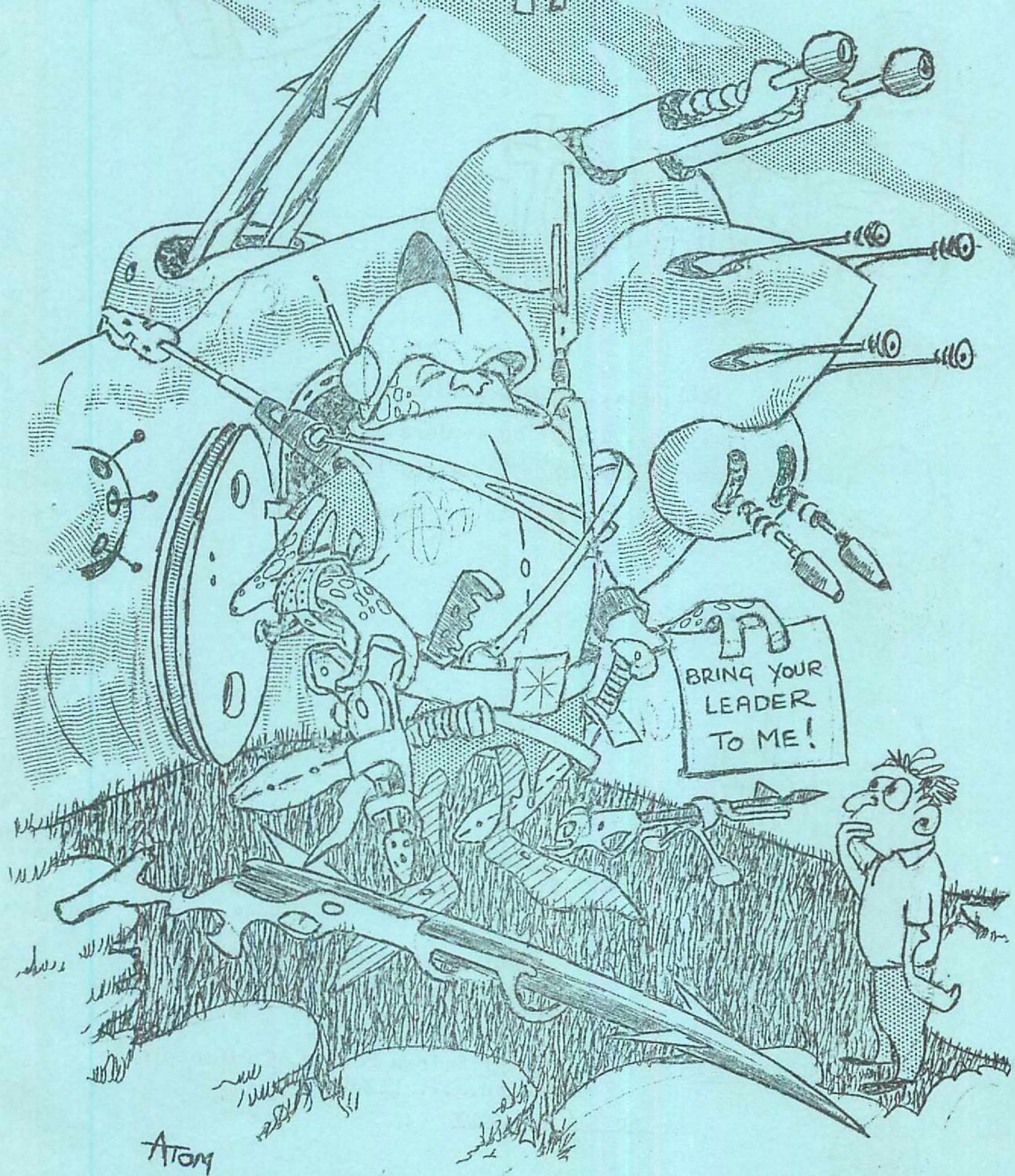


Scottish



Tony

SCOTTISH **57**

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Credits

All artwork by ATOM..to whom be ever
praise.

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QUARTERLY

3/- or 30¢ per copy



The War Of Two Worlds: by Foul Anderson. Dobson SF.18s
In this story, Earth and Mars have been at war for 20 years and Earth is now a conquered planet. The Martians seem bent on reducing Earth back to an agricultural community..and so make certain Earth can never attack again. David Arnfield, ex-spaceman, tries to get back to civilian life even although his home is the base for a Martian official, Regelin. When these two get together and begin to figure out the strange fact that the war lasted 20 years - they have then to find proof of their theory that someone had deliberately planned this. From then on the adventure quickens.

Lord Of The Trees and The Mad Goblin: By Philip José Farmer. Ace Double.75d
These two tales are related concerning, as they do, the Immortal Nine. In the first Lord Grandrith (who appears to be Tarzan in a different guise) is the hero. In the second tale Doc Galiban takes the heroic stand. Both are lined up against the Immortal Nine. According to these tales the Nine can bestow immortal life and have done so to the two men—but they both think the price too high and are determined to kill the Nine. Both tales end with the

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men teaming up and one can expect a sequel to this adventure series. Plenty of action.

The Big Ball Of Wax: by Shepherd Mead. Ace. 05787. 75¢

The year is 1992 and the teller of this story, Lanny, works for Con-Chem which is happily watching its sales soar thanks to TV. Except in St Louis..something very odd is happening there. In this one town the selling techniques are not working..the birth rate is down, buying is down, and a man sent into the area by Con-Chem has disappeared. So Lanny is sent in after him to find out the trouble. There he discovers a new invention XP which can produce complete ecstasy for everyone. Once one has that - what more can be wanted? Mead uses this story outline to take careful aim at the world of business and the world of selling and hits a bullseye every time. Clever and often very funny.

The Fire-Eater: by Ron Glouart. Ace. 28860. 75¢. This is an interesting writer; I like his way with characterisation and dialogue. In this one he has his hero, Raker the secret-agent on a planet where magic is still practised and where Raker's task is to find the Fire-Eater. This is someone with the ability to send fire and burn a man up from a distance.

Tunnel In The Sky: by Robert Heinlein: Ace. 82660. 95¢.

Although published first in '55; this was my first reading of this book. It tells of a graduating class who go through a hyperspatial tunnel to an unknown planet on which they must survive for a certain time to graduate. We follow Rod as he lands and are easily caught up in Heinlein's fascinating story. The summons that should take the class home does not come and they realise they will have to do more than just survive—they must make a new life there.

Twentieth Century Discovery: by Isaac Asimov. Ace. 83225. Asimov's deceptively easy style once again lures the reader into learning new things. He covers the discovery of Pesticides, the origin of life, quarks, and space travel.

The Ship That Sailed The Time Stream: by G.C. Edmondson. Ace 76094. 75¢. Of the latest batch of ACE books, this was the one I enjoyed most. Joe was the captain of an 89-foot jewel called the ALICE which was being used in naval experiments. They are suddenly struck by lightning and the ALICE is transported back in time. Before Joe catches his breath a Viking ship is bearing down on them. Originality and humour are what takes this out of the normal time-travel story. ALICE is filled with rare characters and their reactions to the sometimes hilarious, sometimes terrifying things that happen to them as they switch through time are told with an admirable economy of style. I'd dearly like to see a sequel to this!

Isle Of The Dead: by Roger Zelazny, Rapp and Whiting (Andre Deutsch. 28/-

This is the story of Francis Sandor who was born on Earth but who has become a god of the alien Pei'ans. As this he is known as Shimbo of Darktree, shrugger of Thunders. Although he knows he has some powers - such as the power to shape a world such as his own Homefree - he does not really believe that his own personality can merge with that of the gods. Only when he returns to one of the worlds he has made called Illyria..and particularly to the Isle of the Dead, does he realise that he desperately needs to be able to merge with the god. For facing him is an ancient enemy of Shimbo's, another god called Belion. This is roughly the plot of the book, but it cannot

Nibblings 3

adequately describe the richness that Zelazny produces in which to tell it. He can conjure up an atmosphere like no other; and grab the reader's attention right from the beginning.

Orbit 5: by Damon Knight editing. Rapp & Whiting/Andre Doutsch. 28/-
This collection is titled the best all-new collection of the year and it contains 12 stories. SOMERSET DREAMS by Kate Wilhelm is a strange tale of a village full of old people who are visited by students studying the patterns of dreams. THE ROADS, THE ROADS, THE BEAUTIFUL ROADS by Avram Davidson is a short, terse tale of a thruway-builder who meets up with a new edition of an old monster. LOOK! YOU THINK YOU'VE GOT TROUBLES by Carol Carr was easily my favourite. She writes with lovely assurance about the man who has to face the fact that his daughter has married a Martian. WINTER'S KING by Ursula K. LeGuin has a very neat twist to what, at first, appeared merely a tale of kings. THE TIME MACHINE by Langdon Jones is what I would call New Wave and I skipped lots of it. CONFIGURATION OF THE NORTH SHORE by R.A. Lafferty is another story with symbols but told in more connected fashion. I still thought it fairly ho-hum... psychiatrist and patient and not too original an idea about the relationship. PAUL'S TREEHOUSE by Gene Wolfe could only have been written by an American for this is an American nightmare. THE PRICE by C. Davis Belcher goes into the ethics of organ transplantation. THE ROSE BOWL-PLUTO-HYPOTHESIS by Philp Latham deals with the theory of space shrinking. WINSTON by Kit Reed is a sad little story of a family who buy a baby intellectual of their own. THE HISTORY MAKERS by James Sallis was one that I did not understand. THE BIG FLASH by Norman Spinrad was easily understood-- a very grim story of a pop group that managed to get the Big Flash for us all. A good mixture and deserving of the title - new.

The Players of Null-A: by A.E. Van Vogt. Dobson Science Fiction. 25s
Companion volume to THE WORLD OF NULL-A which was previously published by Dobson SF. It is a follow-up to the adventures of Gosseyn the Null-A trained man with the 'extra' brain. In this he pits himself against the Follower and sets off on a course to establish the identity of his enemy. At times he finds himself within the body of Ashargin, a Prince who is in the power of the conqueror. Naturally, it is impossible to summarise the plot of a VV story! One is hurled dizzily across the universe as he works out its intricacies.

Double Illusion: by Phillip E. High. Dobson Science Fiction. 21s
400 years from now is a grim place for a man like Cook who is a Prole. Particularly as he is a Prole who has just been pushed out onto the street from the sanctuary of his own Combine. As conditions are at the time - he has little chance to live till morning. However this coincides with a takeover of society by a super-computer which thinks of itself as Mother. Rapidly men begin to find themselves reduced to the level of zombies--and I thought myself well into another anti-machine story. However, no such thing - the author has another end in view; and SF readers should be well satisfied with this one.

The Star Beast: by Robert Heinlein: Ace 78000. 95¢.
Lummox, the Star Beast, is the main and most engaging character in this story. John Thomas Stuart the first was a galactic explorer and had brought Lummox back as a pet. John Thomas Stuart the 9th is following in his forefather's footsteps by looking after Lummox. One snag--there are quite a few snags-- is that Lummox has now grown to the size of an elephant. John finds himself

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embroiled in quite a series of adventures in his efforts to protect Lummo; without realising that the outcome would affect Earth's relations with a superior and menacing race. The kind of characterisation that grabs you and holds you in a charming fashion.

The Noblest Experiment In The Galaxy: by Luis Trimble and The Communipaths: by Suzette Haden Elgin. Ace Double, 11560. 75¢

It is really fascinating to compare these two stories—one written by a man and the other by a woman. The first starts off with an SF device that men seem to love—slabs of officialese to set the background of the story. In this story this officialese is called the prologue and it goes on for 9pp before one is introduced to the protagonist, Zeno. Zeno is an agent (another device beloved by the male author) and in this future there are business interests who are out to enslave worlds for their selfish ends. In order to thwart them Zeno is infiltrated into a strange world modelled on that of Victorian England. The contrast of a woman handling the plot in THE COMMUNIPATHS is that she starts right off with a character called Tessa telling of what it is like to live on her world of the Maklunites. They are a very close and loving community until Anne-Charlotte had her baby taken away. After that Anne-Charlotte uses her psi talent to scream her hatred of the universe. One is at once caught by the description of what it is like to be in a community in which everyone is affected by the increasing insanity of Anne-Charlotte. The story moves out from this planet to show more of this world; but the interest is kept with the introduction of other characters. Above all there is the baby..with the strongest psi talent ever discovered..and in touch with the insane Mother. Vivid, original and exciting.; but more than that. This one poses the problem of the worth of the individual against the welfare of the whole universe. One is brought sharply to the question—'Does the end justify the means?'. The male author can produce the standard SF adventure story competently; but the feminine author is the more ruthless of the two in her treatment of her characters.

New World Or No World: Edited and with a commentary by Frank Herbert, Ace, 57250. 95¢. Foreword by Senator Muskie.

The American TV company NBC runs a TODAY show and this show devoted one week to the discussion of the pollution crisis that faces Earth. Some of the people who took part were Ralph Nader, Paul Ehrlich, Stewart Udall and Margaret Mead. This book is mainly a transcript of these discussions but there is also a chapter in which a Wall St broker and the chairman of a major power company were faced with questions and criticism by American students. Anyone interested in our ecology will find this a useful book.

Children Of Tomorrow: by A.E. Van Vogt. Ace, 10410. 95¢

This finds Commander Lane returning to his wife and daughter at Spaceport after being away for ten years. The city has an odd problem as all the men are away for ten years and so the children are left fatherless for this lengthy time. The result has been that the children have organised themselves into 'outfits'—and produced their own framework of rules. Once I had grasped the concept of how this is done (Van Vogt is nothing if not obscure in his style) I found it very unbelievable. I certainly wouldn't believe one could extrapolate these children from what one sees around today! I couldn't forget, either that Van Vogt had once had dealings with Dianetics and felt that this permeated the whole story. An ordinary husband and wife row that has the wife

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exclaiming "Now we've triggered the male principle" and the husband complains "Stop negating me in front of my daughter", makes me mutter - pish and tosh. Put that negative reaction down to a prejudice against jargon.

Noah II: by Roger Dixon (Original story idea by Basil Bova and Roger Dixon) Ace. 58250. 75¢

It says in the blurb that this is to be made into a movie, and it certainly has these possibilities. It tells the story of another Noah's Ark needed this time because of a draught. This new Noah is called Preston but he names his sons Jem, Ham, and Stacey. The new Ark is a fleet of spaceships - and the story mostly consists of the efforts to get these into space. There is a strong religious basis to this, rather unusual you must admit in an SF story these days.

Uncharted Stars: by Andre Norton. Ace. 84000/75¢. This is aimed at the juvenile market; but plenty adults will enjoy it also. It continues the story of Murdoc Jern and his mutated cat companion Eet. They are still searching for the Zero Stone. The search takes them from the planet Largal, on which they are stranded, through many adventures into even Waystar itself which is the headquarters of the Thieves' Guild. Here they hope to find the map that will show them the way to the Zero Stone. I have the feeling there is room for another sequel here!

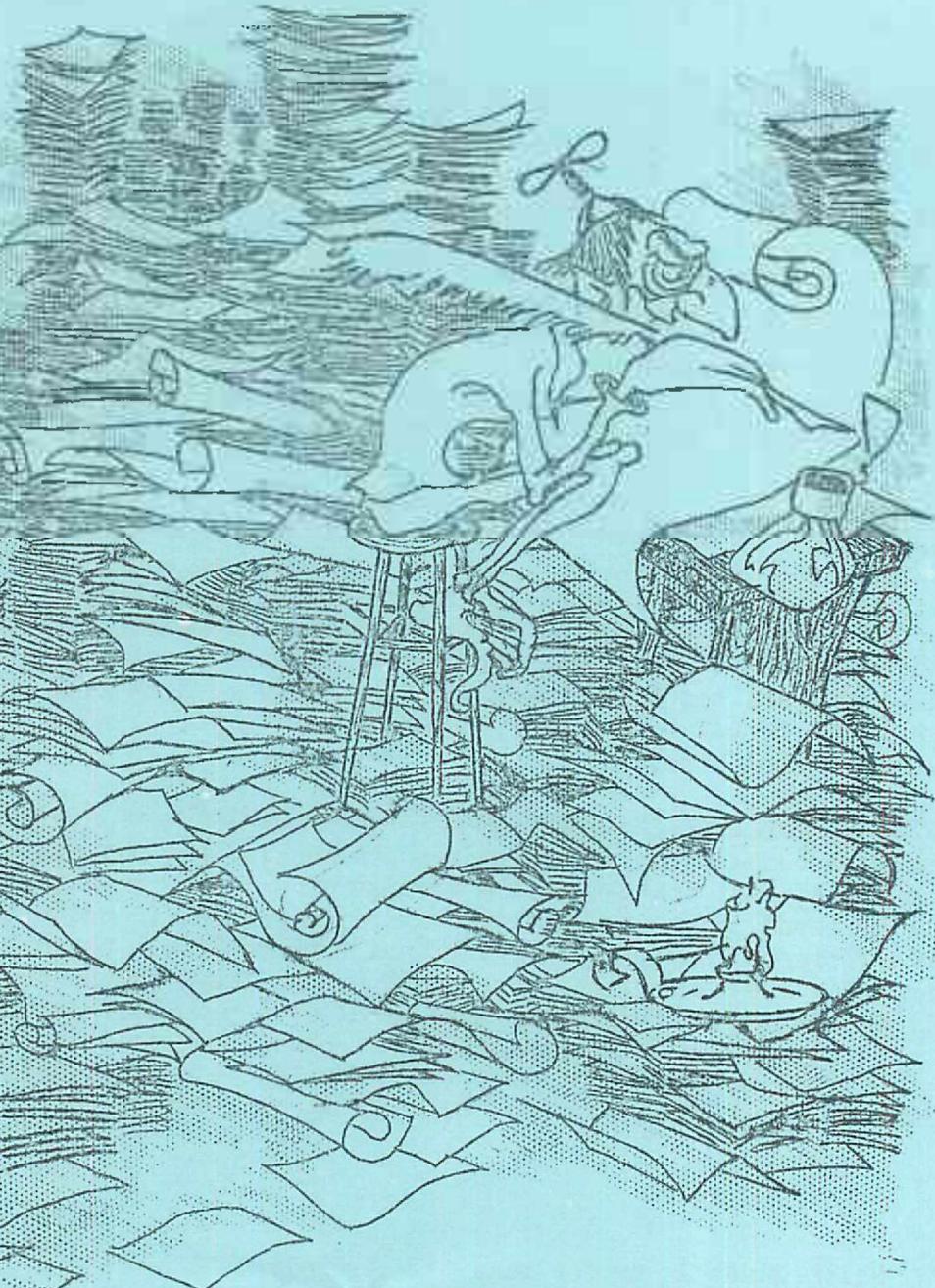
Why Call Them Back From Heaven? by Clifford D. Simak. Ace Special 88601/75¢.

Simak has conjured up a future in which mankind has put all its bets on deep-freezing at death - with the promise of a future in which immortality will be found. So today one lives at poverty level in order to collect funds for a glorious tomorrow. Forever Centre where it all began now practically owns and rules the earth. Dan Frost working there has no doubts about it all; till the day he inadvertently runs afoul of a powerful man and finds himself an outcast. More interesting than the actual plot is the picture of a society so dedicated to the "next life" that they live a narrow, mean and barren life with their goal a deep-freeze and a strong bank balance.

Which winds it up for this time around.

Ethel Lindsay.

Talkers



Torry Jeeves,
230 Bannerdale Rd
SHEFFIELD.S11 9FE

"I liked your account
of the Heicon..and
wondered just what the

answer to that speech-in-German//talkers-in-English might be. Obviously, to deliver a speech in a language not spoken by the vast majority of the attendees poses all sorts of problems..but to deliver it in English places exactly the same burden on the German fen. I suppose the best thing would be to pre-warn would-be listeners, say,"Fred Blogg's speech will be in Esperpsiontics and if you cannot speak it, please stay in the other hall and have a good natter until it is over."***Sounds like a good suggestion..and will need to be thought on for future European cons.***

Letters 2

Mark Adlard,
113 Kennerleigh Rd
Rumney, Cardiff CF3 9BH

(1) Nobody who really believes that SF is worth discussing can possibly accept the statement that SF is merely another "escape mechanism". Escape may not be a "bad thing", in fact I am sure it is often a good thing, but "escape literature" can never be literature with any kind of importance which merits discussion. Still, Mrs Wood is far from being the first American to write a "scholarly paper" on something which the scholarly writer does not believe to be important. (2) "Gernsbackian scientific extrapolation" and "escape literature" are far from being mutually exclusive categories, to a degree which almost makes one think that Mrs Wood has got it the wrong way round. "Gernsbackian scientific extrapolation" produced (and still produces) a large number of alternative futures, many of which are possible and some of which might be achieved. But these future scenarios have frequently no casual relationship with the present, even of a stochastic nature, and the result is "escape literature" in the true meaning of the term. In these cases the SF novel has become a distorted mirror-image of the historical romance, and escape into the future is presented as an alternative to escape into the past. At the other extreme there is the Victorian moralistic fantasy for children (e.g. WATER BABIES) some of Hans Andersen's fairy tales, and Shakespear's TEMPEST - all of which are without any possibility of scientific underpinning, Gernsbackian or otherwise - and some non-Gernsbackian SF (e.g. William Morris, C.S. Lewis, Ballard), all of which are desperately concerned with the human condition and far removed from escape literature. I am by no means saying that non-scientific is superior to scientific SF, But I am saying that a high scientific content is no assurance of serious purpose, or of any desire to write something other than escapist literature".

E.C. Tubb
67 Houston Rd
London, SE 23.

"Ian Williams' contention that Ken Bulmer's comment that sex in SF must form a part of the idea content is rubbish makes me wonder. If it doesn't have to be a part of the idea content should it be used like sprinkling salt? Sex scenes to add spice? Woe to SF if it needs such additives to make it palatable. It is true that if sex is relevant to the book as a whole its use is justified - but then are we still talking about SF? While on the sex theme there is something which most advocates of its use seem to have overlooked. I refer to the speculated societies in which nudity is the norm but which also have a present-day or days-past attitude towards it. Mass nudity does not equal mass fornication; if it did every nudist camp would be a scene of continual orgy. And constant stimulus loses its effect pretty quickly (ask any married man or woman). I know it is hard for beginners to realise this but it is a living truth and if every woman and man went round nude all the time titivation would reside in the fully dressed. So most sexual aspects of SF are illogical and thus unreal and, when they have nothing to do with the true development of the story, damned annoying. Archie Mercer makes a point which has clarified a problem for me - why has SF never successfully been translated into a visual medium? I know that a few films have come close to it but not one has really rung the bell and TV -including STAR TREK (which is good only by comparison with other puerile efforts) has caused me to writhe in my chair too often. The irritating part is that, at times, they have come so close, the Quatermass series is a case in point, but, as Archie says, it could be as simple as the producers, actors etc., being not quite with it. They don't wholly enter into the subject and can't take it seriously. And, as he says,

Letters 3

it need only take one to rupture the effect. Joe Patrizio..I wasn't talking about specialised equipment but about ordinary things in everyday use. Cars, scooters, toasters etc. They don't come equipped with workshop manuals and repair, when necessary, is handicapped by sheer bad design. By that I mean the need of 'special' tools, lack of room to reach essential parts, a general seeming bloody mindedness on the part of the makers. For example, why no starting handles on modern cars? Ask the AA how often they are called out to rescue a motorist with a flat battery - and no means of starting the vehicle without one. Or a stuck starter. And why should it be necessary on a mini to remove the radiator before being able to change the oil filter? I use a Lam-bretta and trunnions are used to hold the control cables. They are cylinders pierced to hold the wire which is secured by a nut which is turned by an alan key. It takes two hands to tighten the nut, one to hold a spanner to hold the cylinder, the other to turn the alan key. Fine when everything is new but after a few hundred miles the holes for the alan key get filled with oily gunk - now try to work the device! An ordinary, square-headed nut which requires no special tool ie, a tool which can be used for nothing else, would make things so much easier. But then those who design and make the things don't have to effect an emergency repair at night(people do drive at night)without a can of petrol and a brush to clean out the nuts before holding a torch in the mouth and getting to work with spanner etc. Ah, well, so it goes!"

Harry Warner
423 Summit Ave.
Hagerstown, Maryland
21740. USA

"I am suddenly on the mailing list for a lot of British fanzines, after years during which only you, Pete Weston, and George Charters had been remembering me. It's confusing to try to straighten out

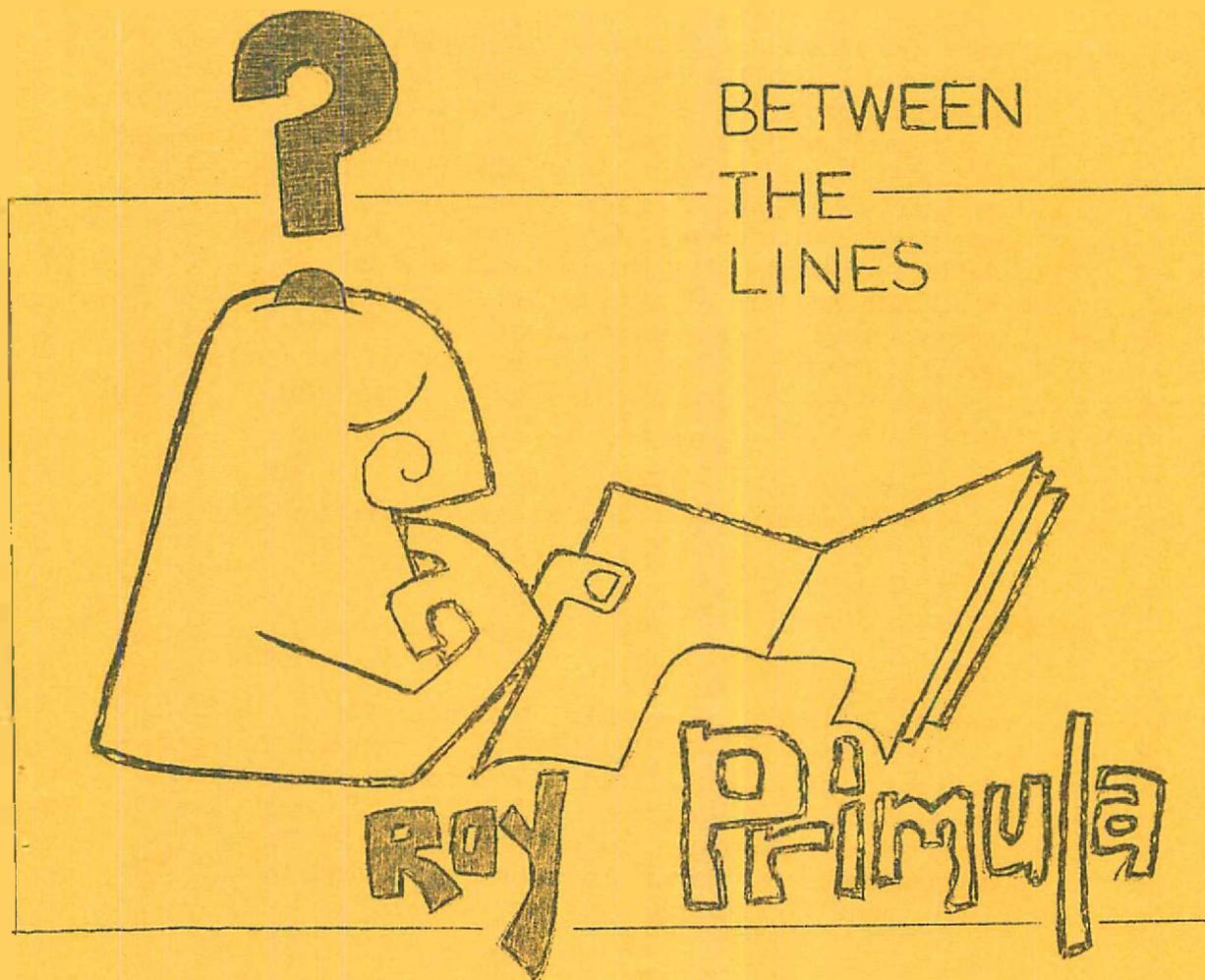
the identities of all the younger fans who are never mentioned by their full names in these fanzines, but it's something like the excitement of discovering fandom all over again for the first time. I don't suppose that fanzines over there will ever again be quite as they were in the era of RETRIBUTION, HYPHEN, APORRHETA, and so on, because there is such an enormous amount of personal contact among fans today during which they must release all sorts of fannish energies and ideas that used to go onto stencils. But I rather like what I'm seeing from the new generation and I hope that the fanzine editors get wider distribution in the US that they've had in recent years. It's surprising how many fans over here are convinced that the US has only three or four active fanzine titles." ***One reason for giving the addresses in this letter column is to let it be seen who are the ones who will take the trouble to write a loc and therefore to whom trade zines should be sent.***

John Piggott
17 Monmouth Rd.
Oxford, OX1 4TD

"I read with interest your Heicon report...but I personally would have preferred a bit more detail. For instance, what's this St. Fanthony ceremony? And do you get an Opposition at every con? And forgive me for being such an ignorant peasant-but who was Alyx?" ***I invite a St Fanthony member(Keith?) to answer the first ? in a short article. I can answer the second though..there has never been an Opposition before..this time it came because politics has been a more hectic subject in Gerfandom than elsewhere. The answer to the 3rd ? is--Alyx was the heroine of that good story by Joanna Russ..PICNIC IN PARADISE.***

Wealsheardfrom and wish to thank..Roger Waddington, Hartley Patterson, Dave Fipcr, and Nicholas Johnson.

Ethel.



A strange effect of the SF world of aerospace - the Indian Government, through NASA, is asking for bids on a relay sat satellite, to permit television into every village in India. The purpose, to bring schooling to the areas where they have the greatest illiteracy, at a cost they can afford. It comes to less than \$1 per pupil per year. Just about everything about NASA is strange. I keep getting the distinct impression that NASA is more interested in other things than in the Moon program. They have been dragging their feet on programs to follow the Apollo program, even those programs which would make use of the left-over Apollo ships. NASA planned on several failures, which did not come about. This left them with several very expensive and embarrassing ships which really have no announced purpose. How many Moon rocks do you really need? From their viewpoint, the emergency aboard Apollo 13 was a godsend. Now they have a catastrophic failure without destroying their pipeline to the treasury. And the reawakening of public interest at a time when they're out digging for money..Hoo Boy..no public relations agent ever had it so good.

Between The Lines 2

I got talking to a fellow gadget designer from Hughes Aircraft at a recent technical meeting. He had a small actuator that had to be shot into space and do nothing for three years, then it had to operate once, with complete reliability. The main problem is the high vacuum. It evaporates just about everything that is normally considered to be a lubricant, then when the bearings get clean, they weld themselves and the motor says OH NO and burns out. There are some very exotic answers to the problem in use at the various Telcomsats, like solid lubricants, but this guy had a beautiful way. His drive system has the motor and all of its gearing inside a can and is so arranged that it makes several turns before it starts to turn the load. The can is soldered shut and there is a can opener mounted on the gearing. It simply cuts its way out, does the job and then expires gracefully. I could kiss people who think like that.

contd on next page.

TERRY JEEVES FOR TAFF!

Terry is a member of First Fandom - his first activity in 1938 was to subscribe to Walt Gilling's SCIENTIFICATION. A constant attendee at British conventions - he is well-liked by everyone there. He is a worker in fandom..has been a Chairman of the BSFA. He publishes his own fanzine LMS; and was a former editor of VECTOR. He has helped out many fan editors with his artwork; and amused many readers with his SOGGIE cartoons. Fans like Terry....

100 fans.... Vote For Terry for TAFF!

Ethel Lindsay.

I heard a Dr Roger Gross--U, of Santa Clara--on the human mind. I heard him speak and was very impressed. He has completed his doctorate in the general area of what is known as the mind--the mapping of the areas of the brain and so on. In part of his talk he was stressing that within the brain, all nerve impulses are the same. A pulse applied to an implanted wire in one area brings the sensation of a warm touch on a finger--another and it is a sour taste--another and the right arm will raise--another and the sensation is of pleasure.

And there lies the danger--as he stressed--and drove home his point with an example. Their clinic was trying unsuccessfully to treat a man who was subject to destructive rages. He would destroy his furniture, break out walls in his house, beat up his wife and children. It was down to a choice of his being committed or try something more powerful. They finally implanted a wire into his pleasure centre and arranged two push buttons on his belt that when hit simultaneously would pulse the wire.

Their biggest problem was to prevent the same reaction in him that they had previously found in rats and monkeys. Instant addiction. You see, the pulse of pleasure is pure, unadulterated pleasure--not the second-hand pleasure as filtered through imperfect receptors such as ears or eyes or taste or feel. Even sexual pleasure fell by the wayside. A monkey would learn a complicated routine in a very few tries if it let him have a pleasure pulse at the end. The monkey will cut himself short on sleep and food just to have more time to run through the routine, arriving finally at a fine balance between the minimum required to keep going and that which leaves him too weak to perform the routine.

To combat this addiction in the man, they went to considerable lengths to build an inhibition which would leave him with a large dose of self revulsion each time he started one of his rages and had to hit the button. It was effective and the poor guy is surviving and building back.

But it takes very little imagination to see what would happen (will happen) if a military leader or politician gets his hands on this technique. We even have the historic example of the hashishin (or assassin, as they were more commonly known), also the Arabic leaders who used gardens of houris to convince their followers that they were truly in paradise. The electric pulse doesn't even leave a hangover.

Pleasant dream--sometimes I'm even more cheery! Like try for size--there are just too damn many people on this earth. Somewhere between five and ten percent of the food supply of this planet is being eaten by one species--us. The ecology cannot tolerate more than two percent being eaten by one species. Otherwise the imbalance will eventually topple the entire system back to some low level and we start over. We have a very mild and local example in the

Between The Lines.

Black Death. Now add to that political leaders in several countries who have been informed of this by their tame scientists and advisers. The more obvious military type answers are out--everybody has the bomb now. What to do?

First, try to throw your people off the track by declaring that we are getting rid of our stockpiles of bugs and poison gases. Of course you do not disband the labs, just the big stockpiles--they were obsolescent anyway. Even get a few communities uptight just for the effect, you understand, by running trainloads of poison gas through them. The gases have other uses in industry and no-one worried before or after when these industries received shipments from their normal sources. It was only news when these industries bought up surplus gas for reprocessing.

Then you start development of new strains of rice rust--a close relative to wheat rust. At the same time you start pushing the idea of using the manned space station for earth resources studies--like they are in a good position to detect new attacks of wheat rust so that it can be contained before it wipes out our food supply.

Get your communications media well in hand--and very tame--try a few things just to measure public reaction--how much police hassling will the people tolerate under the name of law-n-order? Start talking of increased trade with Red China--they're going to be a big market pretty soon, you know. And get your charity drive sob sisters organised--never forget the out-stretched hand is a powerful one.

Then-----isn't it too bad about how the natural disasters are wiping out the rice supply in China?

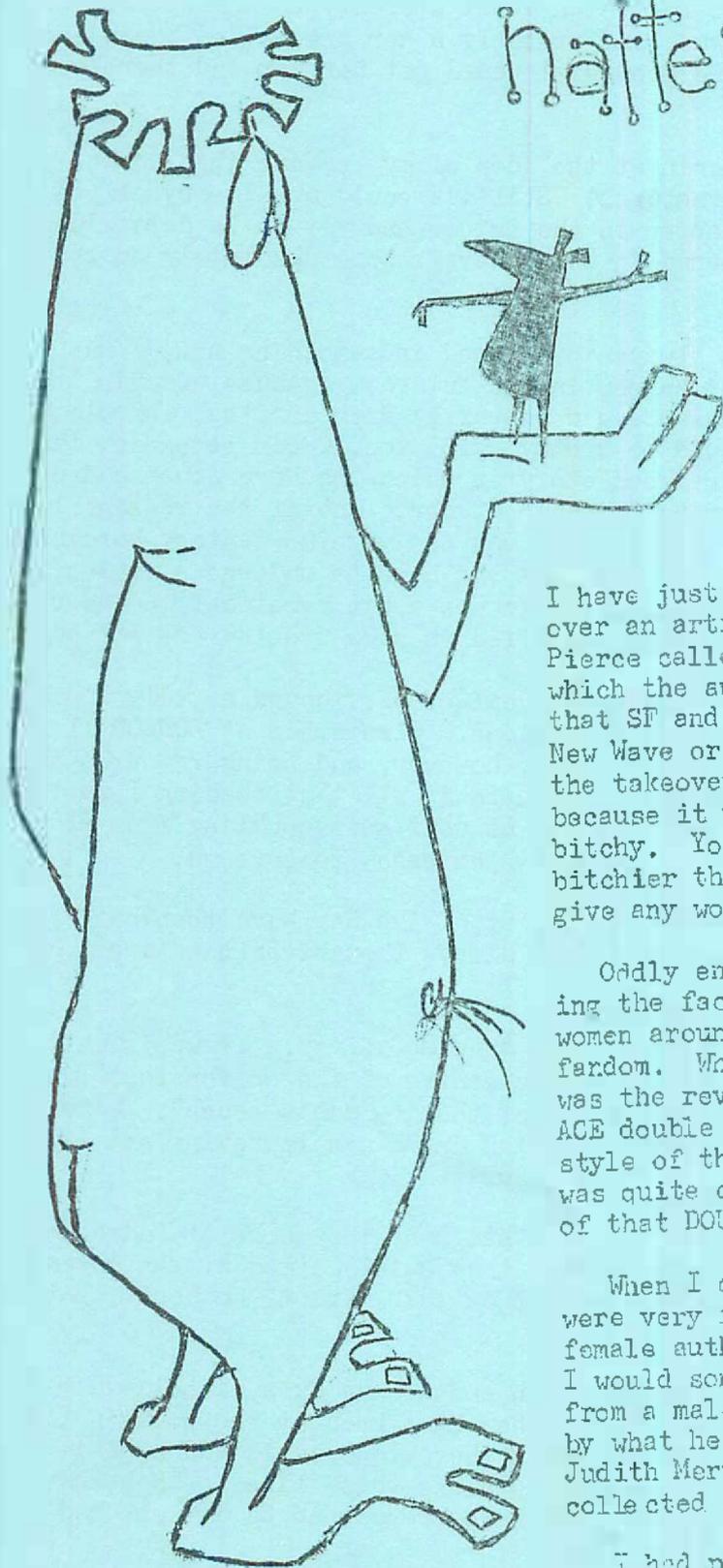
Inhuman..not a bit..its one of the most human things we do. We've been practicing a long time. The real question is not the issue of inhuman or not--but of who is going to survive--the technique will certainly be applied. Of course there are other solutions. We can apply strict controls on births and maybe even strict controls on pollution--though that would be really rough to get passed--it hits big business in the pocketbook and that would get politicians not elected. If it was done very soon and with great vigor and a degree of honesty, it might save this country. Same might even be possible for Europe. Who convinces the rest of the world?

Even not considering the rest of the world--the idea of required birth control is equated in the mind of a certain portion of the politicals as build for a better world(all white or all black or non-jewish or non yellow in the case of the Aussie politicians)and you can readily see the lineup of the zoologists and others who will demand that geneselection be started at once.

And so far into the night. Sometimes I wish I'd never learned to enjoy reading scientific journals--between the lines.

Ron Primula.

hatterings



I have just been chuckling to myself over an article in SFR 40 by J. Anthony Pierce called INSIDE CONSPIRACY, in which the author advances the theory that SF and fandom need not fear the New Wave or the Milford Mafia but rather the takeover by women! I had to chuckle because it was very funny; but also very bitchy. You all know that women are much bitchier than men; but this guy could give any woman a run for her money.

Oddly enough, I had just been pondering the fact that there seemed to be more women around these days in both SF and in fandom. What had sparked off that thought was the review I had just written of an ACE double in which I had contrasted the style of the male and female author. I was quite convinced that the female half of that DOUBLE was much the superior.

When I encountered SF and fandom there were very few women around. Certainly female authors were rare on the ground. I would sometimes read a caustic remark from a male fan who had been turned off by what he called "the woman's touch". Judith Merrill's SHADOW ON THE HEARTH collected a few remarks like this.

I had plenty of sympathy for such remarks for I considered myself a refugee from the bulk of stories written for

Natterings 2

women. To me, a story written for women meant stereotyped characters, unreal situations, truly awful dialogue, and probably a heroine called Susan and an evil woman called Cynthia. The good girl would get her man and there would be a happy ending. Ugh!

You could well give a wry grin at the idea of my leaving this unreal world for the one of space adventures! Still: I could absolve myself on the grounds that what would happen in the future had yet to be determined. Whereas I knew that what happened in Nurse Novels bore absolutely no resemblance to reality.

I enjoyed SF because I was always interested in something new; I was always intrigued by what might happen in the future. Because of this I was willing to accept that the characters were rarely made of flesh and blood and that the dialogue here could be pretty awful too. I can remember, though, getting awful mad at a Fredric Brown story in which the hero never addressed the heroine without first booming "Woman!" at her. One of the reasons I stuck with SF and had little truck with fantasy was the way the fantasy heroine was so blatantly there only to be a reason for the hero to undergo a series of thrilling adventures. At least in SF there was a bit more meat to the plot; and my liking for puzzles was often satisfied as some problem was solved.

As the years rolled on I read a great deal of SF..though happily I was never the type of addict that read this alone. I remember at LONCON 11 going into a huckster room filled with SF, however, and being rather appalled to discover I had read most of it. Somewhere in all that reading I must have begun to get fed up with the SF hero. As he went swashbuckling from planet to planet and from adventure to adventure .. he began to bore me.

Wouldn't you think I'd welcome the advent of the New Wave then? Well, no, it was just men posturing again; and I've always thought Ballard a bit of a cold fish.

No, what I welcomed was the arrival of Anne McCaffrey. It was such a refreshing change to have a heroine as the centre of the action that I was more than willing to overlook any traces of that "woman's touch". More to the point, it seemed to me, characterisation in SF was improving and I think some of the credit should go to the women writers.

Of course, for some time before, there had been the works of Andre Norton and Marion Zimmer Bradley; but I consider they mainly aimed at the juvenile male market. They both raised the content of this market, no doubt, but it is not of them I am thinking now.

Mainly I would point to Ursula K. LeGuin and Joanna Russ, I believe they have added greatly to the field of SF. They have brought the woman's touch alright; but in a way to be admired. Then there is Suzette Haden Elain whose novel THE COMMUNIFATHS first set me musing along these lines. No bathos from that lot; in fact I think what they have brought to SF is some badly needed female ruthlessness.

A lot of SF is written for and aimed at teenage boys. One cannot grumble at this for they do make up a goodly part of the readership. Another part

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of the readership consists of technicians who like to watch an engineering puzzle be unraveled. One must not forget, either, the readers who like to see sociology be given its proper place---and there is the New Wave for those who cherish the jargon of the psycho-analyst.

What I am enjoying is watching SF become less male-dominated. Should this keep up one might expect to see more women in fandom who are readers and not just somebody's girl friend.

In an earlier issue of SCOTTISHE I wrote about a book called THE BRAIN by Michael Harrison. I typed it as a border-line SF book. I have now come across another of his books which can also be typed in this way---it is titled HIGHER THINGS. It is the story of a man who discovers that he can fly. About the only other book I know which treats of this theme is THE FLYING YORKSHIRE MAN by Eric Knight..but this is a very funny book and wholly treated from a humourous angle. HIGHER THINGS comes from an entirely different angle for Harrison is an author who will pursue his plot line at his own leisurely pace. In fact he really uses the possibilities of being able to fly as a device on which to hang his view of the world.

Were you to discover one day that you could fly..what would you first of all do? Any SF fan could contentedly take this theme and weave a million adventures around it---and any comic strip has done so a million times. Only Harrison would have his character sit down and think about the ability before he really uses it and decide it must be kept a deathly secret. He reasons that any man with power in the world would be bound to think of him as a threat---and that all the powerful men in the world would be taking steps to either use him or get rid of him. Almost from the first his thought is that he would never be safe on Earth and that he would have to make plans to go into space. There are a few spins and wheels but this is roughly the plot - he can fly, he practises at it in secret, and in the end he sets off for space.

The man who can fly is called Faraday, and he is a very bitter young man. He considers that his circumstances in the world justify him being bitter; and he despises those who do not feel the same. He does not particularly like other people; and is pretty scathing in his judgement of his fellow-men. He must be the most anti-social protagonist in many a book. He starts off this way and his sudden knowledge that he can fly only intensifies his anti-social tendencies. He has many a theory to put forward to justify his actions; but two people die because of him. One of these is his wife whom he murders by grasping her under the arms; flying up high, and letting her drop! Not a character one can warm to, even if one agreed with his general condemnation of mankind.

The author is using him as an object lesson, of course. This is a book about power and the result of power; and therefore a very good companion volume to THE BRAIN. Power over other people is the most deadly thing of all that can happen to a man; and Harrison is right in deciding that any man given such power will, one way or another, become a monster.

It is not an original thought, I know, but rarely can have been more originally presented.

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Just to prove that I do not read only SF; let me tell you about a few other books I've read lately. First there was NOBODY KNOWS by Jeremy Lerner which was sub-titled -Reflections of the McCarthy Campaign of 1968. Lerner was a speechwriter for McCarthy and so was in daily contact with that strange man - Eugene McCarthy who stood for the US Presidency in 1968. Lerner gives some very intimate glimpses of what it was like to be at the heart of this unusual political campaign. The writer is also a novelist and this helps to make the telling more than just reporterage. It seems to me it lays bare the character of McCarthy in a way I have not seen done before. Here he is shown to be not just the knight on a white horse, but a man of many complexities. Not least of the complexities is the fact that he shunned the cult of person-ality - and yet his own personality shaped the whole campaign. I was left reflecting that it was hard to know for whom one must feel the most pity among the young people who laboured so hard in 1968. There are those who lost because Kennedy was shot; and there were those who lost because McCarthy let it all trickle through his fingers. On the whole I think I feel sorrier for the latter. A must-read book for anyone interested in American politics.

Then there was CUSTER DIED FOR YOUR SINS by Vine Deloria. The writer is a Standing Rock Sioux. He is also a witty and brilliant writer. He tells the history of the relations between Indians and the Americans and it is a very biting indictment. But it is told with humour; and is all the more devastating for that. In particular one chapter called ANTHROPOLOGISTS AND OTHER FRIENDS had me wanting to laugh and weep at the same time. For SF fans let me pluck out an Indian joke from the chapter titled INDIAN HUMOR..."A favourite cartoon in Indian country a few years back showed a flying saucer landing while an Indian stood watching. The caption read 'OH, no, not again!'"

Then there was THE RETURN OF THE VANISHING AMERICAN by Leslie Fiedler which is a book of literary criticism. Its theme as stated by the author is -"an effort to define the myths that give a special character to art and life in America". He concentrates upon the encounter between the white man and the Indian; and points out that whilst the white man's drug--whisky--demoralised the Indian, nowadays it is the Indian's drug marijuana which is used by the white man. To fully appreciate this book some knowledge of American literature is clearly necessary; frankly I was a bit surprised to find out just how much I had read, although there are many mentioned here with which I am unfamiliar. However, the original idea of Fiedler that man is always looking for the 'true West' makes very good sense as he propounds it. It certainly would explain some of the latest manifestations in today's art and literature.

Ethel Lindsay. December.1970