

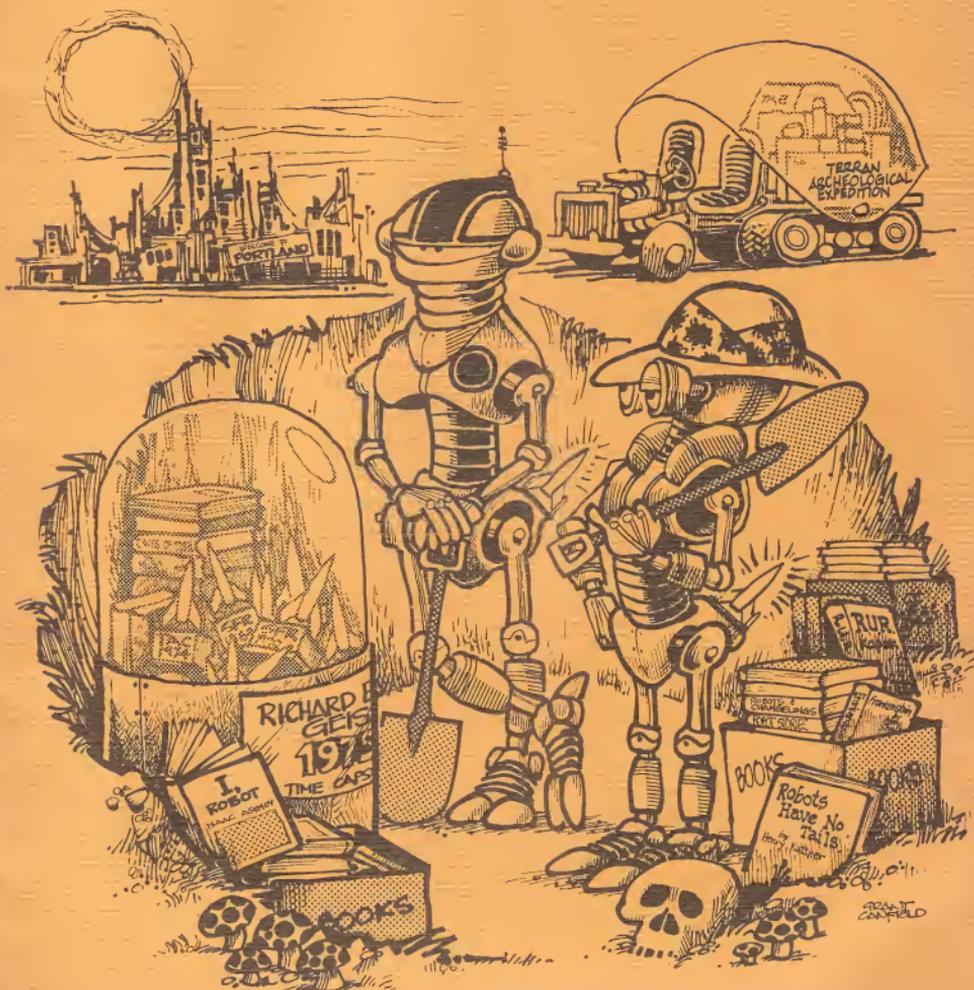
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REVIEW

Formerly THE ALIEN CRITIC

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RICHARD E. GEIS
Editor & Publisher

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ALIEN THOUGHTS

THE HUGO AWARDS were presented at Aussecon, the 33rd World Science Fiction Convention, held at Melbourne, Australia, in August.

BEST NOVEL: THE DISPOSSESSED by Ursula K. Le Guin.

BEST NOVELLA: "A Song for Lya" by George R. R. Martin.

BEST NOVELETTE: "Adrift Just Off the Islets of Langerhans" by Harlan Ellison.

BEST SHORT STORY: "The Hole Man" by Larry Niven.

BEST PROFESSIONAL EDITOR: Ben Bova, of ANALOG.

BEST PROFESSIONAL ARTIST: Kelly Freas.

BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION: YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN.

BEST FANZINE: THE ALIEN CRITIC.

BEST FAN WRITER: Richard E. Geis.

BEST FAN ARTIST: Bill Rotsler.

Other awards given at the WorldCon:

Little Merfs "Invisible Man": A. Bertram Chandler.

First Fandom Award: Donald A. Wollheim.

"Big Heart" Award: Don Tuck.

"Grand Master of Fantasy" (Gandalf) Award: Fritz Leiber.

John W. Campbell Award: P.J. Plauger.

Committee Awards: Donald A. Wollheim and Walt Lee.

Thank you to the many Hugo voters who felt THE ALIEN CRITIC the best fanzine of 1974, and who thought I was the best fan writer.

But I warn you— I'll be impossible to live with. You have no idea what winning two Hugoes in one year does to a pure, innocent ego like mine.

As for Alter-Ego... He sits down in the dungeon fondling them, muttering, polishing, chortling....

I have made some comments on the other Hugo winners in my GALAXY column, scheduled for sometime early in 1976. Not sure which issue, since the publishers keep skipping issues. Last I heard the December and January issues would be combined, and that probably another combined issue would happen in the Spring.

It gives no great pleasure, truly, to let you know that I'll have a novelette in



the second Peter Weston edited ANDROMEDA series of original s-f collections. The books will be published in England starting in 1976. The publisher has a working arrangement with Dell, I understand, and it is expected that ANDROMEDA will appear in the United States in due time.

The novelet is titled "The One Immortal Man" and there is a small tale behind it.

I wrote it originally, on-stencil, in my 1972 personalzine, RICHARD E. GEIS #3. Its title then was, tongue-in-cheekily, "Tomb It May Concern."

Peter Weston remembered it, and when he was given the editorship of the ANDROMEDA books earlier this year, asked if I'd send him the manuscript.

I had in the meanwhile rewritten the rough draft that had appeared in REG #3 and sent it to Virginia Kidd, my agent-in-waiting. She had liked it but was unable to find a market for it...it being still too tough, sexy, violent for the straight s-f markets.

Subsequently Virginia and I decided to end our relationship, mostly because to her frustration I insisted on publishing THE ALIEN CRITIC and then SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW instead of writing science fiction as I had told everyone I was going to.

I had the once-revised ms. of "The One Immortal Man" in hand when Pete asked to see it. I sent it. He and the publisher liked it very much...and wanted some changes made.

I had to admit the changes Pete asked were legitimate, and improved the story. They are minor, but necessary. The essential toughness and adulthood of the novelette remains. Some of the sex and graphic violence has been toned down. One action/killing sequence "promised" by the story (but not delivered—cheating the reader and necessary to the story's resolution) is added. The shocking final scene remains.

And I've promised to write a sequel.

Thus I am finally seriously edging in to the arena.

"The One Immortal Man" is just about (in essence) what I would like to see more of in science fiction. I think there is a realism, an adulthood in attitude, in philosophy, which is hungered for and seldom satisfied.

All this sounds arrogant as hell. Another ten pounds of hubris to carry around. So be it.

THE EDITOR MOANED TO ALTER-EGO: Damn it, I'm short five pages this issue. Where am I going to put the Archives?

"What...no more room? No Archives? Thank God! If you knew how bloody tired I am of organizing and typing those endless columns of titles, dates, authors, prices, publishers..."

But—The Archives are Necessary, an on-going record of books and magazines received. They—

"They're a waste of time and space, Geis. Ditch 'em! 99% of the readers would rather have more commentary on current stories and s-f happenings."

Yes, I've read letters saying that, but The Archives have been my conscience salver. By listing all books received I felt better about my inability to review them all. A listing is better than nothing. And the lists of publishers' addresses...I figured these were valuable, so readers could order books direct.

"I see your point, Guilty-One, but consider the option of printing the publisher's address with each review! See, that way if a reader after reading a review or comment decides he wants to get that book or magazine and can't find it down at the local store, he can still order it direct. The address is right there with the review. No bunting through The Archives."

Yesss... But I can't do that this issue. Almost the whole magazine is already pasted-up on layout sheets.

"Dum-dum, you've got room for the publishers' addresses this issue. I noticed an empty page...there!"

I really hate to abandon The Archives. The bibliographers will hate me.

"Listen, you've got five more books stacked up here waiting to be reviewed. You've still to write the "Small Press Notes" and the "Prozine Notes" for this issue. You have to have room to summarize and short-quote at least a dozen letters you want desperately to print in full, so screw The Archives, Geis. You've got to be ruthless. Merciless. First priority must go to reviews and commentary and let-

ters. Take my advice. Print the publishers' addresses in this issue, then begin the new addresses—with-reviews next issue."

Oh, easy for you to say, because you have absolutely no conscience at all, the ethics of a goat in a field of flowers, the morals of a successful politician.... God, how I envy you, Alter.

"So if the lousy Archives are so precious, send back all the full-page advertising you've accepted. That would make room for—"

On the other hand The Archives are too time-consuming... And the advertising is making the heavy cover possible on this issue....

"I knew you'd find a way to see the wisdom of my advice, Geis. Your problem is you're run-down, tired...you need a vacation. Why don't you let me take over the forebrain for a few days? Close your eyes....let me slide into the control pod. Just let yourself sink down into the medulla for a sweet rest...soothing...quiet...."

AKK! NO! Down! Get away from me! Keep your slimy tendrils off my buttons. I am a master here! I am in command. I am the Prime Self, and don't you forget it!

"Huh. Thought I had you there for a few seconds. Well, there'll come a time."

No way, Alter. To prove my decisiveness, my superior will, I'll even make a further cut. The Keith Laumer interview scheduled for this issue will have to go the way of the Durrell Schweitzer article so often postponed.

"Why, Geis, your guts astonishes me."

Well, the interview is valuable and interesting and worth reading for the Laumer comments on his work and the world, but it is three years old, did first appear in THRUST, and since I am unable to update it or even find out if Laumer is still writing (after recovering from his stroke)...I'll pull it and devote the space to more letters, reviews and such. I never seem to have enough room in this magazine for myself, anyway.

"You assume the readers would rather read you and letters and reviews than warm-over Laumer, huh?"

Err...in this instance, yes. Besides, it's my magazine and I can do anything I want with it!

"You are drunk with power and Hugo juice."

"You are correct, Alter. Say goodnight."

"Goodnight, Geis. And thanks. Wow... no Archives to slave over...."

My New York spy has informed me that the new Roger Elwood s-f magazine schedul-

JAMES BLISH DIED Wednesday, July 30th 1975, of cancer.

We've lost another good one. He'll be best remembered for his Hugo-winning novel, A CASE OF CONSCIENCE, his Cities in Flight series, and his little-known, very fine historical novel, DR. MIRABILIS.

Everyone must die. The tragedy is to die before one's work is finished. Our great loss is that Jim's best work had yet to be written.

ed for January appearance will be titled ODDSEVEN. A file title. I had thought all the good s-f titles were used up. The publisher is the same company that publishes SAGA.

The quarterly schedule is (I am told) tentative, so that if the first issue's sales don't come up to expectations (on a spot-check basis, I presume), the project can be dropped with minimal loss.

Back issues of THE ALIEN CRITIC are dwindling... I've decided, since #5, #6, and #7 (photo-offset 5 1/2 x 8 1/2 size) are in their last 100 or so, it would be a good idea to paste them up in the 8 1/2 x 11 newsprint format of SFR #14 in printings of 3000, for long-term availability. Same for TAC #8-9-10-12, the mimeograph editions. #11 was a photo-offset 5 1/2 x 8 1/2 issue, and it, too, in time, will go to the 8 1/2 x 11 format.

Eventually all back issues will be in the standard size, reprinted.

I am somewhat bemused to realize, after a startled look in the other half of the basement, that I have only about 280 copies of SFR 14 left...out of 4000. Another reprint order.

Andy Porter, editor and publisher of ALGOL, took exception to my statement last issue that SFR has twice as many words as the current issue of ALGOL. Count your words, Geis, he challenges, and I'll have my typesetter give figures and we'll see!

I estimated wordage. If it will make Andy happier I will amend to say SFR has approximately twice the non-advertising wordage of ALGOL.

Eh!!

SFR 16 will have the now-accumulating interview with Jerry Pournelle (who Larry Niven describes as 'somewhere to the right of Genghis Khan.' Jerry describes himself as a twelfth century liberal).

I'll be doing my own interviews from now on, mostly, I think, three to six months before publication, to avoid long delays and to ask the questions I want asked, and to insure exclusivity and freshness.

There will be a just-arrived "Noise Level" column by John Brunner. (You think writing is fun and games? Wait till you read this one!)

There will be a very readable, conversational-style article on Philip K. Dick by Terence M. Green.

George Warren WILL send his review of Bester's THE COMPUTER CONNECTION.

And wild horses couldn't keep Jon Gustafson from sending his popular column.

Also—invariably—someone will send an article or column I can't refuse. I already have a long, meaty letter from Michael G. Coney. And Richard Lupoff is doing a double review...

I have asked Stephen Fabian to do a cover.

I may also have a surprise interview with a pseudonym.

The 34th World Science Fiction Convention will be held in Kansas City, Sept. 2-6, 1976. The convention committee is determined to keep the size of the Con within bounds. They are being very tough and professional. Observe the membership rates below and act accordingly. Frankly, they boggle my mind. Latecomers will be screaming bloody murder.

MEMBERSHIPS

The membership rates for MidAmerCon are as follows:

	Attending	Supporting
until Dec. 31, 1975	\$15.00	\$5.00
Jan. 1, 1976 to April 30, 1976	20.00	6.00
May 1, 1976 to July 31, 1976	25.00	6.00
After Aug. 1, 1976 & at the door	50.00	6.00



I wonder if I could make it with Alter?

SPEC FIC AND THE PERRY RHODAN GHETTO

By Donald C. Thompson
With Commentary By R.E.G.
A Letter From Bob Silverberg
A Quote From Silverberg
And A Commentary by Darrell
Schweitzer

((REG NOIF: "Spec fic and the Perry Rhodan Ghetto" originally appeared in Donald C. Thompson's personalzine, DON-O-SAUR 41. The Darrell Schweitzer quote of Silverberg from an interview, and the Schweitzer comment are from a letter in DON-O-SAUR 42. The Silverberg letter is quoted from DON-O-SAUR 42. My indented comments are in my usual double parenthesis and as usual will probably get me into trouble.))

Something like 500 people paid \$3. each on Friday evening, April 11, 1975, to hear Bob Silverberg, Harlan Ellison, Ursula Le Guin, Ed Bryant, Tom Clareson and Charlie Brown discuss science fiction. It was the first of two public sessions of the SFRA Regional Conference.

The event was billed as a "lecture and discussion." I don't know what most people were expecting. I don't even know what I was expecting.

But after fifteen or twenty minutes of dumb questions from the audience and flip replies from the panel, some in the crowd were beginning to feel cheated, and were saying so. Then somebody asked a serious question about regional influences on SF writers.

That issue was kicked around inconclusively, but Bob Silverberg somehow, in the process of insisting on being taken seriously as he explained why he had moved from New York to California, "where the air is fit to breathe" (a phrase that drew snickers from the largely Colorado crowd), swung the entire discussion around to the topic of his real concern — the reasons why he is, as of May 1, retiring as a science fiction writer.

That announcement came as a genuine surprise to quite a number of people, including even me, though perhaps I should have been more prepared for it because, as I remembered during the discussion, Ed Bryant had mentioned it previously.

Anyway, from that point on, there were no dull spots in the discussion. And while some people were infuriated, some exaspera-

ted, some humiliated, and some I think honestly aggrieved, and while there was lots of angry discussion still going on in the workshops and panels the next day, I don't know of anyone who felt they hadn't gotten their money's worth.

Damned if I'll try to summarize the discussion. My major impression of the evening is that most of the two hours was taken up with Silverberg and Harlan Ellison taking turns saying the nastiest things they could think of about science fiction, with Tom Clareson interjecting occasional long monologues about James Fenimore Cooper and Mark Twain and William Faulkner, and with Leguin, Bryant and Brown being heard only briefly and rarely.

Some very substantial issues were raised; some very valid grievances were aired. Someone can write a book or a doctoral dissertation analyzing them all. I think I can get most conveniently to the points I want to respond to by starting with Bob Silverberg's reasons for quitting science fiction (or the writing of same), and then taking a look at the responses of some of the other panelists.

Silverberg made it clear, if not at the Friday night session, at least before the weekend was over, in private conversation,

that he is not getting out of science fiction entirely: he will continue to attend conferences and conventions and workshops (especially if he's paid to do so), and he will continue with anthologies such as *NEW DIMENSIONS* and *ALPHA*.

But he's made it just as clear that as soon as he's finished writing the novel he's currently working on, about the first of May, he does not intend to do any more writing—definitely not any SF writing—for at least the next couple of years.

He spent quite a bit of time trying to make his reasons clear, and I was trying to comprehend them, but I'm still not certain that I do fully. I hope that I don't misinterpret him in what follows.

For one thing, Silverberg said, he has been writing science fiction for a long time (more than twenty years) and he's tired.

Mostly though he is discouraged and depressed for reasons that have nothing to do with his own efforts or accomplishments.



Silverberg definitely does not consider himself a failure; in financial terms, on the contrary, he acknowledges that he has been far more successful than the average science fiction writer — so successful that he can afford to quit writing. What it comes down to, if I understand him correctly, is that Silverberg considers science fiction a failure.

He considers that the field as a whole has failed him and all the other serious writers who have tried to produce serious works of adult literature within the science fiction genre. He mentioned particularly J.G. Ballard, Theodore Sturgeon, Avram Davidson and Philip Jose Farmer.

For many years Robert Silverberg was regarded as a hack (and presumably regarded himself as such), grinding out competent but undistinguished space opera by the yard. Then, less than a decade ago, he underwent a sort of metamorphosis and began producing (at almost the same incredible rate of speed as before) some of the most noteworthy, intelligent, mature, sophisticated, literate and just plain good science fiction ever seen. THORNS, A TIME OF CHANGES, SON OF MAN, THE WORLD INSIDE, TOWER OF GLASS, UP THE LINE, DYING INSIDE... the list could go on and on.

One of the things that has plunged Silverberg into a depression is that his publishers are keeping his old potboiler novels in print, but are not reissuing his "adult" works.

It's a matter of economics. The recession is being felt in the book trade too. Publishers are cutting back. They're playing it safe, studying the sales figures very closely. The charts seem to show that Silverberg's hack stuff sells; his quality work does not. Therefore...

Well, therefore Bob Silverberg is going to quit writing science fiction.

"We have tried to upgrade this field; we have provided it with quality material that it can be proud of, but our efforts have been rejected. Science fiction readers don't want literary quality, they want space adventure—Perry Rhodan and Cap Kennedy. That's what the public thinks of when you say 'science fiction,' and that's what science fiction is. And high school teachers of science fiction may argue that Perry Rhodan serves a useful purpose by getting kids interested in SF and that once they get hooked on that they will eventually develop enough taste to prefer the better fiction. But it isn't so. Most of them never get beyond Perry Rhodan. We have suffered by having our stories labeled sci-

ence fiction, and so we reject that label!"

None of the members of the panel actually made quite that speech, but the sentiments reflected therein were expressed, in varying degrees of vehemence, by Silverberg, Ellison and Bryant.

((This reminds me of the little boy who finds the rules of the game not to his liking, so he takes his ball and goes home. "All right for you! I won't like you anymore!" Or the lover spurned.

((But the argument implicit here—that "quality" writing doesn't sell, "hack" writing does—I find disgustingly self-serving and self-pitying. These "quality" writers must know that to the extent they abandon or neglect or abjure plot, traditional story elements, reader appeal, in any genre... to the extent they avoid the conventions of commercial fiction...they reduce their potential audience. They do it, not the evil publishers or the 'stupid' and 'lazy' readers. It is their choice to write in such a way that their work will appeal to a smaller audience.

((The really literate readers they wish for may number fewer than fifty thousand. It is ridiculous to condemn the Perry Rhodan and Cap Kennedy and Laser readers for preferring a different variety of sf.

((As a matter of fact, these writers may suffer if their work is not labeled science fiction. 'Speculative Fiction' has an elitist, literary smell to it and the sf reader who isn't snobbish and self-consciously intelligent will avoid it.))

Ellison did, in one of his tirades, actually say that he wished all the Perry Rhodan books could be burned, and that statement did actually elicit a burst of applause from the audience. Silverberg, a little later, expressed sorrow that people with masters degrees should applaud such a statement, but he did not himself disagree with it.

((Harlan does tend to get carried away in heated public rhetoric. I'm sure he doesn't now really wish the reading desires of others be censored or the books they choose and pay for burned.))

It was definitely Silverberg who most actively guided the discussion into its anti-science fiction channel, and it was Silverberg who seemed to dominate the discussion, if only because he was the one planning the most definite action in support of his anti-SF views.

But both Ellison and Bryant made it clear that they agreed with his contention that science fiction is an unsavory ghetto.

"I rue the day that I sold my first story to a science fiction magazine and got myself branded as a science fiction writer," Ellison proclaimed. "I've been fighting to overcome that handicap ever since. Hell, I don't write science fiction stories — never have. I write Harlan Ellison stories!"

Ed Bryant, in his increasingly frequent encounters with newspaper reporters and during his appearances on radio and/or TV talk shows, has always been very careful to refer to himself as a writer of "speculative fiction" and he takes as much time as necessary to explain the difference between that and "science fiction." Among his friends, Bryant has been trying to popularize the term "spec-fic" as a first step toward replacing the lamentable "sci-fi."

"I am willing to take my chances with the critics as just a writer," Bryant told that Friday night crowd. "Science fiction is a ghetto, and I want out!"

((Even the mainstream is a ghetto. Probably as unsavory or noisier than science fiction. And, horror upon horror, the competition is probably tougher, the knives longer and sharper. Lots of luck, Ed.))

Ursula LeGuin had less to say about this whole issue than any of the other three pro writers. She was not at all certain that her future books and stories would continue to fit neatly into the science fiction category, but she was unable to work up any indignation over the existence of the category. "I just write what I feel like writing, and I don't really worry about what it's called," she said.

((Ursula's success as a science fiction writer and her unconcern with 'ghettos' and 'labels' must be terribly disconcerting to the self-styled "quality" writers who blame everything and everyone but themselves for their lack of critical recognition and readers.))

Charlie Brown pleaded with the authors not to leave the science fiction field,

that it was, after all, such writers as themselves who had helped to give science fiction some respectability.

(I find this obsessive concern with Status and Respectability for science fiction and its writers a symptom of ego, envy and conceit.)

It was a little hard to follow what Tom Clareson was saying, because one does tend to start yawning after Clareson has been talking for a few minutes, but I think that in his remarks about Cooper and Twain and Faulkner and I don't remember who else he brought in, he was trying to make a point that I consider of crucial importance — namely that important writers, such as Twain and Faulkner (yes, I remember; Clareson was using Cooper and Horatio Alger as examples of enormously popular writers of no real literary merit — the Perry Rhodan producers of their day) have always had a difficult with publishers pinning labels on them or not knowing how to promote their books. Mark Twain's publishers thought he wrote funny books and they exploited him as a humorist, and it wasn't until after he was dead that the critics discovered what a serious writer he was. Faulkner spent most of his career in obscurity as far as the public was concerned. And so forth.

The audience response to the discussion was, as I've indicated, varied but tended sharply toward the angry.

Several people pointed out that Silverberg, Ellison and Bryant were at least able to get their stuff published, which was more than a good many struggling mainstream writers were able to do, and that both Silverberg and Ellison had made some pretty good money.

Silverberg conceded that point and repeatedly stressed that the finances had nothing to do with his decision to leave SF. Ellison conceded the point, too. "But I've made money because I'm a hustler and I always assume that anything that isn't nailed down is mine, and I take it."

But then Ellison listed some science fiction writers who he said were just as talented as he but not as aggressive — Sturgeon, Davidson, Farmer — and who had achieved neither wealth nor critical acclaim.

Because they bear the label "science fiction writers" and their books are in the science fiction of the stores, and because the critics never give serious attention to science fiction books.

It was that point about the critics, I

think, that came closest to persuading me that Silverberg is maybe justified in getting out of SF; because it has infuriated me for many years that so many really fine writers are systematically ignored by mainstream critics (and therefore by some segments of the reading public) — simply because what they write is called science fiction, and the critics know without having to think about it that science fiction is "oh, that Perry Rhodan stuff."

(May I suggest that time will bring full recognition to those authors who deserve it? The point has been made time and again that the New York Literary Establishment is a clique of shrewish whores. Their opinions are riddled with territoriality, greed, exclusiveness and snobbishness. A lust for their recognition and approval is understandable, but questionable.)

Yeah, that kind of willfully ignorant snobbishness does make me angry. Ellison named just a few good neglected writers. I can name a couple of dozen others without even taking a deep breath — and just for the hell of it, I think I will. Here:

Poul Anderson, James Blish, John Boyd, John Brunner, D. G. Compton, Edmund Cooper, Sam Delany (but maybe he doesn't belong on here; Delany may have discovered that the key to mainstream success is simply to write an enormous book, obscure in meaning, with lots of kinky sex), Philip K. Dick, Thomas Disch, Geo. Alec Effinger, R. A. Lafferty, Fritz Leiber, Anne McCaffrey, Michael Moorcock, Frederik Pohl, Joanna Russ, Bob Shaw, Robert Sheckley, Clifford D. Simak, James Tiptree, Bob Tucker, Jack Vance, Jack Williamson, Roger Zelazny...

That's an even two dozen, isn't it? And I'm sure that each of you can think of another dozen or so that should be added. So could I.

These are writers who, in any sane, literate, truly civilized society, would be famous. Their names would be known to all, not to just a small cult of science fiction freaks.



((No, ho. Idealistic crap. There never has been a sane, literate, truly civilized society, and I doubt there ever will, given the nature of the human animal.

That many from science fiction would be famous? Wow.

I do not like the self-contempt inherent in 'cult' of 'freaks.')

If my indignation makes it sound like I'm agreeing with Silverberg, Ellison and Bryant, I apologize.

On balance, I find that I do not agree with them.

Oh, I agree with them that the plight of the science fiction writer is a sorry one, that publishers are ruthless bastards, more intent on turning a fast buck than in preserving literary values; and I also agree with them that Perry Rhodan is probably crud and that it's a damn shame that in the public mind Rhodan should have come to symbolize SF — if indeed it does (and I'm not all that sure that it does).

In fact, several times during the discussion, Silverberg and Ellison, particularly, seemed to be saying not that the public sees SF in terms of Perry Rhodan — but that they do.

((Of course Perry Rhodan is not selling well; Ace has cut back the number of issues and has put aside plans to publish the companion ATLAN series.))

And there's the essence of my disagreement with them. They blame the nature of science fiction itself for their woes. I blame the stupidity of critics, publishers and readers.

One of the teachers in a workshop session the next day summed up the indignation that had been aroused in many of the educa-

tors, and she came close to expressing some of my own sentiments:

"Here we've been working to get science fiction accepted as a legitimate field of study, and we've finally begun to convince administrators and parents that it's a tremendously wide field—it covers writers from Kepler and Swift to Heinlein, Clarke, Vonnegut and Barth—and now these people come along and tell us that science fiction is nothing but Perry Rhodan! How many teachers or even students here have ever read any Perry Rhodan books?"

The hands of a few students did go up. Some of the teachers present indicated that they had never heard of Perry Rhodan before.

"Well, I just think it's narrow-minded and almost bigoted of Mr. Silverberg and Mr. Ellison to say that science fiction is no good just because some of the things that are called science fiction are no good."

Then my sentiments, pretty much.

And I don't know whether the Perry Rhodan books are any good or not; I've never read any of them.

But even if they are terrible, and even if they are the best sellers of the SF field, I don't see the same significance in the fact that Silverberg seems to see.

Crud is always more popular than quality. That's a corollary of Sturgeon's Law, isn't it? And it's just as true of the mainstream as it is of SF.

I don't know whether Silverberg really thinks his books would be found by more intelligent readers or that a larger number of intelligent readers would find his books if they weren't labeled "science fiction," and I don't know whether Bryant thinks that by calling his stuff "speculative fiction" he will attract a better breed of reader.

They are deluding themselves, I fear, if their expectations really run along those lines. The average level of intelligence among SF readers is almost certainly higher by a significant degree than the average of mainstream fiction readers. No, I don't have statistics to support that statement, but does anybody doubt it?

So if Silverberg wants the acclaim of readers capable of appreciating his best work, it's my personal opinion that he'd do best to stay where he is. (And just parenthetically I think he would be well advised to quit antagonizing the SF scholars and students—the people who are trying hardest to persuade mainstream critics and readers that science fiction is worthy of ser-

ious attention).

On the other hand, if what Silverberg really wants is popular acclaim—like making the best-seller list...then, sure, it is essential to shed the SF label. And to go back to writing crud.

Actually, I don't seriously think that's what Bob Silverberg wants.

I think he's just tired and wants to take a vacation from writing, and maybe that is a good idea.

But frankly I don't think he can stick it out for two years. I hope not.

DARRELL SCHWEITZER: "...I did an interview with Silverbob for AMAZING (it'll be out in maybe six months) in which he made this statement:

"I wouldn't mind making his (Harold Robbins') money, but I don't want to do stuff that's so accessible that millions and millions of people all over the world read it, because all important fiction, all really powerful fiction, literary art, has been an elite art. I think that anything that is worthwhile is either folk art or elite but nothing in between. The gray area of commercialism is useless and short lived."

The interview was done at Disco II last summer, and unless Silverberg has changed his mind since, I can't see why he's so worried about Perry Rodent. The masses read trash and always will, and the good stuff has to appeal only to a few. Perry Rodent is for the otherwise non-reader, and I don't think it seriously cuts in to the adult market. If Silverberg still wants to write for the elite, the intelligent adult reader, he has to realize that he will never be as widely read as the KLANSMAN OF GORE, at least not in the near future. But the chances of his work surviving are far greater than they are for the hack stuff. And in the meantime there is the satisfaction of knowing that he has reached the discerning audience. Even if he had to resort to an Arkham House style specialty press (as all SF writers did 25 years ago) this should be enough. And since he can also make a living, and has some chance for being read beyond his lifetime, what more can a writer ask?"

((The core of my argument with the writers of "quality" sf is my desire to see them stop trying to fight the realities of modern mass market publishing. Instead of al-

lenating readers and deriding them, instead of wailing and moaning and cry-babing around about how they are Artists, unappreciated, victims of greed and stupidity, I always wonder why they don't USE the system, write the best damn space adventures (with their precious messages and symbols and allusions built in, between the lines) it is possible to write; entertaining, gripping, thought-provoking... It can be done. It has been done. That is quality writing. That is having your cake and eating it. But you have to be a really good writer to do it.

Which is more important; saying what you want to say to many, many captivated, happy readers, or saying it in a different mode to far fewer 'hardworking' readers?))

9-25-75

'Dear Bob:

I have Don Thompson's permission to reprint his "Spec fic and the Perry Rhodan Ghetto" from DOM—SAUR 41, and would like permission from you to reprint your loc from DOM—SAUR 42. I'll be commenting here and there in the "Spec fic..." article.

'Do you have any additional or revised thoughts you'd like included/substituted?

'Best,
REG'

10/27- Yes, reprint it. Nothing has happened lately to alter my belief that there's little room in contemporary American SF for the serious writer. I'm out of it for keeps. (But not entirely done with s-f, only with s-f novels and stories. I've just been hired to work on Paramount's Star Trek movie!)

'Bob.'

ROBERT SILVERBERG '...In general you report me fairly, but there is one aspect of your interpretation of my remarks that disturbs me. I don't recall having said nasty things about science fiction, nor trying to antagonize SF scholars and students, nor wishing my books were published as mainstream novels.

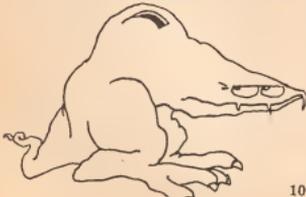
'I love science fiction. I love reading it, I love writing it. Most of what's published disappoints me, because it fails to live up to my ideal vision of what s-f ought to be, but that's not the fault of the genre, only of the authors. In my own work I tried to create the sort of ideal

s-f I had in mind — books like SON OF MAN, TOWER OF GLASS, TO LIVE AGAIN, and the rest — because no one else seemed to be writing it at the moment.

"I have no wish to antagonize the s-f academic division. Those people are my most sympathetic and informed readers. I was only trying to warn them of my own melancholy discoveries — that the bulk of s-f readers prefer fast-paced simple-minded junk, and that the whole effort to make s-f a subject for academic study may be doomed because nothing but Perry Rhodan may survive the present purge. They can't teach Perry Rhodan except in pop-cult courses.

"The problem I've faced is very simple. I wrote well, and my best books went out of print. I didn't want to outsell Harold Robbins, or even Perry Rhodan; I just wanted to stay in print, to be able to reach my audience. The publishers chose to cut me off from my audience. In effect they penalized me for writing too well. I discovered belatedly that to most publishers, s-f is a mere schlock category of commercial fiction, half a notch up the esthetic scale from nurse novels. To those publishers, an s-f writer who gets delusions of quality is a mere nuisance, and an expensive nuisance, because s-f's sales at best are so marginal that a writer who loses readers through excessive literacy is a burden to his publisher. When I found out what was happening, I saw no recourse but to quit, and I did, and after five weeks of joyous retirement I feel better and better about the decision to get out. I was a very good s-f writer, yes, and I was breaking my health and spirit continuing to write (slowly and with much difficulty) books that publishers and most readers didn't seem to want. I have no answers to the paradoxical problems that have impaled me. The only cure, for me, is to go away. Books that aren't written can't go out of print."

((Books that aren't written will never be available to even a first printing audience, and will never be available for eventual reissuing.))



10

MESSAGES MAKE MESSSES

THE LAST LEVIATHAN by Michael Moorcock
Doubleday, \$5.95

IRON CAGE by Andre Norton
Viking

Reviewed by Lynne Holden

This sequel to THE WARLORD OF THE AIR is a fascinating and repulsive book. In it, Moorcock destroys the USA in time for the Bicentennial. The story is narrated by Bastable, who has stumbled into yet another parallel world in which a Chilean genius, Manuel O'Bean, has enabled Man to live without want, who then must turn his energies to destruction. Utopia is intolerable. After the initial bomb and plague wipe-out has swept away most of the Northern Hemisphere, a black warlord named Cicero Hood seeks to destroy any remaining whites. Bastable joins Hood, hoping to assassinate him, but soon becomes a staunch supporter. After napping up Europe, Hood turns to America. Those whites left are enslaved...so that perhaps Moorcock can write a sequel which takes place in 1975 (this novel is set in the alternate world's 1907) which has White Power riots and White ghettos.

Personally, I can understand Cicero Hood's motive for white genocide—revenge. But Bastable I don't understand at all. He's appalled by the White treatment of Blacks in Washington (the Washingtonians regard the Blacks as fifth columnists for Hood...which they are!). Both sides are out for naked power, but it is Hood who is the invader. Later the Whites of the USA regard Bastable as a traitor, and I concur. Of course Bastable is made an honorary Black.

This book is very readable, if distasteful. Bantustan, ruled by Ghandi, is as decent a place as the rest of the world is horrible. Perhaps Manuel O'Bean's support of the Australo-Japanese navy—they consider Hood a grave threat to World Peace—is Moorcock having second thoughts. But don't bet on it.

IRON CAGE is a book that makes you want to hit the dog and kick the cat—in retaliation—for being lectured by yet another message book. This time about man's cruelty to other forms of life. But "preachy" books turn me off, and I suspect that is true for most people.

Jony, a young human, has escaped a lab run by the Big Ones and lives with the People. Conflict begins when humans come to the planet and decide the People aren't in-

telligent enough to count as "people" by law. The ending is about what you'd expect.

I hope this book has gotten the preaching out of Andre Norton's system so she can write the space fantasy and adventure she does so well.

Her books about human/animal teams such as THE BEAST MASTER and THE DEFIANT AGENTS better make the message of respect for different life and intelligence.

LETTER FROM KURT VONNEGUT, JR.

Sept. 2, 1975

"I have read Philip Jose Farmer's account of his side of the VENUS ON THE HALF-SHELL affair. I am sorry that, as he says, he is left with a bad taste in his mouth.

"I never encouraged him in the project, which contained nothing but risks for me. Still, he kept after me, and I at last gave him permission to borrow my readers and my inventions and my reputation — with no editorial or financial strings attached. You cannot find an equivalent act of generosity in the whole history of the writing business. He was and remains a total stranger to me, by the way.

"As for the wonderful idea of actually writing books by Kilgore Trout: I thought of doing it long before Mr. Farmer did, and I may do it still. And Mr. Farmer did not have to labor to turn Trout into a hoax, either. I had already made Trout one of the most famous hoaxes of our time.

"Now then: Mr. Farmer has earned royalties on more than one hundred thousand books which most people at first thought were written by me. That is fine with me. I don't crab about that to anybody. I said from the first that the dough should all be his. I do wish, though, that he would not speak darkly of my being a multi-millionaire, which isn't true. And I don't think he should present himself by contrast as a man of the people, gamely up against something like Standard Oil. He got every penny of the swag in this case, an enormous bundle for only six weeks' work.

"Mr. Farmer has also been able to prove even to college professors, in a sort of blindfold test, that he can write my sort of stuff as well as I can any day. I am not surprised or mortified. That's life.

"All I have complained about so far is the abuse I have received in the mails and in reviews for having written such a book. You might append your own review to this letter, Mr. Geis, to show the sort of thing I mean.

¹And this whole adventure has so muddled my reputation and depressed me that I have perfectly reasonably asked that my publishers not bring out any more books by Kilgore Trout.

¹This still leaves Philip Jose Farmer with Philip Jose Farmer, and, sad to say, a bad taste in his mouth.

¹I thank him for the honor he did me, and I congratulate him on writing a best-seller in only six weeks. It takes me years and years.¹

(My comment on the F&SF appearance of VENUS ON THE HALF-SHELL follows. It was in SFR #12 (Feb. 1975).

(('The magazine publishing "event" of the month—F&SF's publishing in the December issue of VENUS ON THE HALF-SHELL by Kilgore Trout—was a dud as far as I'm concerned. I couldn't finish the first half of Vonnegut's satire of science fiction. I think more of the genre than he does, and I think novel-length japes full of mocking, exaggerated clichés and conventions and themes are inherently vulnerable: they bore easily and they please only the enemies of sf, those "superior" ones who like to sneer a lot.

(('Vonnegut takes all the leading sf writers and their fictional trademarks and makes fun. Perhaps gentle fun (to give him the benefit of the doubt).

(('Anyway, it bored me after twenty pages. Satire has got to be superbly done (and must have more in it than snicker-snicker) to survive at length. Few few writers can sustain farce effectively beyond 5,000 words...and Vonnegut this time is not one of them. It's also a bit sad (and delicious) to see him reduced to this kind of performance, he who scooped sf. At the same time, from him, this is an insult, since I don't think he has earned the "right" to do this kind of tongue-in-cheek hatchet job.

(('I note that Vonnegut has applied to the Science Fiction Writers of America for membership—in the name of Kilgore Trout, his mocking symbol of the Ultimate S-F Hack. It is a measure of Vonnegut's contempt and hatred for sf that he has written VENUS ON THE HALF-SHELL and had it published in the most prestigious sf magazine using the Kilgore Trout pseudonym, so that he can join S.F.W.A. under that name.

(('And trust S.F.W.A. to welcome Kilgore with open arms, kissing Vonnegut's arse to get that name in the organization. That's what is called playing the game.'))

LETTER FROM PHILIP JOSE FARMER

Sept. 16, 1975

¹Thanks for forwarding the petition to me to finish the Riverworld series. (Mailed by James P. Mays, Jr.) I am writing on the third volume, now titled THE MAGIC LABYRINTH. If I get done in the expected time and Putnam's goes to work on it immediately on receipt of Ms., then it will come out in hardcover late next year. However, I will let you know when it is done and the publisher has a schedule for it.

¹Re my interview in the last SFR, I expect some will object to my scenario of the future, especially that part concerning the death of the phytoplankton and the consequent decrease in atmospheric oxygen. They will base their objections on recent indications that there may be a vast oxygen generator (the workings of which are not yet understood) in the upper reaches of the atmosphere. In other words, it is possible that even if all vegetation of land and sea died, there would still be enough oxygen for everybody. (We'd starve, of course, so the end result would be the same.) This may be true; it's too early to say that it is a fact. But if it should be validated, and if we do have enough oxygen even if the seas become poisoned and the phytoplankton die, then sea life would die. And the results would be disastrous for land animal life.¹

((So far, no one has objected—we are all content to let our children and/or grandchildren asphyxiate. So it goes. After us—the deluge.))

¹Also, I may have made a false impression when I said I was giving up writing s-f in about three years. I do intend to write mainly in mainstream and mystery, but I love s-f too much to give it up entirely. I will be writing occasional pieces of s-f, a short story or novel now and then, maybe one a year, maybe two. Of course, if the publishers should by then suddenly decide to make their advances and royalty percentages realistic, that is, in accord with the wages of a truck driver or plumber of 1960 (see, I don't ask for much) instead of ignoring resolutely the inflation since 1960 and insisting that s-f writers can get along on the same rates as then, then I will write much more s-f. Is there a fat chance for this?

¹Since my interview came out I received a letter from Franz Rottensteiner. He says that he is actually a secret admirer of mine, but as a Central European critic he has a public image to maintain, and it's



mandatory that he burrap all American writers.¹

((That must make his intellectual life simpler.))

AN INTERVIEW WITH: L. SPRAGUE de CAMP

By Darrell Schweitzer

L. Sprague de Camp is the author of some 75 books, including science fiction novels, fantasy, historicals, and much distinguished non-fiction such as THE GREAT MONKEY TRIAL, and SPIRITS, STARS AND SPELLS (the final word on magic and superstition).

He has edited several anthologies, co-authored and edited some of Robert E. Howard's famous Conan stories, and is in general one of the world's leading experts on heroic fantasy fiction. He lives in Villanova where he works constantly on new books.

Lately, he has been writing a biography of the great horror fiction writer, H. P. Lovecraft, and on his desk are four-foot stacks of xeroxes of all the known Lovecraft correspondence. Somehow having escaped blindness reading all those millions of words of cramped script, Mr. de Camp is editing a book of uncollected Lovecraft writings for the publisher, Donald Grant.

DS: Lately there has been a tremendous revival of stories about bravely thwarted heroes, malevolent wizards and imperiled heroines. How do you account for this great barbarian revival?

De Camp: Well, it's partly a matter of accident. The big revival seems to have been sparked by the publication of Tolkien as much as anything. Of course when Tolkien came out in expensive clothbound volumes there weren't a great many of them printed, so for years they were simply the enthusiasm of a small circle of connoisseurs, as the Zinivian novels of Eric R. Edisson were some years previously. But when Tolkien was issued in paperback, and since it's an excellent story, it caught on, especial-

ly with the college crowd.

And another factor I think is that it's a reaction against the period of the reign of the anti-hero which featured in a great deal of fiction in the 1950's and 60's. You know, this wretched little jerk who has neither brawn nor brains nor character and can't do anything right. So he suffers and suffers like Ziggy in the cartoons. Well, Ziggy is all very amusing and in fact there are days when I feel a little bit like Ziggy myself, but nevertheless he's hardly what you would call a hero, and when people read fiction they usually like a character with whom they can identify.

The anti-hero, on the other hand, is constructed on the theory that no matter how poor or weak or stupid the reader is he can always say to himself, "Well, at least I'm better than that twerp."

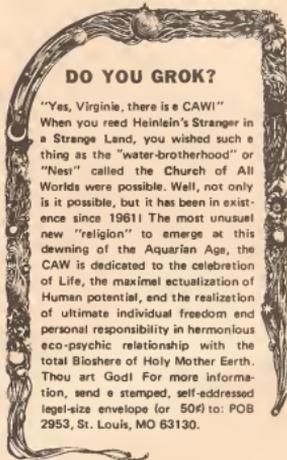
That sort of thing is all very well for a while, but people do get tired of it, so there arose a demand for people who really are heroes with a capital H. And the sword-play and sorcery genre has done what it could to fill that demand.

DS: What are the origins of heroic fantasy? What writers started it?

De Camp: If I knew the name of that writer I'd have to be good for time travel and go back to the stone age. As far as written literature goes it is ultimately derived from ancient myths and legends, hero tales like those of the Sumerian and Babylonian Gilgamesh, the tales of Homer and Vergil, the medieval romances and so on down. The medieval romance of course met a horrible fate. It was murdered by Miguel de Cervantes around the year 1600. You see, Cervantes had led a pretty rough, adventurous life himself. He'd fought in the battle of Lepanto where the Turks were beaten for the first time. He'd been captured and enslaved by the Barbary pirates, and he knew from painful experience that adventures are seldom so entertaining and sanitary as were the romances of gentle knights galloping around and rescuing maidens fair from vile enchanters and all that, so he wrote a hilarious burlesque, DON QUIXOTE, and that so effectively ridiculed the romance that for a couple of centuries nobody cared to write any.

Then in the 18th and early 19th centuries fantasy gradually crept back into European literature through the peasant fairy tales collected by Hans Christian Anderson and the Grimm brothers and others, the oriental extravaganza in the form of the ARABIAN NIGHTS which was first translated into 12

French in the early 18th Century, and the gothic tale of supernatural horror which originated in Germany and was brought to England by Horace Walpole in his novel THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO in 1765. Then Sir Walter Scott with his invention of the modern historical costume romance in the early 19th Century added another element, and in the latter part of the 1880's William Morris put all of these elements together into a series of romantic novels laid in an imaginary world where magic worked but machinery hadn't yet been invented. Then after him came Lord Dunsany, Tolkien, Eric Rucker Edmond whom I mentioned, Robert Howard, and other practitioners of the art. But it's only become what you might call really popular in the last decade with the paperback publication of Tolkien's LORD OF THE RINGS



series and the Conan stories of Robert Howard and several other persons, including myself.

DS: Do you think this is a viable form of writing, or just a passing fad?

De Camp: It's impossible to say how long the present enthusiasm for it will last. These things always go up and down. Around the time of the Second World War it looked as if fantasy in general had become a casualty of the machine age. There were practically no magazines successfully published in that field except for FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION — No, F&S didn't start until around 1950, and for a while there was simply no market for fantasy anywhere. But then it gradually revived and today it's a smaller market than straight science fic-

tion but it's still a viable and living genre which may go on for a long time.

DS: Who do you think are the most important contemporary writers of heroic fantasy and why do you think they're important?

De Camp: Well, that's very hard to say. I could just list their sales figures, but that wouldn't prove anything because somebody who is popular this year may drop out of sight the next and somebody who has been struggling along just barely making a living may have a sudden success. All I can do is tell you which ones I happen to like the best and that's my subjective opinion. I think very highly of Tolkien, of course. I enjoy Fritz Leiber's stories of Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser very much indeed and grab for one whenever I see it. I think very highly of Edmond although he's not a contemporary—he died in 1945. I have also enjoyed in varying degrees the stories in that field of Lin Carter, David Mason, and others. And Andre Norton, too. I'd forgotten about her for the moment. I think very highly of her work in that field. I'd put her pretty well on the top shelf.

DS: What about your own involvement in the field? How did you discover it or it discover you?

De Camp: The way I discovered it was back in 1939 when I was a relatively new freelance writer and I became acquainted with Fletcher Pratt. Pratt had the idea of doing a series of stories in which a modern character by the use of symbolic logic projects himself into various fantasy worlds, worlds of myth and legend. He wanted a collaborator so I undertook the job and we got started on the Harold Shea series, which is, of course, heroic fantasy or swordplay and sorcery before those terms came into use. And I've been at it one way or another ever since.

I had never read any of Robert E. Howard's Conan stories. In fact, I hardly knew who Howard was until 1950, I believe it was, when CONAN THE CONQUERER was published in a clothbound edition and I read it and was hooked at once and read all the other stuff of Howard that I could get my hands on and then I had a part in the discovery of a number of unfinished manuscripts of Conan stories and some that had been written but not sold in Howard's lifetime, and I edited and rewrote and completed these various works and so I became more and more involved in the Conan business and am still in it.

DS: In the Conan stories you have written,

what part of it is yours, what part is Lin Carter's and what part is the original conception?

De Camp: When a story is by Carter and myself the way we work is we get together and hash out a plot outline. That means sitting in a room with a pad and pencil—I usually do it because I can write shorthand—and we try out various ideas, and one will say, "Well how about this?" And the other says, "No, no that's too imitative. Mike Moorcock's already done that." "Well then how about having him do this?" "Oh that's too conventional. I tell you what, why don't we turn it upside down and have him do just the opposite and see what happens?" So we fool around that way for a while and finally we get a pretty good outline. Then I take it home and add a few details and I type out an extended synopsis of the whole story which usually runs to several pages of single spaced typing, and mail that to Carter.

Then Carter does the rough draft, which since Carter knows I'm going to correct is apt to be pretty rough, and sends that to me and I go through and do a second draft and get his approval on it—he may make some further changes—then send it out to a professional typist.

When Pratt and I collaborated we did it just the opposite: I did the rough drafts and he did the final drafts. You see, there is a reason for doing it that way, and that is that the younger writer is apt to be more fertile with ideas but the older writer is apt to be more critical and can spot the illogicality, the pieces of bad writing and things like that better than the younger man can. And we have checked that out, because when Pratt and I or Carter and I have tried to reverse the procedure it hasn't worked out so well and we both have gone back to the system I have described.

DS: Do you think there's any danger that the immense popularity of Conan will cause the entire fantasy field to be overrun with Conan look-alikes?

De Camp: Well, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, of course, if you don't mind a cliché and, let's say that if other people imitate Carter and we must be doing something right. Actually, almost any writer who makes any kind of splash is going to rouse up some imitators, and I try not to imitate my own predecessors but I know perfectly well that they're in there influencing me. Everything a writer reads, especially in his early years, is bound to influence him one way or another. And a seasoned writer should have assimilated

these influences well enough so that they don't show.

For example, in my younger days I went through a Hemingway period because in the late 1930's Hemingway was the big noise. So my stories tend to show a definite use of the Hemingway short sentence dialogue and things like that. My erstwhile colleague, L. Ron Hubbard, once said, "Yeah, you know, the story runs like this: Jim walked down the street. He met Joe. He shot Joe. Joe fell. Joe died. Jim walked on. He walked into a saloon. He met Frank. He said to Frank, 'I've just shot Joe.' Frank said, 'Oh yeah?' Jim said, 'Oh yeah.'" And it goes on and on like that. Well, I did a bit of that I suppose too, and some of my other colleagues very definitely show where they have been through a Lovecraft period or a Howard period or a—I don't know, maybe somebody has been through a de Camp period by now. I haven't noticed any



but it's possible.

DS: Have you had anything to do with the Conan comic books? They seem to be about ready to make Conan as well known as Tarzan. Do you think it's a good thing to get him that popular in that form?

De Camp: As far as I can make out the effects seem to cancel themselves out. I doubt if it makes any great difference, and on balance they probably help more than they hinder. The only dealings I ever had with the particular comic book company in question is that they did make a comic book out of one of my stories which had nothing to do with Conan, and that was "A Gun for a Dinosaur" and I thought they did a reasonably good job of it. I was rather pleased in other words. Also they paid me what they said they would which is always a help.

DS: Are you planning to write any more heroic fantasy in the near future? 13

De Camp: I should like to. That is largely a matter of finding a publisher who wants to publish it, because I don't write things on speculation anymore. But I would like to write the third book of the Jorian series, because the second was obviously left wide open for a sequel, and I have an idea for another trilogy laid in that same world, which, if I could find a publisher I might very well do.

DS: What are the market conditions for Fantasy now?

De Camp: Oh, they go up and down. They are not so consistently favorable as straight science fiction, let's say, and in the otherhand I get more fun out of writing fantasy.

I have done three novels in the genre within the last year or so. I did one for Harry Harrison's Campbell memorial volume called "The Emperor's Fan." I did one for Carter's second FLASHING SWORDS volume called "The Rug and the Bull," and I just did another one for him called "Two Yards of Dragon." It's about a would-be noble young knight who goes out and slays a dragon and then is run in by the game warden.

DS: While we're talking about your fantasy, who do you think has influenced your fantasy writing more than anyone else?

De Camp: A good many people, starting with Edgar Rice Burroughs. And Tolkien, and Howard, and Thorne Smith who is not thought of much nowadays as a fantasy writer but he was one and a good one in his day. Such works as the one about the man who was turned into various animals starting with a horse, and SKIN AND BONES in which the man becomes an animated skeleton to the understandable dismay of his wife and associates. And there are several other people I could dig up if I gave the matter some thought.

DS: About the writing of fantasy now, do you think there is any inherent difference between the way you would write a fantasy story and the way you would write any other kind?

De Camp: No, not as far as I'm concerned. In a fantasy you make certain assumptions which are contrary to what we believe to be actual material facts on this Earth as of now. In other words without supernatural elements. And if we write a realistic story we stick to the laws of nature as we know them, and if we write a fantasy we make up a set of different laws. But we must stick to them once they are made up, so as to make the story internally self-consistent. No story that isn't internally self-consistent has much of a chance.

DS: What if the laws of nature as we understand them change? Suppose, for example, someone in the year 1000 A.D. were to write a fantasy story in which the world was round?

De Camp: That would really be a science fiction story I think, because it doesn't really involve a supernatural element, you see. No gods, demons, witches on broomsticks, elves, gnomes, spells, astrological prognostications or anything of that sort.

DS: Well, today many people believe in astrological prognostications. Would you still consider that fantasy?

De Camp: Well, let's say that's sort of borderline. Astrology is a pseudo-science. It was invented by the ancient Babylonians who didn't know any better and thought that the heavens were a glass bowl, and the earth was an island floating on water in the bowl, and the bowl kept turning over and over. The gods lived in bright little movable houses on wheels on the inside of the bowl, you see, which were the planets, and so when a planet was rising obviously that god's influence would be strong. When Mars (or Nergal as they called it) was rising because it was red and therefore suggested blood and fire there was likely to be war, and people have gone on that way ever since.

Well of course most people do entertain pseudo-scientific or supernatural beliefs of one kind or another. There are very few conscientious materialists in the world. But there is a fairly sharp distinction in the fictional field.

DS: Do you think fantasy has to be written in a way so that people at least half believe in it? When superstitions die out entirely will it still be possible to write fantasy?

De Camp: Oh of course. I mean hardly anyone believes in witches on broomsticks anymore, but it's still perfectly possible to write a good story about them.

DS: Thank you, Mr. de Camp.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS BY RICHARD E. GEIS, September, 1975.

REG: I'm never sure how to type your name. Is it DeCamp...De Camp...deCamp...de Camp?

de Camp: The name is de Camp, spelled with a lower-case "d" save at the beginning of a sentence. I suppose that Laurent de Camp, when he landed in Staten Island in the 1680s used a little "d" since he was a Frenchman. Later generations Anglicized it to De Camp, but my paternal grandfather married a wife

who thought that a little "d" would have more social cachet. This caused some hard feelings in the family. My great-uncle Clarence De Camp, of Boonton, NJ, refused to open a letter addressed to him as "de Camp." "'Taint my name!" he said. I used to hate my name as a boy, but when I got into writing it came in handy, sounding more like a pseudonym than most real pseudonyms do. With a name like mine, who needs a pen name? But it does cause trouble when I travel abroad, since I never know whether hotel clerks and such people will file my mail under S, D, or C.

REG: Has the book of uncollected Lovecraft writings been completed for the publisher, Donald Grant? Is it scheduled for release?

de Camp: The book in question, TO QUEREC AND THE STARS, was finished over a year ago and should be published soon.

REG: Since you've spent so much time and effort accumulating the mass of material on Lovecraft, do you plan any more books or writings about him?

de Camp: I have written 3 articles on Lovecraft (2 published so far) & given one lecture on him. I expect to rewrite the article in FANTASTIC STORIES for inclusion in LITERARY SWORDSMEN & SORCERERS. After that, it depends on circumstances & opportunity. I will certainly get all the spin-off I can from my work on him.

REG: Is there material you've seen concerning Lovecraft since you finished the Biography that would lead you to revise any conclusions or value judgements you made in the book?

de Camp: Only in a few very minor details. I hope to incorporate these in the paperback edition. For example, I meant to visit Father John T. Dunn in Portsmouth, Ohio, before I finished work on LOVECRAFT, but circumstances prevented. Father Dunn knew Lovecraft around 1914-17 in Providence, when Dunn was a plumber and both he and HPL were aspirant amateur journalists. Last May, Dunn told me his reminiscences of Lovecraft - how at meetings HPL sat staring straight ahead, save when he answered a question; and how the sister of a member of the club once, as a joke, asked HPL to take her out on a date. He said he would have to ask his mother, although he was in his middle twenties at the time.

REG: How have the sales of LOVECRAFT—A Biography gone? Is the book accomplishing what you hoped it would? Is Lovecraft being discovered or recognized in academe?

de Camp: Sales, in five figures, have been

gratifying. I have seen some evidence of academic interest in Lovecraft.

REG: Are you working on a book now?

de Camp: At the moment I am editing and abridging LOVECRAFT—A Biography for paperback publication.

REG: Who will be publishing the paperback edition?

de Camp: Ballantine Books.

REG: Do you have any major works planned?

de Camp: The next book for which I have contracted is LITERARY SWORDSMEN AND SORCERERS, a set of literary-biographical sketches of the leading writers of heroic fantasy.

REG: Who will be publishing it? And who are the leading writers of heroic fantasy?

de Camp: Arkham House. Morris, Dunsany, Lovecraft, Edision, Barringer, Howard, Pratt, Smith, Tolkien, T. H. White; with briefer mention of Kuttner, Moore, Ball, Page, Hubbard, and Leiber. (I am confining this to writers producing S&S before 1940.)

REG: Have you found a publisher for the third book of the Jorian series?

de Camp: No.

REG: You mention an idea for another trilogy using the Jorian background world. Would you give us a glimpse of what that story would involve?

de Camp: Travel, adventures, the intractability of humanity in the mass, the pains of learning better, good intentions gone awry.

REG: Has the market for fantasy changed significantly since Darrell asked you about it?

de Camp: Not that I have observed, but I am not in a position to observe very keenly.

REG: In your view is there a need for more graphic realism in heroic fantasy, or is the genre unable or unwilling to sustain the strain? Is more realism inconsistent with the fantasy element? Can a heroic figure survive as a hero if he has a sex life, if he goes to the bathroom and if he genuinely bleeds and is fearful?

de Camp: It depends on the taste of the reader and how well the particular story is done rather than on the precise degree of realism in it.

REG: Thank you, Mr. de Camp.

The de Camp interview appeared first in the Aug. 13, 1974 DRUMMER. Copyright 1974 by Tixton, Inc.

Owlswick Press
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Of the first edition of *SCIENCE FICTION HANDBOOK*, reviewers said:

"Let me say at once that de Camp's *Science Fiction Handbook*, to which I am thus calling attention, is an immensely diverting volume; it is one of the most entertaining textbooks I have read in years. . . . For embryo professionals the work is, I should guess, the Last Word in genial instructions and candid cautions."

. . . Vincent Starrett, writing for the *Chicago Tribune*,
30 August 1953.

"After the pretentious (and usually inaccurate) analyses of *The Place of Science Fiction* that have been springing up in all the intellectual periodicals, it's a relief to read a book by a well-trained and proficient craftsman which treats science fiction simply as commercial entertainment. . . . Any writer will learn a few valuable items he didn't know and the general reader should find it the most unassuming yet most satisfactory of the books published in this field of fiction."

. . . Anthony Boucher, writing as H. H. Holmes for the *New York Herald-Tribune*,
6 September 1953.

"The aspiring writer is given straightforward and adequate information about markets and editors, readers and fans, science-fiction writers and their preparation for the work, sources of ideas, plotting, writing, and selling a story, a writer's extracurricular duties, such as lecturing, giving advice and dodging fans, and even on how to be an author's wife."

. . . *Book List*, 15 September 1953.

Of this edition, *SCIENCE FICTION HANDBOOK, REVISED*, science-fiction writers say:

"*Science Fiction Handbook, Revised* has all the value of the original handbook, but has also added many new features. A section on "The Business Side of Writing" should be *must* reading for anyone interested in any aspect of writing—science fiction or otherwise. I'd have been a richer man today if I'd had it when I began writing; and now that I've read it, I expect to profit from it for many years to come."

. . . Lester del Rey, 29 July 1975.



"This may well be the best how-to book ever published for writers of any kind. It is certainly far and away the best for writers of science fiction and fantasy. New-comers will find it indispensable, old hands hardly less valuable, while to the general reader it will give a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at the profession."

. . . Poul Anderson, 1 August 1975.

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SCIENCE FICTION
HANDBOOK, \$8.50

REVISED
by L. Sprague de Camp &
Catherine Crook de Camp

THE CAMP OF THE SAINTS by Jean Raspail
Scribners, \$8.85

Reviewed by Lynne Haldon

If you don't read any other book this year, read THE CAMP OF THE SAINTS by Jean Raspail. It is probably one of the most important books of the decade as it asks questions of the basic values we live by.

The book is not being marketed as SF but it could be considered so as it takes place about 20 years or so in the future. It is a future in which the entire Third World is a vast slum. Just before total collapse, a million or so beggars in Calcutta seize whatever ships are in the harbor and head for Europe and the good life. They anchor just off the French Riviera. (To be honest, this is probably because the author is French—an American would probably have them off New York or Miami Beach.)

Now the point is that the french aren't doing so great either; nobody's starving but no one is well off, either. The french can't absorb or cope with these people without destroying their own society and losing everything they have. How much do they owe these beggars?

There's a lot of naturalistic writing to show exactly the degradation and squalor in which the beggars live. Even french poverty is wealth to them. It's also hinted that other poor nations and peoples are waiting to see the french reaction to the "invasion" before setting off themselves.

Naturally the french have every reaction from "bleeding heart" liberal to "shoot them all" conservative.

If someone breaks in and robs me or you, that's a crime. Is it any less a crime to rob a country or a civilization. Just how far can a civilization go to protect itself? This may become more than just a speculation in the next few years. That's why I think this book is important. So does the TIMES, but it accuses the author of racism as he seems to be suggesting that France would be better off killing all these people. I don't think it's that simple.



August 1, 1975

'I fucked up in a couple spots in my story, "Dancing On the Titanic" in SFR 14. According to the SFWA BULLETIN which arrived today (a damn good job) the SFWA hospitality suite was Room 2121.(All I know is I went to 2116)* Also, Audrey Gann for some reason prefers to spell her name Genn. This is confirmed by the FORUM, so it's gotta be true. And third, the third member of the editor's panel was Dave Hartwell. Kirby McCauley was chairman and not Harlan Ellison... though Harlan did a lot of talking and was entertaining.

'The enclosed letter to MS is an attempt to clear up an embarrassing situation for which you hold a certain blameless responsibility. I'll explain it step-by-step because it's very complicated and difficult to track.

'STEP ONE: As a loyal SFWA—I sent the above-mentioned story, which we will call simply "Titanic," first to Ted Cogswell at the FORUM. He sent it back telling me to retype it single-space and he'd use it. Well, you know...howcum Christopher Priest gets his double-spaced letters printed and I don't?"

((Let me break in here to note that to save work, Ted Cogswell prints letters in the SFWA FORUM as received, and therefore prefers single-spaced letters to save space. Of course, not all letters are printed in-toto.))

'I fully intended to do this, however — but re-typing is a task I place somewhat lower than carrying out garbage, so I thought, Well, maybe Geis has relaxed his standards to the point where it can be published in his 'zine.

'STEP TWO: This point you should know better than I; your four-figure check arrived and I immediately applied it to my growing hoard. I also sent a letter to Cogswell explaining why I wasn't busy single-spacing the story, and enclosed a photo of Uschi Dansk, well-known cover girl and wet nurse to a thousand dreams, in order that he wouldn't force me to stand at attention holding my typewriter at port arms during the next SFWA business meeting.

'STEP THREE: He published the photo in the FORUM under 'CHARLES W. RUNYON SAYS.' Also he put the flag from MS on the photo.

Actually I thought they were advertising Arthur Clarke's one-hundred twentieth sequel.

Probably you saw it. It read: FULL EQUALITY FOR WOMEN.

'Thus, the explanatory letter to MS. I don't know that they'll print it, or even believe my story. I am sending a copy to Cogswell, but truthfully, I shiver with anticipation of what he'll do with it.

'Possibly you would like to print it. It would be a service to Truth, which gets kicked around a lot in the FORUM, and would let your female readers know that I am not the crude chauvinist pig that Cogswell would have them believe.'

#

LETTER TO MS MAGAZINE
29 July 75

'I'm sure you've experienced this sort of thing many times and have learned to take it in stride; however, this is the first time I have been victimized by the chauvinist backlash, and I am a little indecisive about what to do.

'The enclosed photo, with pasted-on caption, appeared under my name in our association publication, the FORUM of the Science Fiction Writers of America. I had nothing to do with it, and want to assure you it is totally alien to my viewpoint and does not represent my idea of humor.

'The reason behind this misrepresentation is, I think, that I supported one of our well-known female members, Joanna Russ, during an open-letter debate with the esteemed Arthur Clarke, an English Colonial person now living in Sri Lanka.

'Attempts to clarify the matter in the FORUM are foredoomed, insofar as Cogswell exercises a tyrannical control over the publication through the use of such techniques as manipulating deadlines, arbitrary cutting of letters, the use of false names, and in some cases — such as the above — deliberate misattribution of material.

'So you ask — why doesn't the membership kick him out? The explanation lies in the fact that SFWA was originally organized as a men's drinking club, and many older members feel a nostalgic pull toward the locker-room humor purveyed by Cogswell. Clinically, Cogswell could be described as a repressed homosexual attempting to resolve his personal conflicts through machismo and alcohol. Many of his old friends maintain that his work in the FORUM is good therapy, and probably the only thing that keeps him off skid-row, where many ageing science fiction writers spend their last years.

'In addition there is the fact that editorship of the FORUM is a non-paying and

difficult job, and the officers of SFWA are unable to find a reasonably literate person to take his place. Thus, the membership are sort of stuck with Cogswell, and have learned to take him with a cupful of salt.

"Therefore I will probably let the matter lie. I just want you to know I had nothing to do with this gratuitous slur on a magazine to which I was a charter subscriber, and which I continue to read and enjoy."

#

5 Sept 75

"Just finished SFR 14 and will give gut reaction before it percolates to the corollary and becomes sickled o'er. I liked Fabian's cover — possibly the heavy border robbed it of a central focus, but gave it a capsulated dream quality which may have been what you and the artist intended. After reading the contents I thought an appropriate motif might be a giant crow, basted and done up with ruffles on its drumsticks. (Arthur Byron Cover informs me he cooks his crow before eating; I regard this as deplorably effete. A true penitent eats his crow raw.)

"Somehow, in my retyping of "Titanic" or in your typing, my active verb-form stating: "I accosted Paul Anderson ..." got changed to the passive: "I was accosted by Paul Anderson." Harmless in this context, but you can see what might happen, should a witness come to trial and state: "I was raped by Linda-Sue," when he really meant, "I raped Linda-Sue." In Mexico, the reflexive form is used to avoid admission of guilt; a houseboy who drops a glass on the floor will say, "se rompió el vaso!" which means: "the glass went and broke itself!" (He would also allege that Linda-Sue raped herself, and that he was outside taking a leak when it happened.)

"Along the same line of thought, I am going to absent myself from the continental U.S. Put me on hold for personal correspondence, and don't mess with your mailing list. I'll send my new address written on a coconut husk.

"Yes, I am Getting Out. Non-violence is becoming hard work. My neighbors are arming themselves as if the Saracens were just over the hill and headed this way. The sheriff is under indictment by the prosecuting attorney for theft, and the sheriff is charging the PA with public drunkenness. The school board is headed by a mortician who feels that a good student is a dead student — or at least one who knows how to act that way.

"— Ted Cogswell wants it noted that he is not a repressed homosexual but a closet retrosexual. He says he will tidy up my public image in the next FORUM. I regard this with the same apprehension as you might regard a service station attendant approaching your windshield with a greasy rag. Somehow I get the feeling he equates retractions with softness on crime and perversiveness in our public schools.

"Jack Chalker writes an interesting letter, and for more than two-thirds it maintains a fairly balanced, mature viewpoint. Along about the time he gets into Joanna Russ he leaves the rails completely, in my opinion. I haven't read her latest book, but he seems to object on moral terms to the world she creates. I suggest that he merely apply the same standards he upholds in his next-to-last paragraph: "It's her universe and she can do — or not do — what she damned well feels like."

"Personally I tend to agree with the point that Philip Wylie made in his book THE DISAPPEARANCE. A single-sex society would be apathetic at first — at least for the majority of people, until they found a substitute love-hate relationship which now energizes our society. Assuming that humanity remains in its current unenlightened state, this would take the form of status, with rigid prerogatives assigned to each caste. The natural outcome of this would be autocracy — or as Jack puts it "Sexual Nazism." Well, what the hell, we've tried everything else...

"I am a little surprised that he used the example of the Liberian freedmen — since it seems to imply that in his view the women of today are on a level with the black slaves of the old south. Of course I KNOW he didn't mean it that way. Still the example proves nothing except that a sophisticated minority will always rule a primitive majority. It was only natural that the ex-slaves would institute the only system they knew, which happened to be the southern plantation system."

THE MOON IS A HARSH SPACESHIP
A Review of SPACE: 1999

THE OPENING EPISODE

They always seem to make the same technical mistakes, don't they? Like the roaring of rockets and explosions in the vacuum of space... For dramatic effect, I guess. Unless it is assumed the sound is taken from the inside of the spaceship. (Except that the POV is from the outside...)

And that fishy radiation sickness that



produced almost instant (but dramatic!) insanity and a giant tumor in the brain and a dull right eye. Curious that they couldn't detect the radiation before people died and the whole damn radiation waste dump(s) heated up (no explanation as to why!) and went to critical mass or something.

And the blithe way they move the moon out of orbit and up to incredible speed (the Earth is seen visibly dwindling in the distance!) by means of what seems to be at most fifteen or twenty minutes of radioactive waste dump explosions. The moon would have to be made of foam rubber for that to happen.

"I'll forgive the way the actors walk at normal Earth weight inside the moon base, but do accurate semi-float when outside on the surface in spacesuits. Expense, technical problems...

Ah, well, you cares? The moon is on its way to a rendezvous with a strange, inhabited planet a few light years away (but it won't take them but a few episodes to get there, mark my cynical words) with its involuntary colony of scientists.

Martin Landau looked older than I remembered him in MISSION IMPOSSIBLE, and his acting in this new series is very broad. Barbara Bain played the doctor like a robot, with glacial emotion. And Barry Morse reminded me—forgive me—of Dr. Zarkov of FLASH GORDON.

SPACE: 1999 plays here at 6 P.M. on Sunday.

It has excellent sets and good special effects—I especially liked Rudy Gerreich's uniforms, with the colored sleeves denoting rank and speciality.

Summing up: Lousy, contemptuous scripts. Juvenile TV, so that would not be publishable in a magazine or book.

THE ALTER-EGO VIEWPOINT A Dialogue



Alter, why don't you start reviewing with Wilson (Rob) Tucker's latest of novel, from Doubleday at \$4.95 and now a Ballantine paperback—24660, \$1.50—name of ICE AND IRON. It's in his favorite mode, a slice-of-life with no "commercial" plot or clichés or stereotypes.

"Isn't the dribble-off-the-page ending a cliché, Geis? The hero—"

Central character, Alter. Fisher Yann Highsmith is in no way a 'hero'.

"That's part of my gripe. But the book has a fine idea to hook the reader with: this scientist—Highsmith—is with a small team of scientists who are sitting nervously in southern Canada next to the leading edge of an onrushing glacier a couple of hundred years from now, waiting for more bodies of 'natives' to fall out of the sky from no-one knows where (or when), along with assorted ancient-type handmade bricks, debris, crude weapons...and then—lo, a strange, laser-like weapon—"

Alter, Canada has been absorbed by the United States in this novel.

"Yeah, and the new capital of the USA is 'Washington South'—moved because of the inexorably approaching ice. The story is told in alternate chapters of "Ice" and "Iron", using two time-frames. One ("Ice") is the now of Fisher Highsmith, a gentleman who has the hots for a sexually frigid Librarian female in his team...and the other ("Iron") is in the now of a battle going on between an all-woman army advancing north as the ice retreats, and the male-dominated primitives who live on the northern fringe of this matriarchal-fascistic civilization—about eight to ten thousand years later."

I thought it amusing that Tucker tied in the books of Charles Fort, postulating that—

"Don't talk academic language, Geis. And, yeah, Bob has this strange weapon the future women have developed sending their enemies, the primitive, free men through time to the present of Highsmith, when the ice-age is creeping in. The beam kills the men by making them disappear—along with

part of the ground, bushes, water, rocks, etc. in its path. The bodies and debris appear in the 'past' and are driving the government crazy."

And then body #17 comes through still alive, and—

"Whose review is this, Geis? Shut out! And, sure, the speculations buck when ol' #17 drops in half frozen and half dead from radiation burns inflicted by the weapon. The thing is, Tucker writes fine—realistic, true descriptions and dialog—makes you really believe...and also insists on a realistic ending—no solutions, no resolutions...just abandonment of the base as the ice encroaches, as #17 is killed by #18 (one of the future women soldiers zapped by a stolen weapon) are moved to a southerly town, as Highsmith quits the team...and meanwhile in the far future it looks ultimately bad for the remnants of the male primitives."

It's a morality tale dealing with the virtues of 'natural' life versus the crimes and perversions of civilization...even a woman-dominated civilization. It also "explains" the strange, real incidents of falling animal life, vegetation, and other debris which Charles Fort recorded in some of his books.

"I was just going to say that!"
So, did you like it, Alter? The novel?
"Yes! Lots of action and killing in the far future. Lots of frustration and accurate speculation in the near future. Bob writes so good you can't skip pages."

We'll have to move right along; that took a lot of space. Are you going to 'waste' the next novel?

"Geis, you're bloodthirsty. You prate of kindness and compassion, but deep down you want me to rend authors limb from limb. Now, I could accuse John Boyd of writing a potboiler, a two-finger fiction exercise, when he wrote ANDROMEDA GUN, recently published by Berkley in hardcover for \$5.95. This is not a killer review, by the way. It's a disappointed yawn review. John Boyd maybe wrote this story of an alien do-gooder intelligence taking over the mind/body of a wild-west low-life and gunman name of Johnny Loco as a change of pace. The story largely drags as G-7 tries to steer the outlaw into a life of sainthood. The novel has its moments, but they're damn few."

So—that's it on the Boyd book, Alter? Blandsville?

"Yep. It's now out as a Berkley paperback: N2878, 95¢."

I see the next book is—
"Perry Chapdelaine's SWAMPWORLD WEST which was published in England last December by the Elmfield Press. I want to say

I hope an American pocketbook publisher picks up the softcover rights. It has good cover and blurb possibilities—an alien race that periodically runs amok and kills everyone in sight, including human colonists—which would assure sales enough to cover costs and a small profit, at least."

Why do you think Perry's book deserves American publication?

"It has a meticulously worked-out alien ecology; the detailed alien flora and fauna fit together and interact, and the intruding human settlers are both a help and an evil...because what will happen when the intelligent natives find out what causes their periods of amok and develop the advanced civilization and culture they are capable of? The natives-human conflict is inherent."

Maybe Perry has a sequel in mind?
"I wouldn't doubt it; authors always have sequels in mind."

Okay, Alter, now it's time to live up to your reputation. Which book are you going to demolish? Who are you going to send screaming to the typer to pound out a fiery letter of protest to me?

"Bob Silverberg does not pound out fiery letters protesting evil reviews. Maybe he flinches a bit now and then... Maybe he mutters under his breath a bit..."

You—you're going to attack a Silverberg book?

"They're sacred?"
No...but you liked his UP THE LINE very much, and you loved TO LIVE AGAIN, and admired DYING INSIDE and THE BOOK OF SKULLS. Howcum you don't like..."

"BORN WITH THE DEAD. Subtitled 'Three Novellas About the Spirit of Man'. Rather pretentious. I don't know if that can be laid at Bob's door or at that of the editor of Random House who published this in hardcover at \$5.95. But that's a minor grump. Bob Silverberg has chosen a road, in fiction, that seems to be leading him clear off the science fictional map...into the swamps and boonies of Metaphysics and Deep Significances and the Spirit of Man. Damn it, he's trying to write Literature now, and he is trying to do it obviously; he's saying to readers and publishers, 'I'm into heavy thoughts now, boys and girls, and I'm not going to pretend otherwise. Love it or leave it.' He is not very much concerned to use the commercial fiction devices and structures and dynamics which built his reputation in the first place."

That is his affair, Alter. You should limit yourself to the work, not the man.

"Okay, let me put it this way: I like fiction that grabs me, that is primarily concerned with story and whose writing is at the service of the story. When I sniff

the unmistakable aroma of a writer of arrogant, "superior" mein who is intent on instructing me in the eternal verities and anguishes of human existence (which no one but him has ever thought of before!), I resent it. I get my back up. I do not like being patronized, and I think that is what is going on when a writer writes fictional sermons and self-consciously turns to literary ways of writing. In other words, Geis, my ego resents it when he implies in his writing that he is superior and is imparting Truth and Insights. I'm supposed to pay my 95¢ or my \$1.50 or my \$5.95 in order to be subtly put down?"

Alter, you are into a diatribe. Stop it. Bob is tired of writing for the majority of science fiction readers, tired of commercial plots, tired of climaxes, tired of black moments, or heroes and satisfying 'win' endings—the whole bag. Now, are you going to talk about the three novellas in BORN WITH THE DEAD OR NOT?

"Oh, sure. You know, death and the question of God and an afterlife are usually of interest to everyone, and stories dealing with these questions are usually sure-fire, but in those three novellas, Bob managed to bore me more often than not. Somehow, he is cool and distant in this fiction. The title novella, "Born With the Dead," is about a future in which the recently, untimely, relatively undamaged dead can be revived—if they have arranged for it. It's called Rekindling...and afterward they are—different. They have no desire to socialize with 'warms'. They stay with their own kind."

Interesting, fascinating idea.

"Yeah. But Silverberg writes as if he were Rekindled. Maybe it's because... Well, I won't speculate. The story concerns a 'warm' man's obsession to see and talk to his beautiful, recently Rekindled wife. She avoids him, ignores him... Finally, her Rekindled friends murder him to be rid of him...and have him Rekindled. Does he win her back in 'cold' land? No, they become casual friends and he finds other interests, other values."

The resolution of the story sounds reasonable.

"Yes, Geis, there's nothing wrong with the plausibility of the story. Bob is not a careless, casual writer. But I didn't care about the characters, not even Jorge Klein when he was hot to confront his dead/alive wife. Somehow, somehow, Silverberg has seemingly, to me, lost his passion, his narrative sparkle, his electricity... Unless..."

Unless?

"Unless I misread him and 'feel' him wrong. Maybe he deliberately wrote these

three novellas in a cool, detached style to go with the theme."

You think "Thomas the Proclaimer" is too cool? You have to admit that a story wherein God really does exist and has proven it conclusively to mankind—that has a built-in excitement potential.

"Yeah...a sad, bitter, despairing excitement, an examination of what happens to the human tools of God, on Earth. Mankind behaves with all the stupidity you'd expect if... Well, it follows, doesn't it, that if God proves His existence, He automatically proves the existence of Evil—of the Devil? And how perverse of a portion of mankind, robbed of free will and king-of-the-mountainhood, to decide to worship His Most Foulness, eh?"

So you liked the story?

"It was interesting, but vague and repellent. All these three are interesting, but turn-offs. The 'Spirit of Man' doesn't show itself to be much to admire, according to Silverberg. As entertaining, emotional involving fiction, these efforts are duds."

What about the last novella, "Going"?

"It's about a famous composer in the future who at age 136 decides to Go—to die—at one of the elaborate government installations set up for those who are too tired of life and wish a kind of ritualistic, formal, approved suicide. After a lot of dull, boring soul-searching and delay, the man finally goes through with it. There are no great insights here, or dazzling concepts, but the future socialization of suicide is...interesting...even though it strikes me as economically incredible—too costly."

Alter, you've committed hari-kiri—the blood on the floor is yours. Your effort will soon bring you a lobotomy. Apologize to Bob Silverberg. Say you're sorry.

"I'm sorry he bored me this time. I'm sorry he isn't into using strong story elements anymore. I'm sorry his characters are tools used to show the downer spiritual ideas he has now. There's a low passion quotient...a low joy quotient...in these stories. There's a seeking...perhaps Bob is on a longer voyage than even he suspects."

Alter, this gratuitous analysis has got to stop! I'll never let you review again! I'm leaving!

"All right, Geis. Go! Lock me up! But I'll live to review again! The readers will force you down here! You'll see! You'll come crawling—"

SLAM

LETTER FROM D. SCHWEITZER

September, 1975

'I got sufficiently tired of waiting for responses on various mss. that I compiled a list of how long it takes various editors to reply. You might want to pass the results on to your readers, both to show what a reasonably unknown writer can expect (considering geography) & possibly to grease up the Mills of the Gods a bit. The statistics:

- 'ANALOG: 10 days.
- AMAZING/FANTASTIC: 2-10 months.
- F&SF: 3 weeks-6 months.
- GALAXY: 2-7 months.
- ORBIT: 2 weeks.
- VOID (Australia): 6 weeks (Ms. sent surface mail, reply was airmail. They bought it.)
- SF MONTHLY (British): 4 months.
- WHISPERS: 3 weeks - 2 months.
- FANTASY & TERROR: 2-5 weeks.
- ETERNITY: 3 weeks - 2 months.
- WYRD: 3 weeks - 3 months.
- FICTION: 2-4 months.

'Some of these are rather surprising, like the difference between VOID and AMAZING. Ben Bova obviously reads mss. 26 hours a day.'

'The state is the great fictitious entity by which everyone expects to live at the expense of everyone else.'

—Frederic Bastiat,
"The State"

HEH, HEH, HEH! THE FIRST LIBERAL-SPECIFIC VIRUS!

TOO BAD IT ISN'T FATAL!



UPPISH THOTS

A Column By TED WHITE

DISCLAIMER: Reading Philip Jose Farmer's interview—which I found fascinating—in SFR 14 was a jolt that was required for me to organize the following material onto paper. The material has been in my head for a while, now, as I have tried to understand certain basic "gut" reactions I felt on the subject; it has been voiced in conversation in various contexts, but never organized with much coherence.

However, due to the nature of the topic, and the fact that Farmer figures in it not only as a catalyst but as a prime example, I feel that I should say something about him up front, as it were, before getting to the topic itself.

I first "met" Phil Farmer in 1952, when his "The Lovers" appeared in STARTLING STORIES. I was strongly impressed, and made it a point to seek out his stories wherever they appeared thereafter.

In the late sixties I had my first actual contact with the man, in the letter columns of an earlier incarnation of this magazine. It was not the best way to gain contact with him: we seemed to find ourselves in contentious positions. Although he dropped me a congratulatory postcard during my first year as editor of AMAZING and FANTASTIC, he was soon on opposite sides of the fence with my publisher in a wrangle which persisted until 1975 or 1974. This put us several times in the position of antagonists, most particularly in the pages of OUTWORLDS during 1973. Subsequently I did something I should have done much earlier: I wrote him a letter, a personal letter, in an effort to get the thing off the public stage, where all participants usually, and sometimes unwittingly, become actors, trying to score points with the audience and losing track of the basic point, which is communication and understanding.

That letter went a long way, I think, toward clearing up what misunderstanding existed between us. And Phil's response to it—an equally long, equally candid letter—finished the job. This year (1975) he mentioned that we'd settled our differences in a letter to OUTWORLDS, and I'd like to confirm that. We've yet to meet face to face, but I hope we do one of these days.

Thus, although some of the readers of this publication may automatically assume that with our public background of contention if not outright antagonism, anything I may write about Farmer would have an underlying tone of hostility, such readers would

be wrong. And this prefatory note exists specifically to underscore that point. What follows is written out of respect for Philip Jose Farmer, if disagreement with a practice of his, and is in no fashion an attack upon him as a man or as an author.

#

PERSONAL FANTASIES: When I was fourteen or so, I discovered Doc Savage. I was already reading sf magazines and had one foot in fandom. I combed two Washington, D.C. used-book stores for old sf magazines (ghod, they were cheap in those days—pulp, irrespective of topic), went for 10¢ each or three for a quarter) and in the process discovered Doc Savage.

It was 1952; DOC SAVAGE magazine had been dead for three years. I found the digested issues first, tucked away in vertical stacks along with READER'S DIGEST, THE SHADOW (which I also collected) and copies of a magazine known variously (according to the year) as 45, 46 or 47, in the basement of Central Books on 9th St., N.W. Later I began tracking down the pulps, enlisting the help of Dick Witter's F and SF Books on Staten Island via the mails. With Witter's help by 1956 I had a complete set of THE SHADOW and all but two or three issues of DOC SAVAGE.

I was fascinated by the series—character pulps and I collected lots of others—THE WIZARD, THE WHISPERER, THE AVENGER, THE PHANTOM DETECTIVE, The Black Bat in BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE, etc., etc., etc.—but Doc Savage stood out head and shoulders to me then.

I read every one of those pulps, and especially I read the DOC SAVAGE pulps. When I had no new DOC SAVAGES to read I'd reread an old one. My favorites mostly occurred in the years 1935-35, with one or two from 36 and 37. At that time Doc's adventures were science-adventures, involving some super-science, and various hidden lands, peoples, or etc. Later on they looked like science-adventure, but when the element of mystery was revealed in the last chapter, it turned out to have mundane origins. It weakened the stories for me.

I day-dreamed about Doc Savage; I fantasized about him and his adventures. I also fantasized about a revived DOC SAVAGE magazine; I filled pages of my school notebooks with designs for logos and portraits of Doc and his men. Of the various artists who had depicted Doc in his magazine, I liked best Baumhoffer's early-thirties cover paintings and Paul Orban's interiors, which came and went throughout Doc's career. (Orban also illustrated Shadow stories, Captain Future stories and Phantom Detective stories, but I preferred him on Doc Savage. The Shadow was better rendered by Edd Cartier (1937) and Earl

Mayan (1938-39)).

The point I'm making is that I absorbed Doc Savage into my personal consciousness as an adolescent. He became part of my fantasy world, the world I inhabited while bicycling the two miles to school and back each day, and during other moments when my mind had little to do but daydream.

We each do this to some extent, fans more than most. As kids we have heroes—I missed Tarzan due to some coincidence, but many probably saw him the way I did Doc Savage—figures who come alive off printed pages and enter our fantasies.

On another level, consider Oz. I found THE LAND OF OZ (the second Oz book) in my church library before I was old enough to read. The pictures fascinated me (they still do) and I demanded my mother check it out and read it to me. After I learned to read I checked it out many times to reread it. Tonight I read a chapter of the same book (newer edition; paperback) to my five-year-old daughter before putting her to bed; it's her second time through it.

Oz books have been as popular, surely, as Doc Savage ever was, albeit with probably younger readers. Oz was for years part of my interior landscape, my fantasy world. I had read every Oz book then published by the time I was a teenager.

#

In his interview, Phil Farmer talks about his researches into Doc Savage and Tarzan, his integration of their two fictional universes, and his desire to blur the distinctions between reality and fiction. I have his biography of Doc Savage on my shelf—along with my set of Bantam Doc Savage reissues, which is complete. But I do not expect to ever read the book, just as I do not intend ever to read his Doc Caliban books.

Why? Because of my deep-felt conviction that they would—if I allowed them to—violate my personal fantasies. To put it on a more basic level, I feel reading those books would be a form of rape.

To a friend I described them as examples of "literary ghoulishness."

For the same reason I strongly disliked the movie OF THE DROWNING POOL (in which Paul Newman plays Ross McDonald's Lew Archer as badly as he did in HARPER several years ago) and I do not intend to read Joe Gore's HAMMETT (in which Dashiell Hammett is the protagonist). 20

What does all this add up to, you ask?

When we read a book we form a mental picture of the scenes and characters about which we are reading. If there are illustrations they may shape that mental picture, but not always—sometimes they vary so sharply from the way we picture the text that we reject such illustrations as inappropriate bad casting.

The communication is direct: from the author's imagination to ours. To mine. Nothing stands between Lester Dent's conception of Doc Savage and my perception of that character. It does not matter to me that thousands of others are also reading the same stories: the experience is, in every case, one-to-one, uniquely intimate.

The degree of a character's popularity may have something to do with the success with which the author bridges the gap between his imagination and that of his readers. That is to say, the more direct and intimate and immediate an experience of this sort, the greater the audience. Long-term, mass popularity for characters like Tarzan and Doc Savage may simply come down to the fact that their authors had the right touch to reach the fiery imagination of many adolescents. (It's almost always adolescents and pre-adolescents; at that age one's critical abilities are unformed and one is largely style-deaf. The concept is what communicates; the style need be little more than functional, at best. Later on, as adults, we often find the

style of what we enjoyed as kids to be irritatingly bad, sometimes unreadably so.)

#

I saw the MGM movie, THE WIZARD OF OZ, when I was eight or nine. I had by then read all of Baum's Oz books and many of the Ruth Plumly Thompson's. I was just a kid, but I was offended by the movie.

Most people I know saw the movie first—if they ever bothered to read the book later; most didn't. They think it a classic movie, charming, etc. To them the movie is THE WIZARD OF OZ. The reducto ad absurdum of this is the recent publication by the Marvel Comics Group of a \$1.50 large-sized comic book devoted to the movie's conceptualization of THE WIZARD OF OZ, with more issues to follow. I found it disgusting, yet it is obviously the product of a group of people who feel affection for the story and what they are doing. There is a map in the back which had to be drawn by someone who had read many, if not all, of the Oz books, and who tried his best to reconcile Baum's sloppiness in sometimes changing the geographical locations of his countries.

So why am I offended? Because I feel, basically, as if something private and personal had been trespassed upon. My fantasies have been raped again.

What is really happening is this: my experience of Oz through the books was personal, subjective. It looked a certain way to me. Each person's voice sounded a certain way to my inner ear. And each event had emotional significance to me, as I identified with the characters involved. They were my friends—closer than that: they were part of me. I absorbed them and their experiences, made all of it a part of myself, my feelings.

We each do this to varying degrees. But we are each unique individuals: our reactions, our subjective interpretations differ. Each of us experiences a book in unique ways, particular to us each. There is no reason why this should not be the case, and as long as we each contain these separate experiences within ourselves, everything is fine.

But when, for instance, MGM decided to make WIZARD into a movie, that ended. Subjective impressions became objective realizations. Dorothy (whom I believe to be, when she first appears in the Oz books, perhaps five years old) becomes Judy Garland—a teenager with her breasts strapped down playing a pre-teenager. The Cowardly Lion becomes a burlesque comic (albeit one of the very best) in a tatty lion suit. Etc. Periodically the action stops for a song. Good as "Over The Rainbow" has proven to be, it has nothing whatsoever to do with the Oz which my reading of the Oz books led me to experience.

What happened was that someone's subjective impressions of the book became objectified. It became public. And although I did not surrender my private interpretation of WIZARD, I felt it battered by the movie. You can be sure I'll never bother with the newest rape of the book, THE WIZ.

What Farmer has done with Doc Savage is different only in degree. What he has done is take his own subjective impression of the character, which I expect must be fully as intense as my own, and objectify it. Not by continuing the Canon in the style of Dent, as Ron Goulart has done with The Avenger for Warner, but by telling the "real story" of Doc Savage—going behind the scenes in Doc Savage's life. (I infer this from what he has said about the books in his interview and from reviews; as I said I refuse to read the books.) But the behind the scenes of Doc Savage came not from the Canon as realized by Dent and the others who wrote as Kenneth Robeson; they come from Farmer's own fantasy-imagination, from his subjective experience of Doc Savage. He is saying, "Here is the reality I envision behind the character." Worse, he is saying, "Doc Savage's universe is also Tarzan's universe."

Now for Phil Farmer this must be true.

DONT SAY I HAVE
A NOSE FOR
NEWS OR NO
NOSE IS GOOD
NOSE OR
ANY other
SMART
CRACK

I HAVE
ENOUGH
TO DO
JUST
WALKING

He is twenty years older than I, and he must have experienced both Tarzan and Doc Savage at roughly the same time in his own adolescence. For him—in his interior fantasy-world—Tarzan and Doc Savage are contemporaries and must have known each other because he knew them both.

But for me this is not true. I never encountered Burroughs as a child or adolescent. (I read instead Kipling and when I heard of Tarzan I assumed he was a ripoff of Mowgli.) For me Tarzan does not exist to any real extent—and he certainly does not coexist in the same universe with Doc Savage. For me, I said, for I see no reason to subject my interpretation on anyone else: it is mine and mine alone.

Thus it disturbs me when Farmer objectifies his fantasies in print. But I can sympathize too—I'm guilty of the same thing, to a somewhat lesser extent.

In 1966 Bantam Books asked me to do a novel around Captain America. I was recommended by Stan Lee, and I set out to write a book that not only I could take pride in, but one Stan would like too. (Stan didn't create Captain America—Joe Simon and Jack Kirby did that, back when Stan was not yet in his teens—but I think sometimes he feels as though he did: he holds that character in higher affection than most of those he has created. Maybe he read the early Simon & Kirby stories at an impressionable point in his life.

When I finished the book I gave a copy of the manuscript to Stan as well as delivering the original to Bantam—just so he'd have it to read sooner. I was proud of the book. I felt I'd made Captain America real in terms of cold print, that I'd successfully translated a comic character to the print medium (I maintain the belief that I am the only one ever to do this successfully), and that I'd filled in a lot of details skipped over in the comics without negating what had appeared there. Stan never read the manuscript; he gave it to Roy Thomas to check for errors in conceptualization.

A year and a half later Bantam published the book. I immediately picked up several copies and gave an autographed, inscribed copy to Stan.

He never read that, either. I don't believe he has read it to this day. For a long time I felt hurt by his refusal to read the book. I had written it as much for him as for any one person. I'd dedicated it to him and to Jack Kirby. (I have no idea if Kirby ever even saw it.) It was only when I began organizing my feelings about what Farmer had done with Doc Savage that I began to get a

glimmering of what Stan may have felt.

In the meantime, fan mail began coming in. THE GREAT GOLD STEAL (Bantam's title for the book) drew more fan mail than anything else I'd done save the Qar books for Lancer. But a few of the letters were upset, hurt.

I'd introduced a minor character in an early chapter, you see. An apish man who comes to Capt. America to blow the whistle on the bad guys and who is killed by laser just as he gets to the Avenger (Marvel style) headquarters where the good Captain is living. He was, obviously, Monk Mayfair from Doc Savage. It is never explained what he's doing in Capt. America's universe; this is a walk-on part.

What I had in mind, when I was writing the book, was to give insiders an acknowledgment that I was using the Doc Savage style of prose and plotting. I had intuitively analyzed the basic problem of translating a costumed comic character into print and decided that the answer lay in realizing him in pulp fiction terms. Doc Savage, after all, was simply a pulp fiction version of Captain America: aside from the fact that the Captain wore a costume, their talents and abilities did not differ greatly. Neither was a genuine super-hero, like Superman; like Batman, they were extraordinary men, but still men nonetheless. (I wanted to do a Batman novel in the same way, although I would have modified the style to suit the somber—even menacing—overtones I found in the early, and best, Batman stories.)

Unwittingly I had trespassed on others' fantasies. They were indignant. Who was I to kill off Monk, Doc's right-hand man? They wrote to me in anguish and anger. And I had no good answer for them because they were right.

In my arrogance I had assumed that since I had experienced Doc Savage so intensely, absorbed him so completely into myself, I had some sort of proprietary right over him that justified my borrowing Monk as I had.

It had never occurred to me that I was violating someone else's relationship with Doc and his men.

In truth it didn't really hit home until I found out what Farmer was doing. He was doing it bigger than I, gaudier than I, but he was no more guilty of the trespass than I. Suddenly the shoe was on the other foot: someone else had arrogated Doc Savage and his milieu and it was my fantasy that was being violated. I found, suddenly, much more sympathy for those letter-writers who didn't like my killing off Monk.

I wonder if Farmer is aware that his use of Doc Savage (and perhaps of Tarzan, too) has this effect on some people. I know he is not cynical in his use of Doc Savage—he is not exploiting the character; he is realizing his own love of him—but I wonder if it has ever occurred to him that he has been trespassing on others' relationships with the character. I wonder, too, why he wants to use others' characters in his fiction instead of creating those which would be purely his own. Speculation is foolish, if not arrogant; I'll confine myself to the supposition that these characters have so strong an existence in Farmer's imagination that he feels them to be 'real' in the same way he does Kilgore Trout. To accuse him of literary ghouliness is to ignore that supposition: it is simply an unthinking reaction born out of my own anger at the violation of my relationship with the characters in my imagination. Yet it is indicative of the intensity of feeling which can be provoked when one invades another's fantasies.

Recently, at the request of Byron Preiss, for whom Farmer is also creating material, I created a character named Doc Phoenix. Phoenix is not Doc Savage under another name—not a Doc Calliban. But he is in some respects like Doc Savage: the stories are written in the style Lester Dent created as filtered through my own creative abilities and I have surrounded Phoenix with characters not unlike Monk and Han and Long Tom and Rennie; I have even introduced a Pat Savage-like character, although not a cousin and with the hint of



romance between the two. More importantly, Doc Phoenix's adventures are unlike Doc Savage's: they take place for the most part inside the minds and fantasies of Phoenix's client-patients. I'm not awfully happy with the introductory story (in WEIRD HEROES Vol. 2; Pyramid, December 1975) but the first novel (to be published by Pyramid in 1976) I like a lot. Phoenix enters the fantasy-world of a catatonic ten-year-old girl who is living in a perverted version of Oz.

What I like about this is that I am not dealing directly with my fantasy-Oz, nor am I attempting to introduce Oz into the same universe as that inhabited by either Doc Phoenix or myself. I am allowing Phoenix to enter an Oz which is warped by the personality of the girl whose fantasy it is. In it, the Shaggy Man is a villain, for instance—with overtones which extend into the girl's real life. I hope to use the book to make some of the same points I've made here about the sanctity of our private fantasies.

#

I suppose I must accept the fact that inasmuch as each of us is unique in his fantasies, Farmer has every bit as much right to continue writing and publishing the "real stories" as he sees them of others' fictional characters as I do to refuse reading them. Each of us is correct in his own terms. All I am doing here, then, is registering a dissent in a somewhat less public arena than that in which he is publishing his. I am putting down on paper and in print feelings I have felt for some time now with an attempt to understand those feelings and to communicate their import. In the end, how you feel about this matter is your business, a matter of your fantasies.

THE LASER EXPERIENCE(S)

SERVING IN TIME by Gordon Eklund (Laser #6)
Reviewed by Lynne Holdom

Gordon Eklund has always been fascinated by variations on American history and in this book he has finally gained control of his plot rather than letting it control him.

The story starts in 22nd century America, a time of clan homesteads and very little technology. A world that is cozy and above all, safe. Then Jan Jaroux who is vaguely discontented with life but has nowhere else to go in a world of sameness, is drafted into the Time Patrol. There he is extensively tutored in history—(those who

flunk are tossed into the time void, an idea to warn any history teacher's heart) —before being sent into the past with two other students for post-graduate work under an experienced Patrolman. Unfortunately for Jan, those students are Gail Conrad, the smartest student and whose family has always been Patrol, and (after Arthur is killed on a mission) Kirk Rayburn who Jan instinctively distrusts. Worse, Kirk feels the Patrol is not only observing history but changing it even though Horatio, their Patrolman, has explained this is impossible. Yet it would explain some mysterious events that have puzzled Jan. The crisis comes when Kirk and Horatio take a trip to 1776 to see the execution of George Washington. (If the reader gets this far into the book without realizing that Jan comes from an alternate future world, he deserves to be tossed into the time void—Eklund gives plenty of hints.) When Jan and Gail go to report a seeming history change to the Patrol they end up in the overwhelmingly dictatorial world of the Watcher, conclude that they are the Patrol and try to change history back. Then they discover that this history is the original history and Kirk has merely restored it. Perhaps he was caught in the last such switch. Do Jan and Gail have any right to interfere?

One nice touch: Gail, superior student or not, depends on research, not memory. In fact, Jan and Gail do a lot of research in the NYC Public Library where I did lots of mine.

Briefly—

Laser #1. RENEGADES OF TIME by Raymond F. Jones. Van Vogtian romance but makes a bit more sense. Competently written.

Laser #2. HERDS by Stephen Goldin. Much better than I thought it would be. The only really adult novel so far. An alien contact story that solves a mystery.

Laser #3. CRASH LANDING ON IDUNA by Arthur Toffe. The Swedish Family Robinson of outer space. Two sons and two daughters but no sex or incest so a bit unrealistic. Again competently written.

Laser #4. GATES OF THE UNIVERSE by Coulson & deWeese. Didn't get past page 40.

Laser #5. WALLS WITHIN WALLS by Arthur Toffe. Cruelty to mutants after WW3. One groch: a chap tells the hero as hero is having trouble with the heroine that he should beat her and/or rape her. Do we need another John Norman? Yecch!

These books will probably have the same uneven quality of the old Ace doubles and will give a lot of new writers a chance. There is plenty of action and most are competently written. Kelly Freas did all the covers.

LETTER FROM ROBERT BLOCH

August 25, 1975

"Another good issue with an outstanding coverage of Philip Jose Farmer. I have just spent ((squiggle)) days with the actual P.J. Farmer at STAR TREK Chicago, which offered 85% humidity, 95° heat, 15,000 fans and Harlan Ellison, though not necessarily in that order. The combination, however, is quite overwhelming, and I'm now ready for a nice long rest. That's what the funeral director said—just think of it as a nice long rest."

"William Nolan's piece on LOGAN'S RUN should answer a lot of questions raised by fans as to "Why the movie was changed from the book." The answer is that some clown or group of clowns decided to second-guess the stupid author: thus is one's work "improved" by the artistic mentors of Hollywood. Watch for JAWS MEETS DEEP THROAT."

((How about JAWS MEETS THE HAPPY HOOPER?))

LETTER FROM JAMES K. BURK

August 27, 1975

"I find myself forced to agree, in a large part, with your assessment of the review I did for DELAP'S F&SF REVIEW on THE MOTE IN GOD'S EYE. This review was, in fact, an inferior piece of work, not up to the usual high standards of DELAP'S. The fault for this rests entirely with me. Mr. Delap, the editor, and Mr. Patten, the publisher, trusted me, and I have disappointed them. I wish to apologize to them and, very publicly, to Messrs. Niven and Pournelle.

"While I find the general negative tone of the review warranted, the review itself contained several errors in fact. Again, apologies to all concerned."

"The General Market embraces personal relationships as well as commercial ones. All relationships are governed by market principles as individuals come together, exchange or share as appropriate, and work toward the advancement of their own happiness. The same principles apply to finding a friend that apply to finding a buyer for your product." —Harry Browne

A WINNER FROM DARKOVER

THE HERITAGE OF HASTUR by Marion Zimmer Bradley. DAW UM1189, \$1.50

Reviewed by Lynne Holdon

Way back in the wilds of 1967, a friend handed me a copy of STAR OF DANGER by Marion Zimmer Bradley, and from then on I've been hooked on Darkover. THE HERITAGE OF HASTUR, her latest, is easily the best of them all.

Basically, it is the coming-of-age story of two young men, Regis Hastur and Lew Alton. Their intertwined stories are told in alternating chapters—Lew's in the first person. Both feel alienated by their society and manipulated by it into accepting roles they do not want. Regis wants to travel in space but is pressured into becoming a cadet in the guards; Lew must take command of those same guards due to his father's illness though he'd rather work in a tower as a matrix mechanic.

Of the two stories, Regis' is more interesting, but Lew's is the more tragic. Regis has failed to develop laran, the telepathic gift of his caste and so feels worthless; but his grandfather has been the virtual ruler of Darkover for forty years

without laran. As it turns out, Regis does have laran but he has blocked its development because it is linked in his mind with the memory of a homosexual affair with his cousin, Lew Alton. (Lew refers to it obliquely in several spots.) Later he almost dies from threshold sickness rather than admit he desires his friend Danilo Syrtis because Danilo has endured disgrace rather than submit to the desires of the Cadet-Master, Dyan Ardais. Regis does not want to be thought of as like Dyan; also, Danilo is a crisoforo, so homosexuality is a sin to him though not to most Darkovans. (Regis was educated by crisoforo monks before becoming a cadet, though he is not of their faith.) It is Regis' resolution of all these elements of his heritage that forms the core of his story.

Lew Alton is a more tragic figure because he can never really resolve his problem: his lack of acceptance by Darkovans, particularly the Comyn, because of his half-Terran ancestry. Never mind that he has full laran including the Alton gift; never mind that he has become an excellent matrix mechanic; never mind that he has performed perfectly all the duties of a Comyn heir; he is still only grudgingly accepted because his father had no proper Darkovan sons and he is telepath enough to know it.

He feels constantly manipulated—manipulated into becoming active head of the guards and into accepting Dyan Ardais as Cadet-Master even though Lew feels he is most unsuitable. So when he is sent on a mission for the Comyn to rebel Aldaran, he is all too willing to hear Lord Kerniac's arguments that Darkovans should combine the best of their inheritance with the best of Terra's. Then he discovers that all Darkovans are descended from Terrans; a fact his father surely knows and that the rest of the Comyn probably know. Also, he falls in love with Marjorie Scott, another half-Terran Darkovan. Of course the Sharra power that the Aldaran circle unleashes doesn't quite perform as they wish and seems to be the master rather than the servant of the circle, but...

Besides all this there is plenty of action, lots of swordplay, a kidnapping, a trek across the mountains in winter, and vast destruction once the Sharra matrix gets out of hand. In my personal opinion THE HERITAGE OF HASTUR is one of the two best books I've read this year.

"We are much beholden to Machiavel and other, that write what men do, and not what they ought to do."
—Francis Bacon



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LETTER FROM YVONNE MacMANUS
Senior Editor, Manor Books

5 August, 1975

'Dick, how about a poll of what sf readers prefer for cover art, the kinds of titles they are drawn to (should it be vaguely sf or aggressively blatant), and so on. In short, if you've never heard of the author...what attracts your attention? How important are the blurbs front and back?

(SFR readers are invited to send their answers to these questions to:

Yvonne MacManus, Senior Editor,
MAJOR BOOKS,
21322 Lassen St.
Chatsworth, CA 91311.)

'I am trying to find solid original sf rather than reprinting the standards (though my predecessor already had several reprints in the works). I would like to provide an open market for new writers, but, must impose certain limitations with regard to the topic only to assure us the broadest possible sales within the genre. So lost continents, monsters, and even sword & sorcery are out for now. I'm enclosing a copy of our prospectus, but this is what I send out to unknown writers (to me). In other words, I'm not being all that strict about space operas; the object is that space opera does cover a lot of bad-writing sins which philosophical introspection headlights.'

MAJOR BOOKS
AUTHOR'S REFERENCE SHEET

'Major Books are distributed by Kable News, wherever paperbacks are sold, including supermarkets and dimestores. Editorial content should be competitive with the original novels published by Berkley, Ace, Pyramid, and so on.

'As a fledgling company, we must restrict our inventory. This results in many books being rejected which may well be of interest at a later time. MB pays an advance against royalties from \$750. to \$1,000.; the royalty rate is 4-6% of retail price, breaking at the 150M point.

'Our preferred manuscript length is between 50-60,000 words. Ideally, westerns and detective/espionage books should be on the shorter side. The subjects currently sought are the sure-selling category books such as:

'Suspense and/or espionage: Murder mysteries need not involve a detective, but the protagonist should be a Bogartesque sort, tough guy, with plenty of two-fisted action and fast pace. Espionage should be akin to the James

Bond type; nothing too intellectual or difficult to follow.

'Gothics and/or romantic-suspense:

Please do NOT involve the occult unless you really know what you're talking about, or have a new twist.

'Westerns: Traditional shoot'em ups, good guys vs. bad guys; no sprawling sagas. Hard-riding action is the key-note; plenty of brawls, gunfights, and so forth.

'Science-fiction: Spaceships and intergalactic warfare; space opera or "Star Trek" revisited; no fantasy, monsters, lost continents, etc.

'We do hope to expand upon these needs as soon as possible; query first if you wish to submit material which veers from the above.

'Manuscripts accompanied with a good synopsis or outline will receive faster attention; otherwise, please allow approximately six weeks for a decision.

'If possible, enclose a brief bio with all submissions. Indicate previous publications, when, and with which publisher; along with any information which might augment the sales potential of your work.'

Science Fiction Poetry Contest

CTHULHU CALLS, a quarterly review devoted to horror, science fiction and fantasy literature, edited by Robert J. Barthell and published at Northwest Community College, Powell, Wyoming, is sponsoring a science fiction poetry contest.

A first prize of \$50. and a second prize of \$25. plus publication in the April, 1976 issue of CTHULHU CALLS will be awarded for original, previously unpublished science fiction poems dealing with the genetic revolution. Other cash prizes may be awarded.

Poems dealing with genetic engineering, test-tube babies, "Celebrity Seeds," parthenogenesis, the hybridization of human with other animal life, cloning, the manufacturing of specialized human mutants, artificial creation of life, etc. will be considered. Posts are cautioned that material submitted must be suitable for junior high school as well as adult audiences.

A brief autobiographical sketch should accompany submissions. An S.A.S.E. must accompany manuscripts for their return.

Closing date: Jan. 1, 1976. Send poems to: Peter Dillingham, Poetry Editor, CTHULHU CALLS, 2272 South Bannock, Denver, CO 80223.

***** 25

'Individual wishes, conflicts, and defenses have undergone a remarkable socialization. We are a society which bolsters the withdrawal of men and women from each other and provides social defenses against sexual war. The women's movement has offered a way of handling problems by objectifying them. Women band together not merely to achieve greater control of social, personal, and political life but for mutual support against male hostility. Men become brothers to each other in mistrust of women. What unites men to men and women to women are shared problems, the anger and fear they find incommunicable across the gulf of sex.

'Society is now moving further toward the politicization of feeling. The tendency is for individuals to make their problems collective, to find others with similar problems, and to blame the cause of all their woes on others. Anguish thus becomes converted into a series of rallying cries. If growing up in your family has been a nightmare, do away with families! If intimacy is frightening, let us have open marriage! If children seem like a curse, let everyone stop having them!'

'American society virtually encourages the forces that Lock men and women out of passionate sexual and intellectual commitment. No matter what her experience in growing up, the young woman today is subject more and more to the social and cultural pressure of peers who regard vulnerability with contempt and love for a man as weakness. More frequently than young women, the young men incline to be romantic about the opposite sex, but the romance attaches to the far-off, unavailable woman. The scoring syndrome, always in the culture, is more pronounced than ever, and students today have no difficulty appreciating Inamorati Anonymous, Thomas Pynchon's fantasy in THE CRYING OF LOT 49 of an organization dedicated to helping people kick the love habit. Students who have achieved maximal detachment from feeling are, in the new youth culture, admired for being unshakable.'

—"The Revolution Against Love"
by Herbert Hendin
HARPER'S, Aug. '75.

'That was no typo, that was my life.'
---Steve Fahnstak

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SMALL PRESS NOTES

More of a fanzine review column this time, than a true small press review. But of course the categories are so fuzzy by now who can tell what is strictly small press and what strictly amateur? And does it matter? If a zine has a price on it and I think it has something exceptional in it worth noting, I'll mention it and hope to hell the editor/publisher has a few copies left over to sell.

For instance, SYNDROME #4 from Frank Lunney, a wild, irreverent, earthy zine which has an absolutely hilarious article by Grant Canfield titled "Work Is a Four-Letter Word." Grant is a fine cartoonist/illustrator/artist and may be a better writer. Where does he get off being so good in two fields?

SYNDROME #4 costs \$1. from 715 11th Av., Bethlehem, PA 18018.

#

NEW VENTURE #1 was a so-so new fanzine. NEW VENTURE #2 is a hell of an improvement —suddenly it is a class zine with excellent material: a self-revealing new interview with Roger Elwood (he asked for it!), and part one of a new Doctor Eszterhazy story by Avram Davidson. That's not exactly chopped liver.

Send a dollar to: Rt2, Box 135, Pullman, WA 99165.

#

Dave Truesdale is a fan who, by his own admission, I helped into fandom. Now he edits TANGENT. And for my help he mocks me and Alter-Ego in an editorial in #3. Ah, sharper than an alien's tooth is the ingratitude of...

In TANGENT #3 are THREE excellent interviews: Harry Harrison, Lester and Judy-Lynn del Rey, and William Tenn. Each different in emphasis, each fascinating for the informed opinion of current sf and fantasy, the direction of the genre, other writers... A must-read issue.

They want \$1.10 for a copy. From: David A. Truesdale, 611-A Division St., Oshkosh, WI 54901.

#

Mike Glycer is back (with co-editor and publisher Milt Stevens) with PREHENSILE #14. Prime stuff here, including the well-written editorials and other material by Glycer and Stevens, plus an interview with Mr. and Mrs. Ray Bradbury. The standout item is "Original Story Anthology Panel: Westerman" —a transcription of what Terry Carr, Robert Silverberg and Steve Goldin had to say about their crafts and about s-f, each other and others. Absorbing.

Send \$1. to Milt Stevens, 14535 Saticoy, #105, Van Nuys, CA 91405.

#

FANTASY CROSSROADS continues to amaze me. A double issue (#4/5) is 126 pages of 8½ x 11 photo-offset on various shades of lovely, heavy, colored paper. This zine is an act of love. Material by Robert E. Howard, Harlan Ellison, L. Sprague de Camp, Roy Krenkel, Algernon Blackwood, Stephen Fablan.... The maniac workaholic who edits and publishes FANTASY CROSSROADS

is Jonathan Bacon. He asks (and will get!) \$4. for a copy of this double issue. Send to Box 147, Lamoni, IA 50140.

#

TWO SMALL PUBLISHER BOOKS:

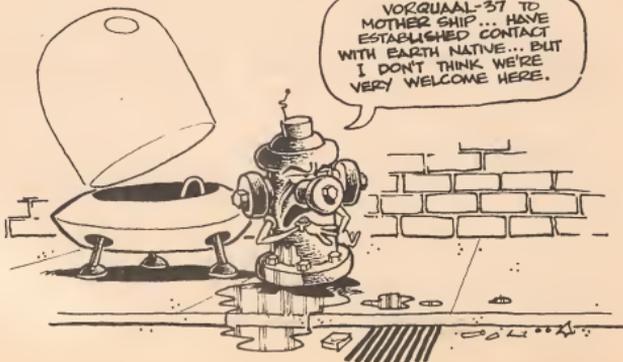
ALMURIC by Robert E. Howard. Grant, \$7.00

Here are all the reasons Howard's fiction survives: Powerful basic story structure, action, suspense, a strong, truly heroic central male character, vivid narrative, and (I think) an unselfconscious, naked enjoyment by Howard of the battles, the rugged survivals against great odds, the creation of the bizarre, exotic, strange. He had a zest, a lustiness in his stories...and the readers know it, love it, drink it in like nectar.

Almuric is an Earthlike planet. Esau Cairn is a fugitive on Earth and is transported to Almuric by a scientist who, in the Foreword, is evasive of how this transport is accomplished, and of how the first-person story from Esau is returned to Earth. It is a device to lend some credence to a fantastic adventure on a wild, alien world.

Esau survives the strange wilderness encounters and toughens to steely muscles and raw courage. He comes upon ape-like humans who father lovely, pure-human women, becomes (by challenged combat) a chief in one of their nation-state cities, battles raiding winged aliens of humanoid form (who are ruled by a seductive, willful Empress), leads a force of allied ape-men against the towering, almost impregnable citadel home of the winged ones....

It is patterned in the Edgar Rice Burroughs/Otis A. Kline tradition. (And how many derivative novels and series are there today, in the same tradition? It



speaks to the strength and appeal of the form.)

If only Howard hadn't suicided so young! But that's easy wishful thinking. If only Lovecraft had.... If only Kuttner.... If only Blish....

#

THE JADE MAN'S EYES by Michael Moorcock. Unicorn Bookshop, 75¢

THE JADE MAN'S EYES is a novella of sword & sorcery, part of Moorcock's long saga of Elric the Necromancer, the "traitor" to his race and people, possessor of the terrifying magic sword, Stormbringer.

The story grabbed me, held me, made me very willing to read more about the adventures of this tortured, seeking, haunted man.

Moorcock displays marvelous invention and imagination. He's one of our finest fantasy writers and is likely not yet fully appreciated.

Unicorn titles are available in the U.S. from R.P.M. Distributors, 5862 Wisconsin Av., Rockville, MD 20852, it says in the back of the book. Or write Unicorn Bookshop, 50 Gloucester Road, Brighton, England.

PROZINE NOTES

Jim Baen, in the course of a recent telephone conversation, told me (with outrageous accuracy) that I only "sniffed" the prozines. My eyes dilated with shock and I sputtered in weak protest. The ancient excuse of lack of time won't wash after this issue of SFR, I fear. I've concluded I do actually indeed no shit have to devote myself full-time to SFR, and

there goes my plan to write one more porno novel to stave off the snuffling wolf at the door. Ah well, I'll be a happy churchmouse.

To ingratiate myself with Jim I managed to read Jerry Pournelle's "Finker" in the July GALAXY.

Good, solid story and not too predictable. Good science lends realism.

I also read Robert Sheekley's "Syncope and Fugue" in the same issue. It is an incident between a bill collector disguised as a tree and Mishkin and his robot. Sheekley writes with an insane brain and a jaundiced eye. I liked it.

Then, somehow, I found myself on page 91 of that same July GALAXY, reading the opening lines of the Conclusion of Arsen Darnay's HELIUM. I read: 'He stirred, rose up to his knees brushing dry hay from his leather tunic and beard.'

I thought: he's got a leather beard? Aha. Darnay didn't know enough to write it: ...dry hay from his beard and leather tunic. My opinion of Darnay's writing remains low.

THEN, because I am interviewing Jerry Pournelle for SFR 16, I read the Larry Niven-Jerry Pournelle collaboration serial that ran in the Aug-Sept.-Oct. GALAXY: INFERNO. I awaited the final installment with great interest and anticipation. I squalled with rage at the last scene. Rip-off! Cheaters! To Hell with them! All through the novel this "dead" science fiction writer, apparently in the Hell as created by Dante, speculates on this Hell: artifact? Real? Aliens? Purpose? And NONE of these questions are answered! The goddamned noble viewpoint character, Carpenter, stays behind in Hell as Benito Mussolini (a changed man) apparently escapes. But we don't KNOW he really escapes.

We don't know anything for sure!
Cop-out!

Listen, if there isn't a sequel in the works that does answer all these dangling questions (which the authors spent much time promoting!), I'll...I'll....

I've got my next question all set for the Pournelle interview.

#

Now, you see? Even after having cut The Archives I find myself out of room. And four of my own book reviews still not in the issue. Disgusting. 52 pages and here it is short hairs time.

I did read in the other magazines, and I promised certain reviews... I am chronically frustrated.

ONE MORE TIME: next issue I'll do better.

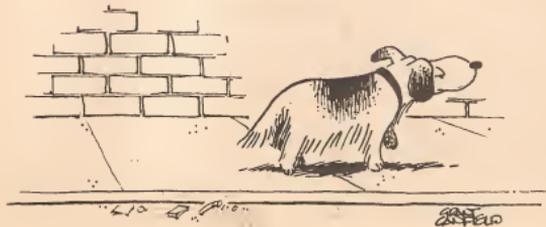
LETTER FROM TIM WHALEN

4-28-75

'As Chairman of the first U.S. PERRY RHODAN Convention and Chairman and founder of Rhocan, the PERRY RHODAN Fan Society, I have come in contact with many PERRY RHODAN fans. There seems to exist a "generation gap" between fans of the PERRY RHODAN series and the majority of the SF fans who do not read PERRY RHODAN. I believe that I can straighten out some of this mess, or at least shine a light on it.

'First of all, SF fans who do not read PERRY RHODAN (let's assign a name to them, say non-PR fans) seem to assume that PERRY RHODAN fans, or at least the majority of them, do not read anything except PERRY RHODAN. This is utterly false. It is true, however, that there do exist PR fans who don't read other SF, but they are the great minority. Many PR fans, myself included, enjoy a wide range of Science Fiction, PERRY RHODAN included.

'Secondly, many non-PR fans just can't seem to understand why the PR fans enjoy the series. They, the non-PR fans, seem to feel that PERRY RHODAN is "juvenile", "stupid", "science fiction for mental midgets" and others. I could name names of well-known fans who have said similar things, but since I don't desire to be sued for slander, I think I'll skip it. Well, I won't admit to PERRY RHODAN being juvenile, or any such thing. It is in fact "light science fiction". Remember that? PERRY RHODAN isn't "heavy", like a good deal of modern SF is. Instead it plays with a cast of characters that are well-known to the readers. The readers understand how these



ASTRONOMICAL ART "IMPRESSIONS OF THE UNIVERSE"



Very likely you have seen my paintings of other worlds at many sf conventions in this country--I've done over 1400 of them in the past 25 years--I never seem to win any great prizes for them, but the biggest prize of all is selling over \$30,000 worth of paintings to fans in the past six years since I have been working at it full time. (Not a really great living, but the slides are now paying their way and making a profit finally.) Convention members have been responsible for most of these sales, but with the greatly increased costs of rent and materials (over THREE times a year ago!!!), I can no longer send art out to those gatherings that cannot be expected to sell at least \$200 of art. The only solution seems to be selling paintings direct, and I have sent out in the past 3 or 4 years a number of one-page catalogs (with color film insert) of a dozen new paintings each time, with very satisfying results. 16x20" paintings sell for \$30 to \$75, a few 8x10" pieces for about \$15 each. Price for the catalog is \$1, the actual cost is near 3 times this. Next one for early Nov. 75.

COLOR SLIDES from paintings An illustrated catalog of 208 subjects exploring space, and symbolic art, many with the good old fashioned streamlined space-ships of the Destination Moon era, is available at \$1, with a sample slide. Slides are 2x2" Ektachrome in cardboard mounts, at 35¢ less, in quantities.



A second catalog is planned, but I cannot find the 300 hours to do it in, so for the present, two subscription plans are available: Each consists of 100 slides per month, at \$25 per set--the sequential series, to be about 1000 slides of the solar system and other worlds and galaxies beyond, binaries, multiple suns, etc. starting in the first set with Mercury and part of Venus; second, rest of Venus, Earth, Moon, etc. (All will be different from the above catalog, without any symbolic art.) The other subscription series will consist of 100 slides of mixed subjects thruout the range of all planets, and other galaxies. The second series, and third, etc., will also be mixed, but different. You can start or stop either series at any time. Write for further information; enclose 10¢ stamp or S.A.S.E.

Science Fiction Radio Plays A descriptive catalog of hundreds of plays available for custom copying on tape reels or cassettes is \$1. Dozens of Ray Bradbury plays and talks, old classic sf stories of other authors, conventions,



I have hopes of getting the lithographing setup properly in the next few months. Then the long-awaited ARTS AND INFINITY magazine may become a reality. If interested, send a 10¢ stamp for sample copy of the next NEWS version to be out soon.

There is even a possibility of a printing of the legendary **Dogstar** book announced many years ago--started some 30 years back--now evolved into my own autobiography--if interested in this combination of art, photography, and poetry, send a 10¢ stamp for announcement later this year. Sorry, no greeting cards or bookplates this year -- not enough time. Maybe next year.

MORRIS DOLLENS, P.O. Box 692, Gateway Stn., Culver City, CA 90230

or: 4354 Coolidge Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90066, PH 1 (213) 398-9097

people think and will act in a certain situation. The main characters therefore do not have to be introduced for fifty pages each book, so that the reader knows him. This lightens up the plot some.

"Now I would prefer to speak of myself, since I find it easier to understand myself better than other people (a trait that is getting rarer). I can tell you that I would prefer to read one Larry Niven, or Heinlein, or Norton, or Dick, than one PERRY RHODAN, since I will generally find one of the afore noted author's books to be more enjoyable than one PERRY RHODAN. But the idea is not one PERRY RHODAN, but rather the whole series. Very complicated plots can be developed, but over a period of time.

"The misunderstanding arises when the non-PR fan is talked into reading one PERRY RHODAN. Usually he will not like it, and in many cases will not hesitate to let me know. If some non-PR fan were to pick up five or six consecutive books, he may actually find himself enjoying the books! What many non-PR fans need is "three painless lessons to Perry Rhodan." Perhaps many who have tried it, but didn't like it might now like to try it again, perhaps not.

"Another thing: From my own personal views, I hate to finish a book. I hate to read 223 pages on a character, get to know him and his world, and then be suddenly ripped away from it at the end of a book. This may account for my great interest in Niven's work. Although he doesn't use the same characters all of the time, he uses the same space. And this I imagine accounts for the many fans of PERRY RHODAN, who feel similarly to myself.

"Most non-PR fans will still not read the series. They will continue to think of PERRY RHODAN as being juvenile. There may not be any hope, but perhaps this has convinced some people to try PERRY RHODAN again."

((Tim... I tried to read PR 18 and PR 20. One by Kurt Mahr and one by Clark Darlton. I was stopped by Wendayne Ackernak's wooden translation of what I take to be initially bad writing. I don't think that, for all her years in America, Mrs. Ackernak is yet fully at home with English, and I doubt that she has any native writing talent.

((After that the calculated Ackernak Juvenalia Hype (which I find patronising and insulting and which I hope even an eight-year-old would resent) turned me off! The editorial approach is to the less-intelligent stratum of the reading public, and to

the immature reader, the uncritical reader.

((From the opening pages of these two novellas I could tell that while the basic story lines would be interesting, the plain awful, painful to read writing could not be endured. Almost every line begged to be rewritten, edited...saved!

((Space adventure can be written with skill, talent, and respect. Once in a while it is. These PERRY RHODAN 'book-a-zines' are an insult to that ideal.))

LETTER FROM ROBERT REGINALD

6 June 1975

"I read Barry Malzher's review of Tuck's ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY Vol 1, with great interest and in looking over the responses from Messrs. Lien, Price and Wood in SFR 13, I was disturbed and rather irritated to find that Mr. Price had paraphrased a comment I made in a private letter to Mr. Tuck without seeking my permission first. I've always felt that it would be highly inappropriate for me to comment publicly on any reference works that might be in direct or indirect competition with my own, since anything I might say, good or ill, could be interpreted in ways not intended by their author. There's an obvious conflict-of-interest. And while I have strong opinions regarding most of the bibliographies currently available in the science fiction field, those opinions are private, and are not meant for public consumption. I wrote to Don when he sent me a form letter last year, asking me for assistance with proposed supplements to the ENCYCLOPEDIA. In that letter, I pointed out that while his basic set tended to complement my book, and vice versa, this would not be the case with supplemental materials, and that I would not be able to provide the same kind of assistance I did with the initial volumes (some bibliographical material from STELLA NOVA, a redesigning of his paperback index format, suggestions for the revision of his bibliographic parameters regarding paperbacks, etc.). I felt that his supplements would be uneconomical, since we would both be doing the same kind of updating, and Gale has superior distribution. My thoughts are still the same, but obviously that's just one man's somewhat biased opinion. What I think of Don Tuck's work is irrelevant; my own book, THE SCIENCE FICTION INDEX, will be available soon enough, and then Price, Wood, or (shudder) even Geis can say what they wish about it, and compare the two for the rest of their days, if they so desire. I'm a firm believer in the free enterprise system: if a work has a little quality in it, and fulfills a

popular demand, it'll prosper; if it's a piece of schlock, it won't. And the good'll drive out the bad. I'm prepared to accept the verdict of the marketplace.

"Mr. Price is, I know, a gentleman at heart, and I presume that the inclusion of the paraphrase without permission was inadvertent. I hope that an apology will be forthcoming. If it isn't, I would be more than happy to defend my (now) public utterances with carefully prepared critiques of Mr. Tuck's work, despite the fact that I would rather not do so."

((Ah, Robert, methinks thou dost protest too much.))

"Ah, Dick, I can see that you and Bruce Arthurs have not yet seen the shining true light of faith. I speak, of course, of the Church of the Holy Toad, recently founded (where else?) in the outback of Southern California by myself, my brother Steve, and my friend and colleague, Doug Menville. Our basic tenet is that the Toad was fried for your sins (not mine), that he gave up his legs to save mankind. We urge our parishioners one and all to leap for the Lord, to wart off evil by being baptized in toad-ail immersion. As the scripture says, "Eat a live toad first thing in the morning, and nothing worse will happen to you the rest of the day." Among our earliest prophets was the well-known author Stephen Crane, who wrote:

"Think as I think," said a man
"Or you are abominably wicked;
You are a toad."

And after I had thought of it,
I said, "I will, then, be a toad."

—XR XLVII

"Other hitherto hidden scriptures are being revealed daily. Already we have a native schism in the Ribitian Heresy, whose blasphemous converts state that the Toad went "ribit, ribit, ribit," when, as everyone knows, he actually went "right, right, right." I won't even mention the Frogians. Get the faith, brother: become a Toadie!"

((I reject the guilt implied that The Toad croaked in my behalf. And whether "ribit" or "right", He was really saying: "Hey, any broads out there with nice long green legs want to hop over to my pad?" (The Toad was a ~~whiffle~~ hoppie at heart, and no amount of rewriting the scriptures will convince me otherwise.

((As for becoming a Toadie... There is altogether too much toadying going on in this world as it is. Although I do confess to practicing the Secret Art of the Tongue now and again.

(I'll finish with the Toad Benediction: May a fat grasshopper LEAP into your mouth. And my best advice is: Stay in the middle of the pond!))

CARTER'S HEROIC SLOW BALL

LANKAR OF CALLISTO by Lin Carter
Dell 440-0468, 95¢ (1975)

Reviewed by Frederick Patten

This is the sixth volume in Carter's "Jandar of Callisto" series, which has been a frank imitation of Edgar Rice Burroughs' "John Carter of Mars" books, up to now. Carter-the-hero fell while fighting American Indians in ERB's original 1912 tale, and was astrally projected to Mars, where he rescued princesses, ray-gunned and sword-duled villains, and slugged it out with monsters for eleven volumes which he "recounted" to Burroughs during the remaining 38 years of that author's life.

Carter-the-author's hero is Capt. Jon Dark, a U.S. soldier in Indochina who fell into a sacred well in a jungle-shrouded lost temple and emerged on Jupiter's moon Callisto, where he has been rescuing princesses, etc., since 1972, sending back a manuscript diary which Carter has been editing for Dell Books.

The first five titles followed the usual hackwork formula in trailing Jandar as he led his life of perpetual derring-do. LAN- KAR OF CALLISTO is something different. It begins with Carter relating in the first person how he and his wife went on vacation to Cambodia (during the balmy days of the Lon Nol regime) to visit the miraculous source of these manuscripts. Carter slips and falls into the well, just as Jandar did in volume one, and hey presto! he's on Callisto, too. Naturally everybody assumes he's another super-warrior like his compatriot, so naturally he's drawn into the rescue amada about to set out in search of Jandar, who was left in a particularly dastardly situation at the close of MIND WIZARDS OF CALLISTO.

LANKAR OF CALLISTO is told with a cheery insouciance which lifts it above the usual pallid imitations of ERB. Lankar, as Carter is immediately dubbed, stumbles through the adventure trying to bear himself as he imagines Errol Flynn would have done. He's not so gauche as to depict himself as any hero. Instead he gets captured by the Mind Wizards and tossed into the same cell with Jandar, and they're both rescued by the rest of the search party. Jandar is properly appreciative of Carter's turning him into a paperback hero back home, and Carter

returns to Earth with a wait 'til I tell Lloyd Alexander and Sprague de Camp about this! anticipation.

Unfortunately, all this is told in a-bout as boring a manner as possible. Carter affects a rambling gosh-wow style heavily larded with asides of "...looked like something out of a Cecil B. De Mille movie ..." or "The garment they selected for me was ... like that worn by Ming the Merciless in the old 'Flash Gordon' serials". This rapidly becomes tiresome. Indeed, when he describes his costume in detail and then remarks that he "felt ready to walk into the costume ball of any world science-fiction convention and carry off first prize", one wonders to what extent this novel is a ploy to enable Carter, a frequent sci con-vention attendee, to do just that?

The novel ambles along at a dead-slow speed. Lankar falls into a giant sinchak spider's web but escapes before the monster's return. The Mind Wizards' lair is discovered mostly by accident, and Jandar and Lankar are released in a "bloody battle" scene which is so clean that the most concerned parents' group would not hesitate to approve it as suitable juvenile fare. The characters are all even more cardboard than usual for pulp fiction of this type - Carter himself included.

The Jandar books are reportedly good sellers around campus bookshops (so are super-hero comic books). LAN- KAR OF CALLISTO should be accepted there by Carter's fans as an enjoyable change of pace, especially since it's particularly easy to vicariously identify with the protagonist in this case. The book might conceivably be considered by teachers and librarians serving high-school writing classes, since Carter does make writing seem like fun!

Some fun was also had by cover artist Vincent di Fate, who depicts a cratered lunar plain upon which a vaguely Grecian sword-wielding warrior is creeping up behind an exotic hawk-shaped aircraft bearing the blue-white-blue roundels of the El Salvadoran Air Force. This adequately captures the spirit of the novel, even if it has absolutely nothing to do with the plot.

HOLLOW LAUGHTER

ETIDORHPA by John Uri Lloyd
Sun Books, \$7.50

Reviewed by Neal Wilgus

John Uri Lloyd's ETIDORHPA, which has recently been reissued in a facsimile edition by Sun Books (\$7.50 paper, Box 4383, Albuquerque, NM 87106), is the story of a

Mysterious Being known only as I-Am-The-Man. Putting a new twist on a theory that was already old in 1895, Lloyd's hero begins his Remarkable Journey in a cave near Paducah, Ky., and eventually learns that our planet originated as a huge bubble of energy which has gathered a coating of space-dust some 800 miles thick. Somewhere near the top of this crust I-Am-The-Man passes the "line of gravity" and thereafter he continually loses the sensation of weight until, reaching the underside of the dust-film, he weighs nothing and is able to continue the mind-boggling journey only by floating effortlessly into the central energy sphere.

Well, there's a lot more to it than that. Written in an old-fashioned style with a double-narrator framework, this "metaphysical" novel touches lightly on the occult, proposes a number of seemingly bizarre theories about physics and biology and includes a good bit of psionics and psychedelics which were way ahead of their time. Sexless, humorless and slow-moving, the book is interrupted continually by arguments between the two narrators and even the story itself is mostly a running debate between I-Am-The-Man and his faceless guide. Lushly illustrated by J. Augustus Knapp, this is a facsimile of the second edition of the 362 page novel so it also contains the preface to the second edition and 20 pages of reviews of the first...



LETTER FROM J. POURNELLE

September, 1975

¹One additional comment, on Farmer's comments ((in SFR 14)).

²The Ace matter was negotiated by Fred Pohl, and the settlement was announced by him; but I was and remain, for my sins, the acting chairman of the Grievance Committee for the Science Fiction Writers of America, and Phil at no time told me he had an outstanding complaint regarding Ace. We even had an exchange of letters regarding another matter; but Ace was not mentioned.

³I'm pleased that Phil has at long last straightened out his problems with Ace, and that I didn't have to get into the act; but I do not think it is relevant for him to point out that this was done by his agent, and not SFWA. If he never sent us a complaint, we could hardly work on the matter.

⁴In general, it is FAR better for a writer to straighten out his problems with a publisher without involving SFWA, because when a writers' association gets into the act, no matter how careful we are, and no matter how polite we try to be, there is a good chance that there will remain at the publishing house an impression that the writer involved is a "troublemaker" and best not dealt with again. That doesn't mean we won't get involved; but I often counsel writers to make further efforts in their own behalf before turning to us. (And incidentally a matter is NOT a legitimate Grievance for SFWA until the writer has made some attempt to straighten it out himself; we are not agents, nor do we make first inquiries for people.)

⁵Regarding policy and annual meetings: I remain unrepentant. When there is a good cross section of SFWA present at a meeting, with representation of most of the "schools" and views within SFWA, and the consensus at the meeting is unanimous (as it was in the Cohen case) or nearly so, then I believe the officers are justified in taking the recommended action.

⁶But note: those actions are taken by the officers and the Directors of SFWA; the consultation with the membership at the meetings is advisory only. We have never used the consensus of an annual meeting as the authority to take an action which we couldn't have taken without that vote. But SFWA being what it is, nothing we do will work unless there's widespread agreement within the organization to support our action; thus it is essential that we take counsel from as representative a group of members as we can. In my presidency that

was done by telephoning about a dozen people, including most of the past presidents, and listening to what they thought we should do, or their reactions to what I thought we should do; I then acted on my own authority.

⁷The alternative is endless debate in FORUM; and nothing whatever is done, either because the debate took so long that the issue is moot, or the officers have changed and the new set aren't interested in this problem (they'll have others), or everyone has just lost all the energy they had put into the matter and after the consensus of all members is reached, the action isn't done because no one takes the initiative to do it. Which is better? This is not a smart-aleck answer or defense; I sincerely wish I knew how to get out of the dilemma of fast action and accusations of arrogance vs. slow or no action at all by democratic means.⁸

((More and more, over the years, I suspect the best course for SFWA is to provide information to its membership: a model contract, lists of agents, up-to-the-minute news of sf markets and conditions, as much info as possible on the meanings and consequences of some critical legal wordage in contracts, advice on tax matters (new rulings, etc.), and advice in general from the grizzled veterans of the free-lance wars.

((A monthly 10-page (one ounce) FORUM mailed first class, even with the upcoming 15¢ rate, would cost under \$100, per issue and would be vastly appreciated.

((I think SFWA should not be involved in writer-editor or writer-publisher disputes. And the money saved would be enormous, the time saved marvelous. SFWA probably could even cut its dues.))

DRIVEL HAPPY

Two Reviews by Neal Wilgus

Mark Reynolds should know better. At least if he's really the world-traveling, socioeconomic-extrapolating think-tanker his publishers project him to be, he must know that his present flood of paperback titles is just not delivering the goods.

TOMORROW MIGHT BE DIFFERENT (Ace 81670, \$1.25) is a prime example of Reynolds' bad execution of a good idea. Briefly, the book concerns a near-future world in which the Western economy remains in a slump because a suddenly affluent Russia floods the world markets with cheap commodities and rich tourists. "Holy smokes," says our American travel-agent hero who happens also to be the youngest man ever to take an Academician de-

gree—and before the story is over he makes it graphically with the luscious Russian heroine, founds a religion of moderation designed to keep the Russkies at home and is consulted by the mysterious leader of the Soviet Complex about another tourist invasion looming on the horizon.

AMAZON PLANET (Ace 01950, \$1.25) begins well with the story of a male visitor to a female-dominated planet, Amazonia, which is apparently an oddity in a largely male-dominated galactic federation called United Planets. Reynolds plays a bit with the idea of a society which uses the hour as a medium of exchange and hints at a vaguely utopian world with no sex roles and no military, but such themes are confined to awkward lectures which are poorly integrated with the action. After 150 pages the action takes over completely and the book degenerates into a shoot-em-up spy story with the hero asking, "Are you driv-el-happy?" on every other page. The book is also marred by an incredible number of typos.

Reynolds is a watered down legacy of the old psychological SF of the 1950s GALAXY, and appropriately Ave advertises him as "voted the most popular science fiction author by the readers of GALAXY and IF." But despite the veneer of sociopolitical examination of a variety of social systems in these assembly-line novels, Reynolds' books are little more than space opera or extended jokes. The heroes, who are almost indistinguishable and are given to expressions like "Great Scott," "Zoraster" and "Wizzard," are cardboard opportunists, forgotten as quickly as the unlikely plots they're maneuvered through.

It's too bad, too, because something really could have been done with the idea of a Russian tourist invasion or a society freed of sexual roles...

Holy Zen, Reynolds, you can do better than this! Are you a flat? Are you a cloddy? Are you driv-el-happy?

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SLICES OF GEORGE WARREN

August 11, 1975

¹Read some Heinlein the other night—CITIZEN OF THE GALAXY and STARSHIP TROOPERS (which last brought GI basic training back in all its gory reality — guys getting their hands blown off by grenades, guys dropping dead during a forced march, myself taking seven-weeks of basic and then having 14 teeth pulled by a drunken Army dentist and hemorrhaging and getting double pneumonia in the hospital only to have myself sent back to do four more weeks of basic; they sent me out to catch up with my unit on a 20-mile hike an hour after they'd left and I had to catch up with them on foot, bearing 65-pound pack and 10-pound rifle, and when I got there, still with pneumonia, I reached them in a driving February rain with no tent partner and had to sleep on the ground in the rain in my poncho, trying mainly to shelter my rifle from the rain. Macho? Up yours, Jack) and was astonished to notice how utterly un-visual a writer Heinlein was. At the end of each story you have no idea what anybody looks like or what the planet looks like or whatever. It's like reading a radio script. Just goes to show if you have a good curve and a good changeup and can hit the corners you can get by without a fastball. My grammar-school pal Ken Johnson (6'5" and 270) got by for 15 years in the majors on junk pitches, even threw a no-hitter once only to have the Braves lose it for him. I guess Heinlein has to qualify as some sort of super junk pitcher¹

#

August 21, 1975

¹I have this fantasy about the best of the fanzines being the avant garde of a new literary populism ... after all, what goddamn university-dominated Little Mag looks as well as ALGÖL, or is as readable as SFR? What prozine (and I'm not limiting this to sf mags)? But of course I don't have to convince you of that. (In a strange way you and Porter are the two halves of the JWCJr of the future. I can't help thinking: Porter for visuals, Geis for content. Sharing Hugos ((last year)) is another proof of the fans' wisdom.)

¹(There is no JWCJr of the pros now. Baen is quite good but not that good, although I hope he gets a fair shot at the Cup. I agree he's the best thing since gold left. Bova? No story sense that I can detect. But his mag is better to look at than it ever was, by my lights — even during the year of the flat-size ANALOG. It's one of the best-looking mags of any

kind in the world, any genre.)

¹Erica Jong I cannot abide on any terms, you already know why. I'm unselective about my antifascism. She also can't write, but I haven't got around to calling that a lynching offense. (Although in the case of Gay Talese ... well ...) Henry Miller, poor old poop, is senile, and before that had blown it all by starting to read his reviews and believing them — worst of all, the shameless encomia by drinkin' buddies and other good ole boys: Rexroth, Ourrell et al. (He seems to have forgot that most of SEXUS is purest Barclay House or worse, or that Durrell almost broke off their friendship over it.) Pomp. Ugh. Miller to me — the part that counts — is mainly that first gasp of freedom in TROPIC OF CANCER; one short story, "The Alcoholic Veteran", which is one of the finest things I've seen in the language in this century — an absolutely inspired improvisation; some sort of status as the Bard of the 14th Ward (and the farther he got away from Brooklyn the worse he got); and a couple of delightful fragments like the dithyramb on bread and his retelling of DOLDILLOCKS ... and you certainly have to wade through a lot of shit to find that, and some of the shit is pure, unadorned porno, whether he admits it these days or not. I agree: goddamn all hypocrisy....¹

¹AND ... part of my agreement with you is based on my conviction, which I think you thought mildly heretical once (how do you feel now?), that the compulsions of the people who buy porno are not to be distinguished in any quality vs. nonquality sense from the compulsions of the people who buy political tracts, Faure Poesie, sf, West-erns, tough private-eye stuff, Irving Wallace, or Proust. They are all getting their buttons pushed, and it's still an open question which button is classier than another. I don't think there is, in that moral sense, good writing and bad writing: just effective writing and ineffective writing. The standards vary according to genre, and what I do in a Beeline would be reprehensible if I put a tough private-eye cover on the book, but in a Beeline they fit and may be effective. Same with one P. Swenson & family. Hell, my only real complaint against hardcore stuff is that it doesn't pay better. The bad stuff did not drive out the good; the low advance did, pace Malzberg. EVERYBODY has written snut. The list of editors alone who worked at American Art is a list of some of the best commercial writers of the last thirty years — including guys like Wilber Peacock, Jerry Bixby, Stuart Palmer (remember Hildy Withers?), even Sam Merwin. But it all

paid so poorly (except for Luross and such) that they all got the hell out as soon as they could.¹

(Yes, yes...effective writing vs. ineffective writing is a good measure of prose, fiction... Generally, I'd say the rules: Be Clear, Be Specific, and Be Brief are applicable to all writing. How clear and how much specific and how brief are all matters of technique and style and a given scene or instance. Obviously. And in fiction another rule might be: Be Plausible.)

((I'm not sure if it's a matter of innocent readers having their buttons pushed by (implied) manipulative publishers, editors, and writers, so much as it is readers seeking out and buying material that fits their conscious or unconscious emotional and intellectual lusts. Of course MY lusts are superior to YOURS. And we will reward those who most effectively pleasure us, satisfy our lusts. Upon that bottom line the cultural and commercial and political world turns, so to speak. Add a lot of ego, a lot of money and a lot of power and let the fun begin.)

((And I suppose that the most effective writing (of its kind) endures, in a free market, all other things being equal.))

#

August 25, 1975

¹SFR 14 received & better than ever. When I opened the package I didn't like the format but got used to it before I finished reading it. Which of course was virtually non-stop; the magazine is the only thing on the market except COMMENTARY which I always



read cover-to-cover without stopping. For, strangely enough, much the same reasons.

'There is less Geis (of the unbuttoned REG variety) here than sometimes in past issues; appears to give some backing to my guess that the stance of REG was something you do not, at this exact time, find as comfortable as once you did. ((True...)) Okay; you'll go in and out of that, I think. I kind of miss some of the REG stuff — not the Sexy Revelations, just the rare-in-all-centuries attempt at utter honesty (which in turn sometimes demands the pornographic or the scatological or what the hell even!'

((I find in me a severe conflict: yes, I would love to write REG again, but it demands that total honesty which would involve people I know and who, I know, would be shocked and hurt if/when they read what I would write about them. There is also a matter of time; I would have to regiment myself like a robot to do all I would like to do, and from experience I know my limits. Ghod knows I'd love to publish a companion magazine: BOLD SCIENCE FICTION; and love to write straight science fiction (in order to show everybody how it should be done "cough-cough"); and do another porno novel (because, damn it, I like to write porno now and then)...but to do that I would have to have a dedicated, full-time (preferably adoring young woman) helper, and that circumstance is highly unlikely given my anti-social mein and loner character. Some problems—if they are problems—are beyond solution, short of the grinning grin reaper, who manages to solve every problem, in the end.

((Back to you, George.))

'Anyhow, the editor takes over in this one, and shows some class. And congrats on the two Hugos in one year, both well deserved — although I kind of go along with Charlie Brown on the question of whether there ought to be a separate fan-critic ghetto.'

'I will take the kind words in SFR as the gentle kick in the ass I deserve and get to work on the Bestef review. I have been ruminating on that for some time, stewing in love-hate for Alfie for letting me down, and have come up with a sort of rationale, which may stand a test of some kind. The rationale, or, better, proposition goes beyond the book itself and the book's mainly a case in point ... but it will get reviewed, and very, very mild controversy, I think. Trouble is keeping all traces of pomp out of the theorizing. The thing I really love about both SFR and COMMENTARY is that professorish pomp won't go down, either place, at all. The sort of

shit you can get by with in NEW YORK REVIEW OF EACH OTHER'S BOOKS or the NEW REPUBLIC will just lie there on the page and die, and, one by one, all of us who contribute in any way to SFR get shown in exactly our true colors and get our just deserts. (I calls that a triumph of editorial flair & expertise, Richard: it accounts for the distinctive flavor of the sheet. I would like you as an editor even if I thought you a jerk personally, and personally I think you are a fine fellow. So there. You too, Norman Podhoretz, wherever you are.)

'Do I detect a bit of pomp in one B. Bova? A bit of I'm-wearing-the-big-cheese's —hat-and-don't-you-forget-it arrogance? Hmmm ...

'You scared the shit out of me about GALAXY not paying writers: they are owned by UPD which owns Award, who just bought my Nick Carter outline and whose check I am still waiting for. Then of course I thought the good people there will have a separate bank account for GALAXY, and if they are turning off the tap there (*sob*) a little at a time it may just mean they are phasing out magazines — which seems likely.'

((The latest word I have is that a threat of legal action is probably sufficient to bring a check. Actually retaining an attorney in NY to make a phone call or write a letter may not be necessary...or a last-resort tactic. Having to report such things is unpleasant. My opinion of the people who treat writers this way is too low to describe adequately. Let me make it clear that Jim Baen is in no way responsible for this UPD policy. He is the victim as much as the writers.))

'Much to my horror, Larry Shaw has just lost his magazine again, since Eddie Goldsmith was talked out of it by PDC, his distributor. Apparent thinking in NYC is that fiction mags have had it: ELLERY QUEEN MYSTERY MAGAZINE, for instance, actually picked-up type on one reprint this month instead of resetting, which looks lousy as one page is wide one-column format and the next is two-column. They didn't useta save money that sort of way. And our friend Leo Margulies says flatly he'll never run another magazine after MIKE SHAYNE is phased out (an action for which he has no present plans, but which seems inevitable in the next couple of years, given the thinking in the distribution trade; the two Leonard Ackerman mags — ED MCBAIN'S and THE EXECUTIONER — folded recently, having had 85% returns. Leo's idea, which has some hefty nibbles from big money at the moment, is pocket books, marketed category-wise, each one containing three novelettes: TRIPLE 34

WESTERN, TRIPPLE MYSTERY, TRIPPLE ROMANCE — and this might well work, particularly with the dist of some reprints, some originals that Leo has in mind.

'Maybe you and I ought to do up a little discussion of Wither Fiction Magazines, developing on the squib on p. 46 of SFR 14. I think it's at least in part the periodicity angle that killing 'em, and maybe we can get some good quotes from this person and that in the racket The purpose being to see if we can stir up some reaction from the pros. And then perhaps use those reactions in getting someone to try some bookazines (ugh! A typical 45J neologism), on, perhaps, another level than Rhodan — not that I disapprove of Rhodan, or of anything that is actually cutting it on a really-pleasing-the-readers-directly level. What do you think?'



((If you agree that the trend of fiction magazine deaths began when the pulps started to fail, and that the attrition has inexorably continued...that the magazine racks are now the home of specialized non-fiction periodicals...that most pocketbooks are fiction...then it follows that the place to go is into the category-fiction pb racks. ((The obvious problems are distribution: could a follower of, say, a pb GALAXY be sure of finding it every month, or even every two months, on a given rack in a given supermarket? I'd like to think so. I notice new DAW and Ballantine, Dell, Avon, etc. releases all the time.

((Some editorial changes would be required. Serials probably would be dropped. Columns and articles could easily be retained, and even letter columns. The key would be easy availability of back issues by mail order, and continuation of subscriptions. It might be possible to build up subscriber sales past 100,000 if a good enough price saving is offered. A pb GALAXY could charge

\$1.50 and perhaps offer a subscription copy at \$1.00.

(Sooner or later a pb publisher is going to put out such a package. The experiment will be watched with intense interest.

((But even in the advantageous pb format, sf editors are going to have to enforce a recognition that readers buy what they like, not what they ought to like.))

LEM'S FORTEAN NOVEL

THE INVESTIGATION by Stanislaw Lem
Seabury Press

Reviewed by Bill Gibson

Martin Gardner's history of the pseudo-sciences, *FAQS AND FALLACIES IN THE NAME OF SCIENCE* (1957), deserves a place in the reference section of any good science fiction library; not only for the accounts of the Shaver Mystery, of John W. Campbell, Jr.'s novel Martian canal theory (they are the well-beaten tracks of migratory herds moving from one water-hole to the next), and of the wonderful (Patent No. 2,482,773) Hieronymus Machine, but simply for the comfort it can afford the reader in these days when pseudo-science seems to proliferate almost as rapidly as the genuine article.

Having failed to dissuade an ailing neighbor from buzzing down to Manilla for a weekend's psychic surgery, you can restore your sense of the absurd by contemplating Iridagnosis, zone therapy, and the Bates ("Throw away those glasses!") method of eye exercise.

And wedged among the outrageous rogues' gallery of outright quacks and well-meaning oddballs assembled between those covers, you eventually come to Charles Fort (1874-1952), whose sense of humor was so great that he probably wouldn't mind that company at all, though even Gardner seems a bit apologetic about having placed him there.

Fort has often been cited as a major influence on modern science fiction, but Gardner feels that this is an exaggeration. (Gardner seems to know his science fiction, especially at those points where the field has overlapped the half-world pseudo-science — as it has on a number of occasions.) He argues that while "about a dozen novels and scores of short stories" have had some Fortean basis, these have usually been "weird tales" rather than serious science fiction.

While I suspect that a great many writers, from the 'twenties on, have been influenced by Fort's books, and stimulated by them, I agree with Gardner that most "Fort-

ean" science fiction hasn't really come to grips with what Fort was all about.

Having recently read Stanislaw Lem's *THE INVESTIGATION* (1974), a novel which seems to me to be perfectly and truly Fortean, I'd like to bring it to your attention. I'm also motivated by an intuition that this is a book which will, in spite of Lem's growing popularity among readers of English, drift away into the hard-cover limbo of library-land. It's a book which makes me grateful for the term "speculative fiction", a term I usually dislike.

(It's very easy for me to see *STARSHIP TROOPERS*, *THE MAN WHO WAS THURSDAY*, *THE NAKED LUNCH*, and *GRAVITY'S RAINBOW* as different aspects of the same continuum, but few seem to agree with me, so I wind up juggling science fiction, science fantasy, fantasy, and all the rest, like everyone else.)

THE INVESTIGATION falls perfectly into the treacherous gap between genres which Silverberg described so well in his *Voon IV* address. Even Darko Suvin (who is, after all, Lem's agent), in his afterword to *SOLARIS*, can think of nothing better to call *THE INVESTIGATION* than a "borderline SF mystery".

Aside from the obvious marketing problems (how about a borderline SF western?), meaning that mystery customers will resent the science fiction aspect, and science fiction customers will resent the lack of same, there is the added difficulty of the book presenting, as Suvin delicately puts it, "a number of ... hypothesis without any clear final solution." That is, you don't learn "who done it"; you aren't even sure what it is that keeps getting done.

While *THE INVESTIGATION* followed *SOLARIS* into print in English, the book was first published in Poland as *SLEOZTWO* in 1959. (The English translation is by Adele Milch, published by the Seabury Press, New York, hardcover, 216 pages.)

Damon Knight, in his biography *CHARLES FORT, PROPHET OF THE UNEXPLAINED* (1970), tells us that the first Fortean story was George Allan England's "The Thing From Outside", in the April 1922 issue of *SCIENCE AND INVENTION*.

Eric Frank Russell's *SINISTER BARRIER*, chosen by Campbell to kick off the first issue of *UNKNOWN WORLDS*, serves as a more familiar example for what has previously passed for Fortean fiction. Various odd things happen, most of them lifted (with all due credit; Russell was a Big Name Fortean) from Fort. What, asks our hero, the hell is going on? Answer: alien super-

parasites have been secretly milking us of our violent emotions for years. Russell builds a framework to support a certain amount of Fort's "damned" data, and mankind is victorious in the end. Russell, in effect, has done exactly what Fort did; Fort deliberately constructed consciously absurd theories to contain the legion of oddities he dredged up from the world's libraries and newspaper files.

Both Gardner and Knight agree that Fort did not "believe" in his own theories, but felt that they were no more absurd than the theories of established science; they were his way of thumbing his nose at science. But Russell's story, like the bulk of Fortean science fiction, makes the totally anti-Fortean assumption that there is an "answer", or a "plot", or a "reality" which can be discovered and comprehended. "I believe nothing of my own that I have ever written", wrote Fort, "I cannot accept that the products of minds are subject-matter for beliefs."

Gardner feels that Fort's whimsical cosmology was too "mundane" to have impressed the more serious science fiction writers. True, Fort's rotating star-sphere and Super-Sargasso Sea could have hardly found comfortable homes in even the sleaziest space opera pulps. The densest kio on the block wouldn't have been able to talk for it; "Hey, Lomby, Buck Rogers went to the moon and guess what?— It's just pointed on this enormous crystal sphere!" No, it wouldn't have sold. Nobody was ready for *THRILLING ANTI-SCIENTIFIC TALES*, least of all Fort.

His philosophy was essentially Hegelian, and his universe an homogenous unity which, since we are part of it, we may never know in its entirety. This led him to an understanding of the paradigmatic nature of the sciences, and these paradigms (I use the word in the sense defined by T. S. Kuhn in *THE STRUCTURE OF SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTIONS* — "universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners." — quoted by Knight), rather than the sciences themselves, were his targets.

"Every science," he wrote, "is a mutilated octopus. If its tentacles were not clipped to stumps, it would feel its way into disturbing contacts." And paradigms are at once the tentacles and the clippers.

For us, in the Fortean universe, as Gardner puts it, "there are only the broken lights, the half truths and the phantom realities."

Until I read THE INVESTIGATION, I would have considered Malcolm Lowry's OCTOBER FERRY TO GABRIOLA the best example of a fictive Fortean universe, and that on the basis of a minor sub-plot in an otherwise mainstream novel.

Lem's familiarity with Fort's writings (or his lack of familiarity) has little bearing on the matter of THE INVESTIGATION being a Fortean novel. When Lem's Inspector Gregory confronts his Chief Inspector with the following argument, which might be dropped into an edition of THE BOOK OF THE DAMNED without creating even the slightest ripple, he presents Fort's universe perfectly:

"What if the world isn't scattered around us like a jigsaw — what if it's like a soup with all kinds of things floating around in it, and from time to time some of them get stuck together by chance to make some kind of whole? What if everything that exists is fragmentary, incomplete, aborted, events with ends but no beginnings, events that have only middles, things that have fronts or rears but not both, with us constantly making categories..."

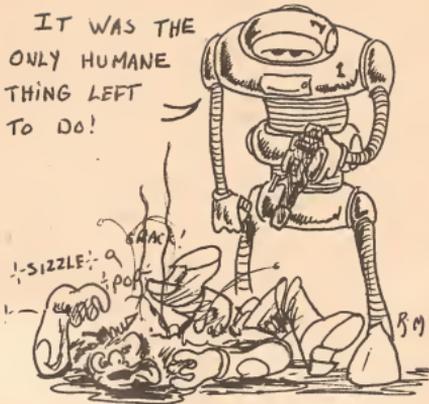
Inspector Gregory of the Yard has taken a case seemingly concerned with a number of temporary resurrections of the dead. Evidence indicates that the cadavers have risen, made an attempt to clothe themselves, and walked away, but the case is being treated as one of multiple grave-robbing. Gregory's superiors at the Yard call in a strange old statistician, Dr. Sciss, who gives his opinion of the case.

Sciss demonstrates his methods, explaining the geographical distribution of the case and showing that the product of the times and distances between consecutive incidents, multiplied by the temperature differential, is a constant.

Pressed for more information, he refuses: "A close relationship can easily be demonstrated between eggs, bacon, and the stomach, to name only one example, or a distant relationship, with somewhat more difficulty, between, for example, a country's political system and its average marital age. But regardless of the degree of difficulty, there is always a definite correlation, a valid basis for a discussion of causes and effects."

Sciss' argument will particularly delight readers of Knight's book on Fort, who know that tree-ring widths in Arizona, international battles, and the ozone content of the atmospheres of London and Paris all fluctuate simultaneously in 9.6-year cycles, along with eighteen other known (and seemingly unconnected) phenomena.

IT WAS THE
ONLY HUMANE
THING LEFT
TO DO!



The reader should be warned that Milch's somewhat over-literal translation can be rather unnerving. London is filled with Buicks and Studebakers, rather than Vauxhalls and Minis, provincial towns are named Engender, Spittoon, and worse, and the Yard detectives speak a sort of B-movie hard-guy Americanese; all of which would be much less jarring in the original Polish, I suppose. On the other hand, it may all serve to further disorient the reader and heighten the novel's surreal tone...

Gregory, who lives in a house out of Edward Gorey, with "rooms so high they seem to have been designed for some sort of flying creature," is kept up nights by regular concerts of bizarre and incomprehensible sounds, "performed with a certain amount of technical finesse," which issue from his landlord's bedroom. Too shy to ask about these nocturnal outbursts, Gregory attempts to work out a logical explanation, but fails. Like Fort's "damned" data — rains of little frogs, thousand-pound hailstones, green children — the sounds threaten the paradigms of Gregory's reality (or his sanity, if you like).

After Gregory's speech to the Chief Inspector, which I've quoted in part and which is, in its entirety, as brilliant as Snow's argument against the possibility of alien contact in SOLARIS, the Chief produces a last-minute scape-goat who would have delighted Fort. Though reality as we know it has been saved (?) in the nick of time, he enlists Gregory in a project to "set up

clearly defined guidelines for the future. For the foreseeable future."

If Lem hasn't read Fort, and I doubt that he prefers to read French translations of American and English science fiction — although the man's reputation is certainly that of a polymath — the similarity in thought between Fort's books and THE INVESTIGATION is very striking. I imagine that the book has its origins both in Lem's grasp, as scientific historian, of the paradigmatic nature of science (and by extension, of our minds) and from what Suvin refers to as "his pet horror... a claim to final, static perfection."

"Debtor" is more than a game. In America it tends to become a script, a plan for a whole lifetime, just as it does in some of the jungles of Africa and New Guinea. Here the relatives of a young man buy him a bride at an enormous price, putting him in their debt for years to come. Here the same custom prevails, at least in the more civilized sections of the country, except that the bride price becomes a house price, and if there is no stake from the relatives, this role is taken on by the bank.'

—Eric Berne, M.D.

GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Coming Up In F&SF

(a partial list)

Frederik Pohl - *Man Plus*, a three-part serial of the new Pohl novel, ten years in the writing, concerning a cyborg and his desperate mission to Mars

Damon Knight - a special Knight issue, featuring his first fiction in many years, an extraordinary story entitled *I See You*

L. Sprague de Camp - two new stories, *The Coronet* and *Balsamo's Mirror*

John Varley - *In the Hall of the Martian Kings* and *The Funhouse Effect*, two novelets from one of sf's best new writers

Ron Goulart - *Lunatic At Large*

Marion Zimmer Bradley - *Hero's Moon*

Tom Reamy - *The Detwiller Boy* and *Insects in Amber* two novelets (sf this time) from the author of *San Diego Lightfoot Sue* and *Twill*.

Manly Wade Wellman - *Where the Woodbine Twineth*, macabre fantasy, from a master

Ursula K. LeGuin - *The Barrow*

Robert Bloch - *But First These Words*

Barry N. Malzberg - *Seeking Assistance*, the last sf story from sf's most controversial writer, along with an explanation of why he's getting out of sf

Robert Thurston - two novelets, *The Aliens* and *The Mars Ship*

Robert Aickman - *The Hospice*

Richard Cowper - *Piper at the Gates of Dawn*

Michael Bishop - *The Samurai and the Willows*, a novelet

R. Bretnor - *The Ladies of Beetlegoose Nine*, a new Papa Schimmelhorn story

Edward Wellen - *Goldbrick*, a wild new novella from the author of *Hijack*, *Mouthpiece* and *Deadpan*

Avram Davidson - *Manatee Gal Ain't You Coming Out Tonight*, something completely different, even for Davidson

Department of fictional authors - *The Volcano* by Rex Stout's **Paul Chapin**; *It's the Queen of Darkness Pal* by Richard Brautigan's **Rod Keen**; *The Doge Whose Barque Was Worse Than His Bite* by Kilgore Trout's **Jonathan Swift Somers III**

Plus, of course, our regular departments: **Isaac Asimov** on Science; **Algis Budrys** on Books; **Baird Searles** on Films and TV; **Gahan Wilson's** cartoons; the F&SF Competition, starring Bob Leman and many other wits, and other odds and ends too numerous to fit on this page...

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HOME ON THE SF RANGE

BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES OF THE YEAR:
FOURTH ANNUAL COLLECTION, Edited by Lester
del Rey, Dutton, \$8.95 (1975).

Reviewed by Frederick Pattin

This anthology is a selection from the sf short fiction of 1974. The blurb says that "the fourth annual collection of BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES OF THE YEAR ... will set a new standard for the 'best.'" It won't really, but it is a good representative volume that shows the range that modern sf spans.

Harry Harrison's "Ad Astra" and Gordon R. Dickson's "Enter a Pilgrim" are old-fashioned melodramas of noble, brave humanity struggling beneath the domination of extraterrestrial invaders, while Harvey Jacobs' "Dress Rehearsal" spoofs this theme and Harlan Ellison's "Sleeping Dogs" presents man as the ruthless dominator of the galaxy. In John Brunner's "What Friends Are For", the alien Friends serve as psychiatrists to a sick mankind. "The Birch Clump Cylinder", by Clifford D. Simak, and "If This Is Winnetka, You Must Be Judy", by F. M. Busby, both show the effects of time travel upon people, but in totally different treatments. Carolyn Gloeckner's "Earth Mother" is a humorously horrific gem about a eugenically-purified, birth-controlled future in which Mother Love still finds a way. Alan Dean Foster's "Dream Done Green", about a worn-out Earth in a galactic civilization of the far future, mixes schmaltz and flip humor in a blend which is lightweight but a surprisingly tasty confection for all that.

"The Man Who Came Back", by Robert Silverberg, is a human interest puzzler: when a man returns to Earth after eighteen years to renew an old love affair, does he seek romance or revenge? Vonda N. McIntyre's "The Mountains of Sunset, the Mountains of Dawn" eschews mankind but not humanity in a bittersweet tale of an alien matriarch seeking to escape her brood's brisk march toward progress, in order to die with old-fashioned dignity.

Mildred Downey Broxon shows the medieval evolution of astronomy by presenting it in an alien setting in "The Night Is Cold, the Stars Are Far Away". Frederick Pohl and C. M. Kornbluth tell a similar story in "Mute Inglorious Tam", which editor del Rey admits is not really sf; a Saxon serf of the early 1300s has dreams that his social position will not allow him to develop, which is a parable of all dreamers in all ages who, due to mundane pressures, are unable

to realize their imaginations. Stan Novick's short "The Postponed Cure" shows that while medical technology may march on, its ideals — and frustrations — are ageless. R. A. Lafferty's "And Name My Name" is a wry fantasy in which God, at a strange Judgement Day, rules that man has muddled long enough and the earth is to be entrusted to another species.

Lester del Rey introduces the volume with a brief foreword warning against the trend in recent sf to discard the basic sense of wonder along with the crudities of old-fashioned pulp writing. He closes it with a summary of sf events in 1974: market report, list of awards, authors' necrology.

This is certainly a fine anthology, but is it one that sets new standards? No. The quality of the stories is generally above average, but there are really no outstanding works among them. Of course there are years in which outstanding stories simply are not written. For what it's worth, these fifteen stories do not include any of the 1974 Nebula or Hugo award contenders, though in this reviewer's opinion several of del Rey's choices are superior to some of those award nominees.

This book is recommended reading to all sf enthusiasts. It is a recommended purchase for libraries that want to keep up with the best of short fiction as well as the novels. At \$8.95, it should be considered a luxury purchase by individual buyers, though it will be well worth adding to personal bookshelves in a less expensive paperback edition.

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SAME TRACK, DIFFERENT HANDICAPPER

THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF THE YEAR #4,
Edited by Terry Carr
Ballantine 24529, \$1.95.

Reviewed by Peter Mandler

Yes, it can be done: an open-minded, reader-oriented editor can pick a representative selection of "best" science fiction stories. The proof of this lies in Terry Carr's fourth annual compilation of THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF THE YEAR. Nine of the ten stories (culled from a variety of markets) included therein bear the admittedly vague mark of a "best."

Even the exception is debatable: Phil Dick's "A Little Something For Us Tempnauts." It is an entertaining time-paradox story framed in Dick's usual "unreality trip" treatment. Unfortunately, the author does not succeed at what he attempts;

the stereotypical scientists, bureaucrats and newscasters are just too typically predictable to be interesting.

There are nine better stories alongside "Tempnauts," including three remarkable novellas. Silverberg's Nebula-winner "Born With the Dead" is a beautiful and subtle twist on the Orpheus legend, a man pursuing his woman beyond the grave, the twist being that she has been rekindled to live a second life apart from ordinary humans and yet to walk in their midst. Michael Moorcock's "Palo Roses" is the latest in his "Dancers at the End of Time" cycle, a delicate tale of a far-future immortal in search of sin. Her name is Catherine Machine-Shop-Seven Gratitude and she is fourteen years old. Greg Benford and Gordon Eklund describe a sect of sun-worshippers who worship other people's sons (one of the most original themes to appear in a long time) in "If the Stars Are Gods."

William Tenn and Frederik Pohl have emerged (to varying degrees) from retirement and successfully, to judge from their stories. Pohl's "We Purchased People" tells of two human rejects sold to Visiting Aliens as slaves. They're given just enough spare time (Visiting Aliens aren't always Mean and Nasty) to fall in love with each other — the kernel of an indescribable gem, perhaps the best of these best. The Tenn story is "On Venus Have We Got a Rabbi," which just about sums it all up, except that on Venus they also have hundreds of tentacled races claiming to be Jews.

There are also two standard stories from authors whose "standard" stories make standard stories read like telephone books, a scientific Hugo-winner by Larry Niven ("The Hole Man") and a romantic heart-winner by Roger Zelazny ("The Engine at Heart-spring's Center"). A third "standard" story would be "The Author of the Acacia Seeds..." if Ursula LeGuin could write anything standard. "Acacia Seeds" is a series of extracts from the JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF TEROLINGUISTICS, an august publication in which scientists describe their communications with ants, penguins sunflowers and licen. The ants' contribution, a poetical (and political) diatribe which exhorts us to "Eat the Eggs!", may come to stand with DAS KAPITAL in the ranks of revolutionary literature.

"Dark Icarus" is left for last, although not because Bob Shaw has slipped up; editor Carr has slipped up. The story is credited as being from SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY, Britain's largely reprint sf magazine. However, "Dark Icarus" was published in IF (August) as "A Little Night Flying."

One would think that an American anthology would credit the American appearance, which was probably the original publication in any case (IF claims/claimed "All Stories Original"). Let the attendant controversy not distract you from the virtues of the story, for it is a fine, fast-paced whirl through a world of airborne cops and robbers (with, incidentally, two appropriate titles).

If you haven't the time to read a lot of short fiction, read this anthology. It includes a lot of good writing, and some of the best science fiction of the year.

HOLDING A WAKE

IN THE WAKE OF MAN: A Science Fiction Tragedy by R. A. Lafferty, Gene Wolfe, and Walter Moudy. Bobbs-Merrill, \$7.95 (1975)

Reviewed by Buzz Dixon

There's a valid reason for the eight buck price tag. Only librarians, compulsive collectors, and grandmothers looking for Christmas presents will buy IN THE WAKE OF MAN.

R.A. Lafferty's offering is "From the Thunder Colt's Mouth." It isn't science fiction. It isn't a story. It isn't much of anything.

The characterizations are telegraphed in poetically brilliant prose, but Lafferty lost my interest by page 20 when it became apparent he was repeating himself.

The Royal Pop Historical Society (a front for a non-human group) changes history by wiping out anything not splendid enough. The non-humans want mankind eradicated so they can graft human history to their own culture ("It was necessary to destroy the village to save it," etc.).

The story is talk, talk, talk, talk. Nothing happens until the last third of this 86-page story.

Gene Wolfe's "Tracking Song" takes place along the tracks of the Great Sleigh, a city-sized vehicle criss-crossing a frozen planet. The culture and pseudo-religious beliefs of the barbarian cannibal tribes (each believes itself to be the only true humans on the planet, all others are animals. Someday other true humans would appear, but until that day they rationalize their slaughter of each other) are very well done. The story style is more suitable for fantasy than science fiction (i.e., the hero blindly accepts everything, never questions anything).

The hero, named Cutthroat after a birthmark, is found after apparently falling off the Great Sleigh. Stricken with amnesia, he sets out to catch up with the Great Sleigh and discover who he is.

So far, so good, the beginnings of a potentially good novella. Then Wolfe forces a hackneyed plot instead of letting the story develop naturally.

The hero picks up a girl in his travels. She is kidnapped. Cutthroat follows her abductors to a cavern containing an ancient

city. He outwits a giant, kills a dwarf, and picks up three friendly robot traveling companions.

Wolfe puts a perverse twist on the Quest theme by having the protagonists simply not give a shit anymore. Some Questors are defeated, some discover their goals to be unworthy, but "Tracking Song" is the only story I've ever read where everybody loses interest.

Finally Cutthroat drops out and lies in the tracks of the Great Sleigh, waiting to die as the planet is terraformed into a much warmer place (who does this and why is never explained). Then, anti-climactically, the Great Sleigh comes over the horizon. Among the humans on board is a mad with wings (alien? angel? demon?).

"Tracking Song" could have been an excellent sf story, which is what makes me so angry with Wolfe's handling of it. His pulp plotting, cutesy-symbolic names, and increasing indifference leaves a sour taste.

The late Walter Moudy's "The Search for Man" reminds me of a poor Ace Double. This is science fiction at its worst.

After Man died out, his androids (called 'humanoids' in the story) go looking for Him. Eventually they find Him.

The hero, who just happens to be born with a superbrain, looks for Man. He becomes Anti-Man to force the Priests of the 2000-year-old Man worshipping religion to let him see the old records. They buckle under and he discovers Man died at the hands of an android chemist who developed a poison to kill all the insects in the world (the poison acts more like a disease and who could be so stupid as to decide the elimination of all insect life is desirable).

He then marries a sub-Pope's daughter (No sex, mind you. Androids got gonads but they don't use them.), checks out a 2000 year old spaceship from his local museum, and searches for a human colony on Mars.

There's no need to describe further. Besides the illogical plot, faulty science, one-dimensional characters, and the unbelievable android culture, there is very, very bad writing.

Only two parts of the story stick in my mind: the hero's conversations with an arch-ecologist android, and the Man-worshipping androids meeting android-worshipping humans.

There's no conflict in the story; everybody is super-polite and super-nice to each other, even when they disagree. And there's no given reason for the hero's marriage—it's just written in.

The stories were purchased ((and copy-righted)) by Roger Elwood. He and Barbara Norville, a Bobb-Merrill house editor, put



it together. Nobody's name appears as editor on the book.

It's a bad anthology. What more can be said?

SEEING IS BELIEVING

Bob Silverberg's new novel, *THE STOCHASTIC MAN*, is a many-layered thing. On the surface it's the story of a man talented in stochastic (predictive) ways, who becomes hooked on a young, upcoming, charismatic politician, and on an old clairvoyant—a man who can see the future and who is always right!

The second level shows us a skull; the terrible effects on a man when he knows what will happen—including (especially including) the who/when/what/where/why/how of his own death—and who must then simply observe the familiar good and bad events take place..

Lew Nichols is married to a lovely, sensuous wife who turns to the new Transit religion which is dedicated to renunciation, the loss of self, the loss of cause and effect; an interesting counterpoint to Lew's inner need for certainty. Yet, maybe the Transit religion isn't so much different from what Lew is moving toward, hm?

Nichols has a kind of logical blindness up till near the end; he hopes/believes that once he knows the future he can change it, somehow. But after the first flush of joy and hope and confusion when seeing finally comes to him on New Year's Eve, 2000 A.D....

The core of the novel is God. Nichols is by character attracted to knowing, to certainty, to power and to the serenity that an unalterable future implies. If the future is fixed, if fate is true, if there is a Plan...relax! You are not responsible. Whatever happens had to happen. Someone or something has set these events on their unalterable course. God.

THE STOCHASTIC MAN is a novel which, if you think about it, will lead you to think about it...and think about it....

And THE STOCHASTIC MAN is a first bite, a preamble, to what might be an excellent sequel—the story of the war between the Nichols-founded religion of true what-will-be, and the old ways of government, morality, culture...the stubborn, slow death of the illusion of free will and of ego. But I doubt Bob will write it. (Harper & Row, \$7.95)

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HISTORY THROUGH THE MIXMASTER

AT THE NARROW PASSAGE by Richard Meredith Berkley N2730, 95¢

TUNNEL THROUGH THE DEEPS by Harry Harrison Berkley 2565, 95¢

THE WHENABOUTS OF BURR by Michael Kurland DAW UV1182, \$1.25

Reviewed by Lynne Haldon

As the Bicentennial approaches there has been a spate of alternate history novels. Is it a coincidence that as TV emphasizes our history, SF emphasizes our non-history?

AT THE NARROW PASSAGE, which is dedicated to H. Beam Piper, begins in a world in which the British put down the American Revolution and helped put down the French one. The Germans are attacking France and the colonies are riddled with secret revolutionary groups much like the I.R.A.—one of which is called the "Mad Anthony Wayne" society. As a resident in one of the towns named after Mad Anthony, I appreciated that touch. However, the action doesn't stay in that world, but hops all over until the plot is a mess of spaghetti. There are two kinds of aliens, a mysterious message from the future, a plot to steal an atomic bomb and all sorts of crosses and double-crosses.

One grouch: There is a lot of antiseptic violence, as well as the other kind; but I suspect individual lives wouldn't matter much in an infinity of alternate worlds. Aside from that I recommend this book as a good action-adventure.

#

TUNNEL THROUGH THE DEEPS takes place in an alternate world in which the Revolution was put down and Washington hung. The hero is Gus Washington who is building a tunnel from Long Island to Land's End, and trying to clear his ancestor's name. This novel has a curiously static quality, as if time were arrested in the Edwardian era.

Since many historians regard our Revolution as the cause of the French Revolution which in turn caused all the later ones; perhaps this Edwardian society has a lower level of violence and vulgarity. Harrison makes this point obliquely in the novel when a medium contacts our universe and is almost driven insane by the violence of our thoughts.

This is Georgette Heyer crossed with SF.

#

THE WHENABOUTS OF BURR starts off in

our world and then shifts to one in which Hamilton was the fourth president. It seems our Constitution was stolen and replaced with an exact duplicate except that it has Burr's signature instead of Hamilton's.

Unfortunately, Kurland tries for laughs with cutesy names for characters and farce for action. I'd skip this one.

WORKING OUT THE OPTIONS

OPTIONS by Robert Sheckley
Pyramid V3688, \$1.25 (1975)

Reviewed by Mal Warwick

It's almost always tiresome when a novelist tries to Tell Us Something, but Robert Sheckley conveys an especially laborious message in OPTIONS. In this paperback original, billed as his first novel in eight years, what Sheckley tells us is that he's tired of writing novels.

It's all too easy to conclude from the cover copy and the hilarious opening chapters that OPTIONS is the story of one Tom Mishkin, grounded on a hostile planet amid a typically bizarre and charming cast of Sheckley's insane creations, but in fact it's Sheckley's story, not Mishkin's, and the book soon proves to be a self-conscious Alice-in-Wonderland for the neurotic New Yorker. Mishkin's misadventures in search of a missing spaceship part become obscured in a forest of sour asides and pretentious anti-intellectual digressions, so that Sheckley is forced to ask midway through, "What's going on around here? Why isn't anything working out?"

"Of course," he answers, "I could put it all in order, and we could dance a minute. I do want to amuse you, but really, there's a limit. Do you really want a guided tour through the formal gardens promised in the prospectus? Maybe that would be OK for you, but how about me? I'm supposed to have some fun, too."

Unfortunately, Sheckley gives the impression that he isn't having much fun as he plods along the shadowy paths of the Pop Zen Buddhism that seems to be responsible for much of this confusion. He would have been well advised to chuck Huang Po and reread his own books instead, or take a closer look at Vonnegut, to whom his debt for OPTIONS, whether he knows it or not, is also embarrassingly large. Vonnegut can play with that concept of "synchronicity" he uses to justify his excursions onto alien worlds and have most of us rolling on the floor with him, but when Sheckley takes

us to the planet Harmonia by means of this same device, we can't help conclude, as does one of his characters, that "The beast that kills by boredom...is also found in these parts."

What makes this conclusion so painfully sad is that, in a more tractable mood, Sheckley could clearly have made **OPTIONS** a book that was both revealing and funny despite his unsuccessful attempt to tinker with the form of the novel. He is one of those writers who cannot construct a bad sentence, and the first few chapters of **OPTIONS** are infused with that demented sense of humor that makes so much of his earlier work such a delight to read. The humor goes sour, however, and the self-revelation becomes self-mockery, because Sheckley—not the world he creates—will not allow Tom Miskin to live a life of his own. Preoccupied with some purpose he never clearly reveals, Sheckley chokes him to death inside a plastic bag of self-justifying pseudo-Oriental jive.

EVERYTHING YOU'D EVER WANT TO KNOW

If Ray Bradbury is a god to you, you'll want **THE RAY BRADBURY COMPANION**, a Brucoli Clark book published by Gale Research Co.

It is, succinctly, 'A life and career history, photolog and comprehensive checklist of writings with facsimiles from Ray Bradbury's unpublished and uncollected work in all media.'

It has a very detailed Index. It is by William F. Nolan and has an Introduction by Ray Bradbury.

It is a monster of a book, endlessly fascinating and instructive. It is about 7" x 10", quality hardbound, slipcased, approx. 1 1/2" thick, and expensive: \$28.50.

Gale Research Co., Book Tower, Detroit, MI 48226.

HIGHLY SPECIALIZED REFERENCE

Would you believe H. W. Hall went back to 1923 and started indexing science fiction book reviews? Yes, and he issues supplements to keep up to date.

The major accumulation, 1923-1973, is published by Gale Research Co. and is in the quality hardbound format they usually use; it is meant to be a long-lasting reference work and they don't put out ill-made, cheap-material volumes.

Hall indexed from 250 or so magazines and accounts for 6900 books. Included are reviews listed from current leading fan-zines.

His 1974 supplement is now out: 3608 Meadow Oaks Ln., Bryan, TX 77801. No price listed. Photo copies of earlier yearly volumes: #1-#4 are \$5.00.

The Gale Research **SCIENCE FICTION BOOK REVIEW INDEX 1923-1973** is \$45.00. Books sent on 30 day approval.

**MAKING FUN OF THE TRUTH!
(How Dare They?)**

ILLUMINATUS!

Part One: **THE EYE IN THE PYRAMID** - Part Two: **THE GOLDEN APPLE**
By Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson
Dell 4688, \$1.50; Dell 4691, \$1.50

They blew it. Instead of writing this three-part (two parts released thus far) extended novel as straight fiction about the ancient and all-embracing conspiracy of the true, ultimate Secret Masters of the World... instead of bringing all the plot and conspiracy elements gradually and tellingly together until, in the third volume it would be so inevitably preposterous and incredible that their underlying satire was hellishly devastating... Instead of doing that, Shea and Wilson started immediately with their tongues obviously deep in their cheeks, and made plain instantly they were writing a Mockery and a Derisive Satire (with some Black Comedy) on the conspiracy mentality and its manifestations.

As a paranoid, I resent this.

I didn't read much beyond page fifty of Part One. Why read on? They made their case by page two; all the rest is unbelievable, variations of caricature and jape. It's sicksville and snickersville, if you like that kind of making-fun-of-with-cheap-shots.

They could have suckered everybody—all the conspiracy buffs, all the uncertain, all the vaguely discontented—could have set the hook of Belief deep and sure...and then could have reeled them all into the good ship Gotcha!

They blew it...and I'm disappointed.

THE GOREY TOUCH

I can't let an appreciation of Edward Gorey's new collection of 19th Century-ish grue-and-satire go unsaid any longer. It is **AMPHIGOREY**, published by Putnam's, distributed by Berkley (E2867, \$4.95). It is fifteen of his "books". It is Sly Mockery of a high order in the artistic form of story-telling he has mastered: not comic

strip, not cartoon... Something Else.

I especially loved "The Unstrung Harp" (which would set novel writing back fifty years) and "The Helpless Child" (which will send any five-year-old into a galloping paranoid trauma—keep the book away from children!).



LETTER FROM H. K. BULMER

26 Sept. 1975

'I much say that I much approve of the superior newsprint you are using now, and it gives the zine a most impressive look of authority that, for we love and cherish the mimeo paper of fnz and would not knock it, a mimeo-paper zine does not have.

'I have read the Farmer interview thru and it is vastly entertaining and enlightening. Philip Farmer comes over here as a much nicer man altogether than the authorial 'Farmer' I have so far encountered in those few books of his I have read. This kind of piece must enhance the reputation of SFR and, also, give you a thumping boost to the editorial ego.'

((The credit must go to Phil; the quality of any interview depends on the time and effort the interviewee is willing to give to the questions.))

'I am most interested in the work of your illustrator, Jim McQuade, for despite the comic-book-art tendrils clinging to it, it is clean and powerful work and as I do not know this illustrator maybe he is already into the field somewhere; if he isn't he ought to be.'

((Jim is a professional, of course, and I first became aware of his work in his Sherbourne Press book, **MISTY** ('An adult Fantasy in visuals'), \$6.50. I am very happy that he is willing to do occasional drawings for SFR. His address is available for professional inquiries.))

'The other writer in the postcardset from George Hay in Harry Harrison. As usual most of the best material in SFR is by REG or Alter.'

((I thank thee. Alter worships you from afar. I should here mention that the Le Guin and Asimov postcards I published last issue are copyrighted in their author's name. I goofed in not adding that notice last time.))

THE GIMLET EYE Commentary On Science Fiction And Fantasy Art

By Jon Gustafson

Western 28. My first con and one that will hang in my thoughts for a long time to come. As an illustrator and a science fiction fan, it was a double treat, for not only could I meet and talk with the leading science fiction writers of our day, but I could also meet and talk with some of the better science fiction illustrators in the field.

The two I met and talked with the most in the hot, crowded hotel in Oakland, were Tim Kirk and George Barr.

We discussed science fiction illustration, and some of the problems in the field that have happened over and over again to all of the artists and will probably occur again in the future.

My perennial favorite—the failure to communicate properly; in this case, between the author and the artist. In most cases this is the fault of the art editor, who in his haste to get a cover or an interior illo gives the artist only a hazy (or inaccurate) idea of what the story is about; rather than let the artist read the story for himself, or better, talk to the author. There are exceptions, to be sure, but these seem to be enough of this non-communication to give the industry as a whole a bad name.

ANALOG seems to be one of the exceptions in the magazine field and DAW Books in the paperback field is another. But these two are not enough; there has to be more rapport between the artist and author.

It is ludicrous to illustrate a blue alien with big brown eyes when the author is telling his tale of brown aliens who don't even have eyes. The message is lost and the artist is often blamed for what was likely the art editor's misreading of the story (or color blindness, or lack of care, or whatever) or his misreporting of that story and the aliens in it. The result is an artist with egg (brown, with yellow speckles) on his face, an author who is forever teased/queried about the mistake, and an art editor who is busy making the same mistakes with the next story and next artist.

Another part of this problem is the relatively common practice of the art editor having an illustration already in his head, and having the artist connect the dots and fill in the numbered areas with

the correct color. His being the hand that feeds, the art editor usually gets his way. The result is a rotten work of art.

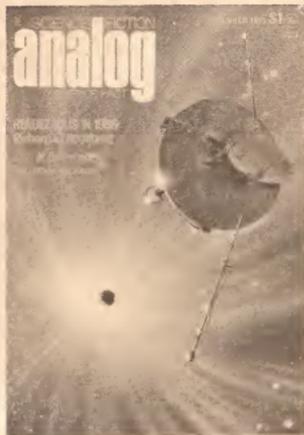
The second problem is one of payment for work rendered unto Caesar. The payment of artists for their work is meager at best in the science fiction field. There are very few artists who can live solely on the income they receive from science fiction illustrations; most of them have some other income (such as a steady job) to tide them over until their next commission. Many of the artists count on sales of their original artwork at conventions and through the mails to supplement their food stamps.

I do not have exact figures on what the various markets pay for artwork; this is something I plan to have in the future, and at that time I hope to explore the problem more thoroughly. The artists who work so diligently to make your reading more pleasurable are not paid enough for their work. They earn nowhere near what artists in other fields do, and this is definitely unfair.

#

Well, on to the critiques.

Rick Sternbach is a young technical illustrator currently working for Space Merchants, Ltd. In what spare time he has, he does some of the best SF illustration in many a year. His cover for the September ANALOG is an excellent example of his work.



It shows a satellite taking readings on the core of a comet. It illustrates (for a change) a fact article in this issue, instead of the usual lead (or most important) story. A refreshing change for ANALOG.

This is an exceptionally fine example of airbrush technique, a technique Sternbach excels in. It's especially demanding (I know from experience) and Sternbach is one of the best I have ever seen. My admiration for the man grows every time one of his works appears.

Back to the cover. The satellite dominates, occupying the upper right portion of the cover, and is rendered in fine detail by airbrush. I think the whole cover is done by airbrush, although so much detail is hard to get by that means. To the left and slightly below the satellite is the core of a comet, surrounded by the soft, multi-hued streamers of the coma and tail, curving off in all directions. The major color is hard to determine, but the overall impression is of blues; there are many other colors, including "Sternbach purple". The orange of the satellite contrasts pleasingly with the rest of the picture, and aids in creating visual interest.

I can't get over the incredible skill Sternbach displays with his airbrushes; not only does he have great technical skill, in putting his lines and shapes precisely where he wants them, but also in impressive color control. The streamers change colors so subtly and so well the effect is almost photographic. This technique is very hard to master, but master it he has. I can only hope he stays with us for many years; the field needs people of his calibre. Those at ANALOG should feel proud they have his services; I only hope they pay what he is worth.

#

The next worthwhile cover is on the September AMAZING. It's one of the best covers I have seen in the past several months, and it shows what can be done with flat colors if one is determined. In a way I am anticipating the possible objections of people who thought I was too rough on Mazey and Schell in the last issue of SFR because of their flat colors. But the flatness of color does not impair this excellent work by Mike Hinge, an illustrator with whom I'm not as familiar as I should be. He is very good and, if this is a sample of his average work, should be commissioned more frequently.

The cover illustrates the Jack Vance story as near as I can tell—the contents page doesn't inform us. The painting shows a spaceship racing towards a star depicted by a large circle of plain yellow, and contrasting strongly with the rest of the illustration, which is convoluted with a great many swirling colors. The overall cast is to the red spectrum, and the paint-

TO GAIN A DREAM by WILLIAM BOTSLEP
 WHAT IS HAPPENING TO SARAH ANNE LAWRENCE? by TED WHITE
 DELIVERYMAN by RICHARD E. PECK
 The Science in Science Fiction by Gregory Benford



ing is an eye-catcher. The spaceship races away from the observer, its exhausts spewing a trail of fumes. Sparsely scattered about the picture are small convolutions of dark blue which provide sharp contrast to the predominant reds, oranges, yellows and white. Mike seems to favor this technique of breaking up the field into separate, meandering sections of colors. I notice the same thing in his color cover for the latest issue of the fanzine ALGOL. This can be a good technique if handled carefully and thoughtfully. Hinge does.

#

Out come the knives. I sometimes feel I should have a special outfit to wear when I cut up a piece of crummy art, perhaps something like Vincent Price would wear in one of his Gothic horror movies. Must be the sadistic streak in me.

The first cover to bleed is the October FANTASTIC. Done by Marcus Boas, another artist with whom I am not yet familiar.

The cover shows a bear being attacked by three humans, and is a perfect example of lack of communication. The bear in the picture has one head but the bear described in the story has two heads.

This artist may have some talent hidden somewhere in his mind and soul, but he unfortunately hasn't yet gotten beyond hack work. The cover also suffers because it appears to be a copy of Frank Frazetta's style. The seeming imitation fails because it hasn't been done well, but the main elements of Frazetta's style occur: from the strong chiaroscuro to the way Frazetta's works fade near the edges. Even to

the way Frazetta signs his work. Boas even seems to use Frazetta's "touch of scarlet" in a painting (to provide an extra tidbit of visual flavor). There are many other similarities.

What I don't understand is how the cover can be so far off, when the interior illustration accurately depicts the bear with two heads. Art Editor J. Edwards has some explaining to do.

Back to the painting. The main human figure is a larzan-like specimen who appears to suffer from a couple of deformities; his left leg seems to be only about half the size of his right leg, and his right arm appears to be growing directly out of the base of his neck, a peculiar place for an arm. The bear, even if it only has one of its heads, is the only pleasing part of the painting, looming large and fierce above the puny humans.

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 Clark Ashton Smith & Lin Carter: The Scroll of Morlok
 Robert Thurston: The Haunted Writing Manual
 Grantia D. Davis: To Whom It May Concern...
 and more!



Boas is an artist who might improve, but he must let his own style develop and not appear to copy (consciously or unconsciously) others. I hope he does. I will watch for more of his works.

((REG Note: It is an open secret that "J. Edwards" is editor Ted White. Ted, of necessity, must wear many hats in the offices of AMAZING and FANTASTIC.))

#

AAAAAARGH!! Another Mazey and Schell cover! I don't believe it! How can such a respected, prestigious magazine as The Magazine of FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION continue to do these things? This cover is on the September issue and is a strong contend-



er for the Worst SF Cover of the Year. The only competitor is another cover by Mazey and Schell (July F&SF), the one I cheeped up in my last column.

The picture shows a nude man, swathed in flames, grabbing the right arm of some kind of devil, also with flames leaping around it. The right arm of this demon is actually a snake or dragon; the left arm seems to be a normal scaly arm. The shapes in the painting are too simple, too repetitive, to be used effectively with the flat colors. The way the story is extremely dumb, since the story is about Fion Mac Cumhail, an Irishman; the painting appears to be depicting a scene from one of the Hindu legends, complete with magic eye. I don't know if this is another case of the publisher/editor not letting the artists (I use the term loosely, obviously) know what the story is about, or giving them the wrong impression as to the actual contents of the story, but in any case the illustration doesn't even come close to any of the scenes described in Randall Garrett's story.

It seems to me that F&SF needs two things, both of which would improve the magazine immensely. The first is an art editor and the second is some interior illustrations. Good writing is fine, but the eye needs some relief; this is one of the functions of interior art. The eye needs something other than those "funny little bugs" running across the pages. I hope that Mr. Ferman wakes up to these necessities in the near future.

((REG NOTE: From the beginning the publishers of F&SF decided a no-interior-

art policy was best for the impression of literary quality they wished to project to the buyer. They'll probably stick with it. With only a cover to buy, an Art Director does not seem required.)

LETTER FROM JESSICA AMANDA SALMONSON

'Early on in September'

'No, FANTASY AND TERROR isn't dead. Surgery, and the resultant notoriety I had around here (television interview, addressing classes in community colleges), not to mention the Lesbian Community (I'm showing video tapes at the YWCA and at my women's rap group, of feminist interest), and parties thrown by television people and photographers and lawyers and artists who want that Neat Transsexual to attend, assorted hedonism which is now quickly wearing me thin, disillusioning me, and causing some degree of boredom and emotional turmoil, have all worked against getting F&T out even close to shortly on time.

'It is printed however, and MIDNIGHT FANTASIES editor Bill Pugmire is going to help collate it, fold it, back-stitch it. It shouldn't be too dreadfully much longer, all hundred pages of it. And the second hundred page issue is mostly compiled and being typed by co-editor Phyllis. So, as this fleeting notoriety fades, I sink back into fanish endeavors, and literary endeavors et al.—I've been visiting old WEIRO TALES writer H. Warner Munn (MERLIN'S RING now from Ballantine) for weekly readings of his unpublished LOST LEGION, a vast half-a-million word historical novel comparable to SHOGUN only set in Europe-on-the-way-to-China in Roman times rather than in Medieval Japan. It's quite amazing really, the scope of it, the careful research. F&T is "getting to know me" so he can make of my psyche a believable character for a new novel, and Elinor has invited me to join THE NAMELESS ONES, the oldest fan and literary circle around here I'm told. These latter socializations don't interfere so heavily as the ego-tripping Society thing. (Although I'm tempted to stick around in this miniature northwest version of High Society long enough to find someone willing to help pay the rent. A married fucker did offer a nice proposition, only I don't think I could stand his touching me...if a mellow gent perchance asks...)

'I'm afraid the most I can say claim to just now is an article on lesbianism & me, "To Sapho With Love", in the upcoming DIVERSIFIER. Ought to cause some small stir in that very family-rated fanzine.

'You're quite wrong about me having no psychosomatic repercussions from my "sexual identity" problem. Liking women is REALLY mixing me up some of the time. Four out of six lovers since June were women,

three of the four were really beautiful women, and I really dig "diking it." The guys were "eh." Do you know what a woman has to contend with to be openly lesbian? I sure never guessed, and it's somewhat irritating to realize I cannot, like most transsexuals after surgery, vanish happily into the straight community as a middle-class housewife. After an affair I have a very hard time dealing with things like fear and Loneliness and Wondering where this perverse interest in my own sex (my new sex) is going to lead me. I do through terrible bouts of despair, depression, streams of tears. I've gotten incredibly emotional. The positive emotions are wondrous, it's fantastic to be able to love so hard and deeply. But the negative emotions are a real bummer, and I have no control over them. I am, for all my recent activity, very much afraid of my new freedom (Canary turned loose in the woods —what's the poor thing to do) and though I'm surrounded by all manner of people, who are into literature, or who are gay, or who are important in some way in Seattle—the full spectrum—I remain intolerably and horribly lonely. Sometimes, even when in the arms of some far-out lezzy, it just suddenly occurs to me how physically isolated I am, how utterly alone. Frankly, I'm having a very hard time. It doesn't always show. Apparently I'm a delight at parties, but after I can't remember having a good time (except once, going home piggy-back on my drunken date's shoulders, down the middle of the street, singing "Whiskey Man's My Friend.") That was far out. But that was after the party). I'm doing a lot, feeling a lot, meeting everybody, very busy, and not in the least happy, and probably won't be until I'm really stable with someone I can rely on for a lot of needs and desires.

'I saw my Shrink today. She's kind of neat because she thinks it's really fascinating that I ended up lesbian, and she thinks it's all right. And she thinks I flirt with her, she said so today, but I think it's either her ego or wishful thinking. She's only about five feet two, and being a short-person bigot I really don't think I've been flirting with her like she says. I perceived, however, that the idea of my flirting with her appealed to her, so I didn't deny it.'

'Sacrifice of the ego is not easy. It is frightening to let go of the self--as frightening as death, for that anticipated loss is what creates the fear of death.'

-- THE JUDOKA
by W. D. Norwood, Jr

Ballantine Books is now putting out a series of new, large, colorful art books called the "Peacock" line. At Westecron, I saw one; a portfolio of the works of Frank Frazetta, and I was very impressed. Very impressed. I didn't have the time I wanted to look at the book, but recently ran across another in this line.

The book was a large paperback of the western works of James Bama. For those of you who don't know who James Bama is, just dig up your early copies of the Doc Savage paperback series. Bama illustrated those covers, and a fine job he did, too. It is a shame that he stopped doing them. Anyway...this book is of his western works, for Bama is a Montanan at heart (and home), and doesn't have any of his commercial works in it. His skill at realism is flabbergasting! He out-Kodaks Kodak in some of his paintings. One portrait of his wife leaps out of the page like...well, there is really no adequate simile. At first glance you are positive it is a photograph, until it strikes you that no camera could ever capture all there is in this startling painting. In another picture, an old man sitting in his chair is wearing a leather jacket that looks so real that you would swear you could pick it up off the page. The leather is so real it puts the man into the realm of a cardboard cutout.

I could go on describing all these paintings and expressing my amazement at the realism (or super-realism) shown in these creations, but I won't. You should try to find one of these books and see for yourself. The quality of the reproductions is excellent and I hope Ballantine can keep it up.

In the future, in addition to my critiques of magazine covers, I plan to cover the art of other sources, such as paperbacks and book club editions, and to review books on art of all kinds (not all of which will be science fiction art).

'I never see a toddler without experiencing the desire to poke my thumb through its soft spot. Those palpitating crania drive me wild.'

---Chris Walker

PEARL'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT

'Book review time: I'm still reading my usual 5 a week or so but lately I've been pulling a few sweet plums out of the melange of bad apples and tasteless pears.

'HEALING by Wm. Nolen, M.D. is one of those plums. He showed a definite flair for getting it down on paper even in his first book but now, the man has developed into a WRITER. His style is as smooth as butter cream frosting, his treatment of his subject matter (psychic healing) as satisfying as devil's food cake. His evolution reminds me of Joseph Wambaugh who faltered through THE NEW CENTURIANS, then hit a glorious stride in the powerful BLUE KNIGHT. Admittedly, Wambaugh went lame in THE ONION FIELD — I never did figure out what that was all about — but I don't think Nolen can do anything but surpass himself. He is the genuine article.

'STRANGER AT THE PARTY is a remarkable autobiography by Helen Lawrenson (she wrote LATINS ARE LOUSY LOVERS). Mistress to Conde Nast and Bernard Baruch, among others, she was free and female at a time when I was just being born into a culture where subjugation of women was the rule. Unhappened by even the tiniest packet of emotional garbage, she presents a life style and way of thinking as clean as a carbon-free, chromium plated engine.

'A rich, fruitcake of a novel is FEMALE FRIENDS by Fay Weldon. It's almost too rich. Her characters are so fully limed, their relationships so complex, the situations so intricate that she forces you to pay attention. It's certainly not a rea-through-at-one-sitting book. You have to put it down every once in a while to take a few deep breaths and let your brains settle back into place. But even with this minor criticism: WOW!

'Slick and seductive is Wm. Goldman's MARATHON MAN. Somewhere, in the first few pages, he hypnotizes you into suspending credulity and once that happens, you're putty in HIS masterful hands. A delight.

'A not quite ripe nectarine is THUNDER LA BOOM by Ann Stein(way?), about the world of topless/bottomless dancing. Her mistake, I think, was in telling the story through the young guy who works the door. She should have used the omniscient viewpoint because Obie's Place, where all the snatch bumping and tit twirling takes place, is the real protagonist of the novel. The book, in fact, is pure pleasure except when she seems constrained to let us know

that her heroine is a well-married matron and accomplished cellist who's only doing this to overcome her shyness at performing in public! Well, I suppose she had to justify her stint as just such a dancer in just such a place. Like, "See people, even though I showed my pussy to the world, I'm really a class dame and academically inclined besides!". Still...worth reading and fun for porno buffs.

'If Shepherd Mead's HOW TO GET TO THE FUTURE, ETC. and St. John's SOME ARE BORN GREAT qualify as blackened bananas (and they do) in this fruit salad of reading matter, Tom Scortia's collection of short stories entitled STRANGE BEDFELLOWS and sub-titled Sex and Science Fiction, has to be a bruised cantaloupe. I had to peel most of it away to cut out the edible sections which were by Silverberg, Reginald Bretnor, Aldiss, Scortia and Farmer, respectively. Silverberg, of course, would be a writer in any prose genre, Bretnor is a name that's new to me, but Aldiss was a surprise. It seems to me that you let me read a book of his stories a long, long time ago—it had a romantic, almost poetic title, as I recall—and I was underwhelmed. Howsoever, the man is a fine writer and I'll be looking for his name on my next trip to the library. Theodore Sturgeon's contribution to this collection, "The World Well Lost" was another kind of surprise. I'd always thought he was in the top echelon of scifi writers but if this is any example of the kind of work he turns out, I can understand why his wife is into saving money and stockpiling food.'

TALK THE ALIENS TO DEATH!

Buzz, I have to say this. In THE PROUD ENEMY your characters, especially Barton, talk too damn much. In GAGE A MAN the first section was taut, gripping, a novellet worthy of an award. After that, once Barton got away from the Demu and back among humans, he started to yap and yap and yap, and he hasn't stopped!

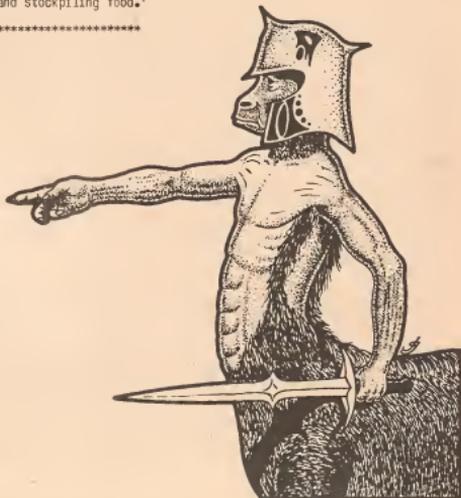
This second novel, this sequel, has a rather formula plot (at least to page 90, where I stopped). But I can live with formula plots if the writing is good enough.

When I'm expected to plow through yards of superfluous dialog I get bored (more easier and quicker as I grow older and more cranky) and fretful, and resentful, and finally I say, "Fuck it!" and I throw the book across the room...to The Pile (which grows larger each month).

I wanted to read of the Earth strike force against the Demu planets, the battles, etc. I dig that scene. But that damned mouth in your typewriter has got to be disciplined. This business of telling the same info to two and three people...indulging in polite, lovey-dovey chit-chat....

The dialog trash that broke my reading back was the stretch in and around pages 86-91. You go into too much repetition and unnecessary detail. I kept growling, "GET ON WITH IT!"

Cut your dialog to the bone, please!
(THE PROUD ENEMY by F.W. Busby; Berkeley N2846, 95¢)



PRIME GULLIBILITY?

In SPECIAL FEATURE by Charles V. DeVet, the super powers of the two aliens-on-Earth (invisibility, shape-changing, telepathy) and the premise that a powerful TV network could preempt federal and local government and police forces in order to initiate and sustain a prime, continuing Special Feature TV program as their cameras track and monopolize and interact with the superior cat-like beings—even past the point of the murder of a man—strained, then broke my credulity.

Yet...I continued reading on because Charles V. DeVet is a good writer and I was interested in the alien viewpoint and imperatives.

Predictable ending, but well done.
Lousy cover. (Avon 24562, 95¢)

'The third wave of popular gothicisms appeals to the fear of the future, and is based on a fundamental ambivalence towards science, which is shaping that future... (Science Fiction's) politics is reasonably liberal, which is to say, it generally favors strong social controls though only for the most unselfish ends... most of its writers are if not anti-utopian, at least suspicious of utopias; ...in their thoroughly rational universe, all the traditional feats of magic for which respectable scientific terms can be found are accepted as a matter of course... Chiefly, however, it is the dissolution of the earth in fire, which so haunted Poe, a vision of the apocalypse, which obsesses the writers of science fiction... Science fiction, on its upper-middlebrow levels, at least, does not admit that it is essentially terror fiction... (insisting) its ends are insight and morality... implicit on all levels of science fiction: a loss of faith in the potentialities of humanity itself and a prevision of its destruction, a masochistic delight in imagining a future in which mutants, robots, extra-terrestrials, dogs, or simply nothing takes over... The hope on the surface and the terror beneath: it is a customary enough American pattern, not untrue fundamentally to the life we live; yet it has turned much science fiction into hypocritical horror-pornography, and stands in the way of its ever being converted into literature of real worth...'

—Leslie A. Fiedler, LOVE AND DEATH IN THE AMERICAN NOVEL

'Richard Cowper is a pseudonym, of Colin Murry.'

—Ian Covell

'Man is born free, but one of the first things he learns is to do as he is told, and he spends the rest of his life doing that. Thus his first enslavement is to his parents. He follows their instructions forever more, retaining only in some cases the right to choose his own methods and consoling himself with an illusion of autonomy. If they want to raise him to feel inadequate, they can start by requiring him to produce square bowel movements and refusing to be satisfied with anything less. Whatever conditions they impose on him he will spend the rest of his life trying to meet, and they can let him know from the beginning that he is not supposed to succeed. In that way he will end up with a good collection of inadequacies to cash in according to their instructions. If he has a streak of independence, he may change the subject and geometry of his efforts, but seldom its essence. He may shift his striving from square bowel movements to pear-shaped orgasms, but he will still make sure that he ends up feeling inadequate. If, on the other hand, they raise him to succeed, then he will do that, using whatever methods he has to to hew his ends to the shape required by this destiny.

'In order to break away from such script programs, he must stop and think. But he cannot think about his programming unless he first gives up the illusion of autonomy. He must realize that he has not been up to now the free agent he likes to imagine he is, but rather the puppet of some Destiny from generations ago. Few people have the courage or the elasticity to turn around and stare down the monkeys on their backs, and the older they get, the stiffer their necks become.'

Eric Berne, SEX IN HUMAN LOVING



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—
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'One of the most important moments in a person's life can come when his Adult sees what he is doing when he is doing it, and is able to say, in effect, "This is my Child." This is the very first step to continuous personal autonomy.'

—Jut Meininger, SUCCESS THROUGH TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

'Witches probably have Lore Enforcement.'
—Ian Covell

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LETTER FROM PEARL

July 25, 1975

'After I wrote to you last, I had a blessed week's relief from my sewing mania which I used to advantage by reading 12 books. Aside from a couple of neat tones on banishing back pain and one fascinating (although questionable) expose of subversive practices in advertising called SUB-LIMINAL SEDUCTION by someone named Key, I can barely recall what volumes passed through these hands. I have come to the conclusion that at age 50, writers should be prohibited from either fictional or non-fictional commentary on contemporary social conditions, prevailing morality and the intellectual processes of people under 25 years of age.

'As horrible examples of obsolete attitudes trying to get a fix on the mercurial NOW, I offer Elia Kazan's THE ASSASSINS, Irvin Faust's A STAR IN THE FAMILY, and Masters & Johnson's THE PLEASURE BOND. There is something obscene about running your eyes over the type in these books; it is like watching some arthritic old lecher trying to embrace a squirmy young girl (who has probably been on the pill since she was 14), attempting to quist her by gasping, "Don't worry honey, I won't get you pregnant."

'I am very much aware that the world around us is in a state of liquid change at any given moment and I'm constantly trying to absorb the variances by osmosis—I don't think you can do it by reading because the rate of change is so fast, by the time something is published, it's old hat—and I do wonder sometimes how much slips by me unnoticed because of mental sets which are beneath my level of consciousness. I'm not anxious about any of this mind you, but I feel that going with the changes is the most exciting form of entertainment available in our society and certainly more rewarding than watching buffoons in clown suits perform upon a stage. And there are times I feel that I'm the only person in the mid-forties age group who didn't shut down their sensory impression/intellectual cognizance functions at some point in 1952.

'For instance, last night I went to a club in Hollywood, THE GASLIGHT, where David is working with a very easy jazz group and backing a singer named Dahle Scott who was evidently a headliner in 1949. This is not to denigrate her talent...she still has good vocal equipment, nice appearance, etc. THE GASLIGHT is a gay bar (both sexes) with a very funky although well-mann-

ered clientele; you don't get the feeling that anyone there is a shy flower just waiting to be turned out. I mean, even the youngies who have to show ID to get a drink, have been around the block, around the world, and have the jaded eyes to prove it. So, Miss Scott, still using the same book of numbers that used to wow them back in 1949, trotted out her Naughty Song (remember Party Records?) and treated us to "Hot Nuts" with lyrics of this ilk:

See that man all dressed in green
He's got the biggest nuts I've ever seen.

See that man whose head is bald
He ain't got no nuts at all.

'Now, here is this crowd of blase fagots who've been bending each other over motorcycles and reaming each other's assholes since puberty, spooning cocaine into their penes to insure all-night engorgement, and tattooed bull dykes with prominent pubic bones listening to this broad sing about two sacs of tissue like it was some big deal and wondering, no doubt, where her head was at.

'I should carry a scarf with me to veil my face when the wicket gets this sticky so that I can't be identified as a member of the out-of-step generation.'

((I'm so far out of step I'm not even in the parade, by choice.))

'ROLLERBALL: the concept had possibilities that were completely blown by the low I.Q. of the director. A totally forgettable experience. In one scene, James Caan is watching a multi-screen cassette of his ex-wife and removing his jacket. I asked David, "Do you suppose he's going to take off all his clothes and masturbate?" "No," he answered, "that would be too interesting."'

BACK ISSUES

#1, #2, #3 were a personal journal titled RICHARD E. GEIS. All are sold out.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #4 is sold out.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #5, #6 #7, #8, #9, #10, #11 are available.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW from #12 are available

BACK ISSUES ARE \$1.00 EACH.

ALIEN CONCLUSIONS



Elsewhere in this issue you will find a letter from Charles Runyon in which he says he will be out of touch in the wilds of overseas lands....

So today (10-23-75) I receive a postcard from him:

'My surfboard went out of control and cast me up on the shore of this remote fishing village. Write when you get time. Aloha.'

The man is in HAWAII! Slothing it up in the sun! And I rode through the rain on my bicycle to the post office to get this from my box!

A short airletter from Donald H. Tuck flew in on the 6th of Oct. He comments:

'I've had many champions for my ENCYCLOPEDIA and don't feel it is now necessary to comment on Malzberg suffice to say I do agree with Panshin that my job is essentially 'bibliographic' rather than 'biographic'. Actually I'm expecting a lot of criticism when the GENERAL SECTION appears as there are sure to be areas which can have peep shot through... Still (and I feel this is the basic premise) I will have done something for other people to chew on.'

Donald praises The Archives. He will probably not appreciate the Decision to devote their space to more reviews and letters.

Telling the SFR readership that the latest on the GALAXY situation is that the writers will be paid in six months or so... is not a happy chore. Jim Baen is probably suffering from an unofficial boycott by the better known professional writers, and is having to search through the slush pile for publishable stories to fill out his upcoming issues.

I hear more incidents of author dissatisfaction with Roger Elwood's editorial practices and contractual provisions.

George Hay writes of his (and the H.G. Wells Society's) attempt to have a 50 foot replica of a Martian fighting machine (from WAR OF THE WORLDS) erected on Hampstead Heath as a memorial to Wells. The steel and concrete memorial would cost a bit over \$4,000.

I think it would be nice if a fan group financed a water fountain somewhere and dedicated it to Robert Heinlein with a plaque saying, "Never Thirst."

Steven L. Goldstein writes a tale of woe about the cancelled UNICON II which was to have been held Oct. 11-12 at the Ranada Inn in Lanham, MD.

The Inn backed out and there are now legal steps being taken by the con committee. A sad story. Steve is sorry if anyone showed up and was met with a blank stare.

The group hopes to try again next year.

Harry Warner writes that he likes the SFR 14 format very much but suggests:

'One thing you might do is recommend to your readers storing SFR in an envelope or folder or some such place where it will be protected to some extent from direct light, particularly sunlight. Pulp paper will yellow and grow brittle with the greatest of eagerness if it's exposed too much for a year or two.'

That advice applies to all the zines which use the inexpensive "fibretint" mimeo papers.

Harry says: 'Jon Gustafson may overvalue the effect that a cover has on the potential purchaser of a prozine. The average magazine browser doesn't recognize imbalance of composition or incorrect color combinations or any of the other rules that artists are supposed to follow to win the critics' approval. What counts is whether the cover grabs his eye or excites his curiosity.'

Buzz Dixon said of the cover on SFR 14: 'I don't like the style of the cover (heavy lines) but I did enjoy spotting the sexual symbolism. Rocket-penis, temple door-vagina, temple dome-breast, phallic pillars blending into roof with fancy design-- intercourse with semen leaking out, hill contours-legs, squatting demon-anal and/or coprophilic interest, toadstool-drug or is it a foot-fetish?

'The topper, however, is the way the three small moons are cropped together. My God! They look like Mickey Mouse! What filth!'

Now the cunning manipulation of bookstore browsers is exposed! I am without conscience.

Here's something from G.C. Clingan for the question of who Writes The Cap Kennedy Books?

'Ron Fortier (who is an expert on the Cap series, and who had one of them dedicated to him) and myself who is equally well read on E.C. Tubb's Dumarest series, have almost conclusive evidence that E. C. Tubb wrote one, and possibly two of the Cap Kennedy books.

'Read "Daw Book Nook" in issue #10 of THE DIVERSIFIER, and let me know what you think of our assumptions.

'The identical description of a man being impaled on a cone of polished glass appears in THE WINDS OF GATH, the first book in the Dumarest series, and in THE MIMICS OF DEPHENE, the most recent of the Cap Kennedy books. All of this, and knowing the style of a certain writer such as E. C. Tubb, has led Ron and I to feel that we are on the right track.'

E.C. Tubb prefers not to comment on the matter at this time.

Arne C. Eastman (65 Winter Av., Staten Island, NY 10301) asks:

'Can anybody out there provide me with a bibliography of the works of Jack Vance? ... This man does for sociology what Ardrey did for anthropology. I suspect that if my Command and General Staff College made Vance required reading Viet Nam might have ended up somewhat differently. Read enough Vance and you'll be able to get along ANYWHERE with ANVBOODY. ...too many people read and review him as a conventional writer instead of as a very subtle sociologist and philosopher.'

Sigh I'll have to read Vance with that in mind, I see. So much to read....

David Haugh of We² Graphics (Sue Haugh is the other half) feels Jon Gustafson in "The Gimlet Eye" has missed a few points.

'First there are not that many excellent SF artists around. And the reason is very simple, MONEY. You have to like SF to do the work, because it doesn't pay worth a damn. I'll cite some examples.

THE PRINT RUN FOR SFR 15 IS 5,000, TOO. THE BREAKDOWN IS AS FOLLOWS: 16-1800 TO SUBSCRIBERS, 300 COMPLIMENTARY AND TRADE COPIES, 1100-1200 BOOKSTORE SALES, THE BALANCE FOR RESERVE AND BACK ISSUE SALES.

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Ultimate Publishing Co. (AMAZING/FANTASTIC) pays an average rate of \$10. for a spot or half-page drawing, \$50. for a cover. (From ARTIST'S MARKET, page 341) Ted White himself said in the editorial for the May '74 FANTASTIC that the scale of payments for artists was poor. To the best of my knowledge the rest of the SF magazines are pretty much in the same area, except for ANALOG which pays a little better.'

I am informed that GALAXY pays \$200. per cover. But back to David.

'Now, taking it for granted that the same time is going to be required to do an illustration for one magazine as for another, we find the following: for a spot drawing COSMOPOLITAN pays \$50.; ESQUIRE \$75; FORTUNE \$50.; LADIES HOME JOURNAL \$page \$200.; NATIONAL LAMPOON \$75.; PENTHOUSE \$175.; VIVA \$150. Full color interiors run from \$200. minimum for ESQUIRE to \$1500. for LADIES HOME JOURNAL. (From the May/June '74 issue of PRINT.) In short, other magazines pay around five times the amount for the same work. If you're a good illustrator you can't afford to do SF. Or the pressure is on to "rush" the job.

'Second, most of the SF magazine publishers are located on the East Coast, and prefer face-to-face relationships with their artists. The rationale being that in case there are sudden changes needed, the artist is available. So if he/she doesn't live on the East Coast, the chances of an artist contributing are lessened even more.'

Martin Last, editor of THE SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW (New York), the monthly all-review-zine, wants me to make it clear that

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the subscription rate is \$10. (not \$12.) per year. He says the magazine is breaking even.

Willis Conover, loooong-time fan and author of LOVECRAFT AT LAST, writes that he is going to publish a new magazine name of SCIENCE-FANTASY CORRESPONDENT, starting Dec. '75. A magazine in book format. 'An extension of LOVECRAFT AT LAST.' Contributors include Clarke, Aldiss, de Camp, Leibner, Howard, Russell, Lovecraft, Wilson, many others.

Expensive—3 issues for \$25. Send for details from Carrollton-Clark, 9122 Rosslyn, Arlington, VA 22209.

Ken Bulmer reports: 'NEW WRITINGS IN SF goes on very well and I've been unearth-ing a lot of new talent lately. Cherry Wilder, an Australian lady, first published in NW has been doing very well in other sf outlets, altho' she'd done work as a mainstream writer before, I understand. And she went over well at the Aussiecon, too. The old regulars still contribute, which is nice. The emphasis of the series is changing very slightly but I like to put in one or two of what are sometimes called 'old-fashioned' stories when they are well done. The balance thus created is beneficial all around, I find.'

Ken's address is: 19 Orchard Way, Horsmonden, Tonbridge, Kent, TN12 8LA, England.

Jean-Claude Zylberstein, editor of Editions Champs Libre in France, asks:

'Do you think you could give some kind of notice in SFR regarding this series of books entitled "Chute Libre" for which I am looking for sexy-SF books and where I have already published THE TIDES OF LUST by Delany, Farmer's IMAGE OF THE BEAST, BLOWN AND A FEAST UNKNOWN, as well as Spinrad's MEN IN THE JUNGLE and AGENT OF CHAOS. Where we shall also publish some of P.K. Dick's novels considered here as "marginal" and which so far had been rejected by other publishers (as all the previously mentioned books). I hope that authors who eventually keep some novels in their secret drawers would risk to send them to me. The books might also be termed "tough SF" or "radical SF" if this has any meaning.'

Sounds like a perfect market for Altergo. ..Hark! Is that his typer I hear faintly tapping, faintly tapping through the wall? Quoth the Alter: "Forever more!"

Ah, let me give Jean-Claude's address: 16, rue Pierre Nicole, 75005 - Paris, France.

By the way, there is no advantage to sending mail to my home address. I get the mail from my P.O. Box every morning around nine, and the carrier delivers to the house around three in the afternoon. Besides, the house mail slot is small, and anything wider than a standard letter is folded, bent, mashed, crushed, creased and shredded on the way in and down the wall chute. I call it Jaws. Be warned.

I have most of a column now to indulge in current event comment and prediction. It's the Reality Teating Syndrome I suffer from: let's keep in mind what I write and see if it comes to pass.

This is the year the money stopped for New York. That shock (and others) will splatter through the world and the nation like a cold shower after an all-night party. Britain is beginning to feel the icy spray, too.

Deficits are no longer the easy way out. Hell, in a few years the interest on the national debt (paid to banks, insurance companies, etc.) will be 100 BILLION DOLLARS. And the debt will be ONE TRILLION DOLLARS.

But that'll be okay...because our money won't be worth 25% on the dollar, anyway. Umm..make that 10%.

Unless— Unless the current minor but pervasive taxpayers revolt focuses on (say) George Wallace and/or Ronald Reagan and expresses itself in the coming primaries as an eye-opening protest vote.

I suspect Wallace's primary delegate strength will cause a scream of terror to rise from the Liberals. Having idealistically changed the delegate-choosing rules toward greater democracy, the Liberals will turn white with fear at what democracy delivers to them.

What fun it will be to observe.

In the meanwhile: Watch gold sneak up in price. Watch and see if the Dow Jones Industrial Average breaks through 900. If it does, we will have a few years of boom/prosperity. If it sinks below 750 or so... look out.

"Hey, Geis, watacha gonna get me for my birthday?"

You have no birthday, Alter. Get below. "I have too! December 25th. My Father is a very strange alien with a beard—"

OUT! *slan!*

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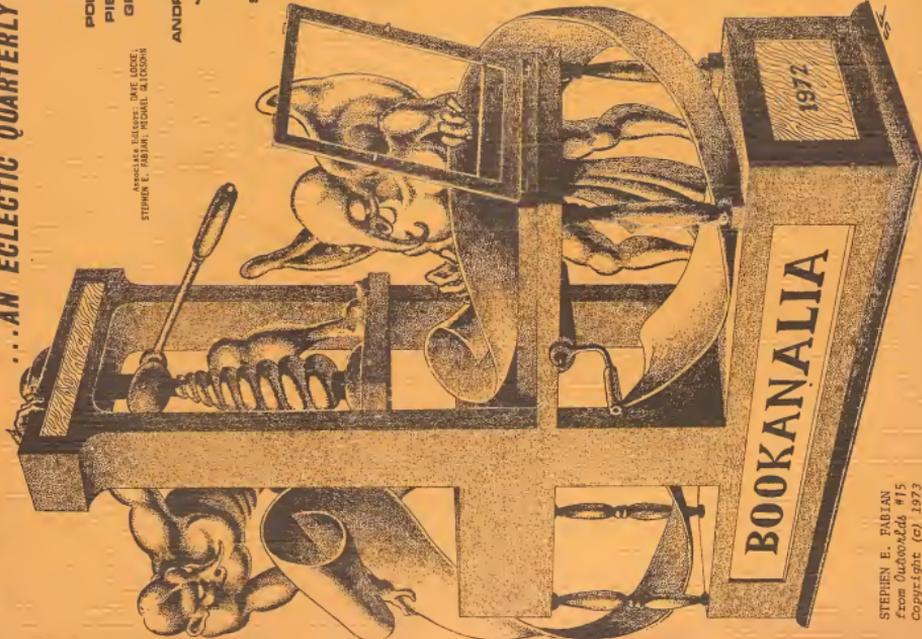
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