bile-filled drop...? But in common with most authors' creations, he ought to beware its coming to existence and taking on a life of its own; though I think an active Kilgore Trout would be quite an asset to SF!

...And where did you pick up that bit about Stonehenge being guarded by electronic geophones? I missed that; and so I suspect did Phil Farmer when he had his characters come in with plastic bikes! It provided the only irritation to what was otherwise a very good rehash. And did you know that Harry Harrison and Leon Stover are launching a book on this sacred edifice? *1*

Speaking of time-travellers, I've just been re-reading two humorous views, both leading off from the same situation, and both having approximately the same ending; and both printed in 1951, and I wonder if anyone knows who had the idea first? The two stories were Pawley's Peepholes by John Wyndham (from Science Fantasy) and The Tourist Trade by Bob Tucker (from Worlds Beyond); any comments?

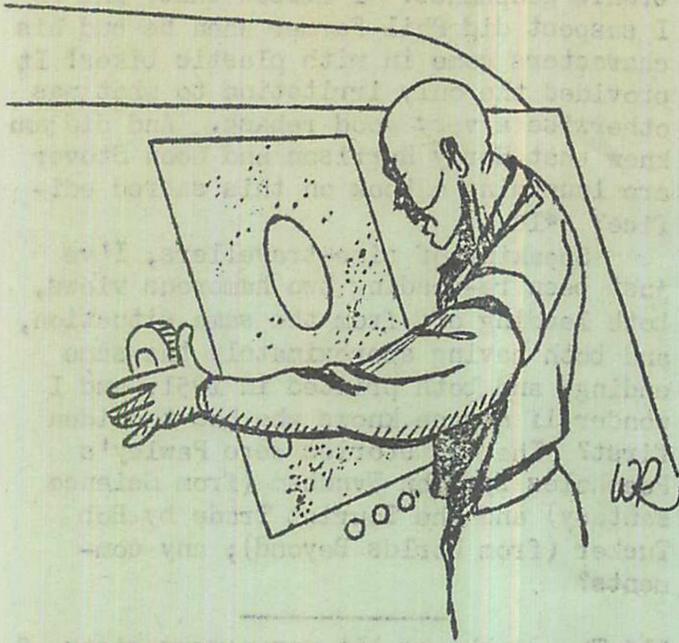
1 The geophones bit was a news-story of fairly recent vintage, postdating Phil's creation. The Harrison-Stover book is eagerly awaited.

TERRY JEEVES

...I thoroughly enjoyed Cy Chauvin's piece on abortion -- nicely and logically constructed. However, I also thoroughly disagree with him as I firmly support abortion. I cannot summon a completely logical argument for it -- but then life is more than logic -- were it not, it would not only be Spock-like and cold, but also without its rich pageant of idiotic fights against odds which despite logic -- actually succeed -- Man couldn't fly, an iron ship wouldn't float, atomic energy, electricity -- and a thousand other things were at one time, against logic! I suppose a vegetarian shouldn't eat eggs as they hatch to become chicks. A foetus is different from a human being in one point at least. Until it severs and exists alone, it is a sort of symbiote or even parasite of its mother. Other unwanted parasites are cut out, why not the foetus? The life-support analogy of oxygen-tent etc is fallacious though. These were imposed by external forces -- and can still be removed if desired -- which gives us euthanasia -- with which I am still in favour. Nevertheless, a good article.

...Tastes differ, which I suppose is why I so dislike the Analog "Foundlings Father" praised by Bill Wolfenbarger. This was about the first Analog tale

I gave up in the middle as utter rubbish..



RICK SNEARY

...Good Rotsler rock cover.. I wish he was writing in FAPA still, and explain why he is onto rocks now.. Maybe other sensitives understand, but I'm too pragmatic (as well as opininated and pompous) to get it.. But I like.

The Farmer article is halarious, and a beutifull example of that kind of article..building the whole thing up out of a few references and facts.. It is at the same time full of interesting remarks and views.. The last thing I know of by Farmer in a fanzine was ten years ago, and I've never seen anything in this vain.. How ever you got it, you are to be congratulated..and it inhances my admeration for Farmer as a writer too.. While I've admired his earily SF work, I've never read anything that wasn't serious (I've skipped the sex books, but as a rule that kind has less humour than New Wave stories).. I would question the remarks about the fear of Doberman pinschers — if we can take parts of the article seriously.. A real fear of one kind of dog, seems to me, more likely to result from an extended period of fear and intimidadation by the same dog, rather than one brief, if horrowing experence.. I grew up being afraid of the neighbors Chow-Chow, and the only kind of dog I'm still leary of — though only a fool would fool around with a strange Pincher. Farmer mentions evadence that Trout was not always cynical and hostile.. I think it is possable to appear cynical and paranoid, do to a life of buffets by the Fates, but still believe

there is hope and good in the world.. At least for others.. Trout must be a dreamer..so his dreams suggest a belief in something, at least different..

Cy Chauvin seems on a par with Michael Glycer in expounding pointless arguments as though they were the last word on the subject.. While I am not out campaigning for pro-abortion laws, I certainly don't see that the points he makes, make any difference. I have personally and quietly been in favor of reasonable forms of euthanasia for over 20 years, so I don't really find whether a fetus is alive or not, very important to the argument. Life itself is not as important as the nature and condition of that life.. We, in our Society, take life, even human life, all the time.. I see no point in argueing a right to end another's life -- be it man, pig, babe or fetus. The argument can only be, when, and under what conditions. To me the "human" life is made imporent by intelegence and self awareness.. The fetus and the vegetable catatonic have no "life", and no awareness. If their chance for future "life" is judged small, I believe it better that what life they do have be ended..

...Hank Davis's long answer to Glycer's is good.. I would make only one addition to his "But #2".. SF authors do not always try to be successful forecast the futures...but warn against what might be.. 1984 has been highly successful, and has had some effect in staveing off the very future it predicted..

...I thought the Kirk illo on the fanzine review colomn was exceeding good. I like his beasties..but the subject is apt too, as turning whole fanzines into little bits, is what most reviews are.. I would suggest you keep using this. I know no one uses the same picture heading over and over, except Boggs, but it is almost as good as a picture of a castle.. The reviews themselves are even briefer than Haverings, and almost as bland..

...I can not agree with Mark Mumper, who thinks that "professional writers" who write for a market, rather as his personal inspiration directs, "smacks not of professionalism but of prostitution." This is an example of the old snobery of the Artist over the Craftsman. To be a good craftsman requires more skill and ability than to be a second-rate artist, and I think this is what Pohl had in mind. Certainly any number of good writers, especially in the SF field, learned their

skill by writing conventional stories for the market.. By his own report, Bob Silverberg is a case in point. Writing like mad for years, on anything the market would buy, so that now he can write with real artistry. And, as Bradbury always says, the way to learn to write, is to write... and how better than write what will sell? A writer who writes from inspiration only, but for a market that does not exist, maybe scratching a mental itch, but isn't doing more than the poor artist who dabs on canvas pictures that no one else wants.

It was a surprise to see words by Ben Indick again...you do have an strange ability to dig old fans out of the woodwork.. He is quite right too, in that it is hard to remain interested, or take seriously the same kind of blaterings we were reading before some of these writers were born. I wonder what Tucker must feel -- having seen it from almost the first.

I would agree with Mae Strelkov that it is possible to become friends with those who attack you...particularly if the attack is based on miss-understanding. I've become quite good friends with a couple of fans who started off taking swipes at me.. but that was fairly long ago when I was more loving and lovable.. Now I'm more the carping swiper myself..but the reasoning is the same.. But, there are some fans who eather think they can make a name for them selves by attacking as "wrong" anything they merely don't enjoy themselves; and a few misintrops, who are pleased with nothing anyone else does...and these are best avoided.

Regard the question about "is Fandom for Egoboo". In my opinion, while it is important, it is not the desideing reason. As anyone past 20 can know, one can get more egoboo, for less work, from any number of other activities.. Local club or civic groups always need workers, and with most fans inate ability they could take over a committee or the whole group in a couple years..and bask in the prase and back-biteing for ever after. If you are interested in keeping records the way I am, one can turn up as treasurer in alsorts of groups, and hear ones name mentioned before applouding multatues several times a month. That kind of ego-boo undoubtedly has draw off a part of our number.. But, for most of us, it is the quality as well as the quenity, that is important. In my own case, that means ego-boo from people I respect as equals or betters, with judgement and honisty.. There are half a dozen

BNF's too, who's favorable opinion I value more than a hundard of the average scratchers and drawers.. Ego-boo is really the currency of Fandom. We work, and we expect to get paid, but we do this rather than something else, because this kind of work appeals to us more. -- While Fandom is important for the friends one can make through it, I believe that what largely sets fans apart from mere readers of SF or other groups, is the personal drive to communicate his opinions and view to others. This is a surch for Ego-boo, of course, but in a way not followed by very many people.

...There are a number of people, now that I'm becomming active in things again, who I wonder about -- in the biographical sense.. It sure would be a wonderfull thing, if some one would bring out a new fannish Who's Who.. It might be as usefull (and a lot easyer to do) than a Fannycyclopidia III..

BEN P. INDICK

...Could've used FOUR times as much Matheson interview, dang it. I'm not a giant Matheson fan (Michael Hu is -- a San Franciscan working on a book on Matheson...).

Great Scott! Yeah, that's what Mike is -- his cover was of the very best yet! The two-color process (in spite of the leaks on the borders) was very good. Mike's linework is a delight to the eye; I don't know whether it was a Lovecraftian inspiration (which so often moves Mike) but to me the scene is a fine version of the Martians' arrival in HGWells' WOTW.

I just completed the excellent article on S. Lem, a name utterly unfamiliar to me. As an aside, I might add that without some summaries, as the author kindly supplied, one would be hopelessly lost! The first part, with a barrage of titles and no summaries at first seemed to me as tho the whole thing was a parody; however, when the author got down to cases, and told us of the nature of the actual works, the titles became immediacies. The article is a teaser, of course, for except for one title available in English, the others scarcely stand a chance of translation. ((I'm afraid we're due for a deluge of Lem books.)) One would at least like-to TRY them. The article itself has the typical plodding and stodgy gait one is accustomed to expect from Soviet writings. Kee-rist, everything

but EVERYTHING has to have a didactic purpose with them; cain't nuthin' just be written to PLEASE? Along with Capitalism, I suspect F-U-N will be NYET in the Communist paradise. I presume the translation is accurate, and, not to be unfair to a capable job, I guess ANY translation must lose out the idiosyncratic flavor of the original. So thankee to you and John Andrews for a worthwhile article.

Mike Glycer's article hits the spot too, and his three criteria at the end admirably define Science Fiction. Bronowski would do well to study them and then reconsider his demeaning attitude toward stf....

GENE WOLFE

...I remember the old Pain of Glass show when it was on radio. The part of Pain in those days, I believe, was taken by Tony Randall, while Naomi was Fifi d'Orsay; the sponsor was "Blue Coal" a coast-to-coast cafeteria chain, and my favorite episode concerned a ruined temple somewhere in Brooklyn (or was that Lovecraft?). I sent away two completely punched meal tickets for my Pain of Glass Secret Decoder, but the postman must have dropped it on the sidewalk -- it arrived broken. (I have since been told by Harlan Ellison (known to most of your readers, I dare say, as H l E l n) that this crack was the code, but I don't believe it.) *1*

/s/ "38 x 30"

1 I knew Dave Hulvey was talking sense in his LoC lastish, even tho I didn't con his subject-matter. But...you have me confused; the "Blue Coal" I remember was a brand of coal; it was a sponsor of "The Shadow" on radio for years....

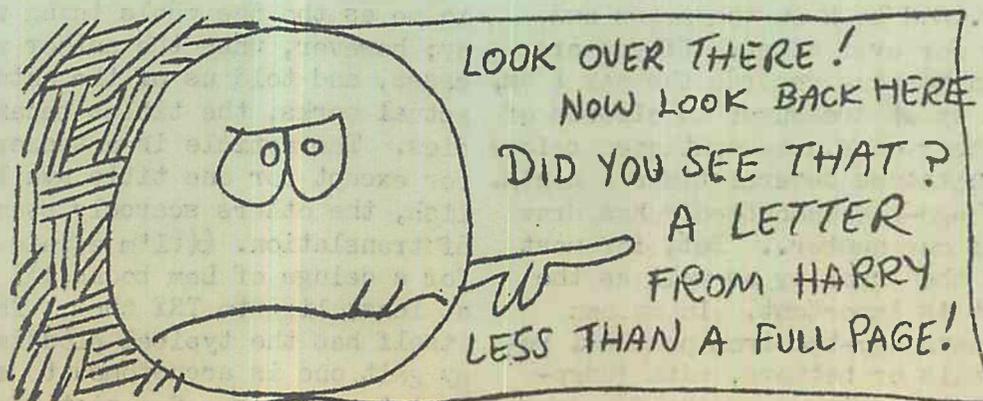
PAUL ANDERSON

...I think that part of the reason why Vonnegut tries to show Trout as being so unsuccessful in terms of money is that he

is a representative of the field that he would like to forget. Vonnegut appears to want to be known solely as a mainstream writer, rather than an ex SF writer who wrote some fairly good SF, and be able to denigrate the genre as a whole. From the references that I have read he never refers to Trout in anything that could be considered as flattering or even fair terms. The quote used is of course quite in keeping with Vonnegut's wish to brand the field as being of low quality literature so that the reader can infer that the books by the author are so much better just by being "mainline" rather than SF. Of course with Slaughterhouse 5 he has just swapped science fiction for the lesser sub-realities (qualities aside) of science fantasy as most certainly the philosophy given in that novel is hardly tenable to a person with any sort of an ego. Vonnegut can still write reasonably well but I am wondering what sort of a crack he will make at his old field through the medium of poor Kilgore Trout in his next treatise....

GEORGE HAY

...I would like to pick up on Mike Kring's query on Mark Geston's OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE DRAGON, which, incidentally, is due out in paperback here from SPHERE BOOKS. The neglect of this novel is extraordinary. However, I am also curious as to why Mike has not placed it in the context of the other to which it was a sequel; LORDS OF THE STARSHIP. (Correction; it is this latter that SPHERE are bringing out first here.) You see, what struck me at once on comparing the two books -- which follow on timewise in their own world-frame -- is that, whereas LOTS is a story that can only be interpreted as having a supernatural motivation, OOTMTD is entirely to be interpreted on a rational basis. I preferred the earlier book, but



both were really outstanding in plot, mood and writing. Further, I would have thought someone would have troubled to point out that LOTS was the first dynastic novel that sf has thrown up in a long and weary while. I wonder why we had to wait so long for this?

HARRY WARNER, JR.

...It's nice to see Richard Matheson using that word "luck" to refer to his movie experiences. It must be hard for a successful person in Hollywood to think that it wasn't his superb abilities that caused his high status. There must be at least a dozen other science fiction writers with roughly the same abilities as Matheson who haven't done at all well in Hollywood; I don't like the old conspiracy-plus-pull theory for why one person becomes famous and the other remains obscure out there, so luck must be part of the answer. Maybe it'll happen to some other people who deserve it.

Why should science fiction have a purpose? It's more apt to have a dozen purposes or fifty purposes, if it has any at all. This is a terribly complicated world and I'm always suspicious of any theory that gives one simple explanation for something in that world. It smacks too much of the primitive tribes who ascribe all deaths to the whim of the gods or to witchcraft. So when someone tells me that all humorous writings are that way because of their quality of incongruity (or because of an unexpected turn of events or because of the cruelty imposed upon someone or whatever the particular theory of humor he is advancing) I prefer to think that all those explanations may be equally valid for various examples of humor. Just so with science fiction: author A writes it with the purpose of making money because he's unable to sell any other type of fiction, the purpose of science fiction written by B is to get his pet beliefs and opinions before the public in fictional guise even though he could make much bigger sums by writing television scripts for soap operas, a third writer's science fiction has the purpose of creating the egoboo he'll get at worldcons and college lectures, and so on. Remember, science fiction can't have a purpose; it's people who may have either a conscious or subconscious purpose when they write stories which many of us define as science fiction.

...Just the other day I ran across a morsel of evidence about how Washington

Countians took the Welles Halloween broadcast seriously. It was in a history of one of the most isolated valleys in this county. The author included an anecdote about how there was only one radio in Blair Valley at the time, in the general store, and when the storekeeper heard the broadcast he telephoned all the healthy men, they pored over maps until they decided which pass the Martians would probably use if they came that way, and tried to ambush them there.

Vonnegut gives me the impression of a person who lacks H. L. Mencken's abilities but is attempting to adopt his methods. They consist of pretending superiority in intellect and ideals to most of the respected trades and projects in the nation, keeping a certain amount of flippancy so it's simple to retreat into the explanation that it was just a joke in case the position becomes indefensible, and insistence that he's really fond of the unimportant little people of the world. Mencken was like Campbell, creating wonderful reading even if you disagreed completely with him. When Vonnegut tries it, I find it more like the old journalistic trick of hunting someone who will give a bitter attack on the latest important news story in order to get a different angle.

MITCHELL HOLLANDER

...I found the article by Philip José Farmer on Kilgore Trout most interesting. The phrase "So it goes" in Slaughterhouse-Five does not, in my opinion, appear so often as to be irritating. Cy Chauvin brought up some good points against abortion. Hasn't anybody considered abstinence or birth control so that abortion won't be necessary?

Hank Davis is not alone, I also like Jeff Schalles' cartoons. (But then, I like anybody's cartoons.)

LARRY CARMODY

...I'll start with Philip José Farmer's bit about the illustrious Kilgore Trout as presented to us by Kurt Vonnegut. It was tremendous, it had me in stitches. I must find some of Trout's novels.

On SOME THOUGHTS ON ABORTION by Cy Chauvin: I agree with the column and would carry it a bit further. How much longer before some enterprising person high up decides that as long as abortion is reality, why not the elimination of elderly persons, retarded humans and any and all that deviate from the "norm". How many

have read Samuel R. Delany's THE BALLAD OF BETA-2 which deals with this idea, or Isaac Asimov's PEBBLE IN THE SKY in which the elderly are dispensed with once they reach 60 years in age? Once an inch is given, how long before the mile? *1*

1 I doubt if the elderly will ever be exterminated, officially (it will always be vastly more expedient, if man is pushed to the wall by pressure of his own numbers, to curtail breeding -- or to prohibit it).

But I feel that, today and for no little time past, a substantial number of the elderly, the hopelessly incapacitated, etc, is being exterminated, "more or less" deliberately, by a surprisingly large percentage of our medical practitioners. Perhaps most of it is done through shrugging neglect, or through risking one of a wide range of drugs (just on the chance it might pull the patient through), etc, etc. Not that there is any "organization" to it -- it's just the way things are.

ROSE M. HOGUE

...The Mike Scott -- War of the Worlds -- cover for M.T. 12 is really something else! Really did enjoy it -- the purple Martians are very well done too and I didn't mind the purplish stains on the edging either -- sort of added to the eeriness and individuality of each cover!

"The Four Futures of Stanislaw Lem" was a very fine article -- one of the best and most comprehensive I've seen on anything pertaining to literature in any fanzine! Also it makes me eager to read the only Lem work I've seen out in pb here -- Solaris and perhaps now when I read the book I'll have a much deeper insight into it and the man who wrote it. Thank you muchly for this fine article, John!

Paul Walker's Matheson interview and following review of Hell House was also most interesting. In fact I think Hell House will make a most excellent movie and hope that Matheson finds the \$s for the film! I've always been partial to Matheson's movie and tv thingys -- as Paul Walker said they really do "re-invent" things or are different.

ADVENTION 1 sounded like a really fan-nish gathering -- wish such a thing were possible here...no animosity or overly largeness. Guess some of the midwest regionals reach this sort of rapport but nothing out here can really compare. Any California based con is doomed to hugeness

before it really gets started even.. Am really looking forward to my first Western con this summer and hope that it is of a size whereby it can be intimate....

DAVE HULVEY

...Comrade, must we hear so much of this Stanislaw Lem? Rottensteiner and the intellectual idiocies in SFC concerning Marxism are quite enough, without more of it in MT. It was a pain to read an otherwise scholarly tract which sought to inject the Communist Line at every opportunity. I don't deny the validity of presenting articles in their socio-cultural context, but to include the whole "socialism" propaganda unedited was a bit much.

I was glad to see the Advention report by Shayne McCormack. It was too short, however, and to properly cover the events in anything approaching perfect lucidity to a foreigner would require more than three times the present length. It would've helped if Shayne had made note of the fact that Australia is in the real, live Southern Hemisphere where the seasons are opposite ours as a reminder so Jest Us Folks would've felt more at ease about the attendees being outside. And, I wonder, is 50 people large, small or medium for attendance figures? Here it would definitely be a small affair, but what of Australia? Just why is it a pity there will not be more like Advention? If so, what's to prevent another con like it? I find a lot of unanswered questions bothering me. A good con report shouldn't raise so many fundamental questions...*1*

1 Shayne has a larger con-tale for next-ish, re Melbourne con of first weekend of April. As for more Aussy cons of the variety she noted lastish, more are in the planning stages for Australia's future...

HELMUT PESCH

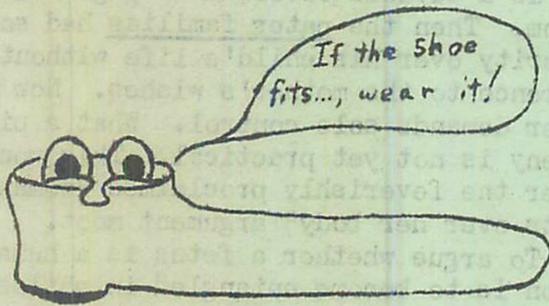
...The most remarkable in the last issue has been the article about Stanislaw Lem, of course. I must confess that I am not as familiar with the works of Lem as Franz Rottensteiner. I have read "The Invincible", a collection of short stories called "Test" and the first half of "Eden" And I can't help: he is interesting, he does know a lot about science and even a lot about the art of fiction, but in spite of this his novels are tedious. I cannot find a better word to describe it, I'm sorry. This is the fault of the whole "Wissenschaftliche Phantastik" ("scien-

tific fantastic fiction"), as it is called in the Deutsche Demokratische Republik, it lacks a certain sense of wonder, the gift of story-telling. The actors are sometimes characterized extremely well and profoundly, but they do not live, they just act.

Besides, even Lem, though he may be an unorthodox, has drunk too much of the message of the "new man of the cosmic age", whom the Russian sf proclaims, to be a writer of my taste. Beside his fantastic visions, beside his personal wishes and fears and his knowledge about the many many possibilities he still believes to a connection between advanced sciences and advanced ethics.

I would like to, but I can't. Though I mistrust the psychologists (if you don't know, what a psychologist is, imagine some kind of a modern version of the medieval inquisition!), I do not expect that the beast inside will be suppressed very soon.

About Lem again: read him, his works aren't genre fiction only but high literature, and you will learn something, I think, but to like him or not to like him is quite another question....



ANGUS TAYLOR

Is Cy Chauvin a "pretentious twit" when he sets himself up to pronounce on abortion? I think not. At least, certainly not a twit. As a professor of mine once noted in commenting on one of my essays, "In order to break the silence of the universe and the sleep of most men, some arrogance or pretension is warranted." What strikes me most about many of those who attack Cy's position, is the intolerance they display. Let he who is without bigotry cast the first stone.

Last year in Manitoba a very controversial, irascible, and populist cabinet minister named Joe Borowski resigned because he couldn't stomach the stand on abortion and birth control of that province's semi-socialist government -- and he made

his views loudly known to one and all. I remember a political meeting (of the Ontario branch of the party in question) during which one woman got very upset about Mr Borowski. ("That male bigot! What right does he have to tell me what to do with my body?" etc.) She also got upset with myself and another male when we said that we admired the fact that Borowski had stood up for his principles -- even though we both disagreed with those principles. "He's a bigot!" was all she could say. "After all, no one's going to force anyone to have an abortion, so what right does he have to force his views on others?"

The answer is, he has every right.*!# Indeed, it can even be argued that he has a duty. Such moral questions are not amenable to majority vote. (Ja, Herr Hitler, we will hold a national referendum on whether the Jews should be sent to the gas chambers. If a majority agree, then we will carry out the will of the people and democratically send the Jews to the democratic gas chambers. Anyone who still protests will obviously be a narrow-minded bigot trying to impose his selfish views on others, nicht wahr?) Is a Jew a person? Is a fetus a person? If one believes that killing a fetus at any stage of development is murder, then one is perfectly justified in demanding that abortion be kept illegal (other than to save the mother's life) **EVEN IF EVERY OTHER PERSON IN THE WORLD DISAGREES WITH YOU.** Of course, in such a case you might be advised to consider whether so many people could be wrong, but, if on reflection you remained convinced of the rightness of your position, then you should stick to it.

Jack Wodhams says, "For the most part, any child under two years of age cannot be considered an individual in the true sense of the word. Few people have memory back to their second birthday, and a babe of two or under might well be regarded as an 'it', on a par somewhereabouts with a dog, or any other domestic pet." It was one of Hitler's ministers who said (as closely as I recall): "We don't deny that the Jews are people. We just deny that they are decent people." Says Wodhams: "A child of this age has no wit for its rights, doesn't even know that it's here, and if it should get knocked off, it wouldn't even realize that it's been." Those persons of less than two years that I have met recently have impressed me as being lively, intelli-

gent individuals with distinct personalities, and great curiosity about the world around them. I suspect they are enjoying life at least as much as Mr Wodhams. How patently ridiculous it is for him to argue that a person is an object which one may destroy just because at some time in the future that person may not recall what he is thinking now! (Since at the age of ninety, when he is quite senile, Wodhams may not remember what he is thinking right now...where did I leave that gun, now?...) Such talk smacks of fascism, or at the very least of Social Darwinism.

It's all too easy to take an I'm-alright-Jack attitude and blithely ridicule persons who are deeply troubled by questions of conscience and morality. Just as it's easy for Australians with their low population and lily-white immigration laws to take a preaching, holier-than-thou attitude on population control. I don't agree with your views on abortion, Cy, and I'm certain that you're fighting a doomed battle against the tide of history, but I'm glad to see you making your stand. Personal integrity and a humane conscience are never out of date.

While we're on the general subject of imposing one's views on others, readers might be interested to know that A CLOCKWORK ORANGE has just been banned by the censorship board in Alberta (Canada's bible-belt) on account of all its sex and violence. I rather suspect the problem lies more with the sex than with the violence though. I've just seen THE GODFATHER, a movie whose violence makes Kubrick's film look like the proverbial Sunday School picnic. It has no "restricted" rating here in Toronto; indeed it offers half-price admissions to children under 13 years of age. Marlon Brando has said he sees the movie as an allegory of American capitalism, and while a perceptive (politically educated) viewer will agree, I doubt that most people will see this movie as much more than a super-duper gangster extravaganza. It's a sad comment on the state of our collective culture that sex and love are considered filthy, while murder and brutality are considered exciting, or even manly. (Sword and sorcery, anyone?)

...you might let Mike Kring know that I spent one-and-a-half pages reviewing Geston's two novels in the January 1972 STARLING, and that Donald Wollheim comments on OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE DRAGON in his book THE UNIVERSE MAKERS.

1 The way you've constructed this, it sounds like you're defending his "right" to force his views on others. I don't deny that he has the right to express his views, but I concede neither him or anyone else any "right" to force them on anyone. (I've felt for years that all participants in any discussion, argument, etc., should agree beforehand not to include the Nazis in analogizing. In most instances such a reference is utilized as a crutch, and it is, I think, dirty pool. Usually the intention is to place the opponent in the position of either having to back up within the confines of the real discussion /argument or of siding with certain Nazi practices. Tsk.)

SANDRA MIESEL

I have no intention of being drawn into a public (or private) debate on abortion. Anyone who attempts this will be ignored. But for the benefit of those who denied Cy Chauvin's competence to oppose abortion, I would like to state my agreement with him. Since when doesn't he have a stake in the outcome of this issue? A father is no less an unborn child's parent than its mother. What we seem to have here is a curious reversal of pagan Roman custom. Then the pater familias had sole authority over his child's life without reference to the mother's wishes. Now the mother demands sole control. What a pity exogeny is not yet practical. This would render the feverishly proclaimed "woman's rights over her body" argument moot.

To argue whether a fetus is a human person is to become entangled in philosophical imponderables -- like the impossibility of proving the existence of anything outside one's own person -- and irreconcilably different definitions of "human person". Surely the psychological criteria Gene Wolfe cites are meant to be applied on a species-wide basis, not individually. Otherwise severe brain injuries etc. could snuff out personhood.

But a fetus is indisputably a human organism, a separate human organism, and enjoys varying degrees of personality before the law. If society refuses to protect an unborn child the day before its birth, eventually it will refuse to protect that child the day after its birth as well. And the lives of the aged, handicapped, politically or socially "undesirable" will likewise be forfeit to the whim of those in power. If some readers prefer such a world, they're welcome to. I

happen to disagree.

BILL BLISS

Nice cover -- a little ink bleed doesn't spoil it.

Great article on Stanislaw Lem. Wonder how he would have written in a capitalist country or a monarchy.

Think I'll wait until Matheson's HELL HOUSE comes out in paperback to read it. Just about out of room in the back room anymore and pbs are smaller.

...Truly amazing how the serious subject of abortion has been treated in depth so very competently in MT. I didn't count the words, but it all should be close to pb length, and as a pb might sell well enough for MT to go slick with interior colour even and run to the size of THE WORM RUNNER'S DIGEST. Incidentally, everybody, how does abortion affect reincarnation? Does the spirit have to go hunting another body, or does it have to start at the bottom of the list and have to wait a few aeons? I don't believe in reincarnation any more than I disbelieve it, there isn't enough evidence to form a solid opinion....

MARK MUMPER

...The Russian writer has failed to communicate what it is that Lem has to offer (I don't think this is the fault of Andrews), his portrait being a rather obtuse, bland description of a singularly unexciting middle aged Polish writer. I haven't read any Lem, so I have no idea whether this is true or not, but judging from others' views of him, I believe Andreev has not done his job well. I get the impression Lem's themes and ideas are no more inspired than run-of-the-mill fifties American sf fare, but I know (at least, I hope) that this is not true, or there would not be this great amount of attention being devoted to him. What the article does not communicate to the reader is Lem's spiritual or non-verbal or subconscious power and creativity. In omitting this I think it has probably omitted everything the man writes for.

To comment on another angle of the Lem thing, his vision of a communistic future seems as unlikely (perhaps not quite as much) as a future ruled by capitalism/technocracy. Both political/social systems grew as a result of industrialization, one concentrating on the movers and the other on the workers. Both are predominately relevant to such a society governed by the production-scarcity ethic, and therefore

(if events transpire as I believe they will) both are doomed to oblivion in the fast approaching future. I believe capitalism especially has served its purpose (rather badly in the process, as is quite evident) and must move over to make room for a new ethic, an economy of abundance. Communism is fast approaching its own doom, as it is but another facet of the economy of scarcity. This is not to say we will cease to see the two systems in operation within, say, three decades, but of course systems do not cease to operate merely because their basic purpose is no longer successful or operative. I would venture to say that both are now, at this moment, dead, but that we shall probably see the dying efforts continue for some years. Neither the US or the USSR (China is a much different case as regards change) have the ability to alter their basic drives overnight. This is where a great deal of cultural and political anxiety will be concentrated in the years to come....

ED CAGLE

...The Rotsler drawings were as pointed and thoughtful as always, and also placed quite skillfully to augment the text in MT 12. And Robert Bloch is right when he says that we should let Rotsler know we appreciate his efforts and generosity. May Rotsler go on forever, in the manner he would most prefer.

Shayne McCormack's report on ADVENTION 1 makes me want to shout:

AUSTRALIA IN '75 !!!!!

...And don't forget the D.U.F.F. !
(Thanks for reminding us about the DOWN UNDER FAN FUND. Deadline for voting is May 31st.)c

ALJO SVOBODA

Don't you think giving your zine a halo is a bit presumptuous? Next thing we know, you'll be gluing on wings and teaching it to blow on a trumpet. Then, hundreds of copies of MOEBIUS TRIP will descend from the sky into the homes of Believers, and our locs will ascend back up to you, wherever you are. It should speed up the mail service, at least...Actually, the cover reminded me of nothing so much as it did of one of those Japanese horror movies, where the monsters invariably destroy Tokyo, probably because of the terrible restaurants there...I expected the entire Japanese Army (consisting of twenty men who look as though they've

been stuck on a desert island since WWII ended and four thousand assembly-line workers on their coffee break) to be off to one side, readying their plastic bazookas. I think it's because of those movies (which have been appearing in great numbers on the tube lately) that a large number of "Made in Japan" jokes have been making the circuits (it's considered scintillatingly witty at the school I attend to make the jokes in front of someone of Japanese origin and watch them wince....

CY CHAUVIN

Hhmm. Well, I guess I'd better react to all the comments on abortion. You are a bit correct in saying "that I was pulling people's legs" -- because there really isn't too firm a ground in science to argue for or against abortion. But I was wondering what sort of reaction I would get -- I've heard some pretty wild theories, both pro and con.

People should also realize that in that article I was arguing from empathy -- putting myself in the place of the fetus. Would I like to be aborted? No, I said. But let's say I was going to be born blind, crippled, or into a family that didn't want me? I don't know. Maybe I would. I can't really answer that question -- can anyone, Ed? Besides the fetus/person? (I have little sympathy for a large percentage of born humans, let alone the unborn, so don't ask me -- I couldn't render an impartial decision. Probably I'd opt for making abortion retroactive to, say, 1950 or so.)

Maybe what we should do is legalize suicide, and give the person a choice to either play their hand or pass, like in poker! (???)

Taking the mother's point of view now, I see that she's really up against the wall, too. I definitely feel that she should be able to have an abortion if her life is in danger and/or she's been raped, since this is simply a matter of self defense -- it's her life or the fetus's. In other instances, a woman may be forced to seek out a "butcher", since abortion isn't legal. (Except in New York, etc.) (I might add here that making abortion legal doesn't automatically make it right; the draft isn't really right, and that's legal, too..) (I disagree with you on both points. Slavery isn't right, either, but once a country has overrun its neighbor, it has the option of "legalizing" slavery therein, right?)

...I think Roger Bryant makes the most important point when he talks about "consciousness." There isn't, like he says, any way to prove that an adult has it, let alone a fetus in the womb. But then the question comes to my mind, where is the dividing point between the human and nonhuman? When does the fetus become a person? At what stage of development? And why?

If someone could answer these questions -- and I think they should be answered -- I would be very interested in it. I would love to be convinced one way or another -- like rich brown points out, males shouldn't really care one way or another, since they really don't have anything to gain....

MIKE GLYER

No disrespect meant, but the translated article on Lem sounded an awful lot like Farmer's essay on Trout; phrasing politely something that the writer really believes is inanity. Making a scholarly work out of something one wouldn't expect to have made scholarly.

Only in a couple sections, actually. But to an acculturated American some of those plots (Memoirs found in a Bathtub) seem as weird to me as Trout's did. Maybe a little more weird. I had often wondered, having seen Soviet characters vilified and ridiculed in the media for so long, what a Russian would think if he came over here and saw them. Sure, capitalism is put down in the USSR, but in the same ostentatious and insidious way? Well, if Memoirs is characteristic of the average Soviet author, perhaps I needn't have worried. The USSR is getting its own back.

However, whether Lem's writing is as deliberately revolutionary as the article's writer insists I would be tempted to question. He might be, but then again, his image may here be brushed up for the Soviet press.

I was interested to see, however, that Lem's view of sf's "purpose", the purpose towards which all the extrapolating seems to be put anyway, mainly agrees with the one I was attempting to put over. Whether I got mine over, trying to argue it into existence as I was rather than simply stating it, remains to be seen....

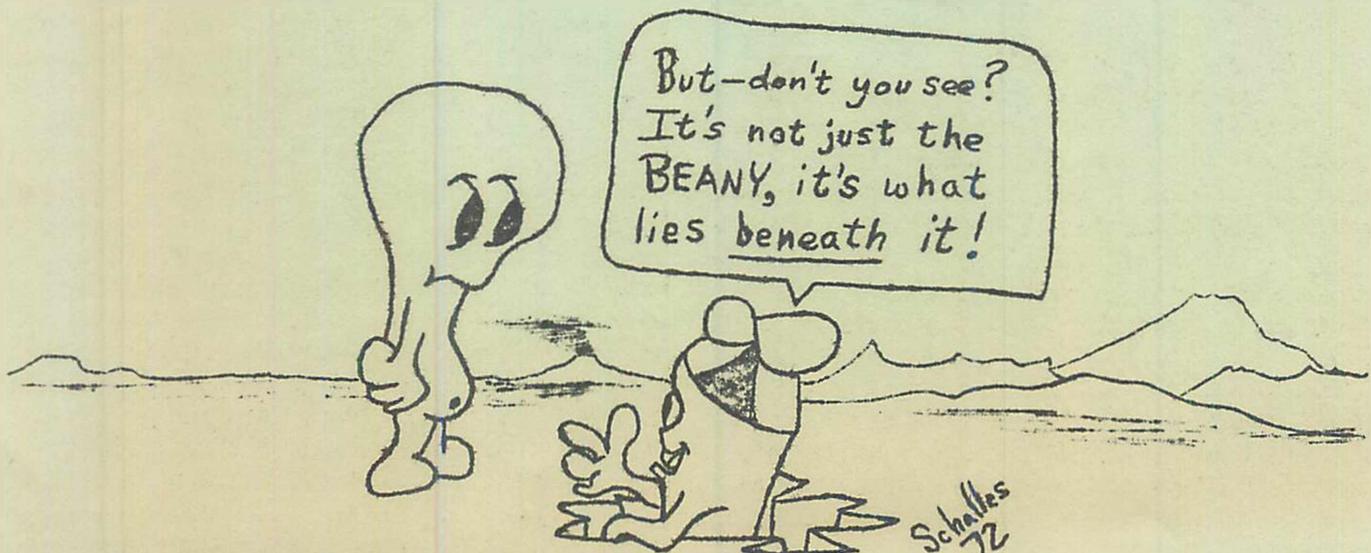
...If pressed for a definite name, I'd take Heinlein as the greatest writer of SF.

W.A.H.F.: Mae Strelkov, Robert Weinberg, Dennis Stocks, Grant Canfield, Brian Robinson, Ron L. Clarke, Perry Chapdelaine, etc.

Guess what? Now the reproduction in Moebius Trip of any part of the correspondence between Perry Chapdelaine and Mae Strelkov, including what I already have on hand, has been terminated; I've decided that its original purpose had already become obscure last issue.

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