

## NORSTRILIAN REVIEWS

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TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO by Philip Jose Farmer (Berkley, 75¢)

Just to say that this is Farmer at his best isn't anything like an adequate description, but there are good reasons for stopping at about that point. They are not good enough for me, however, and I have every intention of making a fool of myself by going further.

'Clasped in Isabel's arms and crying "I am a dead man", Richard Burton died.' (THE WILDER SHORES OF LOVE - Lesley Blanch)

'He died. He knew that he faced certain oblivion.

'But then his eyes opened, and he knew from the strong beat of his heart and the power of his muscles that he was no longer dying.

'It was so quiet that he could hear the blood moving in his head. The silence sung. He could hear, and he could see, yet he did not know what he was seeing. What were these things above him? Where was he?'

(DAY OF THE GREAT SHOUT - P J Farmer, Worlds of Tomorrow 1/1965)

'His wife had held him in her arms as if she could keep death away from him.

'He had cried out, "My God, I am a dead man!"

'The door to the room had opened, and he had seen a giant, black, one-humped camel outside and had heard the tinkle of the bells on its harness as the hot desert wind touched them. Then a huge black face topped by a great black turban had appeared in the doorway. The black eunuch had come in through the door, moving like a cloud, with a gigantic scimitar in his hand. Death, the Destroyer of Delights and the Sunderer of Society, had arrived at last.

'Blackness. Nothingness. He did not even know that his heart had given out forever. Nothingness.

'Then his eyes opened. His heart was beating strongly. He was strong, very strong! All the pain of the gout in his feet, the agony in his liver, the torture in his heart, all were gone.

'It was so quiet he could hear the blood moving in his head. He was alone in a world of soundlessness.

'A bright light of equal intensity was everywhere. He could see, yet he did not understand what he was seeing. What were these things above, beside, below him? Where was he?'

(TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO)

With the rest of humanity, Richard Burton is resurrected along the banks of a million-mile river, but unlike them (or almost all of them) he awoke before reaching the river, as described in the extract above which opens the novel.

Given this especial knowledge and his real-life nature, Burton is soon careering up and down the river, committing suicide now and then (v. THE SUICIDE EXPRESS, Worlds Of Tomorrow 3/66) and battling Hermann Goering. Farmer has begun to exploit the situation to the fullest, as well he might, since he has been working on the series for over fifteen years.

But there is a good deal more to the nature of Riverworld than is revealed in this first novel, so that any discussion of the nature of Farmer's world.

The extracts quoted earlier give some idea of the changes which Farmer has made to the magazine versions. Ugly phrases like 'silence sung' have been cut out. In places there is mere expansion, but for the most part even this has improved the work.

The cover most suitable for the magazine stories appeared on Galaxy, 2/61.

### AUSTRALIAN FANZINES

S F COMMENTARY 25 December 1971 50 pages. \$3 for 9 in Australia from  
Bruce Gillespie, GPO Box 5195AA,  
Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia.

How easy it is to recall the younger Gillespie, with his weird ideas about Cordwainer Smith/Paul Linebarger! Easy, perhaps, provided that SF COMMENTARY isn't around. Bruce's editorial, I MUST BE TALKING TO MY FRIENDS, is becoming increasingly important in SF COMMENTARY. (Of course, the letters appear there also, but Bruce uses them as part of the editorial - feally) Nowadays SFC starts off with three or four pages of vivid (though occasionally morose) opinions about life, Life and LIFE, not to mention science fiction. Occasional news items are not excluded by literary policy, either. And then the letters et start. The major letters here are by George Turner and Sandra Miesel. Ms. Miesel asks the question I was discussing a couple of weeks ago with one of the (rare) local trotskyites: 'Why have no sf writers written from a Marxist point of view?' (Partly reflecting some words of Franz Rottensteiner.) Her short answer seems to be that 'The amount of double-think involved makes this impractical.'. But this is not an answer: the double-think of US imperialist-capitalism comes naturally enough to plenty of writers.

And then again there are book reviews (pretty terrible in this issue), and an open letter to Stanislaw Lem from Philip Jose Farmer, answering Lem's article (SEX IN SCIENCE FICTION) in a previous edition of SFC. In itself, this is worth the price of admission. Hank Davis has an article on SF anthologies which partly counteracts Damon Knight's drivel in the previous issue, Richard Delap reviews three of the original SF anthologies and Sandra Miesel and BRG wind up the issue on a high note with their reviews of Poul Anderson under the title (o excellent title!) WHOOPS! THERE GOES ANOTHER GALAXY. The best fanzine being published today which seriously discusses science fiction.

SCYTHROP 24, 25, 4 & 24 pp \$3 for 6 issues from John Bangsund, GPO Box 4946,  
Melbourne 3001, Victoria etc.

Number 24 can be set aside as the work of a moment (a p/easant moment, mind you) in order that we might approach the sterner stuff - number 25. SCYTHROP 25 starts off with the same kind of editorial as SFC - longer, with more dialogue (dialogue is hard, y'know), less addresses and more humour.

The bulk of the issue is made up of a five and a half page article by Robert Bloch and a four and a half page article by George Turner. The best thing which can be said of the first is that it is by Robert Bloch. In the second article George Turner examines two recent James Blish Productions - MORE ISSUES AT HAND and NEBULA AWARD STORIES FIVE. He prefers the former. The letter column contains an alleged explanation/description of Keats & Chapman anecdotes; obscure puns of a literary, musical or other cultural nature. I object to the words 'obscure'.

#### ELSEWHERE

EGG 5 3 for \$1 from Peter Roberts, 87 West Town Lane, Bristol, BS4 5DZ, Great Britain. (Australian agent is David Grigg, 1556 Main Rd. Research, Victoria 3095 ((but see the CoA in NN)))

The most important article here is Hans-Joachim Alpers' short piece on The Opposition. The editorial contains a couple of letter-extracts expressing the pious wish that politics won't be introduced in Egg. Hmph. There's very little cause for alarm here. Most of what Alpers says has been said before by happily capitalist fans - 'we consider our surroundings more important and see the hobby as just a supplement, not a substitute, a haven for escapists, or a compensation for complexes'. There's a reference to 'a banquet to which the less wealthy were not admitted', which may vaguely recall the name 'Dave Kyle' to some. All in all, the Opposition seems to be wasting its time with fandom, and I suspect that only the twitchiness of American fans (some of 'em) touched of the slight altercation which did occur. Otherwise, EGG is a very good fanzine and I just wish the Australian agent would get his finger out.

BEARDMUTTERINGS 1 not for money from Rich Brown, 410 - 61st Street, Apt D4, Brooklyn, NY 11220, USA.

BM has run into the occasional adverse review (well, it was published back in November) but this seems to be justified only by pique on the part of the reviewer. BM is beautifully multilithed, is free and interesting - more than interesting reading. Of course, being the subject of one of Rich Brown's essays might alter one's attitude. There's a nice piece on the passing of fannish glory which seemed to me to skip a few years. (Rich: Ron Smith interrupted me halfway through your story to ask 'Who's Arnie Katz?'. Who's Ron Smith? He just looks at his Hugo in the mornings to remind himself.) Rich then has a bitch about TUFF, Andy Offutt, the Hugos, Charlie Brown and LOCUS: if Rich Brown knows you, that's the end. The issue winds up with the best item - a Steve Stiles cartoon. RB says he'll send one copy to anyone in the world. Let's see if you can get him offended at me.

YANDRO 209 12 for \$4 from R & J Coulson, Route 3, Hartford City, Indiana 47348 USA.

If you've published 209 issues of a fanzine then you know your business. (Actually if you know your business you'd never even contemplate publishing 9 issues of a fanzine, much less 209.) There's a somewhat inaccurate article by me about Australian censorship, but the rest is the regular YANDRO fare - editorials, book reviews, letters (no fanzine reviews this time - what's the matter, RSC, you well or something?). YANDRO is consistently good and well worth while. (If I took my own advice I'd subscribe, but I don't take advice too well.)

BEABOHEMA 18 50¢ each from Frank Lunney, Box 394, Lehigh University,  
Bethlehem, Pa, 18015, USA.

My own reaction to BEABOHEMA has always been handicapped in its expression by the memory of the first few issues I saw: I'd rather not talk about that. Right now BAB is an interesting sort of fannish fanzine which doesn't quite seem to have made up its mind. My only real complaint now would be the articles on music - I really don't even care to know about that sort of music. But the long fanzine review by Jerry Lapidus (on this occasion about one of the recent glorious failures - the second incarnation of FOCAL POINT) is the best item by far. There are a couple of so-so articles, a very mixed letter column and some excellent drawings.

MOEBIUS TRIP 9,10,11 5 for \$2 from Ed Connor, 1805 N. Gale, Peoria, Illinois  
61604, USA.

Ed Connor goes out of his way to use letter from Australian fans - or so it would seem. Number 10 has half a dozen. Each issue has book reviews and a column of fairly new fanzine reviews (i.e. reviews of the first couple of issues of fanzines: why should I leave such tangles around?) Specific items of interest from the issues in question would be: (9) Paul Walker's lengthy interview with Frederik Pohl and a couple of short Terry Jeeves pieces - (10) Mervyn Barrett's report of the '71 Birmingham Convention (Don't you trust us any more, Mervyn?), Leon Taylor's review of J. Baxter's SCIENCE FICTION IN THE CINEMA and a weird letter by Jack Wodhams (forgot to count Jack amongst the Aussies - sorry, Jack).- (11) This contains Philip Jose Farmer's biography of Kilgore Trout (including a bibliography of Trout's science fiction works) and after that anything has to be anticlimactic. Even so, Andy Offutt's suggestions as to how to be a successful fraud are to the point and Hank Davis's piece on prediction (though too serious-looking for me) are pretty good stuff.

TOMORROW AND... 7 5 for \$2 from Jerry Lapidus 54 Clearview Drive, Pittsford,  
N.Y. 14534, USA (but that's not his present  
address, gentle reader).

TOMORROW AND... is really reduced: I certainly shouldn't like to try to read it in any kind of shade. But this reduction does mean that a lot can be fitted into a few pages. Some of the drawings no doubt benefit from the reduction, but others certainly don't. In Jerry's editorial he touches briefly upon a supposed war between review fandom and fan fandom. I don't suppose this to be any different from the situation which has existed pretty continuously over the past twenty years. Some science fiction fans like reading about science fiction and others prefer to read about more intellectually demanding matters - science fiction fans and their interactions. What does seem to me to be the case is that in recent years there's been a development of some magnitude in the approach taken to the reviewing of science fiction books: not everyone wants to read seventeen reviews of I HAVE NO FACE AND FEAR NO EVIL a month, so some people have been working at it a little harder. At the same time quite a few people feel that seventeen reviews a month isn't enough. I can't get myself much involved with people who write reviews of dozens of SF books a year - but this doesn't mean that one doesn't occasionally find something valuable in a review. As you can guess, TOMORROW AND... is the sort of fanzine which can stir people up.

Next time: STARLING, GRANFALLOON, MOTA and whatever turns up.