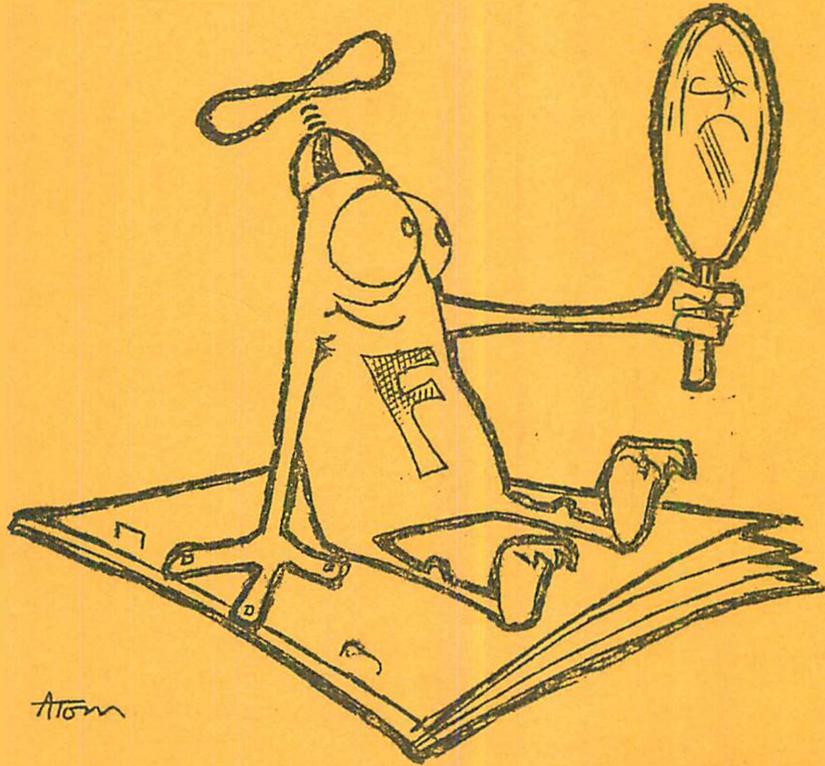


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Credits

Artwork by ATOM

Produced and published by Ethel Lindsay
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offutt on fandom
offutt on fandom

by andrew offutt

Fandom is just a goddam hype.

Oh no?

Fandom is a place where some peanutbutter brained kid with terminal acne can 'review' a book by Silverberg and tell you it isn't as good as the previous one, an award nominee. It's a place where some married-to-his-hand curmudgeon can 'give' Ellison an insulting 'award' (on paper, it's safer), because said Mickey Mouse Club dropout is a midget and thinks he can get bigger by sticking blunt pins into the legs of giants.

It is a place where a guy comes up and tells you he's read your latest story and would you please sign it (and this, and this), and how about saying something too, to make it Personal. And while you sign it with a sweet message--so he can sell it at the 1990 Worldcon--he tells you about the technical error on page 31 and the three misspellings. (They were not in the ms. They were put into the story by union typesetters and left in because the editor was having a long kneesy lunch that day and the 'proofreader' was buffing her Maybelline claws and polishing her Vassar ring--and didn't know who to ask for permission to sharpen her pencil.)

Fandom's a place in which a faneditor says he sure wishes he could meet Rachel Madux, whose work he admires --as who does not -- so he can tell her how she could have done a better job of tying up loose ends.

(The Whole Ass Award, indeed! From a quarter-assed fanzine sneakily written during Study Hall and interrupted by occasional glimpses of Janie Glick's taut garterbelt when she bends to see if there is any reusable Juicy Fruit on the bottom of her desk!)

It is a place where a loudmouthed gumchewing brighteyed bushytailed jello-brained yoyo begs a professional for a piece of writing, anything man, ANYTHING, I'll love you forever, for his excrementzine, and then prints it and sends out review copies but fails to send you one, O honored pro, cause you can't do him any more good right now. (And if you don't come through next time you're a high-and-mighty-snob.) Where another one nicknames you right off the bat because it makes him feel bigger than his (mental)elevator-shoed three feet thirteen. The

offutt on fandom 2

material sent him was on a 5¢-a-sheet letterhead with the name in big letters signed in pristine proper spell, and in an envelope bearing a printer-printed return address, not to mention name rank and serial number. So he misspells the name on the piece, the contents page, and on the mailing label, proving to you his true esteem.

It's a place in which drooling toddlers graduate from sucking pacifiers to sucking up to writers in person and bad-reviewing their work on paper ('this latest isn't up to his SoZ,tata'). In which a trying-to-be-nice-and-accessible, but agonized, pro stands and listens and listens and listens, sometimes to a fan, oftener to someone who's made a 2,000-word sale, his first. Pro goes to fix a drink, hoping to escape, but the talker hangs onto his beltloops with ferocious beaglehound tenacity. And eventually pro engages in broken-field running involving elevator tag and up the down firestairs, to elude the diarrhea-larynxed sycophant without being 'mean.' Or he blows loose, finally, and says BUG OFF, CREEP. And gets badmouthed ever after as an egotist. (No, the ignorami always say egoTist because they don't know any better.)

It's a place in which kudoed and much-discussed and underpaid giants spend a great portion of their time bending down--so the dwarves can get a better trajectory at spitting in their eyes. In which those giants often GIVE away as much material in a year as they SELL, for god's sake(it must be for somebody's sake)--and get postcards of brabblesome beration because so-and-so's zine is holding for their contribution, and they shelve the contract-deadline novel to write the fanzine piece and bail the phart out, knowing fullwell this means hitting the novel this weekend to meet deadline. And that novel, eventually comes out. And guess what fanzine blasts it all to Gehenna in a 'review' by some cretin with insufficient judgment/critical ability to 'review' BATMAN on the telly.

It is a place in which 'reviews,' are accepted by 'editors' for the same reason men have climbed mountains. Because they're there. Because some attention-starved mongoloid read and wrote and sent.

It is a place in which a professional writer enters a con-room to find a couple of gusseted geriatrics look up with a smile of sickening saccharinity. "We were just talking about you," a voice like Vermont syrup burbles from one's sunken chest, and the poor fool says "Oh?" because what else is there, and she says 'Yaas..we think you're going to develop into a good writer!' The beaming statement is made in such a way that he knows he is to be grateful as a stray mongrel getting a chickenleg bounced off his schnozz, perhaps to lick the dirt from her six-years-out-of-date shoes--as she tells him he is not a good writer now. (Not really. She's too stupid to understand the implication.) He is speechless. All those novels..all those short stories..all the material he's dutifully sent in response to fanzine requests..and here's a Fan. Trying to be nice. Trust in her, friends, and someday you MAY be a good writer) (Like her secret favorite, Irving Wallace?)

If he had any guts at all he'd say scrooyou, all quietly and smiling just as cyclamately, but-- why do her the favor of giving her a thrill? (hanjob you, lady.)

offutt on fandom 3

Yeahhhh,jim,that are fandom. A sort of hell of semi-pressed stoneheads.

And it's this.

It's a world in which everybody, always, gripes about the hotel/food/roomservice/beds/toilets/elevators/stairs/deskclerk's hairline/makeout possibilities/_____,_____,_____,(fill in the blanks or check All of The Above... at every con to which they betake their supersuave and hypersophisticated selves in barefoot snarl-faced dare-you-to-please-me hebetude. As if they were accustomed to something better in mom's greasy kitchen!

And yet...

And yet they'll pitch in to buy some grubbypawed shellfish of a hotel manager a new movie screen when a 39¢ roll of cello tape should have been given him..as a suppository. As at St Louis,9/69.

They'll eat a lousy meal for which they laid out ten countem ten US skins, and listen to post-prandial speeches by two little fellers such as Hollis and offutt(excuse me, Hollis; love, you know that, but we ain't no Brunners or LeGuins!), and inept emceeing--and groove on it and applaud and say and do nice sweet human(as opposed to feanish)things. As at New Orleans,3/70.

They'll listen and listen and LISTEN to the mewling vicissitudes of a fanzine editor turned professional fanzine editor, weeping and wailing for 35 minutes, forcing them to ingest lysergic logic while pool 'n' parties wait, until at last the emcee, who's tried three times, sits him down.As at Ciccinnati 6/70.

They'll help bail out the management of an over-the-hill hostel, a 'management' that Peter Principled when he entered kindergarten, and damnear blow a con, wandering up and down Stygianly electricless corridors with flashlights, escorting straights off and on lifts, while all the while the pro-writer GoH sits and sits and SITS there, trying to think of something to do/say at 11:30 while waiting for the 9:00 program to be allowed to begin. Which it does. At high noon. And THEN those sweet fugitives from Samaria sit there and pretend to listen to the pseudointellectual, medieval-mentality prattle of some twitchy twerp suffering under a compulsion to Label..who introduces himself to a successful writer by advising the latter he(t.twerp) will decide as to whether he (writer) writes 'new Thing' or 'Eschatological Romanticism' (dear god, let it be the pronounceable one!)---just as soon as he(T.T.)reads something of his(astonished and by now twitching writer). As at Atlanta, 8/70, and they'll give that con good reviews too. Because when it comes down to the crunch, friends, they honcstly haven't the heart to put each other down hard. (It is a demonstrably and demoniacally Christian Country you see.)

Ayn Rand said that she loved the race of man while hating many of the creatures who pretend to bear his name.(Maybe she said most.)

And I, fool that I am, am in love with fandom.

Let me stay, let me write and conventionize and fan-tasize, and read and 'review' my work. But try not to be too put off when you make me hate you, creep.

endit.

andrew j offutt.

LETTERS

Mary Legg
20 Woodstock Close Flats
Oxford. OX2 8DB

"Was interested in the reference to Tey. I've only read THE DAUGHTER OF TIME. I was introduced to it because the mother of my oldest friend is very interested in that particular Richard. Speaking of Richards, there's the equally mysterious in many ways Richard Coeur de Lion, who was born at the royal palace of Beaumont at Oxford, built by Henry 1. It stood near or at Beaumont St, and I mention it because the Randolph Hotel is on that very street, opposite the Ashmolean Museum and attendees of the Oxcon may be interested.. Read your comments on why you read SF and pondered. I got onto SF at an age when I was too young to be bothered with so-called women's stories. It followed on naturally from the fact that I was a) an avid reader and b) a fearful tomboy. (Come to think of it I am still a&b. Consequently I read a lot of boy's comics etc, and found them meatier than the insipid feminine equivalent, full of middle-class children and boarding schools and ballerinas and what have you. Then I graduated via a shortlived craze for westerns to SF. Of course I read a lot other than SF. It would maybe be enlightening to find out how many female fans came into SF by the same route. Also, how many departed finding SF too had its clichés, or as a non-SF fan said to me "It's just women's stories set on the moon", and while it is a sweeping generalisation, of course there's a grain of truth or two there. What irritates me about the heroines of many a book, not necessarily SF, is their unconcernedness about the everyday things of life -- you know, washing their hair, or cooking the tea. Mind you, I would soon get bored if they all did these chores, even if just referred to in passing. And the only 'kitchen-sink' type ones I enjoyed were A TASTE OF HONEY and THE L-SHAPED ROOM. Which dealt with similar themes, come to think of it. Women!!"

**Perhaps my female readers would like to add their comments on how they ever got started on SF?*

Letters 2

John Trimble
Mathom House
869 Irolo
Los Angeles.
Calif.90005.USA

"As the Chairman of the St LouisCon Business Meeting which passed all the rotation, HUGO and US con rules deservedly un-done at the Heicon, your comments anet the business meeting there struck home. I don't think that anyone ever thought that talk about "freeing" the World-Con from American(that's North American) "control" would lead to the sort of arrangement that came out of the meeting. But, the movement towards a National/North American con for those years when the WorldCon was outside N.A. came to a head at the same time as something was being done about the complaint that the WorldCon was actually a N.A.con, and this coincided with a motion to codify the HUGOs as the English language awards which they've de facto been for years. And what came out of the St. LouisCon meeting was a set-up that no one really wanted, and one which sounded much more chauvenistic/isolationistic/anti-foreign than was intended. I think that, eventually, a series of "national" cons(British, a Eurocon, N.A., Japanese, Scandanavia, Australasia, etc), with an international con of some sort which rotates among continental zones would be a great idea. But, obviously, the time is not now. Buck Coulson's article on St Clair's defeat by Little Turtle was fascinating...and he's certainly correct in stating that you'll never read about this in any history book in the US. The reason for the Custer Massacre being such a Big Thing, I think, largely stems from the fact that the period when it happened is one which has been highly written about & romanticized. And Custer was a flamboyant man, leading a supposedly crack Cavalry unit; his actions at the Little Big Horn display a classic example of what can go wrong when ego gets in the way of sound strategy & tactics. It was all so tragic and useless(sort of like the Viet Nam War...), and that sort of thing seems to inspire romantic types. So the Custer thing is well-known, and St. Clair is lucky to be a footnote in history."

Tony Lewis
Box 547, Cambridge
Mass.02139.USA

"What happens at Heyer teas? well, at St Louis we drank ratafia that Susan(rose) and Marsha(licorice) made. We also drink tea and eat cakes and pass on the latest on-dits. It is almost entirely a social group. The Ladies Patronesses also pass out vouchers."*So now I know what goes on there. I bet you have fun with the on dits....*

Archie Mercer
c/o Harvey
2 Stithians Row
Four Lanes
Redruth, Cornwall.

"Primula: I'm not sure whether I'm any happier and/or better-off for reading his column or not. Oh yes. One point. "The ecology," he says, "cannot tolerate more than two percent(of the planet's food supply) being eaten by one species." Just precisely what grounds does he have for that statement? It seems to me to be simply an assumption conjured out of thin air. Re female fans being possibly on the (proportionate) increase, I can nominate two sub-fandoms where they lie(if that's the not just...) particularly thick on the ground. One is Tolkien fandom; Tolkien's works seem to appeal to females considerably more than do the works of any other recognised sf-or-fantasy author. (I'm not sure why this is). The other "Star Trek" fandom, is practically 100% female anyway - apparently the lassies all fall bonce over buttocks for this Mr Spock character. Mind you, I'm not sure what proportion of Star Trekkies have any sort of trufannish potential - though intelligent females seem to be equally charmed by him. " *I must say

Letters 3

I can't see the attraction of Spock myself; all he does is raise one eyebrow. I much prefer the Captain who does have a little range of facial expression! Female liking for Tolkien may have something to do with the way we are likely to do a bit dotty over animals.*

Alex. Eisenstein,
6424 N. Mozart
Chicago, Illinois
60645, USA

"Re Ian Williams' comments on sex in SF, with special reference to BUG JACK BARRON, I sometimes feel there is a curious syndrome of perversity in operation. The sex must, of course, be "relevant to the book as a whole," but it must not be "cheap titillation". In fact, the sex scenes in BJB are very distant from any sort of titillation; they are about as unevocative of any real feeling or sensation as any such I've ever encountered. It seems to me that this avoidance of all that might possibly arouse denotes a very real underlying prudery in those, such as Spinrad, who could claim the greatest literary freedom for writers. It's a contradiction, it's also not very literary to eschew evocative-or even provocative -description in a book that relies heavily on sex for motivation and plot mechanics. I guess Mr Williams would call Pangborn's DAVY cheap titillation because it is evocative, it is involving, it makes the reader feel the protagonist's desire, and lust, and love. The sex in DAVY relates to the book as a whole no more than that of any Harold Robbin's book, I'm sure; it is merely part of the necessary detail of life that must appear in most stories that cover a whole life. The only general relevance it bears to the whole novel is as part of the entertainment provided by the whole; otherwise it is verisimilitude. In other words, but for the necessity to establish "period" realism, it has no other purpose than titillation! The major thrust of the book's philosophy, its theme, if you will, may be best expressed by the words "discovery" and "truth"; albeit Pangborn's ideas about the latter subjects go no farther than some standard observations that have approached cliché status, even in SF. But never is love and sex a major concern of the book, except insofar as a major concern of the book may be amusement of the reader. Is DAVY therefore a bad book? I hardly think so, though on other grounds it is hardly profound or new in conception. Mr William's strictures seem no better, to me, than Ken Bulmers'; the latter wants relevance to ideational content, the former demands "relevance to the book as whole". Neither one is really fair, and Ian sits in a less tenable position, straddling a fence, while Ken stands four-square on one side of it. And, though Ken is certainly wrong (judging by Ian's version of his position), he also has a good point, ruined only by exaggeration into a general Rule. It would be nice, a fillip, at least, if the sex in an SF story were an integral part of the stfial content...unfortunatly, when this has been the case in the past, some very bad stories have resulted...e.g. Farmer's stories of extra-terrestrial reproductive cycles, simply because the bio-social notions involved in these stories have often been silly and idiotic. At one time these stories caused a big stir simply because they dared to mention sex; now we have Spinrad creating a stir by introduction of less outré, but frank exposition of human sexual relations, yet conveyed in such a style as to be totally sex-less in effect. In THE MASKS OF TIME, Silverberg's prose aptly captures the charms and tribulations of the subject, but the actual story, which has much to do with love and desire, depend not at all on the SF element; the social inter-loper demanded by the plot need not have been one so extraordinary as Vornan-19 the Man From Tomorrow, and the rather shallow moral dilemma plaguing one of the characters need not have been provided by a revolutionary scientific development. This is not to say that these SF elements are entirely irrelevant

Letters 4.

within the context of the story, but the real story of the book, the story of the degenerating love and friendships, doesn't require the sfnal aspects at all. I wonder if this sort of lack of relation between the SF and sex in a book is what Ken is really driving at? Perhaps it is less a matter of relation than focus of attention: a story that focuses upon the SF content can certainly contain ordinary sex if only as background verisimilitude, but a story that focuses on ordinary sexual relationships should not be cluttered with irrelevant trappings of SF."

Roger Waddington
4 Commercial St
Norton, Malton.
Yorks:

"But I found this latest issue of SCOT as fascinating as the Annish, with Buck Coulson's piece among the high spots. We don't see very often the real story of what might be called the Old West, a story as fascinating as the stories that Hollywood and the pulp writers dream up; though I suppose it is mostly the legends that these latter are interested in. What might be a refreshing change was reported by the SUNDAY TIMES of that new film by Arthur Penn...Your Conrep; it made me wish that that could have been my first introduction to the world of Cons, instead of the confused, dull throb that Sci-Con 70 turned out to be; or maybe it was just me?" * No it wasn't just you. I didn't much enjoy it either. Somehow the usual Pennish air was missing*

Rick Sineary,
2962 Santa Ana St.
South Gate, Calif.
90230, USA

"On your remarks about authors not being treated as Lords of Creation--it seems unlikely there are many literary forms in which the writer gets so much direct criticism. They may be honored for their talent but their clay feet sure get stepped on." *Trust you, Rick, to put it in a nut shell!*

Brian Robinson,
9 Linwood Grove
Manchester, M12 4QH

"Just what is the order of St Fanthony? The few friends of mine who are occasionally forced to read a fanzine usually ask that question, and look at me in a pitying way when I have to confess ignorance. Primula's article was thought-provoking to say the least. I read it just before seeing BBC programmes on continental driftage and earthquakes, and it occurred to me that the excess population in California could be got rid of by firing a small nuclear near the San Andreas Fault. The strain should be sufficient to set the land masses on the move!+++Some of my very best friends live in California so I take a dim view of your suggestion. As to St Fanthony..well it all started at the first Worldcon held in London. It was invented to provide a colourful programme item -with the American visitors mainly in mind. The late Eric Jones had a great deal to do with its inception. At the time, like everyone else, I enjoyed it and felt it added to the programme. Nowadays I think it is a pity that the order was allied to medieval fandom more than to SF..but it was thought up with the idea of the phrase "trusion" in mind. New members are voted in by the existing membership..which accounts for the fact that its growth has been slow. It still appears on programmes just because it is a colourful item. It is not the Establishment--it is still meant to be a fun thing. If there is one characteristic that the members share it is that come convention time you will usually see them helping out in some way or another.+++

Letters 5

H.P.Inselmann
Grundtrigsveg 17
1364. Copenhagen V
Denmark

"re one remark in the latest HAVERINGS. We young people don't really feel stubborn about long hair. At least not in the start. We just grow it because we think it looks nice. Then some fool starts walking all over you, going hee, hee, heh all the time, and after a while you feel like punching him. If there is enough people spitting on you, you are apt to get a bit stubborn - take your stand, challenge the universe, that kind of stuff. Newton's second law..action breeds reaction. The funny thing is, it is supposed to be the ignorant, stupid workers who persecute people who are different - but it isn't really, at least not in this country. You have to take a certain amount of good-natured kidding if you are working with them, but if you have a good stolid ego, it won't hurt you. (If you haven't of course you are in deep trouble). But those nicely-clad, necktie bureaucrats are the ones who get really nasty occasionally. Maybe it's different in America. I suppose it is. All you get in this country nowadays is personal reactions. Official sanctions have been suspended. They don't even fire bank-tellers for having long hair anymore. Tolerance is steadily spreading."Speaking personally..long hair may look nice, but it can be a bother. Takes longer to wash and dry and so requires more time. I have worn my hair long and I've worn it short--as I get older I want less bother--so now it is short. There is the further fact that long hair looks better on the young. A middle-aged man with long hair is as bad as a middle-aged woman wearing hot pants.+++

Rick Sneary,
2962 Santa Ana St
South Gate
Calif. 90280. USA

"Primula is a new fan name to me--which almost leads me to suspect the long Sanderson hand. Jumps around a bit and a bit grim, but interesting. As unpleasant as the thought is, the Death answer, seems to be the one that Nature uses most to control over-population in animals. I've been reading resently of several animals who have been so protected from their natural killers (such as man), that their number has increased beyond their ability to find feed enough, and so the whole herd is endangered. We can probably keep working out ways to feed more people, but I don't know if we can do it without going crazy, due to too many people around all the time."Wrong guess on Primula..wish Sanderson would write!***

Robert Coulson
Route 3
Hartford City.
Indiana. 47348.
USA

"I think Mark Adlard has an inflated view of the importance of SF. Hasn't he ever considered that stf could be discussed for the fun of it? Or that "non-scientific SF" is a ponderous term for fantasy? I didn't agree with Jo Ann Wood myself, but I certainly wouldn't have picked those points to argue on; my ego doesn't need the reassurance that my every interest is of vast importance. Ted Tubb has an excellent point on sex in SF. I'm not sure about constant stimulus losing its effect pretty rapidly, though; most of the time, perhaps, but not in all cases. I might mention one reason autos are so hard to work on is just possibly due to the fact that auto companies (in the US anyway,) now make more profits out of their repair facilities than they do in selling new cars. It doesn't make them eager to turn out cars that the average customer can fix himself. ***These last two letters were the first to beat their way over here after the strike. Good show lads! Ethel.*

natterings

Tonight (March 6th) it seems by the news as if our postal strike is coming to an end. I'm sure we never thought, when it began, that it would last for seven weeks. It has been a really weird time.

At first it felt rather like a holiday - no mail coming in. At a leisurely pace I was able to answer the outstanding letters and lay them aside to be posted when the strike ended. Then there were the fanzines; my comments for HAVER were written at a less hectic pace than usual and the day came when the pile was actually cleared. So I started work on a project I had been postponing for years--to use up some material left to me by Harry Turner when he gafisted. Very pleased with myself I was the day I packed that up for posting ..and laid it aside. After that I started on this SCOT, ran off the HAVER stencils, and happily collated..and laid them all aside.

This was when it became really weird - I didn't have a thing to do! How often had I wished for this blissful state--yet here it was and I was downright uneasy. I went searching and things got sewn and mended that had been patiently waiting for my attention for aeons. I even unearthed a tablecloth that usually only got a spot of embroidery when I went home on holiday. I found myself galloping away at that.

It is such an odd thing - I haven't missed the regular arrival of mail every day so very much...but oh! how I miss the guilty feeling of sitting down to do nothing with something waiting to be done!

Maybe it is not so much the time that has been weird; maybe I have to sadly face the fact that I am weird.

Natterings:2

Lately I have seen a few comments lamenting the sad state nowadays of fanzine fandom. I am thinking particularly of the piece written by Terry Carr in which he complained about the lack of good writers in fanzines. He went on to list some names from the past that he mourned -- Norm Clarke, Mal Ashworth, Dean Grennell, Walt Willis, Chuck Harris, Chas. Burbee, Calvin Demmon, Redd Boggs, and Bill Donahue.

Let's take a look at that list. Norm has vanished into FAPA. I met Mal a few years back after I had tracked him into the depths of the Yorkshire Dales. I found him studying for a degree and finding that used up all his energy. Dean went off to edit a gun magazine. Walt wrote a book and decorated his house and went golf mad. Chuck had twins (weeell, his wife did, he helped,) Idunno about Burbee; but didn't Calvin turn professional? Redd went to California and I lost an agent. The last I heard of Bill he was decorating a Christmas tree and founding a new church. Most of them, as you see, found other things that interested them more than writing for fanzines. All good writers and (mostly) content to be amateurs. In the time that Terry sighs after we had a lot of good amateur writers; amateur in the sense that they had little hankering to turn professional. Yet fandom has always been a place where good writers entered as amateurs and left as professionals; and fandom has always been proud of such people.

Terry himself is a professional writer and editor; so his standards are professional. Naturally he judges the writing in fanzines from that standard. Yet, if we are to make it that only those who can write to a professional standard are to appear in fanzines - this amateur hobby of ours might disappear. As it is, the professionals dominate us to quite a degree - any fanzine editor is pleased to give them space. They give a fanzine prestige as well as good writing. Take SF REVIEW and WARHOON as an example - they are two of today's leading fanzines..and check how many of the people adding to their prestige and quality are professional writers.

Good amateur writers are really fairly rare birds. Most people who can write well naturally want to sell their work. Whenever I see a new and good writer appear in fandom (the latest to catch the eye is Liz Fishman currently appearing in YANDRO); I begin to wonder just how long they will stay. Fandom must be resigned to forever having the cream skimmed off and into the professional field. Many writers, having made this move, still like to be seen now and then in fanzines; and this is good for us all in setting a target to aim towards. However, it should never be the case that only those of a professional standard should appear. This is an amateur hobby which gives many people pleasure. Set the standards too high and someone might be scared off. That someone might have turned out to be the sort of fan whose personality so enlivened his fanzine that his lack of professional skill did not matter.

I'd hate to see any fanzine writer discouraged by Terry's remarks. I have personally enjoyed 15 years of amateur publication and amateur writing - and I have never sighed to emulate the professionals. I have met a lot of them now and some are nice, and some are nicer, and some are the nicest...but I do not envy a one of them. No doubt if I were a better writer I might get the itch to go on and make a sale; but I am not and yet I am very well content. When I published my 15th year anniversary issue; I felt very proud that I had lasted that long; and I knew I had gained a lot of good friends from all that

Natterings:3

use of time and energy. I have had no HUGO; no Best Fan Writer award; no break-through to the professional field; no large subscription list; no ding-a-ling Focal Point---but lots of personal satisfaction and the knowledge that the contents of SCOTTISHE have always been what I wanted them to be.

That, you know, is one of the attractions of this hobby..the fanzine editor has complete control of his own zine. In how many other facets of our lives can we say the same? I have spent the last three months as the person in charge of the small hospital where I work. All the decisions I made--could they be to please me? Well, of course not -- with responsibility your own pleasure comes last.

SCOTTISHE is one sphere in which I have complete authority, (can every professional say the same?) You might think this fine declaration of independence more fitting if it came from a controversial fanzine; or a fearlessly outspoken one; or a highly fashionable one; or at least one that is a mite unorthodox. But there is the beauty of it, this hobby of mine, it need not be any of these things unless it pleases me.

Now the strike is over, the fanzines are beginning to roll in again. I decided to carry the current HAVERINGS on to the end of March and this SCOT can get posted out at the same time. The postage has gone up again and I am not looking forward to the posting. Times when I feel THEY are trying to price me right out of my hobby. To those SCOT readers who do not receive HAVERINGS, I must explain that in it I set my comments for all the fanzines I receive. This is my happy answer to the loc problem. It costs 8/-(20p) or \$1 for 6 issues. Andy Forter is agent for this also..and in Australia talk to John Bangsund if you don't want to bother with International Money Orders. I received one these orders after the strike which had gone out of date and had to be returned. The Post Office is still not quite right..the deliveries are all out of joint, the queues to buy anything get longer, and they keep running out of stamps! I've had to wait ages to get airmail letters too. Ah well, come the Spring..and things will improve vastly.

and a happy Spring to you too.

Ethel.

Nibblings

Due to the postal strike this is a rather slim column this time. I guess there is another batch of ACE books somewhere in the post. No hard covers to review either. DENNIS DOBSON has no books scheduled for publication for this month.

I have a catalogue however from ANDRE DEUTSCH who are now putting out the RAPP & WHITING books. They announce one Science Fiction novel for publication in April. Just too late for reviewing in this column but it should be out nicely in time for the Worcester convention. It is THE SHIP WHO SANG by Anne McCaffrey. "The brain was perfect, the tiny crippled body useless. So technology rescued the brain and Helva became a 'shell person' conditioned to live in a different kind of body—a spaceship. Helva could sing, knew Shakespeare by heart; she could do immensely complicated calculations in a split second. She could also fall in love with her various 'brawns' — the human pilots who flew her." As Anne McCaffrey is Guest of Honour at Worcester — this is a very timely and appropriate book to be coming out.

Another book published recently in the States which I am hoping will come out here— is Donald A. Wollheim's THE UNIVERSE MAKERS. In the US it is published by Harper & Row, \$4.95. The CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR gave it a very good review. Some quotes from this review... "This is a good shortish account of the world of science fiction, its factions and frictions, its present situation, its importance to the human world, its past in brief, and its brief for the future.... His intelligent book is illuminating because it is unfashionably frank. This honesty may not be "with it" but the book would be unimportant without it."

I hope to be able to review both these books in the next issue.

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THE ROLLING STONES by Robert Heinlein. ACE BOOKS. 73440/95¢: I see by the copy-right that a condensed version was first published in BOY'S LIFE. So it is one of Heinlein's 'juveniles' and I settled down to enjoy it as I had all the others I've encountered. This one concerns a family - the Stones. They are quite a family - Father is an engineer who also writes TV scripts for a successful serial, and Mother is an MD. The twin boys are called Castor and Pollux and they are very, very bright as is their sister Meade. The youngest, Buster is a chess expert, and Granny is a top engineer also. They all live in Luna City until the day the twins decide they would like to set up as space traders - and incidentally take a look at the Asteroids. It is well told in typical Heinlein manner that always holds the interest. I found the dialogue just a little too cute for my taste - but it should hit its intended target head on.

CHRONOCULES by D.G. Compton. ACE BOOKS 10480/75¢ One expects by now originality from this author; and I was not disappointed. The characters keep you engrossed, the outcome keeps you guessing, and always the writing is good. The main character is Vargo, a Cornishman who lives primitively and alone in a novel. His area is taken over and made into Penheniot Experimental Research Village - but he is allowed to stay as a sort of tame Village Idiot. Lisa is the other main character, she is the assistant to the Professor who is trying to move articles in Time with the eventual aim of moving human beings. The background of a world of riots, drugs, disease, which is all kept outside the Village by its defences, is sketched in skillfully. This provides the need for a move in Time. It is, however, with the characters that the main interest lies. I find it hard to follow why Lisa does the things she does - but then I cannot but admit that women fall in love with the most unprepossessing of men! It is very easy to feel sympathy for Vargo - a simple man in a very confused world. It is much more difficult to feel any sympathy for Lisa - who is anything but simple! I highly recommend it on the grounds that this is one SF novel whose ending you will not guess after just a few chapters. Nothing predictable here!

ON OUR WAY TO THE FUTURE. Edited by Terry Carr. ACE BOOKS. 62940/75¢. 16 stories and quite a good selection. GREENSLEEVES by Frank Herbert shows his interest in ecology..but my dislike of insects put me off this one. A BETTER MOUSEHOLE by Edgar Pangborn..this one has biting blue flies starting off the action..ugh! I rather anxiously hoped this was not to be the theme! However BALLENGER'S PEOPLE by Kris Neville has a different tack; the logical extension of democracy..dry and witty. Roger Zelazny entertains next with KING SOLOMON'S KING a very convoluted story that keeps the reader although the content is so alive. SUNDANCE by Robert Silverberg is pretty clever; starts as a routine planetary survey team at work story and ends deep in the mind of a very disturbed man. BE MERRY by Algis Budrys is the most spell-binding story of the lot; showing an Earth contaminated by infection from aliens. A team composed of a human and an alien set out to investigate a villoge and stumble into something strange there. UNDER THE DRAGON'S TAIL by Philip Latham has a planetarium as the setting and a harassed lecturer who makes a surprising discovery. A TASTE FOR DOSTOEVSKY by Brian Aldiss shows him still fascinated by the idea of moving back in Time. CYCLOPS by Fritz Leiber shows him at his series best. Lastly GOBLIN NIGHT by James Schmitz is another tale of the psi-talented Telzey which shows her being hunted and very vulnerable in spite of her powers. One hopes to see more stories about Telzey as the author has made her very likeable.

Nibblings:3

ELIDOR by Alan Garner. ACE BOOKS 20275/60¢. I must say first how much I enjoyed the very fine George Barr cover to this book. Garner sticks firmly to fantasy; and his fantasy is not the kind to be explained away. The magic is real; the dangers are real; there really is an Elidor which is in danger. Four children wander into Elidor from the streets of Manchester in an area where rows of houses are being demolished. Garner is good at setting a realistic background to his fantasies; and this appeals to me more than if it were set in a kind of fairyland. The four children are real too; and a great part of the book's appeal lies in their dialogue which always rings true. They return from Elidor with four Treasures to guard - and they decide to bury them in their garden. When the Treasures begin to emit electronic disturbances, Garner manages to extract quite a bit of amusement from the effects of this upon everyday Manchester. I liked this book much more than his earlier ones.

THE STONE GOD AWAKES by Philip José Farmer. ACE BOOKS 78650/75¢. There have been many story devices to take a man into the future; in this one Ulysses Singing Bear is working on a project involving atomic stasis. Due to an accident he becomes a man of stone - and awakens twenty million years later. He finds himself being worshipped as a god by a people who are no longer human. He sets out to find if there are any humans left - and embarks on a series of warring adventures. In the end he finds his greatest enemy is - a Tree!

DARK OF THE WOODS and SOFT COME THE DRAGONS by Dean R. Koontz. ACE BOOKS 13793/75¢. The first half is a story of a future in which Earth power is called the Supremacy of Man Party. Stauffer Davis arrives on Demos prepared to write another novel. Authority thinks he intends writing a pro-Authority book; but it is essential that he let Authority think this as he wants to get into the preserves of the Winged People in order to study them. That Authority has been again practising genocide upon this people he knows; but that meeting the stark reality of it will affect his whole life - he has yet to find out. It is fairly predictable how the protagonist will react to genocide; and that he will find a winged woman attractive. The ending is less predictable however. The second half of this book is a series of short stories; and I think I would characterise them all as - grim. Clever, yes..original, yes...but quite definitely grim.

Ethel Lindsay

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