NO
16

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Brag Dept: two poems "Standing on Blacktop" and "Excerpts from the Log" (both fantasy) in Texas Quarterly, XVI Autumn 1973 (U. of TX at Austin 78712, $1.50/issue); poem "Light Hope" in Identity, November 1974, Vol IX (Jewish Community Center 4330 S Cedar Lake Rd Mpls 55416, 50¢/issue); story "Lakewood Cemetery" in English edition of New Worlds 7, 1974 (American edition to come out sometime this year, probably as #6; Eleanor Arnason and a friend of hers, Jean Charlotte, also have stories in that issue of the anthology).

Wandering Stars (ed. Jack Dann), & other thoughts on Jewish and/or religious sf

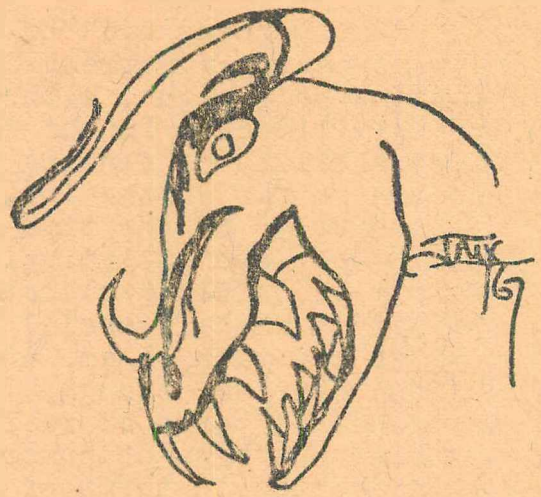
by Ruth Berman

Wandering Stars is a collection of Jewish sf stories (sort of -- about half are fantasy). It maybe doubles the number of Jewish sf stories. (And thanks, Gerry Wassenaar, for the loan of a copy -- I have this taboo against buying hardcover books while unemployed.)

The anthology does not, alas, contain Phyllis Gotlieb's "Son of the Morning," the story which set me off on a discussion of this same topic back in No 10 (yes, there are copies available if anyone wants them), and which is still my favorite of all Jewish sf stories, tied only by Avram Davidson's "The Golem." But the anthology does contain "The Golem." It also has a fantasy by Isaac Bashevis Singer ("Jachid and Jechidah"), whose work I discussed briefly in that article; Dave Hulan discussed Singer at more length in his "Reaction" in No 11. (Maybe I should finish up bibliographing this topic in No by saying that Horace L. Gold's letter pointing out the Jewish values of his "The Trouble With Water" was in No 14.) And the anthology has a couple stories mentioned in these assorted earlier No articles (& reader letters), Carol Carr's "Look, You Think You've Got Troubles," and Isaac Asimov's "Unto the Fourth Generation," and Gold's "The Trouble with Water." There are some other fantasies reprinted: Avram Davidson's "Goslin Day " and Bernard Malamud's "The Jewbird." Of the remaining stories, "Street of Dreams, Feet of Clay" by Robert Sheckley and "Gather Blue Roses" by Pamela Sargent, are reprints but new to me, and the rest seem to have been written for the anthology: "William Tenn's "On Venus, Have We Got a Rabbi," Robert Silverberg's "The Dybbuk of Mazel Tov IV," Geo. Alec Effinger's "Paradise Lost," and Harlan Ellison's "I'm Looking for Kadak."

Just about all of these stories are great fun to read -- well, four of the five fantasies (Davidson, Malamud, Singer, and Asimov), although touched by sardonic humor, are too somber to be called "fun," so I'll just call them good. The only story which doesn't seem to me to work at all is the one sombre-toned sf story, "Gather Blue Roses," which is a variation on the theme of the pain of being a telepath and responsive to everyone else's pain, a theme which here is supposed to tie in with the theme of Centuries of Jewish Suffering, and specifically with the experience of the telepath's mother as a prisoner in a concentration camp. But the comparison of the two themes seems forced. The heroine's awareness of other people's pain telepathically doesn't seem to add anything to what she already knows non-telepathically from her mother. Normally, a writer uses fantasy (or sf) as a symbol for experiences which cannot be adequately

described in realistic terms -- for instance, if the feeling of awe while looking at stars is too intense to get across by writing about looking at stars, you're likely to start writing stories about star travel. But in this case I suspect the experience is too big for the symbol -- telepathy isn't an adequate symbol for a Nazi concentration camp. Aside from this story, all the sf in the collection is humorous and charming.



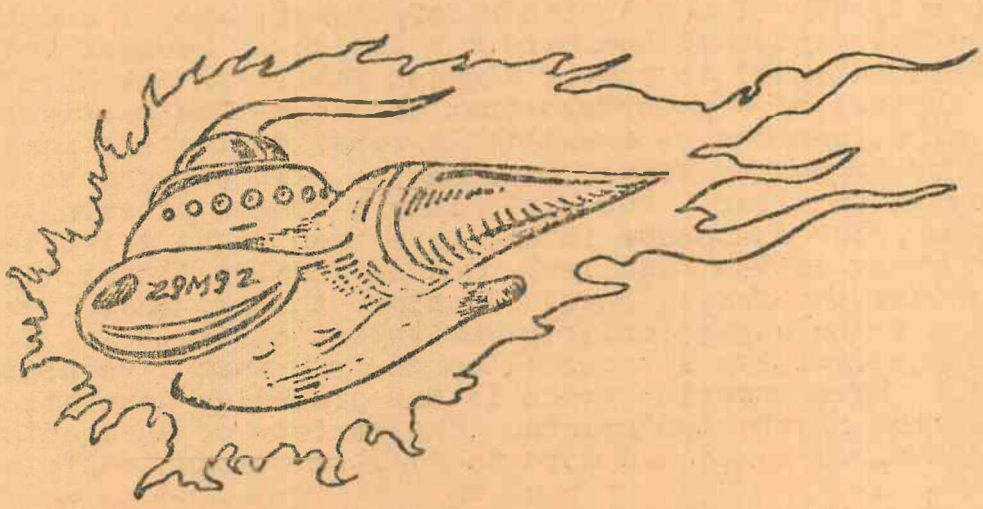
But, oddly enough, even though I enjoyed all the other stories, I don't think the anthology works as a whole.

One reason is obvious -- with nearly all the fantasies in one emotional tone, and nearly all the sf in one emotional tone, the thing gets monotonous. The humorous sf, especially, has a similarity of tone, being not only humor but nearly all farcical, slapstick humor.

But another reason... Mel Gilden's review in Locus pointed out that most of the stories involve Jews who talk "English with a mittle-European twist," and he complained that even if the average American Jew talks like that now (a dubious enough assumption), it's ridiculous to suppose that it will be so forever and ever. (Actually, the average American Jew doesn't talk with a mittle-European twist -- most Jews by now are natives and have no accent and only as much Yiddish as one picks up from watching tv -- or, for the more scholarly, from reading Malamud, Singer, et al. There is, indeed, among that large group of Jews living in New York a New York accent which has become identified with Judaism, but is native to the region. When I first read "The Trouble with Water," years ago, I completely missed the fact that the hero was Jewish -- because the language patterns intended to convey "Jewish family in New York" were more typical of New Yorkers than of Jews. The particular set-up of family tensions -- meek little papa, dominating mama, single child being pushed toward marriage --- is thought to be typical of Jewish families. Actually, it's a common pattern in all cultures, but I suppose it may have been found a little more often among Jewish families, because Judaism is a religion which emphasizes the family unit. I think, though, that it's probably ceasing to be a particularly Jewish set of traits -- I don't see it in the families I know, although from what I've heard it seems to have been in common in the preceding generation, the generation of the immigrants. The anxiety of succeeding in a strange world maybe has more to do with it than religion.)

But getting back to Mel Gilden's complaint of futuristic Jews speaking a current-day comedian's idea of Jewish speech.... I think he's right, although not entirely on the ground of verisimilitude. In the stories by Tenn, Carr, and Ellison, the impossibility of finding those history-bound conventions of speech so far in the future is precisely part of the joke. Unfortunately, by the time you get to Ellison at the back of the book -- or even Silverberg, midway through, and even including a fairly plausible explanation for why this particular group preserves archaic social patterns -- you are sick of the shtick (or at any rate, I am, and evidently Mel Gilden was). In two of the stories, though, I think the vocal game can fairly be attacked in terms of realism. In Effinger's and Sheckley's stories the type of humor is less farcical, and the background is presented in terms of a semi-plausible "if this goes on" speculation. The whole humor of "Street of Dreams" depends on the making plausible the idea that a computer programmed to take care of people would come out sounding just like the stereotype Jewish Mother -- but the similarity is not made plausible, it's simply given. In Effinger's story, the Yiddishkeit of the young woman struggling to preserve Jewish tradition is implausible -- in the terms given, she should be aping Hebrew, not Yiddish (in the same way and for the same reasons that present-day Israelis do). If there's something in her culture that makes her choose Yiddish as more valuable than Hebrew, then that something needs to be shown to the reader.

Gilden asked, "Is there no way to make a Jew different from his goyish counterparts without making him talk as if he's just gotten off the boat from Europe?" Story by story, it's an unfair question, but in terms of the anthology has a whole it's fair to ask why the stories depend so heavily on the device, and there's no easy answer, because it's the old question -- what is a Jew? Several of the stories take up that question, but from the insider's view -- "To a Jew, is ___ a Jew?" In those terms, there



is a sort of catch-22 to being Jewish which goes like this: Judaism is an ancient and beautiful cultural heritage, well worth preserving, whether you are religious or not. So if you are Jewish you should remain so; assimilation is a form of suicide. But the heart of Judaism, that without which the tricks of language and cooking habits and violin playing are meaningless, is the religion. So if you are Jewish you should be religious, whether you are religious or not.

Through this kind of reasoning, many people do actually talk themselves into believing a religion they don't believe. That's one answer to "What is a Jew?" The easiest answer is for those who are religious in the first place and not caught in the catch 22. But I suspect that the average American Jew is an unbelieving Jew -- and certainly the average Jewish sf writer is. For the non-believer, using Jewish beliefs is as much an exercise in alien characterization as using Christian ones. So, if you don't believe and can't force belief for the laudable purpose of making yourself different from everyone else -- then what, if anything, does make you different, and is it anything worth writing a story about?

Well, of course, Judaism can have the same kind of story values that Christianity does for a non-religious writer -- a symbol for transcendent experiences (even star travel may be too small a symbol for the beauty of the stars -- sometimes God makes a better symbol). Or it may be a symbol for historical continuity, the problems of being oneself yet keeping alive one's ancestors, the problem of being a "stranger in a strange land." But, curiously, neither of these will necessarily result in something identifiably Jewish. If it's the transcendtal quality that's wanted, Christian images may be more suitable than specifically Jewish ones, as more comprehensible to a majority of the audience, or images from an invented religion or one culturally distant may be even better. The theme of "Stranger in a strange land" is

one of the major themes of all sf, and you don't have to be Jewish to use it (cf. Heinlein).

And what does all this wind up leaving that's specifically Jewish and best symbolized by Judaism for a writer to work with, except such sociological accidents as the funny speech patterns? Well, there are more important sociological accidents. One characteristic of the Jew's traditional role of "outsider" has been the awareness of being an outsider, to be self-mocking because of being aware that one's self is not the "norm," so that the Jew winds up questioning his own normality and teaches others to question theirs, too. That's one type of artistic perception and obviously valuable. But by now it's become more a matter of cliche than real perception.

I think at this point it would be more valuable to go back to the other side of it -- to perceive oneself as ordinary and to make readers aware that this, too, is a type of the normal. But I don't know of any examples in sf.

It wouldn't be easy to do. Religious sf of any kind is not easy -- although the excellence of such books as Canticle for Leibowitz sometimes makes it seem as if it ought to be easy. (Or maybe just -- if it gets done at all, it must be good.) But consider the fascinating failure of the three stories in An Exaltation of Stars, edited by Terry Carr. It has three stories involving religious and transcendental experience in sf settings, by Robert Silverberg, Roger Zelazny, and Edgar Pangborn. It's an interesting idea, and all three attempts make interesting reading, but I don't think any of them quite work. In the Silverberg and Pangborn stories, the sf is irrelevant. Any guilt would do to make Silverberg's protagonist need the worship of "The Feast of St. Dionysius," not necessarily the guilt of being the only survivor of the first human exploration of Mars. "My Brother Leopold" is a Joan of Arc figure with Francis of Assissi's philosophy; he could be martyred in the Middle Ages as easily as in a future Dark Ages. (If we're supposed to draw any ironic conclusions from the fact that Joan's church martyred a warrior and Leopold's a pacifist, it's not clear in context.) In Zelazny's "Kjwall'kje'k'koothaill'kje'k," the sf/detective story is fascinating, but the transcendent experience which convinces the (sort of) murderer she must protect a particular dolphin's particular favorite spot and convinces the detective that she was right doesn't seem to me to come across, and I'm not even sure it's necessary to have such an experience to convince them that they should protect dolphins.

Then there's Strange Gods, ed. Roger Elwood, with an introduction by George Zebrowski arguing that "in all story lengths ((religious)) themes elicit strong reactions, often drawing the best work from a writer." Maybe, but often the worst work, too. I couldn't get through it, so can't review it properly. But the stories I read in it all seemed to me pretty dull, repeats of ideas done better in other stories.

Footnote: or, Jewry is in the Eye of the Beholder

Actually, I'm not being quite fair in my description of incidental traits It's not just a matter of cooking and talking. There are various ethical and philosophical attitudes which are said to be typical of Jews (I'm not sure they are typical, but the critics make out a plausible case): a belief in bettering an individual's life through sociological development instead of personal salvation (cf."Messianic Age" vs. "Christ"), an attitude which fits in with the usual assumptions of sf anyway; a reverence for learning (sometimes including a reverence for imagination and creativity -- sometimes not); a definition of manhood (aka menschlikeit) which stresses responsibility towards others, sensitivity, kindness, instead of machismo (despite the fact that the religion per se is typically male-chauvinist, as indeed most old religions are -- that's one of the problems with the Glories of an Ancient Heritage, there's so much worry about the baby that it gets awfully hard to throw out the bathwater; it's interesting to speculate as to whether the concept of menschlikeit grows out of the religious stress on the importance of the family or the quasi-feminine role of outsider, weak/clever/unreliable-but-necessary, inherent in living as an alien in strongly military medieval Christian societies).

These ethical emotions (if I can describe them so) make up a Way of Life (maybe) which can (maybe) be supported by non-religious Jews, thus avoiding the catch 22 of the seeming either/or alternative of assimilation or complete religiousness. But here again I seem to be getting back to the idea that really "Jewish" sf is probably not often recognizably "Jewish," but only "humane." Which isn't such an only, after all.

A FILLER FOR POUL ANDERSON

The Song of Hrolf Kraka, the Sea-King, by anon.
(Fraser's Magazine, XIX, 1839, p. 485)

Hark! the Storm-Friend of the deep
Wakes on old Heimdallar's steep,
Yelling out his mountain glee,
Like a soul in agony.
Rouse thee, then, my bark, to go
Through the night, and the billowy ocean snow;
Strong thy bones, and huge thy form,
Trampler of the howling storm--
Horse of Ocean!

Glorious is the eagle's eye!
He gazes afar o'er earth and sky!
He screams from the storm-cloud's misty womb!
Thine, my bark, is keener sight,
Broader wing, and longer flight;
Freer thou, my bark, to roam --
Ocean's thine, thy boundless home,
Tempest Eagle!

As a warrior in his might
Bears him in the wave of fight,
Quell the waves that round thee dash,
Round thy breast, with thundering crash:
Though their frown be black as night,
Though their foamy plume be bright,
Quell them--though their stroke be strong,
Though their shout be loud and long,
Warrior of Storms!

BERRY'S BAEDEKER (Cont.)
by John Berry

VENICE

There are many misconceptions written and spoken about Venice It is claimed that there is always a smell hanging around the place, that the water is always full of debris, that the inhabitants are notoriously mercenary, and that the place is commercialised beyond anything that is reasonable. The people who told me these things had never actually been to Venice, and I doubt very much whether the authors of the articles I'd read had been there, either. But when my wife and I left Cattolica at 6am Tuesday morning, 13th July 1971, I was very apprehensive about these things.

The luxury coach took four hours for the journey, and the driver only knew one way to progress, and that was with the accelerator flush into the floor of his cabin. Mari, our attractive blonde bilingual courier informed us of places of interest en route, and I was really thrilled when she announced that we had all "just crossed the Rubicon." This expression, as you know, is in common English usage denoting an irrevocable step; this is a reference to the position that Julius Caesar found himself in, in 49BC -- he was fighting for power, and his army was at Ravenna. He decided to "go for" Rome, and it was one of the most important decisions of his life. The thrust southwards took him across the River Rubicon, which, 2,000 years ago, was considerably wider than it is today, and he was successful in ultimately gaining power.

At about 10 am we reached the outskirts of Venice -- there are a considerable number of industrial sites to the south of Venice, but to reach the city itself a dual road/rail causeway runs across the shallow sea. Three extremely bad-tempered policemen were directing the converging stream of traffic with ostentatious waves of arms, blasts with piercing whistles and ferocious screams of rage, especially when motorists elected to go on roads which they wished to travel on, rather than roads selected for them by the traffic police. Our coach driver was given a route

which suited him, and he halted at the romantically named "Piazzale Roma."

Even from the commencement of the journey at 6 am it was certain that the weather was going to be magnificent, with nothing in the sky but the sun. But Mari, our courier, had brought an umbrella with her. Its use was soon explained. Although the Piazzale Roma was thronged with tourists and traffic, she held the umbrella above her head and shouted "Follow me," and the forty tourists from Cattolica dutifully followed the gesticulating umbrella until we found ourselves at Station 1 of the Venetian Bus Service, although the buses were passenger vessels, each probably holding 60 or 70 people.

You all know that Venice is an island, joined by a causeway to the mainland. The Grand Canal (Canal Grande in Italian) runs like a letter "S" through the island, and is much wider than the rest of the canals which intersect it at all angles. We travelled for over half an hour, completely traversing the island and eventually docking at Station 17 (Arsenale) on the Bacino San Marco into which the Grand Canal runs.

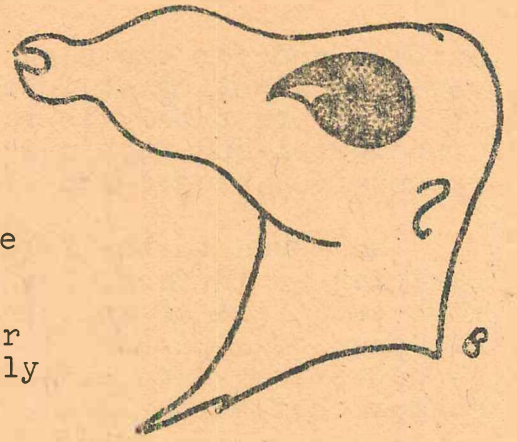
Several Venetian myths were exploded on this journey. Although the sun was intensely hot, there was not the slightest suggestion of an unpleasant odour. I did see odd scraps of refuse floating on the Grand Canal, such as orange crates and wrappers, but not the slightest degree as extensive as I had been led to believe. The Grand Canal was bustling with life -- many official passenger transports, such as ours, many splendid gondolas with the gondoliers sporting the traditional straw hats with scarlet hat bands...transport barges, motor boats, river transports of every description, all keeping to the right side of the canal. Many imposing buildings lined the banks, but quite a number of them showed obvious signs of disrepair....plaster had fallen off the walls in patches, and the brickwork showed up in relief underneath. Nevertheless, it was an unbelievable experience to take this strip through the centre of Venice. Our transport was crowded, and it was a simple matter to pick out the people who had seen it all before, and the wide-eyed tourists to whom it was a sight they would remember all their lives. I certainly shall, and took the opportunity whilst on the canal to take some 25 colour transparencies of the scenery en route, which I'm glad to report all turned out beautifully.

We followed the umbrella from Station 17 along a promenade named Riva cà di Dio, over a pretty bridge to the Schiavoni promenade, and here we ate a packed lunch thoughtfully packed by the hotel in Cattolica. The Schiavoni promenade was wide, our small tables were sheltered under blue parasols, and sweating bow-tied waiters produced glasses of lemon-soda at ridiculously expensive prices. The umbrella waved for attention once more, and we slavishly followed it over two small bridges to the Riva

promenade, over yet another bridge to the most famous place in Venice, the San Marco Basilica.

Mari led us through crowds of tourists to the steps outside the basilica. I looked round me. Facing the basilica was a huge square called the Piazza San Marco with high colonnaded buildings all round, and on my left a very tall four-sided tower. As I've said, the whole area was inundated with tourists, and I could tell by the loud voices, echoing above all the others, that many Americans were present, and in fact I consider they represented by far the biggest percentage of tourists in Venice, even though I never heard a single American accent in Cattolica. Our courier told us we were free until 5.30pm, when we were to meet outside the basilica, which gave us about four hours to examine Venice. She gave us a blue ticket, which she suggested we hand in at a hotel named thereon (which was near the basilica) and we would get one cup of tea and a cake for 550 lire (about 88¢) -- this being a generous discount because we were travelling via the particular travel agency. This seemed an excessive price for my wife and myself to pay for two teas and two cakes ($1.76), but we reasoned that there would be a price increase in Venice, because of the simple laws of supply and demand. So in our ignorance, we went to the hotel, and were shown to a table outside, facing towards the basilica, the globes of which glistened in the afternoon sun. A sweating waiter took the blue ticket from us, sneered, and duly brought the tepid tea and stale cakes, with a bill for 1,600 lire (500 more than the promised figure). He disappeared before I viewed the bill. Our tea and cakes were now costing $2.50. I prepared myself for a fight with him when he returned, but I was pleased to see him involved in a fracas with two Italian tourists whom he had obviously fleeced. I decided, as he came towards us, that the view was worth it, so I told my wife to pay him (she always carries the money). She gave him a 5,000 lire note, and he counted out the change and disappeared. I saw my wife frowning as she counted the change -- his transaction had been so quick that she hadn't noticed he'd only given her two 1,000 lire notes in the change, instead of three. Our small repast had now cost almost $4. Once more I heard shouting, and saw the waiter voluable, gesticulating exchange with two American tourists. The waiter was a gangster (as someone so aptly put it), and I shuddered to think that his utterly premeditated criminal activities might be typical of all the Venetian traders....

We left the Piazza San Marco to explore the narrow side street which intersect with the myriad of canals which criss-cross the whole island. I aimed us in the direction of the Poute di Rialto (Rialto Bridge), because this is the most famous of the Venetian bridges, and it crosses the Grand Canal just about in the middle of the island. Stalls were on the steps of either side of the bridge, and even on the bridge itself; souvenirs were being sold at very reasonable prices. We crossed the Rialto, and wandered through a maze of narrow street with rather grubby but brightly coloured houses on either side. One phenomenon which we



both witnessed (and no one believes it when we tell them) was a cat, with tail vertical, stepping gracefully towards us wearing a blue spotted bowtie ....

We re-crossed Rialto, and my wife announced that she was hungry. I figured that if we went into a restaurant we'd have to cable home for sufficient money to pay them; we'd only got about 15,000 lire remaining. I noted a fruit stall, and purchased a bag of bananas for 300 lire - I spoke to the attendant in Italian and he answered in English, it was just one of those days. I saw a grocer's shop open (called in Italian "alimentari"), and we got a bottle of apple juice for another 300 lire.

We returned to the Piazza San Marco, where we saw a sign indicating a toilet, which was Good News. We went down a small alley-way, entered a hallway, and saw men and women in the same queue. For the payment of 75 lire each we were given a ticket and sent up a flight of stairs. Both sexes were still queueing together, and when a green door was opened and vacated, individuals were whisked into it, regardless of sex. I was fitted in between two strapping German gals, but I'm sorry to say that once my cuticle door was closed behind me I was alone and untainted in a little room with a shower, a bidet (and I did wash my feet in it), a sink with soap and towel and a toilet. I used all the facilities, though not at the same time -- looked through cracks in both walls without success, then ejected myself. I felt fresh and full of life, as did my wife, and we both strode across the Piazza San Marco to the basilica.

As at the San Marino cathedral, a man was strategically situated at the front door to stop people coming into the sacred place -- he was especially looking for women who were indecently dressed and untidy men. It must have been the "wash and brush up" I'd just had which enabled him to usher me in with a smile. I was disappointed, frankly, because I think it would have done my prestige a power of good to have been barred from the basilica. My wife had a dress which showed bare arms, and this, the man said, was definitely indecent, and she had to construct arm-covers from two head scarves she had just purchased. She looked rather like a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis. She said it was worth it, though, to get in a cool place, and to see the majesty of the place, and the mosaics -- although I was a mite perturbed to see her peeling a banana in front of the altar. I felt that this really was indecent, and made her re-zip it and put it away.

My guide book says this about the basilica: "The interior of the church stirs up a deep impression of evocative beauty for the splendour of its mosaics, of its golds, for the value of its

marbles and for the play of light that impetuously pours from the top, lighting at intervals the darkest and hidden sides of it. The presbytery is raised. It is separated from the nave by a wonderful and gothic iconostasis made from polychrome marbles. A wonderful bronze and silver cross overlooks them."

We moved to the Palazzo Ducale (Ducal Palace) next to the basilica -- in fact, joined to it. This is a beautiful building, with two tiers of collonades, and above them a many-windowed frontage of a pinkish hue, with delicate filigree work on top -- it looks very much like a square birthday cake tittivated by a master chef with plenty of time on his hands. We passed into the courtyard of the Ducal Palace and saw wooden seats arranged round the periphery of the courtyard. At this time we were both exhausted by the heat and by our exertions, and although to the purist it may have seemed unethical, my wife and I munched our bananas and quaffed the apple juice and stretched out on the planks for a rest -- it was almost 5.30pm at which time we had the rendezvous with Mari and her umbrella outside the basilica.

Mari led us across the Piazza San Marco to a flotilla of gondolas parked on the Rio Orseolo. Six of us got into each boat, and thegondoliers, flexing their muscles and smiling at the women, commenced to propel their craft with practised ease. We had to turn left into the Scala del Bovo, and prior to its navigation I would have sworn that it was physically impossible for the gondola to have negotiated it. In fact, the gondola didn't even touch the sides of this right-angles turn. We swung expertly into the Rio di San Luca, under a couple of bridges into the Grand Canal. During the journey along these minor waterways before hitting the Grand Canal I must once more report that there was no smell from the water, very little debris, and it really was romantic.

In the Grand Canal the water was much more disturbed as large craft passed busily up and down, but our gondolier aimed the craft directly into the wash, causing little undue movement. At Station 10, on the opposite bank, we entered a very narrow waterway, which according to my map of Venice is unnamed, and climbed out of the gondola.

The umbrella led us through clean narrow side streets, over little humped-back bridges until we returned to the Piazzale Roma, where our coach was waiting.

I don't recall very much of the return four-hour journey to Cattolica. We sat at the front of the coach, behind Mari. Although she was Italian, she had learned many traditional British songs, and she announced a sing-song on the journey. Many of the tourists were so incensed by the way they had been asked for "1,000 lire for this" and "1,000 lire for that," that a deputation at the back of the coach declared that they would only sing if Mari paid them 1,000 lire. Mari was very distressed at this, and I swear there were tears in her eyes as she picked up the micro-

phone and commenced with "It's a long way to Tipperary." Honestly, I felt so sorry for her pathetic attempt at comraderie that I -- and only I -- joined her in the song. It was an off-key duet that ruined for ever the myth that Italy is a l d of song. Slowly and agonisingly, Mari rendered her entire repertoire of songs, and gradually people joined in -- reluctantly at first, as if to drown my raucous voice -- and then entering into the spirit of the thing.

I fell asleep whilst Mari was ahead.....

ANCONA

Towards the end of the holiday I was rather bored with being taken on conducted tours of the countryside, no matter how efficiently they were organised. I decided to go on an expedition myself, and decided to visit the ancient city of Ancona. It was one of the first regions to be colonised by veterans in Roman times, and had two Roman arches to commemorate the Imperators Traira and Clementino.

The return train fare from Cattolica to Ancona was only 1,100 lire, and considering that this was a journey of over 1¼ hours each way, I thought it to be the cheapest thing I'd come across in Italy. I was attired in my floppy linen hat, white shirt (not too clean), bracers (I think you call them suspenders in America -- you know, the things which keep your trousers up), grey flannel trousers and my camera slung nonchalantly round my neck. When the Bologna-Ancona express stopped at Cattolica, I saw that it was very crowded, especially with soldiers. I had to stand in the corridor, but it was opposite a large window, and I had the rare opportunity to observe the countryside south of Cattolica, and in this region it was hilly, but clean, with vineyards here and there, and various crops being worked only by old women in black dresses.

In about twelve days in Italy I had picked up a little of the language, and was prepared to converse with anyone in order to further my education -- so many people were bumping against me in the corridor that I soon noted the subtle difference between "Mi excuse" (excuse me) if you wanted something repeated orally, or "Permesso" (also "excuse me") if you wished to push past someone in your way. I used "permesso" often, with the "r" rolled, as the Italians do, and I thought I was quite fluent, but the Italians looked at me, not unkindly, and said "Inglese." (English)

Ancona surprised me in a number of ways. I left the station and turned left towards the harbour. The road was wide, the buildings large and somewhat scruffy. After walking half a mile I turned right into the shopping centre, deciding to purchase a plan of Ancona. This showed that the two Roman arches were at the very tip of the harbour -- and the harbour was much larger than I expected; it was in fact a large port, dealing mainly with

Greece, Many destroyers were tied up, and I saw many armed soldiers on duty. In fact, Ancona is an important military and naval base.

I followed directions on the map to the southern part of the harbour and saw two armed military personnel standing guard at the entrance to the harbour. Their eyes were wide as I walked up to them. I opened the map, showed them the two arches on the map, and held up my camera, pointing past them.

One was young, and he said "Si."

The other one stood in front of me, barring my way. "Inglese?" he asked.

"Si," I said, hoping that by breaking into the local vernacular I would impress him.

He shook his head in slow bewilderment, then stepped to one side. I walked into the harbour precincts and felt their eyes burning into my back. I stopped at the Traiano Arch. It was very impressive, sort of gaunt-looking, as it had a right to be, being almost 2,000 years old. I took colour photographs of it, then did likewise to the smaller Clementino Arch.

I returned towards the two guards. They looked at me and I looked at them and I didn't drop my gaze and they didn't drop theirs. Everything was quiet except for the blast of a ship's siren across the harbour. It was like the climax of High Noon. When I was about a yard from them they stepped to one side.

"Grazie," I said. The young one smiled and the other turned away, muttering "Inglese."

The plan showed that Ancona abounded in historical sites, but I had not permitted myself sufficient time to negotiate them, and retraced my steps to the station.

(to be concluded)

Sword 'n' Sorcery Note

The League of Effete City Wizards,
Disguised in impenetrable vizards,
Intends to make carrion
Of every barbarian,
And regale all the dragons with gizzards.

-- rb

MabinogiCON Proceedings

by J.R. Christopher

I. The Kitten

Friday morning, August 23, the opening morning of Mythcon V, when leaving our house in the car, taking two of our children to school, my wife ran over our kitten, Target. Appropriately named -- but the kitten's nomen came from the concentric circles of grey and white on its sides. Target had been given to me by my youngest daughter for my birthday in order to keep us from giving it away, it being the final kitten of the litter another of our cats had had; I buried Target before I left for the Dallas Fort Worth airport and the trip to Los Angeles.

Perhaps Target was the sacrifice demanded for my safe journey.

II. Friday Evening

While in the air, I decided to phone Paula Marmor, editor of Parma Eldalamberon, upon arrival. She had told me the previous year that I was foolish to take busrides to the meetings. I landed, hunted through the various telephone directories, found her number, and phoned. Jim Allan, author of A Glossary of the Eldarin Tongues, answered -- he being down from Canada and also getting a ride. Paula said over the phone that she had been expecting my call, and that they would be along in about an hour.

It wasn't until the next day that someone mentioned the bus strike in L.A., so I couldn't have ridden to Scripps College, Claremont, without Paula.

Jim spent part of the time on the ride trying to teach me how to pronounce Welsh, without a great amount of success, which was unfortunate, since I ended up reading a number of papers filled with Welsh words at the convention.

During the later part of the afternoon Jim and I, Ian Slater, editor of Fantasiae, and a number of others, ended up in a Mythprint work-party. We folded copies, took our turns running the stapler, and even put address labels on those out of zip code sequence.

Supper with Bernie (editor of Germinal) and Teny Zuber and others: an elaborate sandwich shop, with a piano player. The others were a couple, Irene Rosenberg and Ron Schmoller. He, she explained at one point, had a Ph.D. in biology and was now back in a university working on another, in history. His discouragement was illustrated later in the evening, at the convention, when he joined a table where Julia Mendoza was describing her work at a free-speech radio station. Ron was upset about what was happening to the Arizona desert (where he had been) and the California coast (where he was); he explained that he had invented a new, single word to describe the polluters and developers: MotherNatureFuckers. But I think we were too frivolous for him: he got up and left when Paula Sigman was describing the different styles of the various Walt Disney cartoons.

Afterwards, I got my copies of Evangeline Walton's books autographed by the author: The Children of Llyr, based on the Second Branch of the Mabinogi; The Song of Rhiannon, based on the Third; and The Island of the Mighty, based on the Fourth. She, one of the Guests of Honor, was a small, wizened lady, who (from a few things I heard at her table) seems to have suffered from a number of illnesses in her life. Her skin was oddly discolored -- from one of the medical treatments, I was told at another time; later during the convention she was sick, and another had to read her formal address for her.

III. The Opening Procession (Saturday, 10:15 A.M.)

Marching down the wooded tree-rows,
banners floating in the cool air,
comes in force the Mythopoea --
just as once Pryderi bravely
forces led with banners flying,
led against great Math his army,
led to battle most heroic.

IV. Papers and Discussions (throughout)

Fittingly for Miss Walton's guest-of-honorship, we had a number of papers on modern uses of Welsh legends. Ian Slater read his learned paper on her use of Sir Rhys's Celtic studies, and she said afterwards that he was largely right. I had a shorter, lighter paper on The Children of Llyr, which meandered to a conclusion on an Ozarks' murder, about which Miss Walton was polite (my natterings will be out in the next issue of Unicorn), and there were also Nancy-Lou Patterson's Jungian analysis of Gurgi in Lloyd Alexander's Prydain books; Diana L. Paxson's survey of the four symbols of the Grail legends (lance, cup, sword, dish -- with a stone as a substitute) in modern uses (one of Yeats' Red Hanrahan stories, for example); Dainis Bisenieks' description of two obscure novels by Kenneth Morris based on the Mabinogion (enlivened in the discussion afterwards by someone besides the author having actually read one of them); and a panel by the Company of Logres on the Children of Don -- with Miss Walton participating. Other papers or talks on George MacDonald, C.S. Lewis, Dorothy L. Sayers, and fairy tales generally. The traditional emphasis on Tolkien came during the open discussion by the Mythopoeic Linguistic Fellowship -- for example, it was revealed that the narrative poem upon which Tolkien was working at one time was "The Mariner's Wife," not "The Man and his Wife," as was stated years ago in a Tolkien Journal or a Green Dragon.

V. The Masquerade (Saturday 8:00 P.M.)

Rosie Cotton Gamgee, hobbit;
Caspian Tenth with Queen beside him;
Snow White out of Disney's version
(prettiest maiden in my fancy);
angel Hagar blind and led there;
Queen Johán from D'ryni Rising;
good and evil sisters from The
Silver Trumpet writ by Barfield;
Peter Pan; the Lady Verdis;
wolfman; priestess; Sam and Frodo:
magic summons from their sleeping
visions of imagination --
just as Lloyd mab Cil Coéd did,
clerk and priest and bishop highest,
all to save a little mouse-ling.

VI. Dawn Fandom (Sunday 5:15 A.M.)

I arose about 5:30 -- already fifteen minutes late when my alarm went off. On leaving Grace Scripps Hall, I heard an owl hoot -- and thought, "How unusual! in this urban setting." I had no precognition of disaster.

But when I arrived at the hortus conclusus, Margaret Fowler Garden, the disaster was told to me by the urbaness itself -- Mike Urban, that is. There were five of us there, one couple who seemed content with each other, a white-gowned figure (who later turned out to be Edith Crowe -- a white crow? the portents were deadly), and Mike and myself, who wandered around. Glen Good-Knight, the reader, the leader, the president of the Mythopoeic Society, had not shown up. I looked at the "chapel" which Glen had celebrated in a Mythprint before the convention, at the water, at the murals. Mike left to see the sun come up from an un-walled position. As I left to shave, I decided that I would not get up for Dawn Fandom next year.

Of course, thirty minutes later I went back, still unshaven, and found Glen finishing up the first of the snippets of sunrise-descriptions he was reading. He journeyed from Middle Earth to Narnia, then to Pan's island, with his music in the breeze (his wind music amid the willows), and finally to the ghost's vanishing at the end of The Great Divorce. The sun in golden glory was now arisen. Another figure had joined us later than I: we were seven at the sunrise.

As Glen and I walked back to the Hall, he spoke of a dream he had had before he awoke, to find his alarm had not gone off. He had walked across a floor, up a wall, and half way across a ceiling before he had fallen off -- then a mirror had caught him, absorbed him, before he reached the floor. I diagnosed it immediately as an anxiety dream (the details of which were meaningless), caused by his attempts to keep the convention going as it should. (I thought of telling him of the dream I had while preparing for my doctoral examinations, in which I stole a Santa Claus suit and whiskers from a Methodist student center and was chased all over town by police men firing guns at me -- and I'm not even Methodist.) But Glen went on to speak of a dream several weeks earlier in which the ghost of Dwight David Eisenhower appeared in his classroom. I would reveal the secrets of the afterlife they talked about, but those are High Mysteries.

VII. The Living Chessgame (Sunday, 10:00 A.M.)

Hither, thither, move the chessmen,
slain or slaying till the king dies,
played upon the grassy courtyard,
played with living men and women --
just as Arthur played with Owain
at the ancient game of gwythbwyll,
golden pieces, board of silver.

VIII. The Addresses, the Dance (Sunday, 8:30 P.M.)

Miss Walton's address, read for her, asked why anyone should write fantasies if he or she did not believe in dreams, in the numinous, in the ultimate Mysteries. (Ruth, would you as an

agnostic like to answer?) ((at end of article)) But most of Miss Walton's paper was on Celtic themes -- the Irish prevalence of writings when she began, with Yeats, A.E., and Stephens; the curiosities of the Mabinogion -- its one moment of faery time, its greatest plot blunder, its origin -- for the latter, she hypothesized a drunken monk writing down the words of an illiterate author; and the modern uses of Celtic legends, in the various Arthurian authors and in Tolkien's descent into Moria.

Kay Lindskoog, slender, with long blonde hair, author of The Lion of Judah in Never-Never Land and C.S. Lewis: Mere Christian, our other Guest of Honor, gave a pleasant, anecdotal account of Lewis's relationships with various women, including his mother; his foster-mother, Mrs. Moore; Joy Davidman, the American whom he married; and Kay herself, with emphasis on their one meeting, for tea, and his mention of his first choice of titles for Till We Have Faces.

Between the addresses came the modern dance of two women (Diane Plummer and Annabelle Peoples, in green for one and black for the other, with white veils) and a dragon (Christine Smith, in purple and black, with a red sash and yellow veils for wings). The women danced; the dragon danced; they fought; they reconciled.

IX. The Leaving (Monday afternoon)

Rising from the modern runway,
lifts the airship on its sail-wings,
not dependent on the breezes
(yet we circle o'er the ocean,
there below us swings the sailboat) --
not like Brân's our journey modern,
for he waded clear to Ireland
from his home, from Wales to Ireland,
while his men in ships went with him,
there to fight the ancient Irish,
there to rescue from them Branwen,
there to burst the deathly cauldron.

X. The Return to "Reality"

I had meant to end this report with the jet circling over the Pacific before heading in the opposite direction, to Texas. But when I arrived at the Dallas-Fort Worth airport Monday evening, my wife asked me if I had heard any news or read any newspapers over the weekend. Three men, it turned out, had broken free from the Colorado State Penitentiary, had raped two women in New Mexico, and had reached my home area -- Stephenville -- in Texas, where they were seeking vengeance on the people who put them in prison. By the time Lynn met me they had killed two people and wounded five others. My children were sleeping behind locked doors in a neighbor's house. Several people on my block had left their cars in the driveways with the keys in them,

hoping the killers would be content with an automobile if they broke the roadblocks and got into town.

As we made the two-hour drive back to our home, we heard the news over the car-radio that the police had shot and killed one of the three, and captured the two others. It is only distance -- of time, of place, of legend -- which makes Efnisien endurable.

((rb's notes. I don't really follow the point Miss Walton was making. I don't see in what sense one can believe in both dreams and ultimate Mysteries, much less how one belives in an adjective like "numinous." There seem to be two meanings of "to believe in" involved. . The question of believing in dreams is not whether they exist but whether the scenes they show are in any sense true. The question of believing in ultimate Mysteries is not whether they are true but whether they exist at all -- Or, rather, if any solutions to them exist. It's easy enough to believe in an ultimate truth without believing that either dreams or fantasy lead to it, as many religious people do, or to believe that dreams and fantasy tell us something about ourselves and our world without leading to any ultimate truths.

((I suspect I should footnote the various fanzines mentioned in the article. Parma Eldalamberon, articles about linguistics in Tolkien et al; and the newsletter Mythprint, are among the publications of the Mythopoeic Society, Box 4671 Whittier CA 90607. The Tolkien Journal and the newsletter Green Dragon used to be published by the Tolkien Society of America, but folded when that group merged with the Mythopoeics; the Mythopoeic Society has copies of some of the back issues. I don't know if Jim Allan still has copies of his Glossary, but he also puts out an interesting personalzine with a good deal of discussion of fantasy, Caer Pedryvan; 299 Mill Road #1708, Etobicoke Ontario M9C 4V9, Canada. Fantasiae is published by the Fantasy Association, PO Box 24560 LA CA 90024. Germinal, the newsletter of the Pre-Raphaelite Guild, is ed Bernie Zuber, 1053 ¼ North Ardmore Ave LA CA 90029. Unicorn, midway between genzine and literary magazine, is ed. Karen Rockow, 1153 East 26 Str Brooklyn NY 11210. EW's re-telling of the first branch, Prince of Annwn, came out recently.))

((QUERY DEPT. The OED cites F&SF -- The Magazine of Fantasy in its first issue -- as their earliest example of "fantasy" meaning a genre of literature in which deliberately impossible events occur. I doubt Boucher and McComas would have named it that if it didn't already mean that. Can any of you out there cite earlier examples? As I'm using the term "fantasy" in my thesis -- because even though it hadn't acquired that meaning in the nineteenth century it was then that the literature developed which demanded such a label's being invented -- I'm interested in trying to pin down when the word did take on the meaning of a genre of literature. Anyone? -- rb))

Using Chess in SF

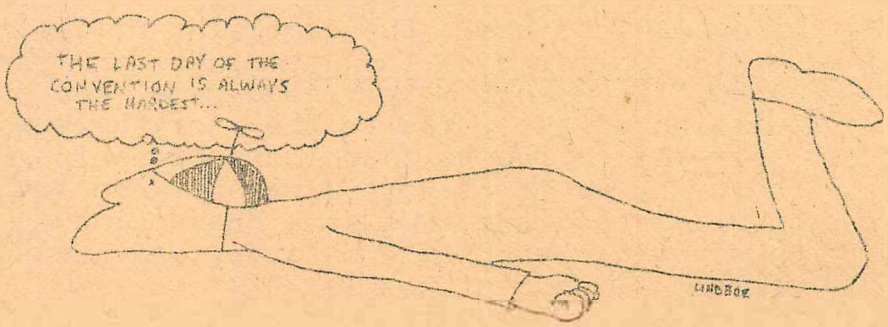
by Ruth Berman

This is one outcome of my attempt to sell an anthology of stfnal chess stories (my story "A Board in the Other Direction" being the other). As I looked around for appropriate stories I realized that they fell into a pattern of three general types. I finally gave up trying to sell the anthology, after several turn-downs, when a well known sf writer announced that he was looking for stories for an anthology of sf/chess, and I figured that as a well known writer he had a lot better chance of getting his proposed collection accepted than I did, and it would be more sensible for me to try to sell reprint rights to "Board" to him instead of trying to compete in anthologizing. (So far he hasn't been able to sell the anthology idea, either, but maybe eventually....)

And meanwhile I've got chess on the brain, despite not being a player. I did a shorter version of this article for the K'Westcon program booklet, but decided I wanted to give the full version here (minus the section about chess on "Star Trek").

Chess has always been popular in sf. Both make an appeal to the intellect and to the symbolic imagination (as opposed to the realistic imagination which produces art that aims at Realism or Naturalism). Both reduce the world to a carefully restricted analog, leaving the player (and the sf reader and writer are both players in this sense) free to consider consequences within the given limits. In science fiction, the given limits change from story to story -- which maybe explains why Fairy Chess, chess-with-variations, has always been so popular in sf, as with Henry Kuttner's novel, Fairy Chessmen.

Basically, there are three ways to use chess in any kind of fiction. The first is common to all kinds of fiction: the world as chess-board. In these stories the techniques of chess are used to solve real-life problems -- or to cause them. Frequently the master-player is the villain of the story, the willingness to use people as pawns a symbol of an inability to relate to others normally. ("Chess -- one mark, Watson, of a scheming mind," said Sherlock Holmes.) This set-up is particularly popular in detective stories,



although it also occurs in some sf stories, as in John Brunner's novel Squares of the City. (R.W. Hays' "Chess in the Detective Story" in the October 1971 Armchair Detective, points out the frequent appearance of villainous chess-players in detective stories.) But generally sf writers take a kinder view of mental abstraction, and the master-player is also the hero in such stories as Cosmic Checkmate by Charles DeVet and Katharine MacLean, Matthew Cammens' "Mate in Three Moves," Robert Sheckley's "Fool's Mate," Rog Phillips' "Checkmate for Aradjo," or Eando Binder's "Chessboard of Mars." (My "Board in the Other Direction" is sort of in the middle, taking an ambivalent attitude toward those who manipulate pawns/people.)

The second way of using chess is the reverse of the first, and it occurs in sf and fantasy, but not in realistic fiction: the chessboard as world. Sometimes, as with Fritz Leiber's eerie "Dreams of Albert Moreland," it's hard to say if the universe has literally been turned into a terrible game or if this should be called a special case of treating the world as a chessboard, the hero-as-chess-master.) In these stories we see the world not from the point of view of the player, but from the point of view of one of the pieces. Knights are often used as viewpoint characters, as in Poul Anderson's "The Immortal Game" and Nelson Bond's Pawns of Tomorrow" (both of which play over famous games from chess history in fictional terms). Symbolically, it's appropriate to use the knight, because as the only figure in that two-dimensional game whose moves involve the third dimension, he's the one most likely to be aware of living in a limited world, the one trying hardest (once you start anthropomorphizing the pieces and imagining personalities for them) to understand the meaning of his universe. (I can't track down which critic it was, but I remember reading a book on Lewis Carroll once which argued that it is this extra-dimensional vision which made the White Knight the only courteous, kindly person in Through the Looking Glass.) The Looking Glass world, the most famous chessboard-as-world story, is seen from the point of view of Alice, who plays a white pawn. A contemporary of Carroll's, Lucretia Hale, used the red queen as the heroine in "The Queen of the Red Chessmen (1858). A black bishop is the hero (with his pawn as the usual point of view character) in Dahlov Ipcar's fantasy, Warlock of Night, which is also another actual-famous-game. (By now quite a few writers seem to have taken to heart the complaint of Timothy Paul in Wilmar Shiras' Children of the Atom that "in 'Through the Looking Glass,' it wasn't a very good game, and you couldn't see the relation of the moves to the story very well," and agreed that "it would be fun to take a championship game and write a fantasy about it, as if it were a war between two little old countries... to understand the game as a chess game and then to translate it into human actions and motives, and put speeches to it to fit different kinds of people.")

Incidentally, Ipcar is the only writer I know of to use black chessmen. I suppose the use of red is partly an affection-

ate nod to Lewis Carroll. But it's mainly a way of keeping the reader sympathetic to both sides, without letting the mind slide into the easy symbolism of white/good/pure; black/bad/dirty (not to mention the even more unfortunate possibility of adding racial overtones to such symbolism). Ipcar, startlingly, uses the traditional black symbolism in portraying her black heroes (but not the racial symbolism); her black chessmen are pagans, guided by black magic against the Christian whites -- yet the blacks remain our heroes, with an ambivalent ending hinting at eventual peace between the two sides, leaving it unclear as to whether Ipcar indeed thinks the two sides moral equals or not. A fascinating story.

A variation of the chessboard-as-world story is the one in which the piece through whom we see as much of the game as it can comprehend is not literally a chesspiece but a human being (or reasonable facsimile thereof) being forced to play out a living chess game (or reasonable facsimile thereof), as in Edgar Rice Burroughs' Chessmen of Mars, or Harlan Ellison's "Silver Corridor," or -- in a way -- Poul Anderson's "White King's War." This variation could occur outside of sf and fantasy, but the only such story I know is by an author better known for his sf, Kurt Vonnegut (in the collection In the Madhouse -- I don't remember the story-title).

The third category is common to sf and fantasy, but occurs far more often in sf, thanks to Maelzell's fake chess-playing automaton, which was exposed by Edgar Allen Poe, but left behind a heritage of real (albeit fictional) chess-playing robots. The first of them was Ambrose Bierce's murderous Moxon in "Moxon's Master," but Moxon's progeny are more amiable: the drunken robot in E.B. White's "Hour of Let-Down," the slightly-but-only-slightly vulnerable computer of Fritz Leiber's "64-Square Madhouse" (which with its portraits of a wide range of types of chess players, and the pathos and humor of its portrait of an aging player, is perhaps the finest chess story around), the cyborg of Gavin Hyde's "Nor the Moon by Night." And then are other types of Strange Player -- Zeno the rat in Charles Harness' "The Chessplayers," the devil-haunted Van Goom in Victor Contoski's "Van Goom's Gambit," and the ghosts of H.G. Hickey's "Checkmate to Demos," "Stephen Grendon's" (August Derleth's) "Bishop's Gambit," D.C. Fontana's "Alter-Ego" (on the tv series "Ghost Story"), and (yet again) Fritz Leiber in "Midnight by the Morphy Watch," which appeared in the August 1974 Worlds of If (the late lamented). It's the latest chess story in a science fiction magazine, but probably not the last.

> "There wasn't really a rat playing chess in there, was there?"
> "No," I said. "There wasn't any rat in there. And no human beings, either. Just chess players."
> -- Charles Harness, "The Chess Players"

No & Yes: Letters

from Gerard Giannattasio, 1130 Park Blvd, Massapequa Park NY 11762

I found J.R. Christopher's "Carving in Marble" of interest. ((No 14)) Sometimes I wonder if I'm a little odd: the criticism is sometimes as intriguing to me as the work itself. Just in the scraps of lines given I could see the influence of J.R.R. Tolkien. This Tolkien influence seems apparent because of the placement of the lines from "Lines on the Death of Robin Hood" in the first paragraph of the article. The use of feminine rhymes struck me in the poem about Beren and Tinuviel in Vol. I of LOTR, and in "Lines on the Death." I often reread the Beren and Tinuviel poem, so perhaps that's why the resemblance strikes me. Feminine rhymes aren't that common English poetry.

from Ray Nelson, 333 Ramona, El Cerrito CA 94530

The problem of telling the amateurs apart from the professionals in writing is complicated by the fact that these days a great many stories are published in prozines that should not be published anywhere, not even in fanzines. Let's take the April 1974 Vertex as an example. We have "Knowing" by John Croft Norton, a formless mass of purple prose that I defy anyone to explain, "History Lesson" by J. Douglas Burtt, an agonizingly stupid shaggy dog story about piss, and "Second Paradise Lost" by Don Pfeil, the editor, which is all-too-obviously exactly the right length to fill up the left-over space, being nearly all padding with a shaggy dog punchline added to make it resemble a story. Then we have "The Magic Machine" by Scott Edelstein, still

another painful shaggy dog, and "Tower of Babble" by Rachel Cosgrove Payes, a long stupid buildup for a ghastly pun, "Mattie Harris, Galactic Spy" also by Rachel Cosgrove Payes, which is another long buildup to a stupid pun. Another stupid pun is the punchline of "Shell Shock" by Donald Franson. The lead story, "Time Scoop" by John Keith Mason, tells about a planet where warriors from all times are transported to do battle for "The Secret Masters" (sound familiar?) and at the end, after the secret masters are defeated, one warrior says to another, "We have gained a wholenew world to make of what we will." Left unanswered, even unasked, is the question of how this exclusively male population is going to reproduce. There are other stories, but I'll pass over them mercifully...and tucked away in back, almost as an afterthought, there is one real story, "Deeper than Death" by Steven Utley, which shines like a star against the dark background of the rest of the magazine.

Is Vertex alone in publishing this garbage?

Alas no.

Ted White, operating on what is said to be a tight budget, has managed to maintain a much higher level of quality than Vertex, which is said to have a large budget, but even Ted has some bad moments. Far and away the worst story I have read in years appears in the April 1974 issue, a story written by someone who has done far better work in fanzines. I'm speaking (through clenched teeth) of F.M. Busby's "What Was That?" Here we have a story which is not science-fiction or even fantasy, but a particularly dull, slow-moving spy story centering around one spy's attempt to pass information to another spy while a counterspy is sitting at the table with them. The attempt is successful because they make the counterspy yawn, and, so it says, you can't hear when you're yawning. That's fine, except that you can hear when you're yawning, as either Buzz or Ted could have found out by trying it.

Right next door to "What Was That?" is the second worst story I have read in years, "Upping the Planet" by Barry N. Malzberg. A being from Elsewhere tells our hero, "If you are capable of having 24 ejaculations in 24 hours, we'll let your planet survive." How does our hero succeed? If you guessed "By masturbation," you can congratulate yourself that you are at least as intelligent as Barry N. Malzberg, who has been nominated for a Hugo (so I've heard) for another story which has equally little to do with science-fiction.

But one might suppose that these stories are published because there is nothing better submitted

Not so!

Both Vertex and Ted White's magazines are overstocked. Ted had to hold the last story I sold him (with my permission, I

hasten to add) for months before buying it because he was so overstocked, and Vertex claims they are so overstocked that they have to return manuscripts unread.

So here's the problem (And this question is particularly addressed to Harlan): How does a professional-quality writer get his work published if the prozines are overstocked with amateur-quality stories? I'd really like to know.

from Norm Hochberg, 89-07 209 Str Queens Village NY

The letter column and the continuing adventures of John Berry were, as usual, the high points of No 15 for me. "The Fandoliers" was the low. Fan parodies are usually on a level not much higher than Mad's movie/play parodies. Possibly, this comes from my own basic prejudices against musicals but I think not. I've just never seen any such parodies (though I've found many parodies of written material to be enjoyable) that were worth more than a passing interest. Perhaps this is because musical parodies rarely make more than slight changes in lyrics. That hardly shows much talent to me.

Lovely Faddis cover. Keep 'em coming.

from Joe Christopher, Tarleton State U Dept of English & Languages, Tarleton Station, Stephenville TX 76402

Thank you for No 15. I see that E.A. Arnason picks to pieces my "hormone theory of poetry." Probably quite rightly, although I don't think I'll abandon it yet. My assumption that writing is a product of sexual energy is Freudian, I believe. That is, I haven't read most of Freud, but in my reading about his ideas, I find this as a common assumption. (More about Freud in a moment.) And my assumption that about the age of 30 is the end of the early lyricism, followed either by quiet or by a different sort of dedication in the poet comes from Robert Graves -- from The White Goddess, I believe, although it may be in one of his essays.

I do not claim either Freud or Graves as the last word -- and Arnason correctly argues from specific examples. Of the five women cited in her second paragraph, I've not heard of two -- Jong and Wakowski. Plath I've read only in anthologies; ditto on Bradstreet. Moore I've read and enjoyed, but I know less of her life than of Plath or Bradstreet. (The little I've read by Bradstreet has been only so-so, I judge; or maybe too realistic for my tastes.) At any rate, Arnason has a valid point about my ignorance.

Or it may be that women do not react the same way as men creatively. Certainly they do not so far as the Oedipus complex is concerned. Babies start with an emotional dependence on their mothers; the female teenagers shift their primary emotional tie

to men and do not develop the Oedipus relationship strongly, while the male teenagers continue the emotional tie to the woman (mother + sweetheart; Jung's anima) and do. (Add all sorts of qualifications, but I think the statement can be defended generally.) Thus one psychological difference; probably there are others.

(I promised a further note on Freud: I'm hung up on him at the moment because I've been writing several poems using Freudian terminology recently. Dorothy L. Sayers, in an essay about allegory, convinced me that he invented the basic allegorical terminology of our time, and I have wanted to explore the use of this framework. I'm not much interested in the "truth" of Freud per se, but I assume his analyses projected the truth about himself and, by extension, some of the truth about all men.)

In answer to your question, Ruth: I'm an English teacher at Tarleton State University. An associate professor, more precisely. Ph.D. from the University of Oklahoma on "The Romances of Clive Staples Lewis" (1969). (And to Arnason: yes, I teach the Victorians -- a senior level course every third year; no, I don't teach modern poetry.) Also, I taught a graduate course on SF this past spring. Teaching two hour-and-a-half classes each day during this summer term ((June 1974)) is keeping me busy. Tomorrow is Ben Franklin. (Tell Arnason that I'm on first name basis with Ben too.) The day after, someone else.

from Mike Glicksohn, 141 High Park Ave Toronto Ont M6P 2S3 Canada

Most interesting parts to me were the Berry travelog and the Ellison-and-others discussion of professionalism in writing. I'm more familiar with John's humorous writing and this sample of his very careful and craftsmanlike use of words is a very nice change. I wish Harlan could explain how he can spot a potential professional, but I accept his statement that it's an instinctive sort of thing. It must be terrible to really want to write and just not have any ability in that field. I don't particularly have any desire to be a full-time writer, although I think it would be sorta nice to have a couple of stories published. The only story I've written in eight years was a short satire that Ted White bought. I haven't tried anything since then: possibly out of a desire to keep a perfect record but more likely out of having nothing more to write and no time to not write it in.

from Harry Warner, 423 Summit Ave Hagerstown MD 21740

You completed "The Fandoliers" so smoothly that I can't imagine anyone noticing where Len Bailes stopped and you started, if the whole were published in one volume without explanation of who did what. So I'd say that you both displayed equal ingenuity in translating G&S into faanish. I doubt if there are enough G&S fans left in fandom in these modern times to give this the reception it would deserve if produced at a con. Come to think of

it, production on the fan level might be very difficult, because this operetta probably makes the greatest demands on singing voices, out of the whole series. I've never believed in fiawol, but I keep wondering about that topic, every time I see a long parody in which some fannish equivalent has been found for everything in the original, as if there really were a fannish substitute for any mundane manner important enough to enter a work of art. The only emendation that occurred to me while reading the entire thing: the vanished conventioneer might have disappeared because he turned out to be a Carl Brandon or a Joan Carr instead of just a gafiate. There should be a pretense at logic even in a parody, and it's usually possible to find someone who has gafiated while the unmasking of a non-existent fan who is a combination of several fans' efforts could present a genuine difficulty.

John Berry was much fun to read again. The more I read European travel reports, the more I realize how much war is de-emphasized over there as a tourist attraction, compared with the United States situation.

Showcase Review disappointed me somewhat. There's the basic problem that the reviewer didn't read all of the book being reviewed. This behavior always leaves me to suspect that the reviewer was simply too lazy to finish it, and therefore might also have been too lazy to look hard enough for the good things about the portions actually read. I don't like the qualities listed as important for good science fiction, real problems and "bizarre symbols, startling conjunctions and so on" in their treatment. If that's what's important, why write science fiction at all, when so many fine writers have put those two qualities into their mundane fiction and when they're behind most of the great poetry of the world?

Louise Valmeras also indulges in overkill when she complains about the audible effect of fiction which is going to be read silently by 999 out of every 1,000 readers. Besides, I don't believe she could make her complaint about the harsh consonants stand up against witnesses drawn from famous writing of the past. If harsh consonants were bad, a century of babies would have acquired lifelong insomnia listening to "Rockabye, baby, on the tree top," and Sandburg would have found some other description of fog than the two-t'd cat's feet, and Shakespeare wouldn't have written a famous line like "But soft, what light through yonder window breaks." English is basically a language of harsh consonants. I suspect that the occasional line in literature which contains nothing but soft r, l, and n sounds got that way through the workings of coincidence, not some intention of the writer to keep the noise level down.

One odd thing about the Gandalf award for Tolkien: Tolkien did win an award once from fandom, in 1957 for Lord of the Rings, when the International Fantasy Awards were being given out, before the Hugos were given every year for best novel. Tolkien

seems to have been quite unhappy about the necessity to attend a convention to receive his award, and he apparently didn't linger much longer than necessary to get it. So if he wins a Gandalf award ((he did)), and he is in a position to know it, I'm sure he'll be glad he needn't go through that ordeal again.

from Al Sirois, 233 County Str New Haven CT 06511

It may seem useless to LoC old zines, but I did enjoy them and feel that you might like to know why. Beginning with #13: Nice Ken Fletcher cover, reminiscent of Vaugn Bodé. Where's the rest of the drawing? If there isn't any more to it, it's definitely flawed; why are those 3 figures staring at something outside of the page? Drawings should be self-contained. This one, tho well-done, isn't. Picky, picky, Sirois.

I enjoyed the Ellison letter mightily. I think one reason I found his letter so interesting is that I myself am writing; I've sold two stories to Ted White in the past year, after ten years of collecting rejection slips (so stick that in your ear, Buck Coulson! I'm gonna write to him too and tell him. I never happened to tell him that I'd been at it for ten years before I got into the sfwa. I wonder what he'll say? Heh heh heh) and so I can now call myself a pro. (Well....)

Why did you run that drawing on page 24 #13 as the cover of #15? ((Forgetfulness.)) Nice artwork, esp. stuff by Jon Wilmunen, Fletcher and Ladore. The Ladore critter was a bit sketchy, but nice anyway.

Onward to No 15 (is No short for "number" or is it the negative word no?) ((It's half of Nous, the name when it had two editors; all applicable puns derivable from No acceptable as intended whether they were or not.))

I found John Berry's travelogue interesting, esp. the part about San Marino. I've been a fan of the little country for years, along with other tiny places like the SMOM (also in Italy; it's a sovereign country located about two blocks west of the American Express building in Rome...no lie!), Andorra, Swat, Sikkim, and all those other out-of-the-way countries, from Punial to Lundy to Sharja.

Again, good letter from Ellison. Again, I agree with most of what he has to say, except that wager business. Maybe he could tell the pros from the amateurs, but I don't know....John Gardner (Grendel, The Wreckage of Agathon, and other recent novels), wrote several books before he sold one....then he went back and mailed out all those old manuscripts, which is why he has been appearing with new books so often recently. Those were written before he'd sold anything, so they're amateur, right? ((Not necessarily. We'd have to find out if the editors who rejected them before did so because they thought them unpublishable or because they thought them good but couldn't work them into their schedule for some reason outside the-quality-of-the-writing.))

A telling sentence in Alpajpuri's letter: "If you allow others to decide for you, you might produce what pleases them, but then it is no longer your work. This is what I have against such people as Roger Ellwood, no matter how many nice stories he's been responsible for getting out into public. It's all a question of ethics, and as such varies from person to person, but for myself, I'd rather write my own stories. The first time I met Roger, I hadn't known him five minutes when he was soliciting a novel from me. "Straight sf adventure, male protagonist, no sex or profanity." Ah, horseshit, Roger! WHY NOT PUT OUT A BOOK BY GERARD S. CONWAY, OR SOME OTHER SUPERB NEW WRITER, RATHER THAN CHURNING OUT CRUDDY FORMULA NOVELS? I've never written a novel; if Roger had said to me "Look, I've read your work, I like it, try a novel for me, whatever you would like to do," then I would've done it, most likely. But he isn't interested in an unknown factor like me, unless I can work within set parameters, which I WILL NOT do. ((I think your terminology is misleading there. Writing a "novel" involves working to the parameter of a given minimum number of words. It's possible to write well to a formula -- it's just that the odds are against it, and an editor who tries to insist on sticking to a formula winds up with a higher than average lot of bad writing. On the other hand, restrictions on the sex of the characters, and on the use of sex and profanity, can be argued against as innately evil, because they produce falsity?))

But, now, where does it leave me, as a writer? I'm a pro only by definition; two sales, both short-short. This doesn't exactly leave me eminently qualified to leap on my soapbox in defense of Art, or whatever, but I can shoot my mouth off in letters all I want. I'm no longer an amateur, in writing or outlook; I've sold and have every intention of keeping it up. My writing projects are both more numerous and more complex than they were even a year ago; I put much more time into it, now, and am extremely concerned with the symbolic and action portions of my work; I want to synthesize the hardware and software of sf, the old wave and the new wave. I think I can do it.

For my own self-image and integrity, I have to think I can do it. I have to know I can do it, in order to write convincingly. Herein lies the difference, I think. The amateur thinks he might be able to do it, someday; the pro knows he can do it now, and DOES IT. (Hopefully he keeps the knowledge at the back of his mind -- esp. in interviews). I am somewhere inbetween. A writer finding his voice, as it were, if I can get pompous and pretentious for a sec. I know I can do it, but I'm not sure just how, yet. I have these flashes, in my

work, of good writing; certain passages, a whole page or so at a time, every few pages. Not enough for a novel, yet. But I know what I want; it's just a matter of time till I get there. Write write write, and write some more.

from Dan Stefacek, 6212 Bowman, St. Louis MO 63139

Berry's Baedeker brings me to a certain enigma. The article on his travels should, by definition, not be included in an sf zine, either fan or pro. And material like that, no matter how well-written, probably never will get into the prozines. However, it will continue to be mixed into personalzines and genzines centered around sf -- and so much the better. It links sf to the World Outside.
Furthermore, it adds an amount of variety to the scope of things, a depth of flavor to the gestalt impression of the zine. (Genuflect and place your offerings in the receptacles at the side.-- I don't come up with those wordstrings often, praise be...) However, I did not personally enjoy the article. I don't like tourist stories, no matter what they are about. A certain bigotry is involved; the concept of tourism makes my stomach turn. But if I ever must read tourism pieces, let them be by John Berry.

Your comments in the various reviews (by your I mean you as an editor, manhandler of all submitted material and Shaker of Universes) were succinct, sophisticated (though not snobby) and pointed. And of course, I disagree in some points.

Like where you downgraded the Lafferty story in Showcase for being too cute, there was the illo right next to it, which seemed to be the same vein of cuteness that you were talking about. Perhaps it's just a matter of media. I found both the story and illo cuteness enjoyable for what it was -- a piece of fluff. (The Lafferty story more so because very rarely is Lafferty merely "cute.") The reviews contained a fair amount of legit criticsim, and a fair amount of personal gripes, shaded by bias. Me, on the other hand (Bad grammar, I know, but I enjoy a certain element of roughness) subscribe alternately to the Sturgeonian reviewing credo: If you can't say anything good about a book, don't say anything. To off-balance this, I also like the Geisian (or "Alien" as some would have it) viewpoint: If you can't say anything good about a book, don't say anything good.

Many of the comments, especially those about writers, struck through to my shallow little heart. Luckily, I have a great ego, and can handle verbal maulings, gorings, and browbeats. Yet unfortunately,(I have had no opportunity to exhibit these extraordinary skills. (You may take that as a subtle hint.) ((Hint noted. In response, I'll remark that I'm always happy to see articles, reviews, artwork, etc., offered to No from anyone, but especially from letter-col-contributers.))

from Ben Indick, 428 Sagamore Avenue Teaneck NJ 07666

I wanted to comment on the replies to my article. I rather enjoyed them, for it has been a long time since I bothered with even mild controversy, and it is fun.

First, to Dave Hall, I regret my peculiar syntax, which seemed to make every writer in sight (exeept Harlan Ellison) a Lovecraftian. Indeed, I really didnot have that in mind. I guess Dave knows I am a bit of an HPL scholar myself, and as such, must give credit where it is due. HPL was surely influenced by Chambers, and Blackwood as well; he writes admiringly of each. The interesting name I added was Merritt's (so far as I know, not usually mentioned in Lovecraftian chat). However, I have always felt Merritt was influenced in his later work by HPL. Consider his pre-1930 work; the villains usually are an incarnation of Evil per se, as in THE FACE IN THE ABYSS/THE SNAKE MOTHER, where Nimir is nearly Lucifer himself; THE CONQUEST OF THE MOON POOL, where the Shining One is a created and somewhat impersonal Being combining extremes of emotion, but susceptible to Absolute Goodness; THE SHIP OF ISHTAR, THROUGH THE DRAGON GLASS, which had legendary creatures as villains, and THE METAL MONSTER, which had a non-hydrocarbon creature as antagonist.

However, in 1932, DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE called upon a tentacled and extraterrestrial monster, drawn by runes and ritual, and Khalk'ru, the Kraken, has much in common with Cthulhu, who appeared in THE CALL OF CTHULHU in 1928, and the creatures who are THE DUNWICH HORROR in 1929. Merritt, an astute student of legend, claimed (in a letter to ARGOSY in the early '30s) to have seen representations of the Kraken in native work in Alaska, but I still feel HPL rated a doff of his hat as well. This is not to belittle my beloved author of yesterdgy, but simply to place his work in context. Indeed, in CREEP SHADOW! there is yet another Lovecraftian monster, The Gatherer in the Cairn (based on Druidic legend, but nevertheless Mythos-like). After all, Merritt was well aware of WEIRD TALES; he had a story in the magazine once.

I would urge Loren MacGregor sincerely to give KING IN YELLOW another try. The initial story, "Repairer of Reputations," may have put him off. However, "The Yellow Sign," "The Mask," and "Demoiselle D'Ys" are unquestionably masterpieces.

Now, Ruth, for such a nice girl, you have allowed my good friend Bruce Arthurs to walk into a trap (which was not my intention, of course). I hope I did not spoil a great story for him -- but there are several endings to THE DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE. The original ending, as Merritt wrote it and preferred it, was one in which both women died, Evalie as well as Lur. ARGOSY insisted upon a "happy ending," and he obligingly rewrote

it slightly. When FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES reprinted it in the early '40s, they used his preferred ending. When Avon reprinted it a few years later, in their MURDER MYSTERY MONTHLY series, they used the tragic ending as well (slightly rewritten). The Grandon reprint, somewhat later, used the "happy ending." Personally, I prefer it the way Merritt wanted. I simply cannot see Evalie settling down in a split level with Leif, watching TV, etc. She belonged with Lur in that wonderful Mirage-land, the alter-ego of Lur forever. I read and reread it many times many years ago; it has been decades since I have reread it, but I still think I would love this grand adventure fantasy, written in his prime by a Master. I hope Bruce enjoyed it, in spite of the pall I cast upon it for him.

I enjoyed Ellison's letter, very restrained for this wunderkind of SF. Harlan's Yiddish-SF tale in WANDERING STARS was, however, a disappointment to me. It was merely a humorous exploitation of a genre, and I long to see him do something significant with the theme of the Jew in SF. He has so very much going for him. Do it, Harlan! WANDERING STARS wasn't bad. Isaac Asimov's story was good, even if his intro was smart-alecky. Wm Tenn rather foolishly wrote of the future and a Venusian colony of Jews which was a transplanted 19th century shtetl, rather silly even in our own day when Tevye is only a romantic stage character; to resurrect him and a veritable Anatevka in a distant and faraway future is mere romanticism (or worse, the sort of comedy the "professional Jews" like Buddy Hackett, Alan King and Mel Brooks employ). Silverberg manages to resurrect a dybbuk story in the future on a distant starsystem -- and does it with internal logic and a quiet bit of story-telling, which, somehow, works. Geo. Alex Effinger does very well indeed, and movingly also in a story of a future Earth run by the same Representatives who toy with humans in his interesting novel RELATIVES.

I sympathize with brave, enduring Louise Valmeras, in her battle with anthos.

I finished a household chore sooner than I'd expected, so I glanced at the "Fandoliers"; indeed, I also glanced at the "Gondoliers," and, altho each glance was brief, your original author and yourself have concocted a merry piece which does have a mirror of sorts in the original. Fans and fandom are universal after all. I especially liked the quartet concluding Act One, and Tessa's Song, in your act -- very Gilbertian bitter-sweet.... I'm afraid it'll take more than brief glances. One fine resting-day, I'll reread G&S first, and then yours, and then -- woe! Basingstoke! Oops, as your character says, "wrong operetta."