ZENITH

speculation

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December 1964
(Number 7)

Feature Article

Articles

Departments

Artwork In This Issue

Atom (19); Eddie (5,7,9,39); Mik (29,30,31,33) Brian McCabe (34,36,51,53); Jeeves (40,43); Howett (45,46,59); Aldridge (25,27,38,49); Joseph Zajackowski (3,21,23)

Green inking by Ken Cheslin

ZENITH Speculation. ---- A Fanzine Of Comment and Review

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5 issues for 7/6. Single copies 1/6 + 6d. postage.

Available for trade or contribution.

U.S.Agent -Al Lewis, 1825 Greenfield Ave, Los Angeles 25, USA.

5 issues for one dollar.Single copies 20 cents, + 10 cents postage.

Front cover artwork, illustrating "FLESH" (from ' The Strange Relations of Philip Jose Farmer'), drawn by Brian McCabe.

Back cover artwork provided by arrangement with Transworld Publishers, Ltd.

Front & back covers printed by litho, by H.J.Chapman & Co,Ltd

Most readers will realise that ZENITH's editorial policy is not a vindictive one; when vitriol does appear between our covers, as has happened in this issue, it should be noted that it has arisen through comment on the magazine, and that it is not to be taken as evidence for personal feuding. The editor is indirectly responsible, of course, since he choses to publish such a strongly-worded column as Terry Jeeves' Magazine Reviews. Without confirmation here, you may speculate that the editorial tastes run rather in sympathy with Terry Jeeves, although it is not ZENITH policy to publish only those items which are 'slanted' towards our viewpoint. nything interesting, well-written, and concerning science fiction can find a place in the magazine.

This issue sees an increase in both quantity and quality. Let us hope that no-one will be so trivial as to comment upon the poor typeface in which many of the items were typed. To avoid these typing difficulties in future issues, and to take some of the load from your editor's shoulders, would anyone care to volunteer to type out some of the stencils for the next ZENITH ? The work involved will not amount to very much, and although no payment is offered, there will certainly be many ways in which the editor can express his gratitude.

Does anyone know the exact position with regard to the 1966 Annual UK Convention ? There was a preliminary bid made last year, but has this irretrievably committed the BSFA to holding the 1966 Con at Great Yarmouth ? Surely there must be a better site than this, offering as it does only the virtue of a hotel willing to take the Convention. There are hundreds of hotels in the land who haven't been consulted -- don't let us be rushed into grabbing the first one that shows willingness.

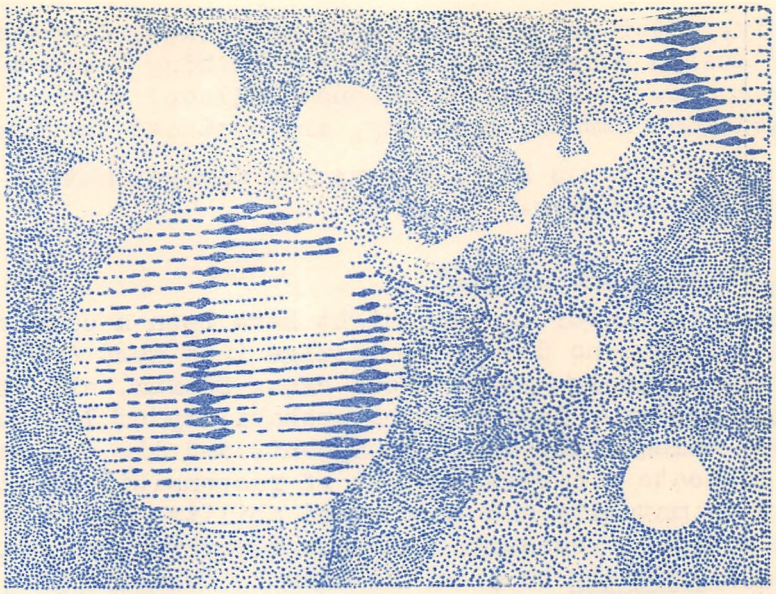
There has been some talk of a Manchester Convention. Whether or not the new DELTA group are willing to stage a Con in 1966 is at present unknown -- but if they are, it would seem only fair to put the choice of location in 1966 to vote this coming Easter. Manchester is in many ways a much more convenient site than is windswept Great Yarmouth -- and it would seem an excellent idea to give a booming local club some worthwhile project on which to cut their teeth

It seems that Terry Jeeves is a most deserving candidate for the Doc Weir Award this year.

Your editor would like to obtain copies of the following magazines. Please state which issues you have for disposal

SPECULATIVE REVIEW (Dick Eney) ; NEW FRONTIERS (Norm Metcalf); SPACE DIVERSIONS; RHODOMAGNETIC DIGEST; THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR (Willis) ; AMRA (containing L Sprague deCamp's Krishna chronology); ZENITH (Harry Turner) ; INSIDE (Ron Smith, Jon White); NEW FUTURIAN (Mike Rosenblum).

LETTERS



Bill Temple to Terry Jeeves. (Round II in the Jeeves-Temple dispute about Terry's Magazine Reviews. See last issue.)

I suspect your forbearance in not punning on my name is gamesmanship, a ploy to limelight the fact that by contradistinction, I'm no gentleman. I'd assumed that fact was self-evident anyhow. It would be a pity, though, if punning were banned in fandom on grounds of bad form. Most of us, from Walt Willis down, would be rendered only semi-articulate.

However, thank you for your well-meant attempt to point out a few things I missed. Forgive my obtuseness, but I continue to miss the point. In your first para. you tell me I've not read your reviews attentively enough, and in para 3. you say I've read a lot into them (which could hardly be done if I'd not read 'em attentively.)

You say I overlooked your statement that your reviews would be "MY OPINIONS" (your caps.) Yet my letter says clearly, "He emphasises that his judgements are solely his own opinions.

So, you see, it's really you who are culpable of careless reading. And worthwhile criticism can't be based on careless reading.

I didn't complain because you marked my yarn 'C' (indeed, I pointed out that this marking was higher than the majority) -- you're arguing from the general to the particular. I simply objected to your self-stated general policy of marking meagerly,(which means ungenerously). A critic can claim the right to set his standards high, only if his own standard of performance as a critic is high. I doubted whether yours reached those heights, but that, of course, was only MY OPINION (my caps.),

Maturity isn't a rigid mould, as you term it. Quite the opposite. It's youth that's intolerant, arrogant, blinkered by ignorance, rigid in opinions. Because youth is the time when we believe there's a single and simple answer to every question, and we're impatient with those who don't see these answers, clear and plain, as we do. Either life in due time tempers us, giving us the needed flexibility of maturity. Or else we're too stupid or too frightened to learn, shut out eyes and ears, and do become fixed in a rigid mould ... of adolescent intolerance, to the age of 41 and beyond.

Oddly, after writing that last paragraph, I paused to read a review in today's Mail of Evelyn Waugh's autobiography looking back on his younger self as an Oxford undergraduate. The reviewer (Kenneth Allsop) remarks on the mature Waugh's "mellowed good humour, humility, and distaste for his callow arrogance."

So don't give up hope, Terry; you may yet mature similarly. I might even make it myself, eventually.

Terry Jeeves to Bill Temple

I suspect my forbearance might have been a sign of maturity ... then again the fact that I have no desire to indulge in a word quibbling match may be another. Let's take a purely hypothetical case. So far, all observations, Sputnik, radio, and other reports, indicate the probability of life on Venus is pretty slim. Now all these scientists, their equipment, and the analysis work which has gone into it, all indicate a certain amount of responsibility, care, thought, and -- dare I say it ? -- maturity and background ability. However, nothing has been proved as a fact. Wouldn't you say I had some teeny weeny little right to hint that there just might possibly be life on Venus ? Wouldn't you, huh ? Just admit my right to have a little opinion until FACTS emerge huh ? After all, you can't yet PROVE the opposite case, can you ?

Similarly, I gave my humble opinion as to the quality of the stories in the magazines... and my humble opinion as to how I wanted to review them. Then you your own equally valid (but perhaps not so humble ?) view. After all, you can no more prove your viewpoint correct than I can...or so far, the Venus argument. can't be settled either.

Let's accept the fact that I rate stories how I please, and you accept my rating how you please. After all, until you can put them both through the ultimate analog/digital multiple maturity push-pull turbo analyser and PROVE what is a good review and what is a good story, (and incidentally prove a story to be SF or not)... until then may we not agree to differ.

Then again, if you really want to, I append a conversion chart for converting Jeeve's reviews into Temple standards. Simply go through the review with a blue pencil, changing the ratings as follows; - Jeeves B becomes Temple A

" C " " B
" D " " C
" E " " D

And of course the Temple scale has no 'E'

Maturity ? Sorry, but I guess I'll never grow up.

Charles Brown, 2719 Morris Avenue, Bronx, NY. 10468, USA.

Terry Jeeves answered Bill Temple much too softly in the last ZENITH. Temple wrote something about "Let's take the science out of science-fiction" in NEW FRONTIERS a couple of years ago, and was squelched beautifully by somebody saying -- "If you don't like apples, get the hell out of the tree." He deserves the same here.

ZENITH is perfect for me because I'm a collector. Keep up the book and magazine info., and especially your lists of new and forthcoming titles. I wish you would cross reference them with the American titles. I have no interest in the fan fiction, and strangely enough, Walt Willis is dull. This is odd because he is my favourite fan writer. The artwork by Atom and Eddie Jones is excellent and well worth the price of the magazine alone. DAY OF THE ROBOT by Frank B Long is I think, a new book and not a classic reprint. It's a paperback over here.

Lloyd Biggle Jr.

I should think it rather dangerous for writers to start imposing licensing qualifications on critics. Someone might follow this up by insisting that writers must, since they presume to construct windows on life, live widely, experience deeply, observe constantly and meditate long -- and thereby put most of us out of work.

I would defend to my last postage stamp the right of Mr. Jeeves to assign letter ratings to stories if he wants to -- but I wish he wouldn't. Every time I encounter such a system the critic seems to be playing with a different scale of values. This makes for nothing but confusion, which is precisely the opposite of what I expect a critic to provide. SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, the last time I saw it, had four different codes, I-IX for novellas, A-H for novelets, a-g for short stories, and 1-10 for novels. Why nine classifications were neccessary for the first, eight for the second, seven for the third, and ten for the fourth was not made clear, at least to me. I doubt that any critic can keep that many graduations clearly enough in mind to apply them consistently, just as I doubt that Mr Jeeves can consistently delineate between C-plus and B-minus on his scale. The SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW further arranged its scales of values in three broad categories -- under the novel, for example, worth buying, 1-5; marginal, 6-7; buy at your own risk, 8-10. This seems a reasonable enough basis for coded criticism, and I see no advantage to the subdivisions except to give a cautious critic the opportunity to hedge his opinions.

There would be some justification for the use of a letter code if space requirements permitted only the listing of the contents of magazines. Where the critic has space to criticise, too often the letter becomes a crutch to support fuzzy thinking and inept expression. Mr Jeeves doesn't need it. His letter ratings are, in many cases, redundancies. After he has said, "Slickly written rubbish" or "Utter twaddle defying description," he doesn't really need to add the "E". "Well written pot boiler," "Interesting but lightweight," "Interesting but not outstanding," all sound average, and all are followed by "C".

Window on life or no, literary values are too complicated to be conveyed by coded simplifications. Mr Jeeves would be a better -- and more interesting -- critic if all of his opinions and evaluations were expressed rather than coded.

Charles Platt, 18E Fitzjohns Avenue, London, NW 3.

Now, Mr Jeeves. I enjoyed his reviews last issue, but here he has taken terseness past the border of good taste in reviewing. In fact he has, I think, written some very stupid, shortsighted reviews; which surprised me a lot. The main fault is, that he gives his opinion as if it were an absolute judgement; the fact is that Terry's tastes in SF, are, like anybody else's, limited. However, he goes further than most by giving anything outside these limits an "E" rating, as if insulted that he should have to read such muck.

He may not have enjoyed EQUINOX, but he nedd not reveal his lack of appreciation in such a distasteful manner. I see that EQUINOX was rated top by NW readers; perhaps some people disagree with Terry that the story was a "stinker."?

I don't know quite why, but most of Terry's reviews irritated me thish; whereas last issue they delighted me.

This issue's FANORAMA wasn't half as good as last issue's. Or should I say half of this issue's FANORAMA wasn't as good as last issue's ? The first half was definitely sub standard; it read as if it had been rushed off. But the second half was much better, more carefully written, more thought-provoking, and more cleverly written.

Now, this fiction. OK, so it's professionally written, BUT IT'S NO DAMN GOOD! You've not only dug up the lousiest thing Fritz Leiber ever wrote (apart from the stuff he was too ashamed to publish), you've chosen what I think must be one of the worst in the series of ads that ran in Scientific American. I know -- I read them all. There were one or two quite good stories in them; intriguing. But this one is full of pseudoscience and gimmickry, has no plot, and is generally a mess. Morever, if they had been projected into a mirror image universe (how ?; why?), why should the time flow be reversed ? (cf the last line). I disliked this story. The only good thing about it was that you printed it in blue. Rather a good idea, I thought.

It may provide prestige to have some big names in your lettercol, but I don't honestly think much of their letters ! I hope you won't fall into the trap of selecting LoCs according to name rather than content. You can always get the prestige by having an 'we also heard from' section. In fact, putting the big names there would be rather fun....

Fritz Leiber.

Thanks for ZENITH -- 'MIRROR" looked good in it -- and of course it's O.K. about making Betelgeuse red; since that's what it is technically, though most unenlightened naked-eye observers would see it yellow. /_ N.B. in the original version of the story, Betelgeuse was mentioned as being yellow in colour. The ZENITH version was corrected to 'red'. _/

I'm sending you a copy of THE WANDERER, since the thing seems to be so difficult to come by in England. I believe Ballantine is planning some sort of paperback edition there, while Ted Carnell is working on the possibility of a hardcover.

No, I've never visited England, (or crossed the Atlantic, though I hope to be at the next Con), but I've travelled around there through the eyes of many authors, my wife's from Wales and London, and a section of THE WANDERER simply had to occur there and nowhere else; even the Cotswolds are mentioned in the story, and a place there called Lower Slaughter, if I remember my own book aright. I'm eager to sed your write-up of the Witchcraft Museum -- read a book by a chap named Gardener, I believe, who tends such a museum on the Isle Of Man, and talks about the modern covens. He's a witch or warlock himself.....

/_ There will be a writeup of THE WANDERER in ZENITH very shortly, being as it is one of the contenders for next year's Hugo Award. That account of a Witchcraft Museum was intended to appear in NEXUS-2, and was to be about the Museum at Bourton -on-the-Water. Regrettably, it is forbidden to take notes inside the museum, and this prevented the writing-up of the place. _/

William F Temple.

I know that, on the face of it, the lined-up margins look neater than ragged edges of type. Also that producing them takes patience. But, frankly, I doubt that they're worth the extra effort. The matter would be as legible without them, and matter and legibility are the really important things. Again, your method of

lining-up by leaving one long gap preceding the ultimate word on each line tends to break the flow. The effect is as though the writer kept making awkward pauses while he searched desperately for the right word.

This is the only adverse comment I can conjure up about an otherwise impeccable production.

I still have the FANTASY REVIEW of Jan. 1938 from which the Clarke article was reprinted, and I still think A MARTIAN ODYSSEY takes some beating as neo-fan bait. I've no doubt though, that if Arthur revised and updated the article now, he'd find a dozen good reasons for introducing some of his own yarns -- and would have then, if he'd written any (which he hadn't).

Phil Harbottle's blind faith in Terry Jeeve's guidance is touching, but I feel, misplaced. For in the same letter, Phil raps Beryl Henley over the knuckles for assuming that an author of mature age can't help writing stiltedly and pedantically, which is the assumption critic Terry Jeeves seems to share ("the rigid world of maturity").

/ Now seems a good enough moment to reveal that last issue's SF FOR BEGINNERS was chosen by Phil Harbottle, and he also wrote a 2-page commentary upon this article. This 'epilogue' listed sources of the stories, and gave an opinion of their worth today. I'm sorry that a last-minute foul-up prevented printing it. /

Al Lewis, 1825 Greenfield Avenue, Los Angèles 25, California.

The bits on Budrys and Colin Kapp were the best in the issue -- I'd like to see more comment and analysis of the lesser writers in the field. Heinlein et al have been worked over pretty thoroughly, but there are a lot of pretty good writers who have never been the subject of a single article. There is a wide open field here. The two reprints (Anderson and Leiber) are less interesting to me because they are reprints from material that is fairly easily obtainable --but I did enjoy Arthur C Clarke's period piece. The stories he admired in the thirties are the sort of story he is writing in the fifties and sixties.

The reviews -- all of them -- suffer a common fault. They are too short and synoptic -- and there are too many of them. A couple of pages of short reviews are one thing, but here you've got your amateur publications rundown, Jeeves reviews and Beryl Henley's column. And none of these have time to develop their thoughts. Willis's column is less satisfactorary than last time, also because it is shorter -- I regard a page as about the minimal length to competently review any piece of writing. 'Course, as Tony Boucher said several years back, you can't print things you don't get.

Charlie Brown stopped here for a couple of days prior to the Con, and is a first-rate student of the field. He told a couple of interesting stories. It seems that authors aren't simply selling JWC his editorial matter back (as per my letter in Z6). Randy Garret, in particular, thinks up a corker of an idea, writes it into a story, sells it to Campbell,

and discovers that all of a sudden there is a Campbell editorial taking off from it -- and THEN the story gets printed a month or two afterwards. Another tale Charlie told was the "Darrell T. Langert" matter. It seems that Randy is terribly prolific, and had saddled Campbell with quite a backlog. Campbell was beginning to be embarassed about having the whole magazine written by one person. So he told Randy not to submit anything more for a while -- he needed variety. So Garrett who after all has to eat, simply started submitting through his agent as "Darrell T Langert" and "Sam and Janet Argo", and then had to listen to Campbell's raves about the new authors he had discovered. And it seems that everybody saw through that anagram but Campbell ! At any rate, this is why Garrett had to deny the pen name a couple of years back. Campbell eventually caught on, and it is no longer a secret.

/ You'll notice, Al, that AMATEUR PUBLICATIONS has been dropped. This field is covered quite fully in YANDRO, SKYRACK, and HAVERINGS, so there is little need for me to do it as well. Magazine Reviews, under their new name as BRICKBATS AND ROSES stay fairly short -- to do long reviews for half a dozen issues per issue would take far too many pages ! However, Terry will lengthen the reviews of some stories that he thinks particularly deserve comment. Beryl's reviews remain at an average length of ¾page. There are so many of them for a simple reason. The publishers send review copies of every hardback. These obviously have to be reviewed out of courtesy if nothing else. /

Chris Priest, 'Cornerways', Willow Close, Doddinghurst, Brentwood, Essex.

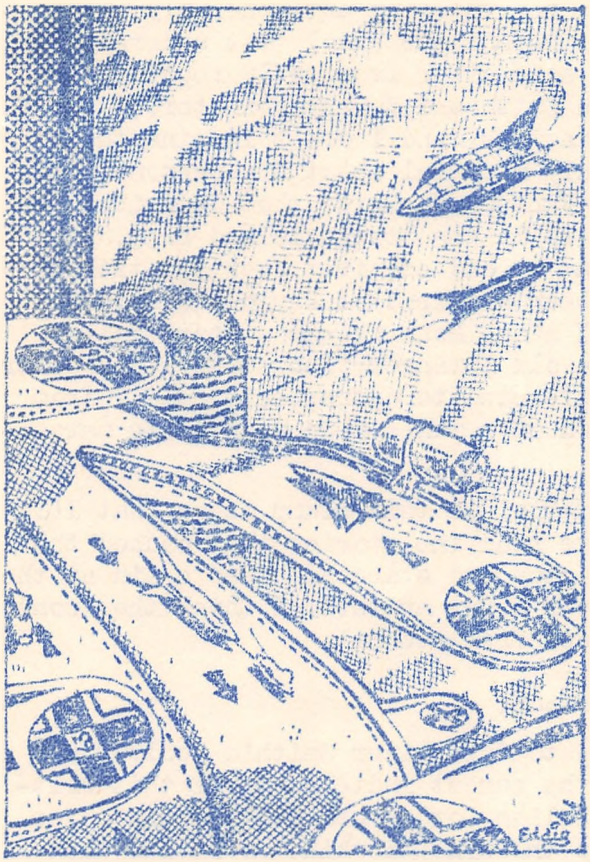
ZENITH's features are still its best part. Walt Willis' is the best by far, Baryl Henley's is the worst. A brief comparison of the two, each thrown into relief by the other, gives the lie. Walt Willis', whilst seeming to circumnavigate the point-in-fact all the time, still says what he has to say, and does it well. Beryl on the other hand, appears to go to great pains to tell you everything that she thinks is relevant, but in fact says nothing worthwhile. Walt's style is flowing, easy, and relaxed, Beryl's seems to be forced and unnatural, a sort of deliberate attempt at being casual.

Fritz Leiber's story was a real oddity. A telegraphed twist ending, corny writing and plot-development, and a totally unconvincing effect all round. It seems to me that stories like this one only get written because either (a) they're out-and-out fan fiction, or (b), because they're (like this one), commissioned. At a guess, I would say that this was an early Leiber effort, rehashed for the Hoffman people. By the way, if you're in the market for these Hoffman stories, there's a good one called 'Itself' by van Vogt in the Jan '64 Scientific American....

/ I may of course be wrong, but Beryl's reviews seem most well written to me. Opinion seems divided...either they're very good, or very bad, depending upon the commentator. For instance, the review of ETHICAL ENGINEER in this issue, seemed to me to be a real gem...(and it's longer than 1 page, Al..) What do you think ?

Again, the Leiber story attracted mixed comment. The Platt-Priest axis though it awful...a lot of people said how much better it was than fiction written by fans, and what a difference a story by a professional makes.... Again, what do you think ?/

Harry Warner Jr. 423, Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, USA.



Let me begin with just a passing stare of amazement at a person who publishes an impeccably well reproduced fanzine, and then promises a clearer typeface for the next issue. If you rescued a girl from drowning I'll bet that you would apologise to her for your wet hands.

Of the critical and story-slanted material in this issue, I think that I appreciated most the Poul Anderson items. I didn't get that issue of Startling Stories, and I wasn't aware that there was any coherence at all from one Anderson story to the other. The whole matter of a consistent future for an author who writes a lot of science fiction has never been discussed as thoroughly as it deserves. The one obvious problem that any science fiction writer faces is inability to draw material from his own experiences and observations; either he must make up everything out of the whole cloth, or transplant present day people and situations into the future and hope that not too many people recognise the trick. Perhaps the author who stuck to one scheme of events for the future and thought about this particular future frequently enough in the course of writing stories could become sufficiently at home in it to sidetrack at least part of this built-in handicap of the science fiction story. It might be analogous to the writer of historical fiction; the best ones immerse themselves so deeply in reference works and contemporary literature of the period in which they set their work that they betray fewer of the awkwardnesses committed by the hack who just reads a couple of chapters in the nearest history book before starting to write.

A fellow employee who occasionally reads science fiction told me today that Campbell has come out as a strong backer of Goldwater. It seems to me that this culminating deed makes obsolete any complaints about Campbell's previous harebrained notions and wild enthusiasms.

Bill Temple in his letter left out one important thing that the good literary critic must possess. Besides the experience, observations, meditations, and other matters that he duly lists, the critic must have practice. There is no better time to get it than when he's a youngster and has more spare time and greater amounts of writing energy. If he waits till he's middle-aged to try his hand at criticism, as Bill would seem to prefer, he'll be close to old age before the practice has made anything resembling the perfect critic. I feel exactly as Bill does when I encounter an iconoclastic essay by some teen-ager who speaks more bluntly and groundlessly than I dared to do when I was in my twenties. But this merely proves that I'm about the same age as Bill Temple, and suffer the same emotional reactions that he does. Of course, this is not to say that Terry Jeeves or anyone else criticises quite as well as Walt Willis. It is no small achievement to write a miniature essay with some point of general importance, every time a new fanzine comes up for review.

The welcome reprint of the Clarke article reminds me all over again that Lawrence Manning must be the most unjustly neglected of all the early prozine writers. As far as I know. virtually none of his stories has been reprinted in any generally accessible publication, but I'm sure that they would withstand the cruel test undergone by any 30-year old science fiction much better than some other frequently reprinted material from the period, by such as Clark Ashton Smith and Murray Leinster. I can't recall any thorough discussion of his works in fanzines, and I don't imagine that anyone knows for sure if he's still alive. The only material about his personal life that I've ever run across was in a 1934 issue of Fantasy Magazine that described him as a Canadian who was operating a nursery somewhere in the Staten Island area, and who had been collecting Utopia novels so long that he had acquired over 500 titles, and began writing for the prozines because he'd been a friend of David Lasser, the early editor of Wonder Stories. Managing editor, I mean. Manning was a story teller, first and foremost, and that should provide those old Stranger Club stories and other yarns better readability than the stories that attempted to extrapolate coldly from some scientific theory, or described the breakdown of a man's mind when he is marooned on an asteroid.

There's quite a bit of other well-written material in this plump issue that I'll refrain from mentioning through my failure to have read the stories that caused the articles to be written. And there's just room to gape and stare all over again at the draftsmanship and surehanded technique of both your cover artists. I think the front cover breaks all previous records for a black black from stencil.

Leland Sapiro, 1314 Empress Avenue, Saskatoon, Canada.

Your critic is accurate in his reference (p9) to Cordwainer Smith's "colour and movement"; indeed, such colour and movement are the surest indications of this writers artistry. From Jeeves' proposed society to abolish Cordwainer Smith I can infer only that C.S.'s type of story is not amenable to the synoptic kind of review that Mr Jeeves likes to write.

This letter cannot be regarded as a "vindication" of Cordwainer Smith, but merely as an indication of some aspects in his writing which I enjoy.

What impresses me so strongly in Cordwainer Smith's work, is his consciousness of what can be called the "articulated present", which comprises those aspects of a present event which are specified not by immediate physical effect, but by their repetition in future song and legend ... as in the affirmative spoken by The Lady Who Sailed The Soul. Naturally unaware that..."the single yes would be articulated by hundreds of great artists...across the centuries to come.."

More generally, Smith's concern is not the present as it is experienced, but as it will be experienced, e.g. during the Reconstruction of Man -- I myself was the first man to put a postage stamp on a letter after fourteen thousand years.." --or during the later Decadence, when " a stricken and haunted Mankind crept through the glorious ruins of an immense past."

Likewise noteworthy are this author's philosophical and mystical predilections, as manifested by his concern with the nature of personal identity and his attitude toward the Irrational -- see Alpha Ralpha Boulevard, with its strange foreknowledge possessed by the flying creatures and the Abandingo machine -- and his deliberatly contrived fairy-tale atmosphere, as with the talking bear in Mark Elf.

In a sense, C.S.'s work is the converse of that by another C.S; Clifford Simak. Both writers describe the humanisation of animals, but instead of humanising machines, (e.g. Simak's robot, Jenkins,)Smith relates the literal mechanisation of human beings -- and of necessity the pain associated with such physical transformations . (Cf The House Of Pain in Well's Island Of Dr. Moreau.)

This last remark leaves me vulnerable to a counter arguement about the pain experienced by your critic when he reads Cordwainer Smith -- but I think such pain is due to Mr Jeeves's own lack of perception, not to any deficit in Cordwainer Smith.

Smith, then, combines the awareness of the poet and the mechanical precision of the surgeon with his own nostalgia for the distant past -- a past that is being experienced now. From no other writer do we get this kind of vividness and temporal insight.

Ivor S Latto, 16 Merryton Avenue, Glasgow, W5.

I enjoyed Terry Jeeves' reviews as much as before, but I'm beginning to doubt whether they are of any value to me, as reviews. Of course, it is startling and enjoyable to see someone discussing Cordwainer Smith without making the usual genuflection or knuckling of the forehead, but how long is it going to remain enjoyable ? Looking over his reviews, there are a number which he slays, and which I found fairly enjoyable, so either his critical responses are much sterner than mine, or he is being over-harsh. I wonder if the fact that he is required to publish his opinions for all to see makes him seeks out faults which would normally not register, or might be ignored; if he really thinks the sf magazines are such a load of yugh, his job as a reviewer must be a grim personal hell, and must inflict deep psychological harm. I can't make up my mind whether his standards are really so high; very laudable if so, or whether he merely gives that impression by knocking everything in sight. Anyway, if he only remains consistent that will allow us to relate our tastes to his own, and so form an opinion...if only on the basis of "Jeeves hates it so it must be good."

I've formed an opinion on his artistic tastes at any rate. So he doesn't like John Schoenherr ? Dear dear. Who does he like in the field of artwork if not Schoenherr ? For my money John Schoenherr stands head and shoulders above any other illustrator in the field, except possibly Gaughan on a good day. He has authority that the others lack, and originality, and style. Who is as consistently enjoyable ? Emsh, Finlay, Aragna ? Never! With Kelly Freas back in the fold, Analog is easily the best illustrated magazine on the market; always a joy to look at, if not always to read.

I don't know if it was that I read Beryl Henley's reviews after reading and enjoying Terry Jeeves', but by comparison they seemed just a little wide-eyed. It's quite possible that Beryl is more than usually well-read in the sf field, but she conveys an impression of some innocence, which would be charming anywhere else, but one wants a firm guiding hand in a reviewer...even perhaps a Jeevesian snarl.

I'm beginning to get bored with this long discussion about Campbell. Al Lewis had a good point about the relationship between Campbell's editorials and the stories he prints in Analog, but really all this chat is beside the point. Since I first began to read Astounding, I've always felt that Campbell's views on political, moral, or historical matters anyway, were vintage Edward Martel; but that didn't prevent me buying, reading, and enjoying his magazine..he can think the Earth is hollow for all I care, as long as is magazine is of interest.

/ Some comment is needed here; I believe Terry was not decrying John Schoenherr as an artist, as much as he was decrying his style in recent Analogs. Schoenherr can be excellent..he has a flair for the unusual..but I personally suspect him of laziness. Where Finlay for example would spend days drawing fine lines on an illo, Schoenherr gets a charcoal stick and scrubs it across the illo. Effective, but often very crude. As Terry said, 'soot and whitewash'. PRW /

Michael Moorcock, 8, Colville Terrace, London, W.11.

It's easy to forget -- and probably best to -- one's own juvenile enthusiasms of not so very long ago. My own included some writers whom I'm now inclined to denigrate quite strongly, and who are still called 'masters' by your contributors. It's easy, too, to adopt a lofty attitude towards youngsters who have these enthusiasms now, and I have tried quite hard to restrain myself from appearing to adopt this lofty attitude. But since you asked for comments and since you want an honest opinion presumably, I intend to break my rules -- not for the first time in recent weeks. You may find some of my comments strong, but there are things I've been holding back from saying for some time, and I might as well get them off my chest. None of these opinions are intended as an attack on ZENITH or its counterparts, or, unless obvious, on individual sf fans, many of whom I like, admire and respect, and they are not all members of the 'Old Guard' either. I enjoyed for instance meeting Phil Harbottle at the convention, and the same can be said for the varioys other newer fans that I met -- the fact that I can't agree with their views, that I find their written opinions smug and ill-considered, is a different matter and I hope they will keep this difference in mind.

What really surprises me is that the 'New Wave' is, with several exceptions, reactionary rather than radical in its approach to sf, not only disliking any new approaches to sf, but denigrating them with an emotional vehemence that smacks of fanaticism. The only comforting thing is that they are not typical of the general reader of sf -- their opinions seem in direct contrast to public taste. Compare, for instance, the sales figures of THE DROWNED WORLD with those of any other recent sf title in hardcover -- THE DROWNED WORLD sold over twice as many copies as most others. Aldiss's titles also do very well. And the fact that NEW WORLDS has doubled its circulation, attracts a higher proportion of reasonably-argued and literate letters etc, seems to show that not all readers of sf agree with, for instance, Terry Jeeves. Admittedly popularity with the general public is not always a sign of real merit, but the above cases are not merely popular but have enjoyed a considerable succes d'estime. As I wrote recently to Rog Peyton, the people who raise sensationalism over seriously intended writing by reterming it with that much abused word 'entertainment', are hardly qualified to judge a story when they make such simple confusion over terms. If I were in their position I should be very wary of making such smug statements.

What, of course, tends to happen is that people like me tend to be so annoyed by these judgements that they react in terms which are as strong -- damning writers that they have never considered particularly bad because others raise them on to impossibly and embarrasingly high pedestals.

All this is by way of a preliminary to my comments on some of the material in ZENITH (6).

Poul Anderson is one of the writers, by the way, whom I have always considered to be a decent run-of-the-mill adventure story writer, who is at his best when writing fantasy -- THE BROKEN SWORD and THREE HEARTS AND THREE LIONS are very enjoyable, I enjoy many of his other stories as adventure stories, and regard him as a fairly good craftsman. But recently

I have found him raised to a level ... of all proportion to his talent, whereas Ballard, who entertains on many different levels at once, receives contemptuous dismissal not only from younger readers who might not be able to understand all his allusions and symbolism, but from 41-year-eld schoolmasters who appear, in print, so insensate and insensitive that one fears for the minds of their pupils.

Ray Peters in his article on Budry's three stories seems to be reaching some sort of conclusion by his fourth paragraph --i.e. that Budrys was able to see the faults of his story by the time he got round to rewriting it in book form and was mature enough to rewrite the theme from a more original and less sensational angle. I'd like to have seen something longer from Peters, who appeared to be fumbling around for a standpoint in his article and never quite deciding what his standpoint was.

Colin Kapp,has at last written a story which I can read without laughing and/or suffering revulsion. It is called THE NIGHT FLAME and appeared in NEW WRITINGS IN SF 2. He is improving and I'm pleased to see he is, for I have always thought he was a potentially good story-teller suffering mainly from an inability to draw convincing characters, to construct a proper plot, or write a paragraph that had a consistent style. His THE DARK MIND had some good ideas and images -- I will not fault his powers of imagination -- but was a particularly good example of a non-writer getting into print. His dialogue, for instance, was a riot -- a man begins by talking in a quasi-poetical way,about the past, switches into Cockney, veers off into formal Victorian, gallops into the American of a pre-war thriller writer, and winds off with something approaching Australian slang -- all in the same speech. I cannot take a writer like this seriously. I will say nothing about the various influences on the plot of THE DARK MIND, but if Kapp has this great facility for changing styles it is because the style of one story depends heavily on the style of the last story by someone else. he's read. If he is a master of anything, he is a master of pastiche. Perhaps his abilities lie in the field of parody ? I am not, thank God, alone in these opinions --if I were, I should perhaps not make them public.

Next we have a little paragraph from Terry Jeeves, a man who I have restrained from attacking for a good long time -- I have even defended him on occasions. But my patience is done. Jeeves is thick, thick, thick and the only way I can think of getting some sense into him at this late stage is to challenge him to a few rounds of fisticuffs. Violence is the only answer where extreme cases of this kind are concerned. When I wrote 'attacking' up there, I should have put 'counter-attacking', because he has subjected me to an amount of criticism which goes beyond the bounds of fair-comment, to a point where I feel victimised by someone I had always regarded as an amiable acquaintance. I have restrained myself from any counter-attacking also because Jeeves is a friend of a man whose friendship I regard as valuable, and I haven't wanted to alienate him. But it's gone too far. Jeeves has evidently found his niche among your contributors -- a place where his dullards opinions can not only be aired but where they seem to find approval. Cordwainer Smith's writings do have certain weaknesses of plot construction from time to time, and I haven't yet read THE BOY WHO BOUGHT OLD EARTH, yet the whole fascination of his writing is in the inner-plot, the dreamlike quality of his images and

and his ability to bring a metaphysical sense of wonder to the physical worlds of the future. Smith's PLANET NAMED SHAYOL is to my mind one of the most effective stories of alien-change that I have ever read, the only one that ever made me wholly believe in the events and situation described Smith has an ability to postulate social, psychological and physical changes in human-beings that are at once horrifying, convincing, and attractive. Terry Jeeves was sadly misnamed, since we're fighting dirty, by whoever chose his first Christian name (Byron), since he evidently hasn't an ounce of poetry in his soggy, rudimentary soul.

I don't want to knock Anderson too much, since I still regard him as on the whole a workmanlike sf writer. I can only say that in your chart, the sociological developments seem on the whole regressive, particularly when compared with the technological developments. This is one of my main criticisms of much of Anderson's work.

I think your correspondents may be a bit hard on Campbell, though I'm inclined to feel that Leland Sapiro has a point. Many enjoy the EF (engineering fiction) published in ANALOG and I am sure much of it is good of its kind -- professionally-written and so on -- though I can't work up much enthusiasm for it. I rarely understand Campbell's editorials, but on the occasions when he leaves the engineering field for the field of literature, I wonder if his opinions about the sciences are as oddly-informed as his opinions of, say, Shakespeare.

I've nothing against the piece by Clarke except that it has little to say nowadays which is relevant to contemporary sf. I admire Leiber and will usually read whatever it is he writes, but couldn't get into this piece, I'm afraid. Liked the Atom page.

I'd like to support Bill Temple since I know what he feels. Jeeves has made various attacks on my Elric series in the past, some of which have been in the nature of fair comment, some of which have been arbitrary, and since I don't regard this series as successful in that it failed to do on the whole what I set out to do, I haven't minded too much. It is merely the manner of Jeeves's comments which annoys me, much as it does Bill. Bill says he doesn't get the impression that Jeeves is fully qualified and, as I've already pointed out to Rog Peyton, there are a few basic qualifications for criticism and a few basic rules that should be employed. Jeeves appears to have none of the qualifications and to follow none of the rules. I differ with Bill on his last comment. A criticism of Brunner's personality (particularly by someone who must know him not at all well) does not in any way betoken good taste. It betokens exceptionally bad taste. Brunner can be irritating at times, but his outer manner in no way indicates his real personality. Evidently the same can be said for Jeeves -- though here Jeeves's outer manner seems quite pleasant.

No comment on the rest of the letters. Magazine Reviews by Jeeves. At least he gets a perverse sort of enjoyment, evidently, from the great numbers of stories he has to read. I get the impression that Jeeves's real enthusiasms would be Landseer and Marie Corelli if he were living in the 1880's where he undoubtedly belongs (though this is a bit unfair on man Eminent and not-so-Eminent Victorians). I suppose I'd better defend my policy a bit, since, by inference, he attacks it. He aks why THE FALL OF FRENCHY STEINER is in an sf-mag. Because, I suppose, it's about a

parallel world, contains an sf-type explanation as to how this world came about, etc. It doesn't have space and that, admittedly, but neither did BRING THE JUBILEE or LEST DARKNESS FALL -- both excellent books which come into the framework of the sf tag. Anyway, a lot of people enjoyed it. What I found in the favour of STORM WATER TUNNEL was that it was very well-written by a new writer who had the ability to bring a lot of freshness into a not-new theme. A writer who can write and will soon be writing so well, that I doubt that we'll have him in the sf field much longer. I didn't think GOODBYE MIRANDA so hot myself, but was surprised that many did enjoy it. Indeed, some said it was the best thing I'd ever written, which is a bit depressing since I wrote it at least three years ago, submitted it nowhere and shoved it in to make up the weight. I reckoned the theme was a bit over worked, but if Jeeves missed it I'm amused -- he's got further to go than I thought. I can't see him making it in this incarnation. I too hope to see more in the line of SINGLE COMBAT from Green, although he's at the moment back to the old 'what-is-the-mystery-on-this-new-planet ?' theme at present -- good of their kind, thought not to my taste. Didn't go much for THE EVIDENCE myself. My mind boggles at the depths of crassness Jeeves can sink to when faced with a writer of such outstanding talent as Ballard -- someone of whom THE TRIBUNE sf reviewer said that he is the only really important writer working in the field of sf. Evidently Jeeves has become so hide-bound that he can only think in terms of invasions from outer space ('the alien threat is a gradual conversion of everything to crystals') or 'things' which take-over the Earth. He misses entirely the basic theme of the story about crystallising time, all the very direct symbolism is missed, the nature of the protagonist's personal conflict is missed. What a very, very literal mind Mr. Jeeves has. As for SCIECE FANTASY 66, Bonfiglioli reckoned it was crap and I'm inclined to agree with him. Still, if there are more like Jeeves and heaven forbid, there is, sadly, still a market for crap.

And if we want a condemnation of sf (I'm not saying we do) pause to think what a 30-year diet of it can do to a man. As I've said elsewhere, the man who lives on porridge can't be expected to recognise or appreciate caviar, even when it's presented to him in a porridge plate.

Walt's reviews were fair and informative; Beryl Henley states somewhat naively that Ballard seems obsesses with the symbolism of the sea. Seems ? It's pretty obvious to me that he is. Which few readers can't understand it ? Again I have to say that I found THE TERMINAL BEACH completely explicit and recommend anyone who wants a clue to consult my review in NEW WORLDS 145. I've only just got around to reading Galouye -- his short stories THE LAST LEAP (Corgi) and think they're pretty good. The writing tends to slip a bit in places, but I'll have a bash at COUNTERFEIT WORLD on Beryl's recommendation. Apart from certain comments on Ballard, I find Beryl's opinions fairly close to mine on the other books, though I find her being more patient with some of the stuff than I'd have been.

That's it, since you asked for it. I didn't like most of your illustrations, I'm afraid, and felt that the quality of production you have mainained deserves better material. Captions, on the other hand, were very nicely laid out. I suppose that I shall become embroiled in some sort of dispute if you publish this letter, which is another good reason why I've usually refrained from writing letters of this kind. Still, I suppose I shall have to bear the consequences.

WALT WILLIS

FANORAMA

" An excess of credulity is an excellent fault in females, assuring as it does the perpetuation of the species." I found this remark in my notebook, without any initials after it, so that now I'm not quite sure whether I said it, or Dr. Johnson. Mind you this is not a problem which I run across very often, and before someone jumps on me for bigheadness on this occasion let me hasten to point out that many of the pronouncements attributed to the famous Doctor are just as stupid as anything I could say. They would be ignored as those of an opinionated old boor, if it weren't for the famous name and that pontificial style, which I think I was imitating. One thing I do know was that the Doctor couldn't have been thinking of Beryl Henley, and I'm pretty sure I was.

Beryl, you will remember, wrote an article about reincarnation, and I said in this column that I had always thought of it as a crackpot idea. Subsequently in a letter somewhere Beryl defined fandom as a place where being called a crackpot could make you feel ten feet tall. Well good for her, I thought. And good for us, I added; here we have a likeable girl who is a good sport, can write well, has a sense of humour, and doesn't take criticism of her work as a personal affront. You don't get people like that coming into fandom every day. She is my very favourite ten foot tall crackpot.

So it was with pleasant expectations that I started to read LINK 1, (Beryl Henley, 59 The Fearnings, Crabbs Cross, Redditch, Worcs, 1/- per copy.), especially as it was billed as a humourous fanzine. Unfortunately as it turned out, it seemed as far as I was concerned to have one defect which was quite serious for such a publication. It wasn't funny. I admit that if you fed it into a computer you wouldn't get this assessment, because it has all of the superficial attributes of humour. The style is informal, it deals with interesting people in potentially amusing situations, and it even has the characteristics of the best type of fannish humour -- wild logic, allusiveness, running gags, wordplay, and an element of fantasy. What we have here, I concluded, is the raw material of humour. It is an interesting lode, but it has just been dug up and left there in a heap.

It's unfair to criticise anything as subjective as humour without giving an example, so let me quote from a paragraph dealing with Beryl's part in an amateur dramatic production;

> " I dropped an ad-lib line which I'd been saving for weeks, and ruined me Injun Dad's war-cry. "I call braves!" he ranted,"and we make war on these paleface weaklings ! Too long they have trodden us down !" "Pore soles!" I howled. Collapse of chief. "

Now I know that nearly anything goes on the stage, especially in amateur dramatics, and I am prepared to admit that this was a very good pun at the time and probably brought the house down. I am concerned only with the literary presentation of the incident to us. From our point of view, sitting as we are reading it in cold blood (an uncomfortable situation at the best of times unless you happen to be wearing waterproof trousers) this is not a very good pun, partly because it has only one layer of meaning. A pun is successful to the degree in which it reveals unexpected associations; all this one shows you is people's feet, which were there anyway. Worse, the word 'pore' clutters up the scene. I thought for a moment this was part of the gag, some reference being intended to the pores in the skin of the soles of the savage's feet, the sweat from which is supposed to enable them to walk on burning coals. Whether this is so or not, the momentary doubt is fatal. A pun has to hit you like a hammer, not fall on you like a wet rag. In fact I think the only reason 'pore' is there is to provide a signpost to 'souls'. It might have been better to say simply 'The heels', which while not very good either would have avoided that fatal doubt.

But in any event all that we the reading audience get from the account is this single pun, which looks weak in print. For us the humour of the incident can lie only in the effects of the pun, and for this "Collapse of chief" is inadequate. For one thing an author must describe a character before we can appreciate his reactions -- even such a simple surefire piece of slapstick as a man slipping on a banana peel will not be funny unless we have reason to think the victim was pompous. It was necessary here, I think, to portray the other actor as pedantic, humourless and perhaps over conscientious about learning his lines, so that we have some interest in his reactions. And then those reactions should have been described as vividly as possible. As it stands the account is like rendering the famous episode of Harris and the missing can-opener in Three Men In A Boat as "Then we saw a passing stranger try to open a tin."

All this may seem like using a steam hammer to crack a very small chestnut, but humour needs as much attention to detail as poetry. For instance the ambiguity of the word "pore" above originates in a basic defect of Beryl's style, the notion that there is something intrinsically humourous about colloquial mispronounciation. This may occasionally be true when it is used unexpectedly, but not when the whole thing is written that way in what is presumably an attempt at casual spontaneity. This is a laudable ambition, but doomed. In fact casual spontaneity is a very difficult style to achieve, requiring much hard work. All we have here is a first draft.

I was so frustrated about the humourous part of this fanzine that in desperation I actually read the serious poems at the back. Generally serious poetry in fanzines has the effect of sending me into a sort of coma, from which I awake to find myself reading some other fanzine, but not this time. Beryl's poem shows she can write very well when she works at it. It is in the form of answers to that Zen Buddhist saying, "What is the sound of one hand clapping ?", which has always seemed to me such a silly meaningless question as to make one suspect that the entire wisdom of the inscrutable East is just a load of old codswallop, but Beryl's answers are not silly.

Indeed, they show a sensitivity and ability to handle words which make one realise that the first draft we have just been reading may be one of a very good humourous fanzine indeed. To believe that humour is easier to write than poetry shows nothing worse than an excess of credulity, which is, as I or Dr Johnson said, hardly a fault at all.

CON 1. Chris Priest, "Cornerways", Willow Close, Doddinghurst, Brentwood, Essex. 1/- per copy.

It seems to me that British addresses get more cumbersome every year. How is it that three words are often enough to pinpoint one house in the entire sub-continent of North America, whereas for these tiny islands we need envelopes that look like miniature gazetteers ? Oh well.

This fanzine comes complete with a book of matches, a striking innovation, but the editor himself feels it needs a lighter touch. This shows a commendable talent for self-criticism, but personally I feel that his little Department of Useless Information is more effective than many longer and less original attempts at humour. He offers a free lifetime subscription to anyone who can find a profitable use for one of these fascinating items, and I would like to make my own bid in respect of the statement that St Pauls is sliding down Ludgate Hill at a rate of half an inch per century. I have read that in America people make fortunes by finding tiny inaccuracies in land deeds, so that they can, for instance, go and demand that a half inch strip of the Empire State Building be torn down, and it seems to me that the headlong descent of St Pauls must by now have produced some quite profitable discrepancies.

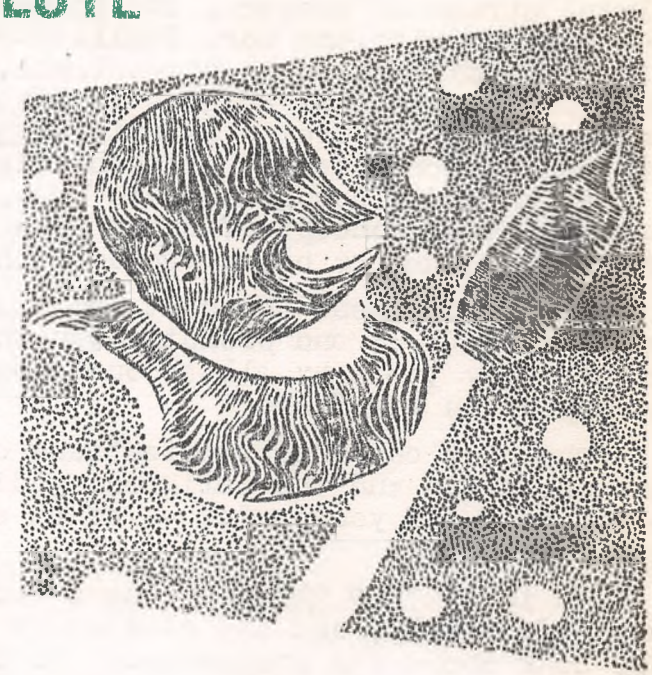
I hope I win because this is a very likely-looking fanzine. One of the scientific items shows signs of over credulity -- the only thing one can be certain of in newspaper reports is that they have got their facts wrong -- and the fiction is quietly regrettable, but the remainder of the contents, which are all science-based, -- including the sixteen pieces of apparatus neccessary for demonstrating the Second Law Of Thermodynamics -- show intelligence, literacy, and a refreshing degree of originality.

Fanzines for review should be sent to Walt Willis, 170 Upper N'Ards Road, Belfast Northern Ireland.

Copies of ZENITH 5 & 6 are available at 1/6 each.

RELATIVE AND ABSOLUTE

the novels of edgar pangborn



by JOHN BOSTON

One of the puzzlements of my career as a science fiction reader is the obscurity of Edgar Pangborn. In my opinion, he is as deserving a writer as any who have appeared in the field, worthy of a place in the pantheon made up most often of Heinlein, Asimov and Clarke.

I would suspect that this relative lack of prominence is due to two factors; the small quantity of his work, and its rather limited distribution.

Pangborn has written three s-f novels and a few shorter stories. Little of his short work has been reprinted; offhand I recall only "Angel's Egg" and "The Music Master Of Babylon", as having been anthologised. Hence, I will stick exclusively to his novels.

The first of these was WEST OF THE SUN, published in 1953 by Doubleday as an original hardcover. To the best of my knowledge it has never been reprinted in any form except as one of the early selections of the then-new American Science Fiction Book Club. The reason for the lack of a paperbound edition is beyond me, especially in view of some of the absymally awful material appearing in pb form today.

The plot of WEST OF THE SUN is one of the oldest in the field. A group of Earthmen, the members of the first interstellar expedition, are stranded on a lush Earth-type planet by the crash of their spaceship. In attempting to build a new life for themselves, they become involved with two mutually hostile species of sentient humanoids, one made up of warring tribes of pygmies and the other of solitary foraging giants. Rifts also appear in the human community, as Edmund Spearman, a discontented acolyte of a discredited political and economic doctrine, sets off on his own.

There is a curiously timeless air to this novel, well suited to the setting. The unspoiled wilderness of the alien planet is described in a fluent stream of imagery, and is brought to life in a way managed by few writers with the more familiar Terrestrial landscape. The characters are realistic and three-dimensional, rather than the cardboard cutouts so characteristic of science fiction; the aliens are made believable and understandable. While no classic, WEST OF THE SUN is in all respects one of the most competently written science fiction novels I have ever read (a left-handed compliment, to be sure.) Only a lack of the spectacular brilliance of concept of books like THE DEMOLISHED MAN, and MORE THAN HUMAN prevents its being ranked with such landmarks of sf.

Pangborn's best and most familiar novel, A MIRROR FOR OBSERVERS, appeared in 1954 and promptly won the International Fantasy Award, and rightly so. It is by all accounts one of the best novels, as such, ever to appear in the field.

The plot concerns two factions of expatriate Martians, the benevolent Observers and the malignant Abdicators, struggling over the mind, -- or soul, if youmprefer -- of an exceptional human child, Angelo Pontevecchio.

As in WEST OF THE SUN, the setting is brought to life forcefully and effectively, and the characters are equally well drawn. What sets the book above its predecessor is its scope. It is an overview of the precarious position of man on his planet, an illustration of the insecure position of civilisation, showing how an insignificant shove, magnified by man's runaway technology, could well serve to send the whole ramshackle structure over in a heap.

The most recent of Pangborn's novels, DAVY, appeared this spring as a five dollar hardcover from St. Martin's press -- their first venture into science fiction publishing, in my knowledge. It is based on two short stories, "The Golden Horn" and "A War Of No Consequence", which appeared in F&SF in 1962.

As are his other two novels, this is based on one of the most overworked ideas in science fiction, that of man's decline into barbarism after a disasterous nuclear war. Aftera a few false starts in which the author runs into the ground a self-conscious ribald style, he paints a vivid and consistent picture of a rural and backward society, divided into squabbling principalities and presided over by the established Holy Murcan Church.

There is a thread of thought which shows up in all three books. One facet of this is the interrelation of the young and the old, maturity and immaturity. This is expfessed by a triple relationship, relatively straightforward in the first two books, but somewhat more obscure in DAVY.

In WEST OF THE SUN, the force of maturity is the colony of Earthmen, who attempt to build a new society free of the flaws of Earth's culture. Their efforts are balanced on one hand by the chilish immaturity of the auchtothones, and on the other by the fanatic immaturity of Edmund Spearman.

The main group of humans befriends the humanoids with a fair degree of ease. Spearman, however, breaks away from the rest of the human community and becomes, in time, the leader of another and more remote

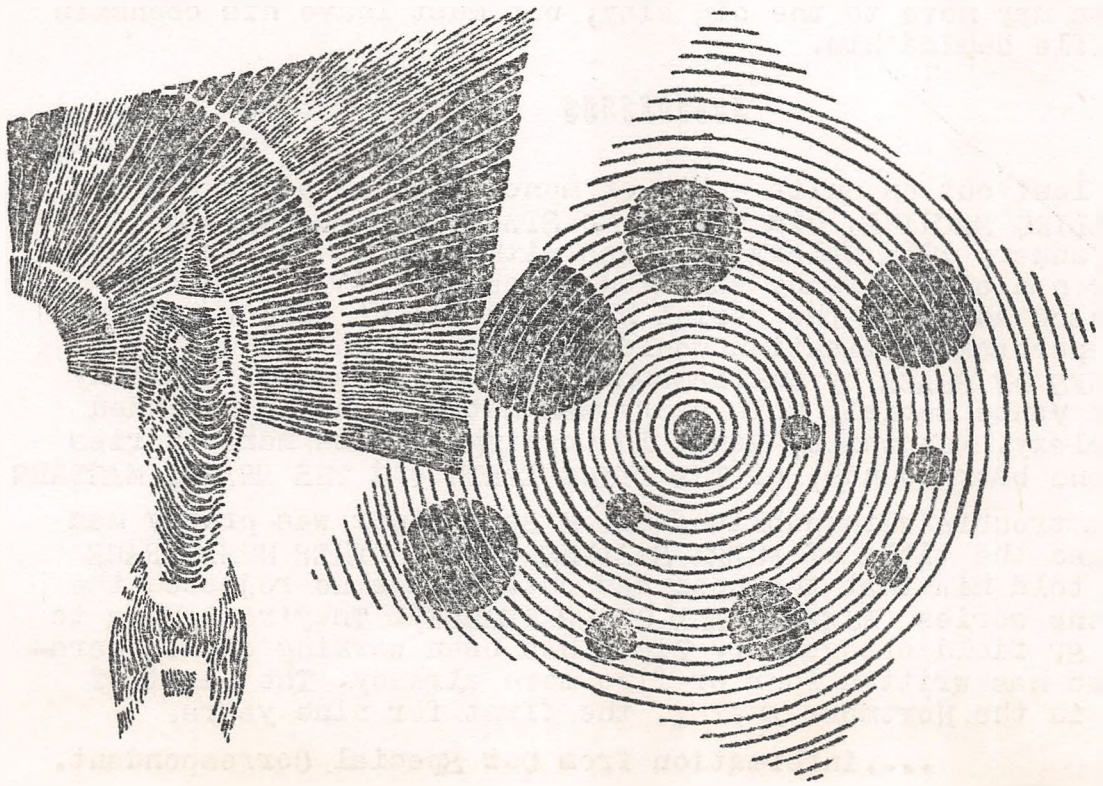
band of pygmies, which he converts to his political philosophy and proceeds to enslave and impoverish in the name of the Cause.

Meanwhile, the aliens living with the other Earthmen are rapidly adopting the ways of civilisation, and learning to get on with each other. The implications of this are obvious; the young are pliable, as the twig is bent the tree will grow.

The same point made in Clifton and Riley's THEY'D RATHER BE RIGHT and Jack Williamson's THE HUMANOIDS iso very much in evidence. We must abandon our preconceptions and prejudices to gain true maturity; it is impossible for an individual or a species to gain full maturity without shedding itself of absolutism and giving up the desire to be certain.

The same situation is present in A MIRROR FOR OBSERVERS, in which the Observers must prsserve the human race from its own follies (aided and abetted by the cynical propaganda and totalitarianidoctrines promulgated by the Abdicators among the unsuspecting humans as well as the secret Martians.) The purpose of the Abdicators is to goad man into self-destruction so that the Martians may again have a world of their own. This conflict is abstracted in the storm centred about Angelo Pontevecchio. In their struggle, the two factions illustrate the conflict that goes on in the mind of every human, between the uncertainty of wisdom and the security of the absolutist philosophies embraced by sommuch of humanity.

The conflict in DAVY is not so well-defined. The force of maturity is no group or person, but the influence of the good of the Old Time before the final war. This is the restraining and maturing force that



works on Davy and the Heretics, through the few writings still in existence, and through such objects as Davy's French horn. It is in conflict with the entrenched absolutism of the Murcan Church, as evidenced by the Church's proscription of all ancient writing as well as gunpowder and anything else suspected of "containing atoms".

The eventual embarkation of Davy and the Heretics on a new voyage of discovery to Europe is, like the similar retreats in WEST OF THE SUN and A MIRROR FOR OBSERVERS, also representative of Bangborn's rejection of inflexible philosophies, rejecting as it does the doctrine that "right makes might" that is so characteristic of much popular thought and popular fiction -- including a depressingly large quantity of SF.

It is this thread of consistent philosophy, as well as the author's skill in the technique of writing, that places his work in the top rank of the field. At a time when intellectual content is to a great extent devalued in favour of such material as the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs and his disciples, he is especially significant. Writing in SCIENCE FANTASY No.66, editor Kyril Bonfiglioli suggests that science fiction may be doomed unless it abolishes itself as a separate classificationm and dissolves itself into the mainstream of literature. If any such merging of SF into "straight" fiction occurs -- andn it has already begun, with great success, -- it will be through the efforts of such men as Edgar Bangborn, who combine a high degree of writing skill with the breadth of mind and imagination neccessary to the creation of anything worthwhile in the field.

To be swallowed up by the "mainstream", sf must be made both palatable and digestible, with all the rotten spots pared off. The provincialism and clannishness expressed in the cry for a return to the good old " sense of wonder " must go out the window with Shaverism. In its place must come good writing and far-reaching but controlled imagination. The backwoodsman may move to the big city, but must leave his coonskin cap and long rifle behind him.

§§§§§§§§§§

Jack Vance lost out on quite a bit of money because of an agent's error. THE KILLING MACHINE, his sequel to STAR KING was supposed to appear in the January 1965 Galaxy, but was withdrawn at the last moment (the cover had been already engraved) because it came out in the paperback edition. The serial had been bought with the stipulation that paperback publication would be deferred until June 1965. A sequel to REEFS OF SPACE by Williamson & Pohl will appear in Galaxy in place of the Vance serial. This story was not originally intended to appear in Galaxy. Meanwhile, Vance is working on some more stories in the style (and backgrounds) of THE DYING EARTH and THE DRAGON MASTERS

Also having trouble with publishers...H Beam Piper was pretty mad when Avon changed the title of FUZZY SAPIENS to THE OTHER HUMAN RACE and never even told him that the book was out. Avon also rejected the third book in the series (FUZZIES AND OTHER PEOPLE). They're trying to get out of the SF field altogether. Piper has been working on his Paratime series, and has written four or five more already. The first of these appeared in the November Analog, the first for nine years.

....information from Our Special Correspondant.

Suppose that you occupied a position of considerable political or moral power, how would you use it to re-create the world as you would like to see it ?

Such an idea has been the inspiration for many sf works; however eccentric one's views of what the ideal society should be, and however unlikely the chance of seeing them put into operation, they can at least be given a wider audience by incorporating them into a work of fiction. Indeed, the possibility of using the medium of fiction to point a moral/political/philosophical message is one of the attractions that sf has for mainstream writers; in Sir Thomas More's day, Utopia was a hitherto-undiscovered island, remote from the known world; in our own time it materialises some time in the future, perhaps on another planet.

Around the turn of the century, possibly under the influence of H.G. Wells, many writers used the sf form to show the future consequences of female emancipation, socialism, the Channel Tunnel, Irish Home Rule, or democracy... cataclysmic or beneficial, according to the standpoint. I would like to discuss one such work, which by the very personal involvement of the author in its argument exemplifies the use of sf as a tract.

Frederick Rolfe, Baron Corvo, (1860-1913) became a convert to Roman Catholicism at the age of 26. Indeed, so strong was his conversion that he abandoned his profession as a schoolmaster, and entered a theological college to study for the priesthood. Because of his eccentric temperent he was refused ordination. He was refused once more when he went to Rome, in 1890, to make another attempt. With his ambition thus crushed, Corvo became extremely embittered, and for some years lived a precarious existence as an artist, an existence burdened with debt and punctuated by violent quarrels with his friends. Turning his hand to writing, he produced a number of works, the most notable being his novels, "Don Tarquinio" and "Hadrian VII".

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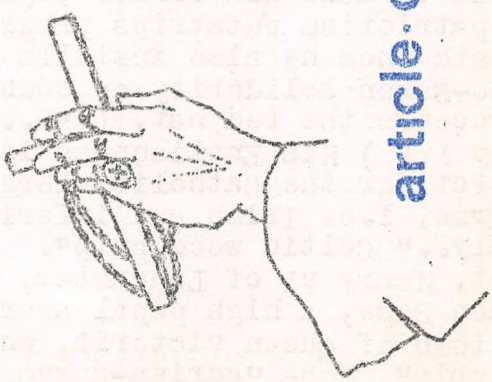
HADRIAN VII



illustrated by Ian Aldridge.

The theme of "Hadrian VII" is quite simply stated; what would be the consequences... in the world of the early 1900's... of an Englishman being elected Pope, and using the power of the Papacy to influence world events ? This falls within the sf field, especially if that "s" in sf stands for "speculative".

To someone familiar with Corvo's personal history it is soon apparent that his hero, George Arthur Rose, is really Corvo himself; he describes Rosen as a bitter cold aesthete who, for misty but manifestly unfair reasons has been refused the priesthood, and who exists in a contemptuous self-isolation, brooding over past wrongs, real and imaginary. Thus, "Hadrian VII" becomes an account of how Corvo himself would redress the world's wrongs, according to his own ideals, if he were Pope.

The first departure from autobiographical detail in the book is when the powers of the Church relent, and Rose (read Corvo) is ordained a priest. The next step is to install him in the Papacy. Rose-Corvo travels to Rome, as chaplain to the Bishop of Caerleon, to the Conclave which has gathered to elect a successor to Pope Leo XIII (Leo XIII died in 1903, an event which obviously inspired Corvo to write on this particular theme, and no doubt, influenced Chatto & Windud in publishing "Hadrian VII" in 1904. The novel was reprinted for the Penguin Modern Classic series in 1963, the year of the Conclave which elected Pope Paul VI).

Corvo was well acquainted with the procedure and ceremonial proper to such an occasion, and he describes the interminable process of the election in excrutiating detail. Eventually, after many indecisive votes the eminent cardinals, for no little apparent reason, choose Rose-Corvo to be the next Pope. Theoretically any male Catholic, priest or layman, married or single, could be elected Pope; but since the fourteenth century the elected Pope has always come from the Cardinals of the Church, so that the chances of a newly ordained priest being elected today are virtually non-existent. But Corvo is not dealing in rational possibilities, he is working out a personal daydream in print.

Rose-Corvo, in accepting, chooses as his Pontificial name Hadrian VII ... the last, and only, English Pope being Hadrian IV... and the scene is set for Corvo to remake the world.

Hadrian-Corvo has nothing if not a sense of the fitting; his first act is to make his former superior, the Bishop of Caerleon, a cardinal. But patriotism outstrips propriety; he next calls to Rome five English priests whom he also installs in the cardinalature, and for the sake of Anglo-Saxon solidarity no doubt, he also calls an American millionaire to receive the red hat. ("... a cardinal deacon ? Oh, that would be a daisy ! ") His Englishness is given full play; Hadrian-Corvo has little respect for the Catholic clergy of England, he constantly refers to them as Erse, i.e. Irish and inferior, while the English-Catholic press is merely.." Celtic wood pulp". The English Pope beatifies Alfred The Great, Henry VI of Lancaster, and Mary Queen Of Scots; he accords The Golden Rose, a high papal award, " to virtuous queens", to be set on the tomb of Queen Victoria, whom he refers to in conversation as "Divine Victoria". Pope Hadrian-Corvo addresses an "Epistle to the English" in which he asserts that"....the English Race naturally was fitted to give an example to humanity.." He notes"its dignified good sense,... self restraint..and altruism (among the upper and middle classes.)

It soon becomes evident how the new Pope regards the political reconstruction of the world; "The socialistic idea, which suggested such iniquity, was essentially selfish and venal." "....Aristos, the Strong Man, invariably dominates. It's in the order of nature. And Demos loves him for it, only the silly thing won't say so." "The claim to equality was so indecently unjust that it could only emanate from inferiors who hoped to gain by degrading their superiors." With the Vicar Of Christ holding such views, it is no surprise to find that the villains of the book are the English socialists. "The Liblab Fellowship" and the arch-villain is one of their leaders, one Jerry Sant, who speaks a form of pidgin English, has dirty nails, and is a haberdasher's bagman. Sant, in the hope of blackmailing the new Pope, acquires some indiscreet letters written by Hadrian when he was George Arthur Rose, and threatens to publish them. Hadrian, like the Duke of Wellington, says "Publish and be damned", and there is a good deal of vituperative prose aimed at infamous Liblabism.

However, these murky sub-plots are merely expressions of Corvo's aristocratic distaste, although they do point the way in which Hadrian-Corvo reconstructs the world. He begins mildly enough by exerting his authority over the too-independant Jesuits, and then turns his attention to admonishing the Mafia. The first signs of a growing ambition for greater temporal power for the Church come when the Pontiff decides to sell the artistic treasures of the Church in order to acquire ready capital for his enterprises.

Before examining Hadrian-Corvo's proposals for the initiation of a new Golden Age, it should be pointed out that the author takes some liberties with the political world of his time; he advances the Russian Revolution by a dozen years, even mentioning the murder of the Romanov family by the "anarchists"; he supposes an anti-clerical revolution in France and the fall of Holland and Belgium to the anarchical-socialist armies of the new Commune, and he kills off the Austrian Emperor before his time (Emperor Frans Josef actually died in 1916.)

The latter event gives the Pope his first chance to dabble in statemanship, when he has an interview with the Italian Ambassador to the Vatican, and discusses in facile terms what he thinks should be done to re-organise the ramshackle Austro-Hungarian Empire, left in turmoil upon the Emperor's death. The ambassador listens in open-mouthed admiration. Hadrian follows this up with a cosy chat with the Kaiser... yes, Wilhelm II...who rushes to Rome for

the Pope's approbation after having organised a purge of the German socialists. He gets it too...Hadrian-Corvo is a great admirer of Little Willy.

All this is leading up to the grand climax of the book, when our hero, Pope or author, take your pick... remoulds the world to his own design. Inmorder to discuss the precarious situation in Europe, King Edward VII summons a Congress of World leaders to Windsor. The heads of state cannot come to a satisfactory conclusion, and so they call upon the Pope, of all people, to actvas Supfeme Arbiter (" the appeal of Caesar to Peter"). So the scene is set for the creation of Corvo's ideal world.

After much cogitation, Hadrian VII produces his "Epistle to Princes", the tenor of which is set by a preliminary passage; " a rebel is worse than the worst prince, and rebellion is worse than the worst goverment of the worst prince that hitherto has been." Then follows an allocation of territory and spheres of influence to those countries which the Pope thinks alone have the faculty to rule. England receives all Asia (sic) except Siberia; Africa; Canada; Australia; New Zealand; and all islands. Furthermore, because "the title Emperor being antipathetic to the English Race", the English sovereign is given the title of The Ninefold King.

America gets the whole of Central and South America... after all, they're almost British. Russia and France, having adopted social systems antipathetic to the Pope, are given over to annexation. Kaiser Wilhelm takes the lion's, or should I say, the eagle's share of these mistaken nations. As Northern Emperor of a new Holy Roman Empire he is given power over most of the northern and central European countries, together with Poland, Hungary Bohemia, and Rumania, and is authorised to "annexe" France and European Russia (Japan gets Siberia). The Southern Emperor, the King Of Italy, gets the bulk of Southern Europe, Spain, Portugal, and Greece.

Corvo not only sets this down completely straight-faced, he describes the acclamation with which these proposals are greeted all over the world. ... but presumably not including the Russians, French, and Latin Americans Clearly with the world now settled in the path of righteousness, Hadrian's task is done, and, after allowing him to enjoy some of the fruits of his political labours, Corvo sends him to the glory of a matry's death. He is assassinated by...guess who ?.. the maloderous Jerry Sant, but he does not die before forgiving his murderer, noble-hearted to the last.

Reading "Hadrian VII" fifty years after its publication, one is not unnerved by the aboriginal conservatism, the xenophobia, or the sticky sentimentality; like a "Daily Express" editorial, one's usual reaction is amusement. And, after all, Corvo had no monopoly over these particular qualities, they can be found in many novels of the time. No, the main interest liesmin the use which Corvo makes of a traditional sf form to create a fantasy world in which he himself, in the form of Arthur George Rose, the bitter, pathetic misfit, takes into his hands the power to right the wrongs of the world, and discharge the accumulated bile of a lifetime.

Although one may indulge in such a daydream oneself, it remains a daydream, and is not converted into print, for sale. So closely does Corvo's hero resemble Corvo himself, that one finds it ratner sad to see the contrast between the way Hadrian-Corvo reshapes the Universe, and the reality of Corvo's own ineffectual life.

(continued on Page 38.)

FROM VELVET ALLEY TO STRAIT JACKET.

WITH COMMENTS BY ROBERT BLOCH

alan dodd

In the days before 'TWILIGHT ZONE', Rod Serling once wrote a very fine play called ' THE VELVET ALLEY ', in which a writer went to Hollywood, and became corrupted by the "velvet alley" of his world, and was eventually destroyed there. Robert Bloch has been in Hollywood for four years now, but thankfully the success that spoiled Rock Hunter has not appeared to have changed him. This is very fortunate, since there are too few writers left with an active interest in the pages of magazines like this that can remain unchanged while the world around them is changing. There are new situations, new types of people to deal with, new ideas and new ideals to contend with, not the least of which is the pressure of the inevitable deadline.

Since much of Robert Bloch's work currently appears in such mediums as television, whose programmes seldom appear here, we see comparatively little of his recent work. ' Alfred Hitchcock Presents ' and similar such programmes are seldom shown in England with any degree of regularity. Television bookers for the BBC and ITV seem reluctant to book any series other than the standard western, comedy or detective series. Anything else is either never seen, or is shown for such a short season that it is soon forgotten. 'TWILIGHT ZONE' had only 12 episodes shown in the London area, probably all that were bought, before it disappeared as rapidly as it appeared. "THE OUTER LIMITS" is shown only on North & Midlands television; and Alfred Hitchcock himself has not been seen on television for a considerable length of time.

More is the pity that the series that showed one of Bloch's best classics, 'YOURS TRULY, JACK THE RIPPER' never came to England, though from having heard it on tape it was well worthy of exhibition here. The pocketbook of the same story, plus about half a dozen other assorted titles have appeared here. Mostly these are collections of short stories including 'BLOOD RUNS COLD'; 'BOGEY MEN' ; 'NIGHTMARES'; 'MORE NIGHTMARES' (Extracts from the hardcover'PLEASANT DREAMS',) and several others, Full length paperbacks of complete stories are such as 'THE COUCH' (A cunningly inventive psychiatric thriller of a vicious murderer who takes to heart the old advice, "if you want to hide a leaf, do so in a forest"); TERROR,

(Originally called by Bloch, "KILL FOR KALI", a story of modern Thugee disciples in California, killing their victims in the age-old manner); FIREBUG,(not, as one might have expected, a psycho-study of the mind that enjoys lighting fires, but more of a who-dunnit set amid the strange religious cults that seem to flourish in America); and THE DEAD BEAT,(possibly his most ordinary aperback in recent years.)

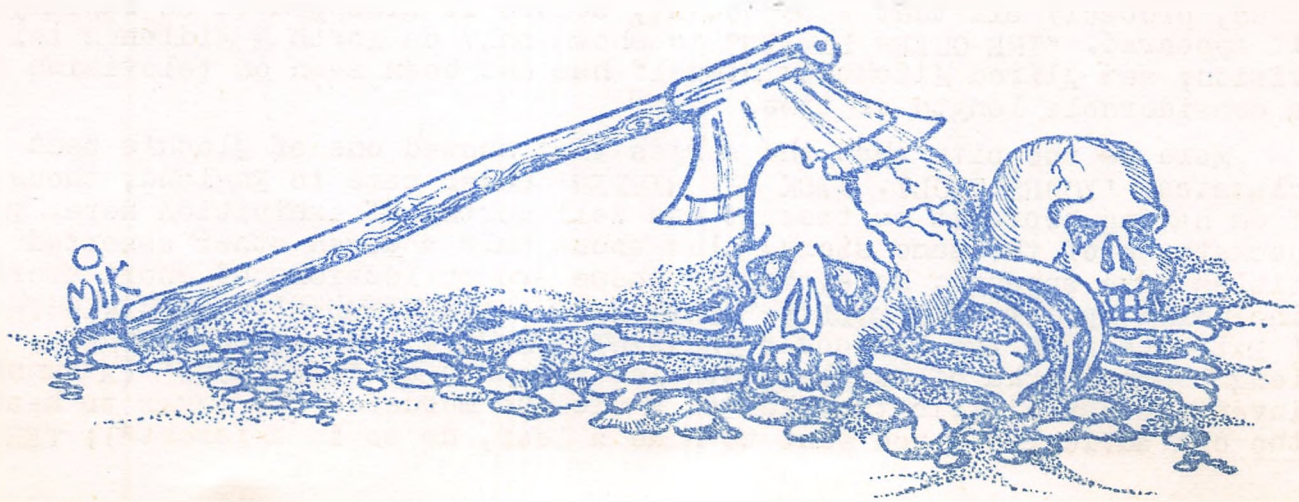
The short story collections of Bloch have undoubtedly contained his finest work, since this is a field he and perhaps a scant half dozen other contemporary writers excel in. Each of his short stories emerges as a polished gemstone, each shining with its own individual facets, some more so than others. One remembers in particular "The Show Must Go On". --

In this a third rate actor is offered violence in a bar, by the father of the girl he has made pregnant. He begs to be allowed to leave for the theatre, and in contempt he is allowed to go. Reaching the theatre, he ascends the stairs for his greatest performance. He pats ... the derringer in his pocket, and murmurs, "Now which one is Lincoln's box ?".

The actor is of course John Wilkes Booth. One wonders how long it will be before Bloch will be able to treat the Kennedy assassination in a similar vein, if at all in this lifetime.

Leaving aside PSYCHO, now his most famous work (it cannot strictly be included among his own contributions to the film media, as the script by one Joseph Stefano was vastly inferior to the original book.) Bloch's first filmic work shown here was a disasterous version of THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI. This takes my vote as the slowest and most pretentious piece of rubbish produced in that particular year. In defence of Bloch, and indeed of any other writer, it should be pointed out that many writers who deliver a script to a studio are totally unable to recognise the finished product when it comes off the studio floor, other than by the title, so great have been the changes made by the director and producer

CALIGARI is best forgotten. There have been other films both real and projected, but the only other one to be released in England so far has been the William Castle directed 'STRAIT JACKET'.



William Castle is a gimmick director who has in past horror thrillers thrillers used everything from a cardboard skeleton coming out of the edge of the screen into the audience, (HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL), to coloured spectacles to pick out the 13 GHOSTS, and buzzers under the seats to simulate electrical creatures.

With the financial success of the PSYCHO film directed by Alfred Hitchcock, Castle produced a cheap copy of the same idea in HOMICIDAL. In this, the theme of a hero dressed as a woman who did the grisly knife killings was altered. The murderer became a woman dressed as a man. Only the plot was not changed, so as to ensure good box offices.

After the successes of these two films came the unusual success of 'WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE'. This featured two veteran movie queens, Bette Davis and Joan Crawford, and it was only inevitable that other producers should cash in on the combined success and make horror films with ageing female stars. Bette Davis starred in DEAD IMAGE, a title altered for some reason from the American DEAD RINGER, and Tallulah Bankhead came to England to make FANATIC for Hammer Films.

Castle, showing a little more astuteness than others, grabbed Joan Crawford for his film, and went a stage further in getting the actual script from Robert Bloch. How much of this original script remains in the finished STRAIT JACKET is something only Bloch can tell us. I find it difficult to believe some of the dialogue could have come from Bloch himself. "My mother -- a murderess" is the first unlikely selection.

Half the film is over before the actual credit titles appear, painted as they are on some effectively macabre paintings of horror scenes. One of which shows "Written by Robert Bloch", others, in deference to Joan Crawford's past work, show "Miss Crawford's make-up by --", and Miss Crawford's hairdressing by --".

The initial before-credit sequences feature Miss Crawford(accompanied by some very wooden-sounding axe blows) demolishing her husband and mistress, whom she has found together on her sudden return home. After the credits we switch to a lonely farm twenty years later where Joan, her daughter, and relatives, are living after her return from the asylum. Severed heads, bloody axes, and childrens voices singing the "Lizzie Borden" axe song haunt Joan, and when the psychiatrist from the

hospital comes to call on her he mysteriously disappears, though his car remains. Joan's meeting with her daughter's fiance is one of the most embarassing sequences ever seen in a film intended presumably for adults. "I think my future has just arrived", simpers sculptress daughter Diane Baker, who watches as her mother makes up to her finance with archly unexplained impropriety. "I'm just a country boy," stammers the hero uncomprehendingly, and is answered with, "Yeah, and I'm just a country girl."

Drama is accentuated by the mother striking a match on a moving gramaphone record. Can it be done ? I must try it out sometime on a record I don't like. The choice should be a wide one.

There are occasional touches of directorial flair. Castle is a ham, but he knows his business. A shot from the top of the windmill-pump water tower overlooking the sinister farm is very effective; the greatest moment of horror comes when the handyman, sensing the presence of the killer, walks alongside a yard of hanging clothes, and an arm whips arownd his neck, bringing forth loud screams from the audience at the suddenness of the action.

The arm is that of a wet shirt hanging up, which has been whipped around by the wind.

The three axe-murders contained in the central part of the narrative are Psycho-sudden, and so grisly in their implications that days afterward, at night, I find myself still looking around in the dark for the deseending head of that axe.

What perhaps is most amazing, is that in the era of mass deaths of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, the simple act of a single death by knife or axe (after all, commonplace enough objects) should still be successful in evoking such horror. A single act of killing should pall into insignificance, beside, for example, the recent evidence against Wilhelm Boger or Oswald Kaduk at the Auschwitz trial. Yet still the solitary isolated killings have this effect.

Further dialogue like, "I blame myself" and "All my life I've been running away from things" shows why the theme song of STRAIT-JACKET, played on an old gramaphone record, is appropriately, "There Goes That Song Again."

One cannot help wondering how the original lyrics of the Bloch script must have read.

Perhaps we'll never know.

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No sooner was this article received when Alan Dodd received an interesting letter from Robert Bloch. Since this pertains to the above article, and is also extremely interesting, I have taken the liberty of printing it on the following page. PRW

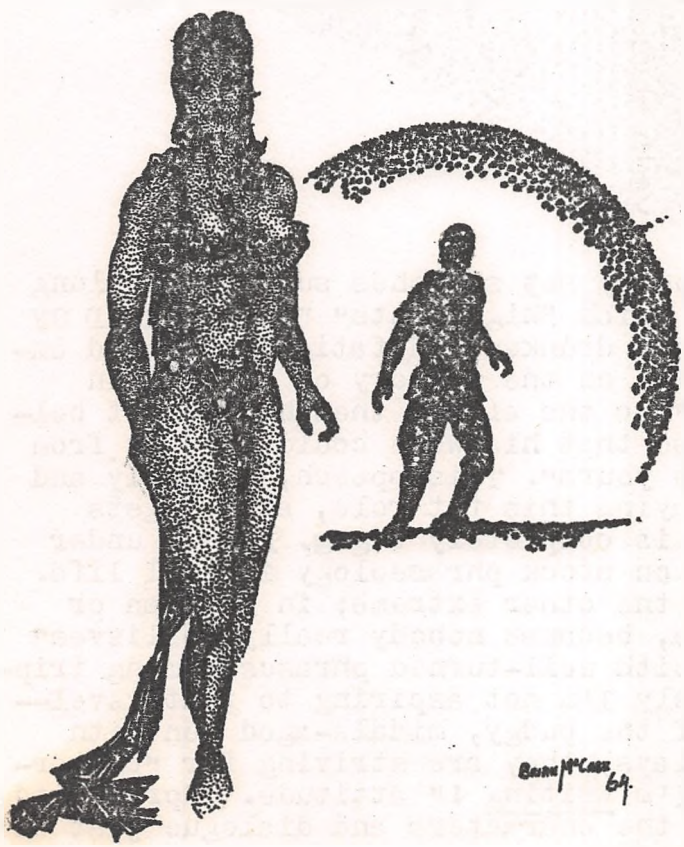
From Robert Bloch.

About STRAITJACKET -- yes, I wrote every word of that banal dialogue. And deliberately. You see I have a very strange theory about drama as opposed to print media. In print media, because of the constsant imposition of the author's viewpoint, it is possible to sustain the "willing suspension of disbelief" to a greater degree, and add touches in reported conversation as well as in description, which smack of considered reflection. But even so, I think you'll find I tend to write rather simple dialogue in much of my later work. In drama-- with a modern setting -- I go on the notion that most of us are not elocutionists, parlour wits, or amateur philosophers. My ear tells me that the majority of people deal in clumsy cliches, feeble jokes that don't come off, soap-opera phrases. We don't make phony set speeches such as the long and completely incredible harangue which "highlights" WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF, in which the supposed drunken and fatigued husband embarks on a scintillating disquisition on the history of mankind in order to end up, with a "punch-line" to the effect that he doesn't believe the human race was developed so that his wife could benefit from her cultural heritage by saying "Up yours". This speech, artfully and lovingly delivered by any actor playing this fat role, always gets applause from the audience. But it is completely a gag. People under emotional stress usually fall back on stock phraseology in real life. But the audience is conditioned to the other extreme; in Shavian or Shakespearean drama it's acceptable, because nobody really "believes" it, and everyone is a philosopher with well-turned phrases coming trippingly from the tongue. Unfortunately I'm not aspiring to that level-- and neither, I feel, should most of the pudgy, middle-aged men with glasses who concoct TV and screenplays; they are striving for "cleverness" with a sort of "Look, Ma -- I'm writing !" attitude. I prefer to deal in incredible events but keep the characters and dialogue just as trite as I find them to be in real life.

continued on Page 38

The Strange Relations of PHILIP JOSE FARMER

charles platt.



Science fiction, like any other field of writing, is predominantly set within accepted limits, using accepted stage-props to act as a backdrop to the story. Just as the murder mystery is likely to follow a traditional format, employing variations on the theme of victim, detective, and murderer, so the sf tale of the type common to Analog will follow an ingrained pattern.

Inevitably, this results in limited imagination and limited thinking. Authors search for new variations on old themes, new juxtapositions of alien planets, immortality, nuclear holocaust, ... only to be met with the familiar cry of "It's been done before !" The mark of fresh imagination is the ability to see beyond the accepted borders of science fiction, and produce stories packed with ideas that have not occurred in any form previously; where the backdrop may be the same, but the play is excitingly new.

James Blish has occasionally achieved this, combining mediocre writing with a seemingly routine sf setting, and then introducing possibilities that provide more food for thought, after putting down the book, than a thousand run-of-the mill sf stories would.

In the same way that Blish has employed atomic physics and scientifically grounded (and detailed) anti-gravity, Farmer has written truly remarkable stories around fascinating biological ideas.

Four of his paperback books have passed through my hands; STRANGE RELATIONS, THE LOVERS, FLESH, and THE ALLEY GOD. THE GREEN MILLENNIUM and A WOMAN A DAY are books that, as far as I know, have yet to be imported by Thorpe and Porter.

STRANGE RELATIONS is a collection of five short stories. The first two are most relevant to the title; they concern the relationship of man with alien life. There are slightly sick overtones; the man suffers from a strong Oedipus complex, and he and his mother are the only survivors of a rocket crash on the alien planet. When the man is taken into the womb-like interior of a giant land-mollusc, (a parthogenetic female), it takes over the mother image; and soon, even the sight of his own mother being absorbed into a boiling stew-stomach fails to arouse him. The snail supplies his food and drink in the same way that it caters for its own young.

The man eventually finds complete peace of mind when he conquers his sexual ignorance and impotency, and slashes with his knife a protuberance " fleshlike and womanly -- almost breastlike in texture and smoothness and warmth.." thus providing the stimulus neccessary to initiate the creature's reproductive cycle. He has, in effect, indulged in symbolic intercourse; and from then onwards retreats into himself, curling up into a foetal ball, "In the darkness, in the moistness, safe and warm, well fed, much loved."

The rest of the stories in this collection are inferior in comparison; they display Farmer's casual American style of hack writing into which he so often lapses, but do not offer the reader any exciting or interesting ideas in compensation.

FLESH is published in the Beacon Book series, (Galaxy's sexy--sf novels), presumably designed to appeal to science fiction and spicy book fans alike. The writing in FLESH is deliberately sensationalised to the point where one wonders how much of the sexual description was included for the perverse amusement it gave Farmer to set it down. In painting a lurid but convincing picture of a future Earth society dominated by a religion with the sexual act as its focal point, he often appears to include certain passages purely for his own satisfaction. Examples are the detailed accounts of two kill-the-opponents baseball matches, played with a reinforced bat and a ball studded with four steel spikes.

Moreover, Farmer seems to identify with the central character, who has been rendered super-potent by the grafting of antlers to his skull. " The secret dream of every man was his -- unlimited opportunity, inexhaustible ability." Indeed, it would be surprising if a writer could describe so many scenes of rape, massacre and destruction <u>without</u> becoming involved himself.

The plot of FLESH provides excuses for including descriptions of; sex-crazed virgins lined up and taken by the hero one by one; fanatical religious riots, the symbolic'birth' of the hero; legalised brothels of sterile women; homosexuality; ("Abner smiled and fluttered his long lashes. 'Oh, you'll get over that absurd prejudice, baby. Besides, I've heard that you horned men are over-sexed, and that

once you're aroused you stop at nothing. What're you going to do if there are no women available ?'"); and many scenes of casual decapitation, maiming, flesh-ripping, etc, etc.

The hero, once a balanced individual from the 20th Century before the transformation brought about by the grafted antlers, is caught continually between his irrepressable sexual urges, and his moral revulsion for what he is doing, (though this is played down considerably). This conflict too, is described with enthusiasm, as if the author enjoyed the hero's plight.

FLESH has several interesting ideas, but the blatant commercialised spicing-up, and the hopelessly immature view of sex tend to ruin it for the reader. Life, contrary to what Mr Farmer would have us believe, is not built around the sexual act alone, nor is love. Yet his characters act, and in one case get married, as if this were so, which deprives them of any chance they might have otherwise had of appearing real to the reader.

THE LOVERS is a much more legitimately intimate book. Unfortunately though, it has not been successfully lengthened from magazine story to novel; Farmer switches things around, and adds sub-plots, but the action still drags. As in nearly all of his stories, THE LOVERS uses a stock science fiction idea, (in this case 'man lands on alien world and encounters an alien creature') and, by looking at it in a different, possibly much more frank and realistic way, pulls it up from the mundane to the exceptional. Though the plot is only passable, and obvioulsy contrived solely to support the scientific discourse (which is what the book really is), Farmer writes convincingly and with feeling, conveying to the reader not only the feasibility of sexual intercourse between a man and a humanoid insect, but at least a glimmer of the emotional overtones involved. This is pure science fiction carried to its perhaps illogical extreme.

Of the four books I first mentioned surely THE ALLEY GOD anthology of three stories is the most readable and intelligent. The first story, THE ALLEY MAN, is certainly the best of Farmer's

that I have ever read, concerning the relationship of a young female social research scientist with a man on a garbage dump who claims to be the last direct descendant of Neanderthal Man. The description of his character and appearance is vivid, as are the conditions where he lives with the two women who are irresistably attracted to him.

The Alley Man's world is upset by the intrusion of the sociologist; the woman is only partly captured by his character and unique body odour, and then complicates matters further by making a replica of his one desire in life. This is a hat he believes was once worn by his forefathers when going into battle, and which contains the power of all their souls. Having found the hat and inherited the luck, the Alley Man is lost. Though he continues his routine of collecting garbage, without his goal in life he becomes confused, irritable, and eventually uncontrollable. In the classic Shakespearian imagery of a crashing thunderstorm, the last action is played out, and the Alley Man dies, after a struggle that lasted perhaps a few pages too many.

In this story, Farmer not only creates believable characters, he unfolds the story naturally, without talking down or explaining the plot to the reader, and the treatment of sex escapes falling to juvenile level. He treats it crudely, — the Alley Man is crude, -- but with conviction; and it seems wholly believable that the man should corrupt and ensnare beautiful women with his unique body odour. His bestiality and bravado are fascinating to the reader, also if only because of their obvious weakness; yet after the Alley Man's death, the reader, like the young sociologist in the story, is left to remember him with fascination.

The rest of the collection is poor in comparison. THE CAPTAIN'S DAUGHTER is a biological what-dunnit, with a surprisingly unoriginal idea for the denouement; a parasite is infesting human beings, spreading thin tendrils throughout their bodies. However, Farmer adds more convincing detail than most writers would, and draws interesting parallels with parasites of the Terrestrial crab.

Here, as in all of his work, sloppy writing is mixed with occasional perceptive description. One wonders how his conscience can allow him to leave the two side by side. One would hardly expect to find such simpering American banter as ;

" ' Who's the patient, Doc ? '

' I gathered it was the Captain's daughter.'

' Foiled again ! I did so want it to be a man. You know, some big, virile, temporarily indisposed male who'd come out of a coma and see me, first thing -- love at first sight.' "

followed by insensitively phrased but convincing description such as ;

" His eyes matched his voice. They were pale blue and hard as shields. The brows above were the colour of dried blood. Their hairs stuck out thick and long, like a phalanx of spears. In fact, though Gaulers, Captain Everlake was a man who bristled with sharp points. Even motionless and silent, he gave the impression of armed impregnability."

In this story, as usual, there is sexual deviation from the norm. It turns out that one of the side effects of being infected by the parasite is the occurrence of periodic bursts of irresistable sexual craving. Farmer describes the upright, unyielding captain, disciple of the strictest of religions, losing his battle with the parasite and craving his own daughter. The writing style is a strange mixture of clinical exactitude in detail and terminology, and lusty pornography in its seemingly deliberately full description — a description that

is not really necessary, or, one feels, spontaneous.

Despite this, I believe that even the out-and-out pornography of FLESH can be justified, by its originality and deliberate disregard of commonly accepted limits of plot and action. The writing may be bad, the plotting inconsequential, the male-female relations crude and superficial, the portrayal of emotion non-existent; but Farmer is trying something new. The pioneers of science fiction produced hack work horrifying in its near-illiteracy and crudity of style. But today, we find that their ideas have been distilled and used by writers of lesser imagination but of greater writing ability, to construct truly excellent stories, both from the point of view of concepts and literacy.

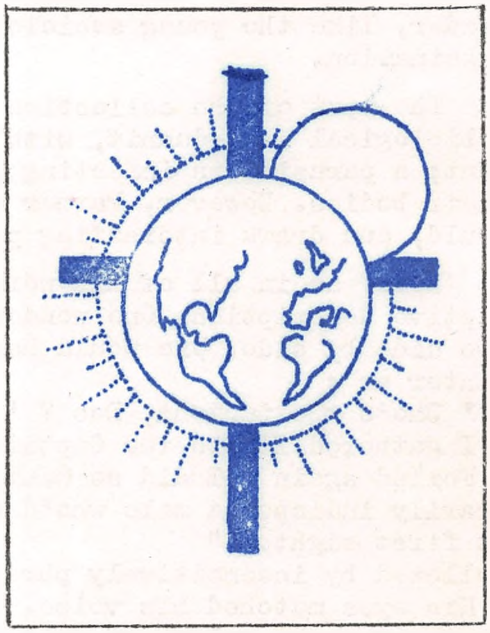
Those 'pioneers' produced hack work, but without their ideas and inspiration contemporary science fiction would have little upon which to base its more subtle stories. Mr Farmer's shortcomings will be fully justified if his biological experimentation and off-colour sexual ideas one day inspire some other less imaginative author to produce work of better overall quality.

****

Hadrian VII -- continued.

It is relatively easy to see this now, half a century after the novel's appearance, and with its author long dead. The intriguing thing is whether the same process is being carried out by writers still with us. How many times when we purchase an sf book, are we buying someone's private power-fantasy ? It suggests a new category on the science fiction field ..." therapeutic sf".

Ivor S. Latto.



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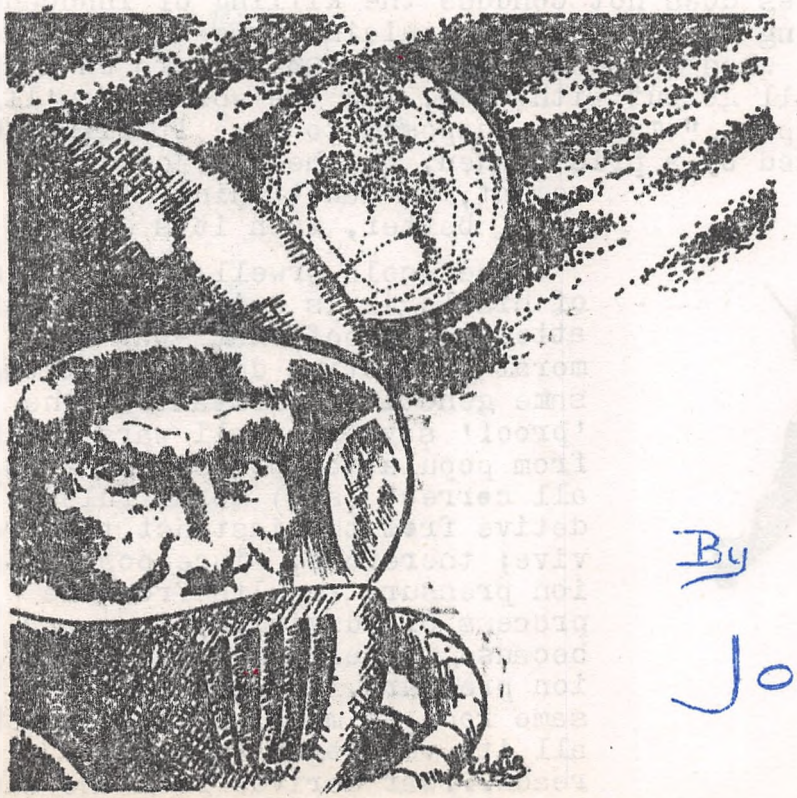
Robert Bloch -- continued.

This is explanation not apology, and is of course open to dispute, particularly on the part of those who contend that the theatre is, or should be, all illusion. I just don't think that most people are clever conversationalists, and prefer to report them as drearily as I hear them. It's their actions which fascinate me.

A Foreword by the Editor;

Although Joe Patrizio mentions that this is an article primarily for the newer fans, I had better explain a little of the events that led to its appearance in ZENITH. Originally I intended to write an article on this subject, for inclusion in my OMPA-zine, NEXUS. Learning of my plans, Joe wrote saying that he was all ready to refute my opinions, as he did with my thoughts on H.Beam Piper's work. Foolishly, Joe mentioned that he himself had written an article on the book, STARSHIP TROOPERS, many years ago, 'to let off steam'. Quick as a striking cobra your editor extracted from Joe a promise to find and submit his article to ZENITH. The article had been lost, this version has been specially rewritten.

Since Heinlein's new book is attracting attention,it may be that ZENITH's contribution to the Heinlein-discussion is ill-timed. However I advise every reader who can to read "The Political Philosophy of Robert Heinlein" by Jerry Pournelle (DYNATRON 23); and "The Politics Of Nostalgia." by Tom Perry (Quark 8)



STARSHIP TROOPERS REVISITED

By

Joe Patrizio

The following thoughts and opinions concerning the book 'STARSHIP TROOPERS' do not purport to be bursting with original thought, but they are my own. Similar articles were written a few years ago when the book was first published, but our good editor has suggested that the younger fans may not have read anything on the subject, and it is for those that this article has been written.

Let me say right away that I have little against STARSHIP TROOPERS as a novel -- it's a fine piece of writing, and Heinlein pushes the story along, making it all very believable. However, all the way through you get the feeling that inside the man is a little, uncivilised 10 year old boy trying to break out; an immature streak which most intelligent people grow out of. I am, of course, talking about his "death or glory" philosophy -- that which was a few months ago called Goldwaterism -- and it is at this facet of the book that I intend to look.

Heinlein indulges in a monumental bit of doublethink, by glorifying war while ranting on at us about morality. He really believes that the killing of innocents is justified when occurring in the scramble for political power, and that a man should be proud to commit murder or suicide in order to perpetuate a ploitical system..and to cap it all, he tells us that pacifism is immoral.

Now the word 'moral' has a dictionary definition of 'virtuous according to civilised standards of right and wrong', which seems fair enough, as these standards can change (have, in fact) as the civilisation changes. However, RAH still manages to ignore the fact that the civilisation in which he lives does not condone the killing of innocent people. Right at the beginning of the story, Heinlein shows us how his mind works, in this respect, when he sends Rasczak's Roughnecks on a mission with a Padre, who will go out with them, and the words "You'll kill only when you can't help it." This is supposed to make it all right and proper -- if you're killed by a priest when, on the spur of the moment, he can't think of anything better, then it's OK.

The whole Orwellian confusion of his logic is epitomised in his attempted proof that "war and moral perfection derive from the same genetic inheritance." The 'proof' says that all wars result from population pressures; also, all correct (sic) moral rules detive from the instinct to survive; therefore, since population pressure results from the process of surviving, then war, because it derives from population pressure, derives from the same root as morals. Stripped of all its verbiage, this proof reads...war derives from the survival instinct; survival instincts are good things; therefore war is a good thing.

Now, all this may sound quite reasonable, but that is only because Heinlein doesn't define his terms, and, in the text, keeps on shifting his terms of reference. Take the first part of his proof -- all wars result from population pressures. This can mean anything you want "population pressures" to mean, although most people will immediately think of lebensraum. The American Indian wars were caused through greed more than through any population explosion; the greed for gold, and buffalo hides, and land. If Heinlein is going to equate greed with population pressures he's rather stretching credulity, but why not come straight out and say so, anyway ?

The second part of the proof should be quite acceptable to most people, as it stands -- morals derive from an instinct to survive. This is quitetrue, but Heinlein takes a particular case -- the father who dies to save his children -- and from it, evolves a general rule, equating children with political systems. Any man would find it difficult not to give up his life to save his children -- there is a basic instinct there which would drive him, almost against his will, to abandon any thought of personal safety; but only a madman would willingly die for the greater glory of the Labour Party, the Communist Party, or any other sort of artificial social set-up. This false comparison, of the individual case with the national one, comes up quite early in the book when Heinlein says, "The noblest fate that a man can endure is to place his own mortal body between his loved home and the war's desolation." A fine, high sounding sentiment which is seemingly irrefutable -- until you examine not what it says, but what it means. The whole implication is that wars just happen, like earthquakes, floods, etc; whereas they are started by madmen for their own gain/glory, and who have no intention of placing their mortal bodies in any jeopardy. Here again the substitution of one's own children for the political system. Anyway, even if you accept that wars are moral because they are basically a survival device, the arguement collapses in the light of the H-bomb. A war fought with the H-bomb would constitute, at the very least, a grave risk to the survival of the race; this being so, it is immoral to do anything which would conceivably precipitate a nuclear war.

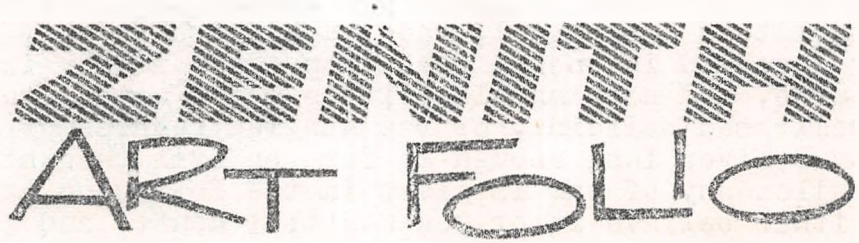
STARSHIP TROOPERS is permeated with Heinlein's obsession with discipline, destruction, and death. The discipline he talks of, and advocates, is a complete conformity, and subjugation of the will to political superiors; a 1984 attitude which demands instant acceptance of all the man in charge says, whether he's right or not. Destruction and death are lauded as great and glorious, the conscience being perfunctorily salved with the excuse that it is unfortunate but neccessary. War, to Heinlein, is something completely impersonal, and I'd be surprised if he's ever been personally involved in one. A bomb dropped on a city is part of a strategic manoeuvre, and nothing else; it is not a woman crushed to death under a collapsed building, or the mangled remains of a six month old baby who never lived long enough to form an evil thought. The essence of Heinlein's philosophy of war is given in the following passage from the book. You either believe it or you don't; I don't, and I'm afraid I can't understand anybody who does ;

" war - not violence and killing, pure and simple; war is controlled violence, for a purpose. The purpose of war is to support your goverment's decisions by force. The purpose is never to be killing the enemy just to be killing him..but to make him do what you want him to do. Not killing .. but controlled and purposeful violence. But it's not your business or mine to decide the purpose or the control. It's never a soldiers business to decide when or where or how--or why-- he fights that belongs to the statesmen and the generals. The statesmen decide why and how much;the generals take it from there and tell us where and when and how. We supply the violence; other people - 'older and wiser heads' as they say -- supply the control. Which is as it should be. "

Wilfred Owen died 40 years before Heinlein wrote Starship Troopers, killed seven days before the end of WWI. Here, as he describes a man who has been gassed, he answers Heinlein;

"If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sins;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Bitter as the cud.
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues, --
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
to children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori "

.....J. P. Patrizio, 1964.



--- The Art Folio -- less than one dozen copies remaining (50 printed.) 25 sheets, board covers, all electrostencil work, 2/6 postpaid from the usual address. ---

Brickbats and Roses.

terry jeeves

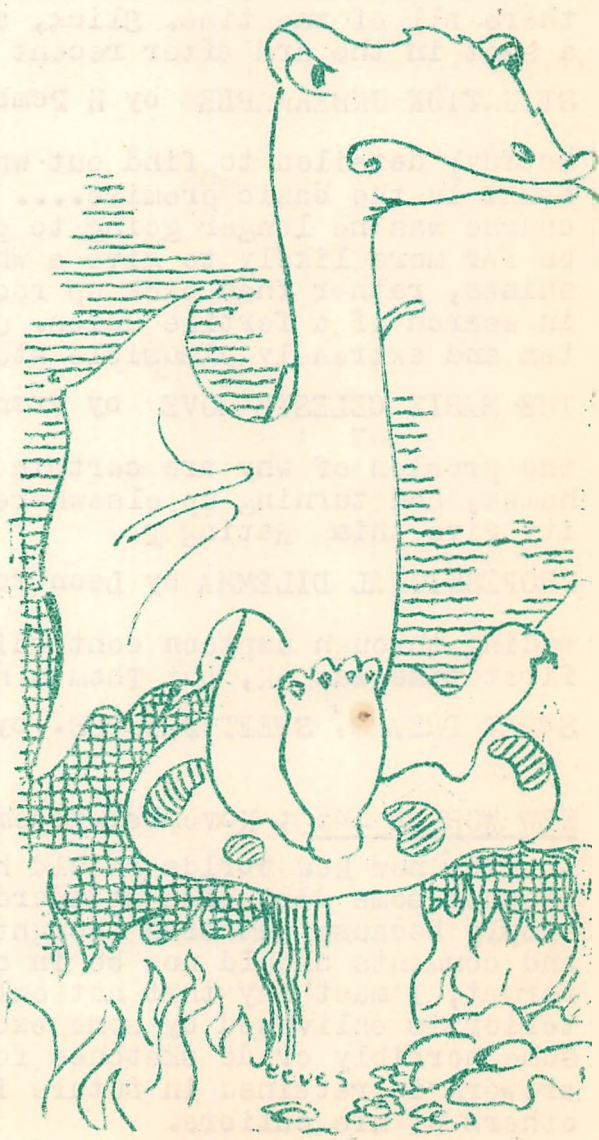
MAGAZINE REVIEWS

I gather that a lively correspondence is waxing over my magazine reviews, and myo rating system.... seems I can please some of the people most of the time, but some of the people I can't please any of the time.

When Pete kindly offered me the chance to resurrect my old VECTOR column, I thought I had made it pretty plain that the comments would represent my own opinions without any claim to expert or inside knowledge, experience, or what-have-you. Readers could compare my tastes with their own, and form a rough yardstick. To capsule the comments I also rate the stories on a 5-point (A to E) scale.

This may seem awfully simple to some of you. It did to me. However, that was before I was informed that a critic should be 90 years old, and have done everything from played ninth flute in the Boston Prom, to have written half of the Encyclopedia Britannica, whilst busily maturing like a vat of old wine. If this were true, then it would be a grievous fault (Thank you, William). Taken to its bitter extreme we would have no more right to our own opinions on fanzines, TV programmes, films, or even life on Venus. This is too ridiculous a state of affairs to waste any breath over, so let the immature quibble over the qualifications needed for the Critic's Badge (First Class), and the rest of us can accept everyone having a right to opinion on subjective matters (or matters of fact, where a yardstick cannot yet be applied.) And that of course includes the right to disagree with my opinions, but NOT with my right to hold them.

As to rating on a five point scale; I agree completely with the correspondent who points out that there is no guarantee that a story getting B in January is superior to one that gets C in the following month. Perfectly true; I am not a calibrated measuring cylinder, and my rating is quite capable of varying with the state of my temper.... BUT SO IS my more wordy comment. We



happily (?) accept the assessment of the Driving Test Inspector,which is also susceptible to imponderables. No friends, I try to be objective, but I'm only human, so my ratings may and will vary from time to time. But since they only represent a guide, let's not get bogged down in trying to count angels on pins, and suchlike picayune quibblings. If you don't like the letters...just ignore 'em. The same of course applies to the reviews... so here goes with more comment..and more of the alphabet soup.

ANALOG ; October 1964.

FLYING FISH by John T Phillifent. Nice to see John R using his own name, and this yarn concerning an alien who throws all the scientists for a loop until the nero sorts out the problem, is a worthy one. Hero is designed for you to empathise (ouch !) with, and I really enjoyed the yarn, in spite of a minor flaw... the alien had such mastery and knowledge of its planet, yet asked.."Why have I not met these two before ?".... the two had been there all of the time. Slick, action-packed, maybe even juvenile, but a shot in the arm after recent Analogs. Rating B.

SITUATION UNBEARABLE by H Pembroke. An extremely detailed account of an investigator,(rather cardboardy) detailed to find out why the birth rate is falling. I feel a fault in the basic premise.... if confronted by the fact that intercourse was no longer going to produce children, I fear mankind would be far more likely to give a whoop of joy and make hay while the sun shimes, rather than pick up roots and head off to another continent in search of a fertile union. Otherwise a well though out, well written and extremely plausible story. Rating B.

THE MARIE CELESTE MOVE by Frank Herbert. Ratner incomprehensible piece concerning, I think, the problem of why are certain families vanishing from their normal homes, and turning up elsewhere....Seeds of extrapolation cum credibity give this.. Rating D.

PROFESSIONAL DILEMMA by Leonard Lockhard. Another of those patent lawyer hoo haws...whereby after wading through umpteen contradicting lawsuits, the hero wins out. The first time was OK, but Thomas has boiled this bone too often.Rating E.

SWEET DREAMS, SWEET PRINCES..by Mack Reynolds. serial, to be reviewed in toto.

NEW WORLDS 145 ; November-December.

The new New Worlds should have had sufficient time by now to have reached some sort of a standard. The period when material was scarce simply because authors thought the magazine had folded should be over, and comments should now be in order. While disliking the pocket book format, I must say that not only is the cover attractive, but the interior is enlivened by some excellent Cawthorn artwork.. and marred by some horribly crude sketches for 'Books' and 'Emissary'. I hope the artwork is retained in future issues, but is limited to Cawthorn, and others of his calibre.

GAMMA POSITIVE. E. Hill tells of a scientist able to sketch the future (but not to remember it) while under hypnosis, and the effects of a new drug. Fairly well handled, if a trifle over-wordy; the punch-line was logical and well hidden. Rating near B.

MIX UP by G Collyn details the interchange of mentalities between a beauty-queen movie star, and an egghead, when using a matter transmitter. The introductory set-up is well done, but after that the story drags. Rating D.

SOME WILL BE SAVED by C Fry. (Yes, another bomb story). Reasonably well-handled run of the mill story. D.

THE PATCH. by P Woods. To be fair, I had to scan this story a second time, only two days after firstv reading it, to find out what it was about...I'm not much wiser. A monarch has two troubles; a human antagonist, and an alien entity. His agent works to defeat the first by using the second, and in the process take over himself. Instead, the first antagonist whacks the monarch, makes an alliance with the alien, and the agent decides to become his henchman. Confused ? ..yes, so was I, so you'd better rate this one yourself.

EMISSARY by J. Hamilton. A nice little thing about a fiftn column agent softening us up for invasion. Another near B.

THE SHORES OF DEATH. Michael Moorcok. I've left the serial until last because of its incredible depth, imagery, and poor quality. Basically, the story poncerns a man seeking immortality... he finds it, and it proves to be a living hell. On these bare bones Moorcock has grafted offshoots such as;-- An undetailed end to humanity in two generations; a monster man scientist created by many operations and lifted straight from the old school sf. A colourful, freeloving, society without law machinery. The erection and destruction of a huge transmitter to shout across the Universe, "We Are Here.." after everyone was dead. There is even the old gimmick of a superhuman character called 'Take' wandering around in the background. Sad to say, all these bits and pieces are not developed during the story, but are just gummed together one after another, rather like the false fronts along the filmic Western main street. Despite the author's colourful imagery and description, they fail to be more than ...artificial jewels on a tawdry piece of string. Once the author learns how to handle such vignettes as part of the whole, rather than to hold them up briefly for inspection before discarding them in favour of the next word-padding item, he will produce some powerful stories. Until then like this one, the rating will be D.

ANALOG November 1964.

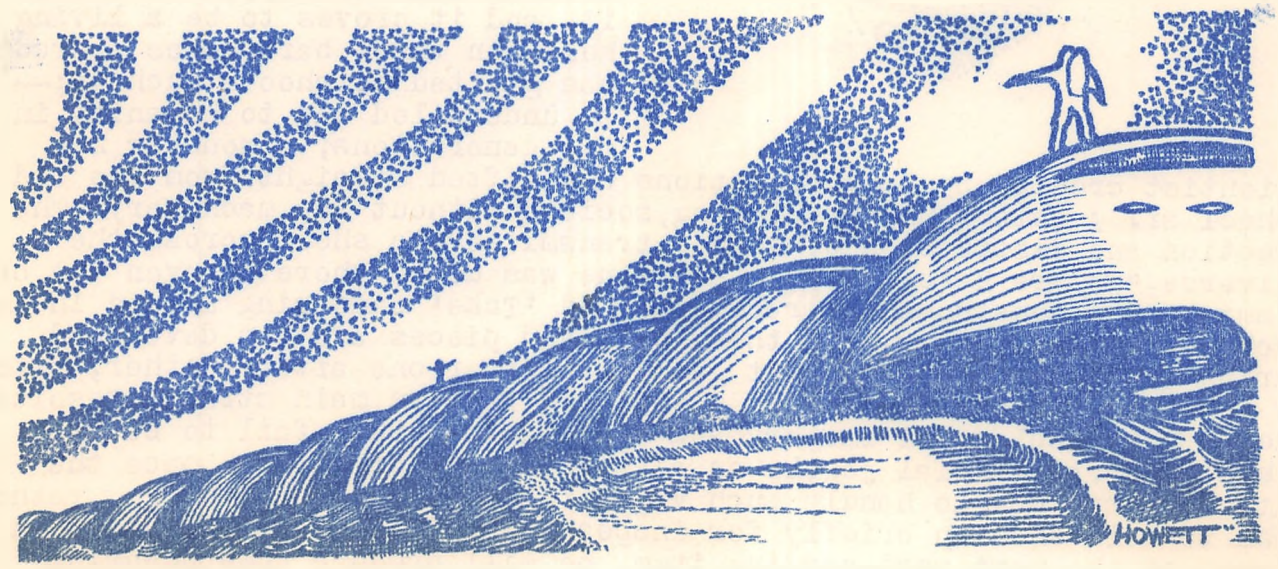
GUNPOWDER GOD by H Beam Piper. This concerns a US trooper who is inadvertantly transposed to a more barbaric timeline where he soon streamlines the art of battle. The Paratime Police supply the transition method, and after that have very little to do with the story. It's been done before, and often better, but it still makes an interesting yarn. Rating C.

GUTTERSNIPE by Rick Raphael. Water Conservation is of paramount importance but the Sewage Reclamation section men are social pariahs. Radioactives contaminate the supply, and hundreds die before the heroes (risk their necks) and solve the problem. However, they still remain pariahs. Well written but not outstanding. Rating C.

GALLAGHER'S GLACIER. W & L Richmond. This pair seem to have gained a corner on the crud market. This time they rehash the old company-versus-the-individual theme by having their rough diamond engineer convert his (reaction-mass) ice asteroid into a spaceship. The idea is that others copy him and the Company is a cooked goose. I always wonder why a company didn't do..the obvious and use the gimmick themselves if it happened to be so good. Rating E.

BILL FOR DELIVERY. by Christopher Anvil. One of those yarns where the contract calls for the space freighter to deliver an unmanageable cargo under impossible conditions. (Sheckley and Stecher have done series of em for Galaxy) In this case the cargo is live birds, whose qualities have obviously been tailored to cause the maximum difficulty for the crew. An accident-prone navigator is brought in as a weak reason for all the troubles, and the story tapers off to leave you wondering if they ever got out of their predicament...that's if you ever got to the point of caring. One of Anvil's worst old pot boilers. Rating E^2.

Apart from the serial, which I'll review in toto, the issue is rounded off by two articles..an overlong account of weird doings in photo emulsions, and a much too short (and undetailed) account of waldoes and their origin. This I would like to have seen expanded.



A Reply to Mike Moorcock (Pages 12-15)

Dear Mike,

First of all, I must plead guilty on one charge. I did descend to the personal, and was thoughtless enough to make a poor pun on your name. I apologise for this, it was in poor taste, and unwarranted. My only defence is that at the time I was in particularly poor health (as I have been on and off for the past three years) and probably let this influence my better sense. This doesn't condone the offence, merely offers some explanation. I sincerely apologise for the fault. It will not be repeated.

Secondly,... I probably have been hard in commenting on your stories, and again, this may have been partly due to my dislike of 'adventure' type stories in general (I refer here to my comments on the Elric series) Quite possibly, I may have let this colour my judgement. However, I have commented favourably on your more recent stories in person... perhaps if you corner Ted Carnell, he will recall a discussion we had at Peterborough I, where I said that the Elric stories were improving. Again, in my latest review, I did say that you had great ability... or words to that effect, my complaint being that you created pearls, but that they were isolated on their string, and did not form a cohesive whole... maybe you haven't yet seen that review.

Anyway, all this comment and criticism is by the board as far as value goes. I'm only airing my opinion... as I've repeated so often. I make no claims to being either expert or literary critic. All I set out to do was to give my own opinions as long as they proved interesting enough for Pete (and his readers) to accept them. They are only that...OPINIONS, and have absolutely no value other than the ephemeral pleasure we all get from finding someone with similar views to our own.

However, one snag has raised its head high. To give my reviews some slight value, I had to not only praise what I liked, but pan what I disliked... this has made one thing obvious. If you please people, they purr, but don't say anything. If you step on their corns, they holler loud and long. My reviews have now alienated one friend (yourself, if I may take the liberty), and one person whom I would have liked to have had as a friend (Bill Temple.)

In your letter you say some rather hard things about me, but I'm not going to reply to them for two reasons. One, because they are YOUR OPINIONS, and as such are perfectly valid... which is the point I keep trying to put across in Pete's pages. Secondly, I refrain from replying for an even more valid reason. I was the one to overdo the critic's boundary of comment, and I asked for slapping down, and now you've done it for me. I feel you had a right to say most of the things you did, so we can leave it there, honour satisfied and all that, and I promise that I will try to be more objective in the future.

One point though, I still maintain that to give one's opinions on a story does not require any credentials AT ALL... though obviously, the more credentials one has, the more likely it is that the opinions will be more unbiased

Turning to Cordwainer Smith, Yourself, and Ballard... yes, to me you all have something in common.... I'd like to say this. You all have terrific word imagery and can construct a scene so that it lives, breathes, and fascinates... but then, you all tend to let that scene fade away and start work on another, without a strong enough linking thread. Maybe the Tribune reviewer did praise Ballard... maybe the whole world does, after all not many people agreed with Galileo, but sad to say, I can't work up any enthusiasm for the style so far.

Well Mike, I guess that's that, I could ramble on for pages on the fringes of this thing, and if you care to indulge in a personal correspondence on this, maybe we can get to see a bit more of each other's point of view. I for one would welcome this.

Terry Jeeves.

/_ This is taken from the carbon of a personal letter to Mike Moorcock, and is printed both to interest ZENITH readers, and to assure them that this dispute will not end in a bloodbath. PRW 7

/_ This month brings the very bad news of the death on November 10th of H Beam Piper. While the details of this most unfortunate event have not yet been released, I am sure that the readers of ZENITH will be very distressed to hear of this. Mr Piper produced some excellent stories during his career as an author, and the fact that there will be no more is one more, though less important, reason for regret at this very sad news.

Mr Piper had completed at least four paratime stories, one of which was already sold to Analog, and which should appear. He also left a third Fuzzy novel, and a historical novel set in the city states of medieval Italy. This was Mr Piper's first love, and he had been working on the novel for at least ten years

Mr Piper's charting of his Future History Series appeared in ZENITH 4. (copies no longer available.) / ...PRW. 7

FIRST TIME EVER ! !

TWO CITIES JOIN HANDS

TO PUT ON A CONVENTION

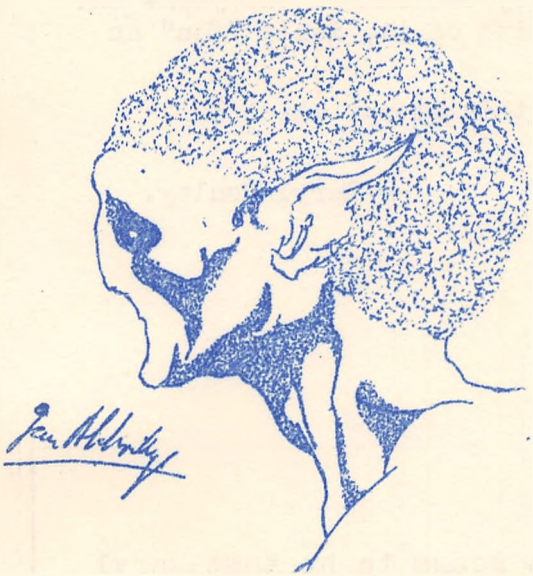
IT'S

CLEVELAND

DETROIT

IN

1966



BOOK REVIEWS

BERYL HENLEY

PETER WESTON

THE ETHICAL ENGINEER ; Harry Harrison.

First serialised in Analog, July & August 1963, revised and expanded version published by Gollancz. 15/-

The story is introduced with a quotation from "Essay on Man" by Alexander Pope. Shakespeare said much the same things: "There's nothing either good or bad but thinkinf makes it so."

It's another tale of the exploits of Jason dinAlt on (and off) Pyrrus. This cheerful, likeable rogue first appeared in "Deathworld" (ASF, 1960). He has his own code of ethics; this seems to be the kernel of the present story -- that personal ethics must be formed by each individual to suit his own needs and circumstances.

Mikah Samon arrives on Pyrrus to take Jason back to a gambler's planet to stand trial. Jason, believing Mikah to be a cop, will not allow him to be killed by Pyrrans Kerk and Meta -- "he's only trying to do his job." An ethical attitude ? -- be that as it may, it doesn't do Jason any good.

Later, he and Mikah have a whingding arguement on ethics compared with ethos. "Ethics," says Mikah, "is the discipline dealing with what is good or bad, or right and wrong -- or with moral duty and obligation."

But isn't it confusing the issue to identify morals with ethics ? A moral code is hammered out by a society in an effort to stave off general anarchy, and is supposed to ensure "the greatest good for the greatest number." But does it ? How many people adhere to society's imposed moral code because they want to, and because they approve of it ? It might be said that many people observe it or pay lip service to it through fear; -- fear of "being found out", of social ostracism, ridicule, deprivation of priviledges, etc. To be really effective, a moral code must be, above all, elastic, -- adaptable to the needs of the individual, and to the circumstances and company in which he finds himself. Which is precisely what this story sets out to demonstrate. Does it very well, too.

Jason is a master of compromise, at the same time estimating, "What's in this set-up for me? " "Better to die free than to live in chains !" proclaims Mikah. "Will you stop the nonsense ?" pleads Jason. "Better to live in chains and learn how to get rid of them. That way you end up alive-free rather than dead-free...."

By accepting (on the surface) the customs of the primitive society in which he finds himself, and turning these customs to his own advantage at every available opportunity, Jason finally emerges triumphant. Most of his methods are unscrupulous but ingenious; one cannot deplore his lack of scruples because he didn't get himself into the mess in the first place. And one chuckles in admiration of his ingenuity and his unmitigated gall.

Whether he gives Mikah cause to re-assess his own rigid standards and ethics is doubtful, for Mikah's dogmatism and bigotry excite the reader's annoyance, laced with a soupcon of head-shaking pity. As Jason tells him, " One has to be born into your particular brand of illogic to get any pleasure from it. The rest of us are happier bending a bit under the impact of existence, and exacting a mite more pleasure from the physical life around us."

And if it is possible to beat sense into a stubborn head, then certainly Mikah ought to have acquired a modicum of tolerance by the end of the yarn. But it isn't, so he doesn't. He's a fanatic. (Come to think of it, isn't "fan" an abbreviation of "Fanatic" ?).

A vein of pleasing light humour runs throughout this story, which is recommended.

-- Beryl Henley.

.o.0.o.0.o.0.o.

ZENITH PROFILE: Beryl Henley.

The chief contention of half of fandom seems to be that Beryl is a crank and a crackpot. May I say that I have yet to meet a more devastatingly charming, overwhelmingly good-humoured and surprisingly down-to-earth crackpot ? Personally I disagree with almost everything she writes; -- yet find her always interesting and guaranteed to provoke. She has yet to contribute an article to ZENITH; or ratner, has yet to contribute an article to ZENITH that has been accepted. This is due to no fault in her writing ability -- the rejects find willing homes elsewhere --but is more the result of ZENITH's somewhat limited scope, which precludes a more off-beat item's use.

ZENITH can boast theonly Henley column outside of LINK, and I am sure you will agree that whatever her outlook on life, Beryl writes refreshingly well. As Lloyd Biggle Jr remarked in the last issue, " an articulate book reviewer -- and isn't that a rarety!" I enjoy her reviews. I hope you share my enjoyment. -- PRW

BEYOND THE BARRIER; Damon Knight. Gollancz SF, 15s. 188pp.

Oh dear. I usually manage to get bogged down in time-travel stories (Pete is still patiently trying to explain Heinlein's "ALL YOU ZOMBIES" to me !), and this was no exception -- but in this case I think I'll have plenty of company ! Could it be that Damon Knight, deserting his excellent short-story metier to write his first full-length novel for several years, got himself bogged down with this ? Pity -- it starts off so intriguingly too. A 35-year-old Professor at a Californian University has memories reaching back only four years to an aircraft crash which left him with total amnesia. In addition to that, he teaches nine different classes, in person, at the same time, by courtesy of the University's matter-duplicator. One day a girl student asks a strange and apparently meaningless question -- but this triggers off a whole series of violent and inexplicable events.

The plot and action move up ahead in time, getting more and more involvedton the way. After going back a few times in an effort to find out what the hell was going on, and why, I gave it up and just "rode it" to the end. Loose ends are not tied in, questions are left unanswered, and certain events left unexplained.

BEYOND THE BARRIER is doubly disappointing in that it came from the pen of the man who wrote excellent stories such as FOUR IN ONE, and TICKET TO ANYWHERE. Perhaps A.E.Van Vogt, working in collaberation with Francis Durbridge, might have been able to sort this story out, and bring it to a satisfactory conclusion, but I doubt it...

SCAVENGERS IN SPACE ; Alan E Nourse. Faber & Faber
15s. 171 pp.

This is a story aimed at the juvenile market and a very good one it is. An uncomplicated, straightforward adventure yarn, full of action. The 18-year old twin sons of Roger Hunter sink their personal differences in an attempt to solve the mystery of their father's death in the Asteroid Belt, where he had (ostensibly) been working a mining claim. Representatives of a Big Bad Mining Combine do their coldly efficient best to thwart these investigations, in which the twins are aided by the experienced Johnny Coombs, their father's friend.

It is obvious almost from the start that Hunter's death was not an accident, as officially stated. Certainly this is space-opera, but it has no need to be ashamed of itself on that, or any other count. It's at least as good as the Heinlein juvenile, TIME FOR THE STARS. Personally I got a lot more fun out of it than I did from the Knight book -- and it beats Ballard any day....

NEW WRITINGS IN SF: 2. ; ed John Carnell 18s.
Dennis Dobson, 191 pp.

I was a little disappointed in this; in my view, it doesn't quite live up to the promise of the No.1. volume.

Brian McCabe, '64.

HELL-PLANET, by John Rackham, is rather too long for this type of collection (56 pp). It's well-written though, even if the theme is somewhat hackneyed. E.t.'s of aeons-ago human origin -- galactic traders and explorers -- discover Earth, and are flabbergasted to find it inhabited by a progressive technological culture. To their way of thinking, there is something badly wrong with the Terran race, and they feel obliged to discover what and why. Rackham's characters are believable, three-dimensional people, but the story might have been crisper, and packed a bigger punch, had it been condensed a little.

Colin Kapp's THE NIGHT FLAME is a very well written story of the horrors of satellite warfare, and its effects upon men of different temperaments. This is the best item in the collection; head-and-shoulders above the rest.

THE CREATORS by Joseph Green provides a thought-provoking and intriguing theory to account for the origin of the Large Magellanic Cloud.

ROGUE LEONARDO by G.L.Lack -- Art has finally been reduced to a stodgy, appalling conformity -- but what happens when one of the machines which reproduces Old Masters, begins to develop creative ideas of its own ? A rather depressing tale.

MAIDEN VOYAGE by John Rankine -- a fairly run-of-the-mill yarn about disaster on a hostile planet, and an eleventh-hour rescue from the attentions of equally hostile natives.

ODD BOY OUT by Dennis Etchison. This tragic and moving story would, I feel, (in contrast to HELL PLANET), have been better for a little more development of background, explanation of motives, etc. It leaves a number of 'Why ?' questions unanswered. A promising effort though.

THE ETERNAL MACHINES by William Spencer. A tale of a man, alone on a "graveyard planet -- the junkpile of the Universe", who develops delusions of grandeur.

A ROUND BILLIARD TABLE by Steve Hall. A light, frothy, faintly amusing 9-page yarn, frankly based on a gimmick.

I still think that the idea of boosting new writers in this way is commendable, and I await No.3 in the series with interest. I definitely recommend the Kapp story, even if you skip the rest. (I read it twice.)

GREYBEARD: Brian W Aldiss. Faber & faber, 18s. 237pp.

I found the first two chapters of this heavy going. I don't like catastrophe books, and here we have a world in which the youngest inhabitants are in their fifties. This is because nuclear testing finally got out of hand, inducing world-wide sterility. Civilisation breaks down into small, hopeless, pathetic groups of middle-aged and elderly people. Mr Aldiss's landscape is bleak and wintry, and his people cling on to life for no apparent reason.

Then, in Chapter Three, I came across a paragraph which suddenly made sense - to me, at any rate. The "Greybeard" of the title is in his middle fifties, and is, therefore, one of the youngest people on Earth.

"Life was a pleasure; (Greybeard) looked back at its moments... objectively, many of them held only misery, fear, confusion; but afterwards, and even at the time, he had known an exhilaration stronger than the misery, fear or confusion. A fragment of belief came to him from another epoch; "Cogito ergo sum". For him that had not been true; his truth had been, "Sentio ergo sum". I feel, so I exist.

He enjoyed this fearful, miserable, confused life, and not only because it made more sense than non-life. He could never explain that to anyone; he did not have to explain it to Martha" (his wife) "she knew; she felt as he did in that respect."

After that, I read on with renewed interest. Parts of the book still depressed me, but the flashbacks into the early lives of the main characters were were fascinating, and "Greybeard's"reflections on Man's age-old preoccupation with various symbolisms provided much food for thought.

The charlatan, Jingadangelow (how about that for a name !) is a larger-that-life character of whom I'd have liked to have learned more. His brand of fraud and mumbo-jumbo is, of course, inevitable in this childless world.

One of the few beautiful things in the story is the relationship between "Greybeard" and his wife, Martha. Hope is offered at the end of the book, but even that lacks certainty -- has humanity been hell-bent for suicide too long to apply the brakes ?

The book is very well-written, and, coming from the man who wrote the hilarious " The Primal Urge", demonstrates an enviable versatility. I don't quite know how to sum it up... I think "uncomfortable" is the most apt adjective, because its warning is well within the realms of contemporary possibility -- even probability.

I'm glad I read it (I think) -- but I wouldn't want to read it again. Perhaps those who like catastrophe stories will express less prejudiced views.

THE SYNDIC; Cyril M. Kornbluth. Faber & faber, 18s. 223pp.

This one I will want to read again -- a fine memorial to Kornbluth, who died at the tragically early age of 36. "THE SYNDIC" was written in 1953, and this edition has a preface by Edmund Crispin. The latter says; "The reasons for our being expected to like this story are so unusual, and so complicated, that the only way to explain them properly would be to quote the entire book." And he's right.

The blurb describes it as " a fast-moving, tightly-plotted and highly intelligent political thriller." That's right, too ! Three main groups are involved, -- the(U.S.) Goverment; the 'Mob'; and the Syndic itself. The "fat, sloppy, happy Syndic," which has carried the Welfare State to its extremes -- and has, for " a handful of wonderfully pleasant decades," made it work.

Charles Orsino is "brain-washed" and sent to spy on the Goverment, which has been "driven into the sea", and has a fleet based in Ireland. The people he meets on the way and after he arrives there are wonderfully varied and fascinating. His adventures are in the best thud-and-blunder traditions, with psychology, philosophy, and even psi thrown in for good measure. The love-interest is never over-intrusive, and throws some interesting sidelights on the pseudo-aristocracy/caste system to which even the Syndic is subject. Jobs for the boys, like - if they have the right family names.... (Was it Christopher Morley who once quoted, "The Lowells speak only to the Cabots, and the Cabots speak only to God."? It's not

quite as rigid as that in "THE SYNDIC," as Charles discovers.)

And Charles's Uncle Frank is a hell of a character ! Reminded me vaguely of Jubal in "Stranger In A Strange Land". Uncle Frank delivers a magnificent peroration near the end of the book (which Crispin quotes in full in the preface), which is one of the finest summings-up of humanity, with all its faults and virtues, that I've ever read. It demonstrates, as Crispin says, that "there's always some sort of baby thrown out with the bath water."

Reviewing Sheckley's "Journey of Joenes", I remarked that the Americans are inclined to take themselves a mite seriously. Obviously, the Syndic does nothing of the sort. Equally obviously, I approve of this kind of thing; "Orsino thought it over carefully. Dignity of the individual ? No, he doubted that he believed in it. Individuals were pretty funny, and were always making mistakes. Back home" (in the Syndic that is,)" you got along much better if you didn't go in for such a haughty austere notion, and took it for granted that there'd be a lot of bungling by you and everybody you ran into," which seems to match up nicely with the British habit of "muddling through."

Read it, read it, READ IT ! You may love it, you may hate it, -- but you'll never forget it.

THE UNCENSORED MAN. : Arthur Sellings. Dennis Dobson, 16s. 183pp.

Since I am always intensely interested in anything which extrapolates the potential of the human mind, I found this book intriguing. The publishers describe it as " a story of 'inner space'."

Dr. Mark Anders, a nuclear physicist involved in top secret work at "an arsenal of ideas", Jarwood -- (a thinly disguised Harwell ?) -- undergoes two strange and disquieting experiences within a few days. He is also conscious of a growing unease about the nature of his work, and its possible results, and his marriage to a fellow-scientist has degenerated into a series of dreary sparring matches.

Deciding that the "fault lies in himself", he visits a Polish-born psychiatrist Nowatski. The latter, after trying orthodox methods to resolve the conflict in Ander's mind, injects him with lysergic acid -- with startling and entirely unexpected results.

From here on, a parallel may be drawn with Chandler's "The Deep Reaches Of Space" but Sellings' story differs from that of Chandler, in that he devotes much more of his writing to philosophical discussion, and an attempt to explain what has happened to Ander's mind, and why. The title is a reference to the Freudian "censor" of the mind.

The ending is vaguely unsatisfactory; perhaps a sequel is planned. And I'd like to have read more about the Hardies, a couple of interesting characters who make an early appearance in the book, and who are "never heard o again.."

Recommended for students of the human mind, collectors of psi-slanted stories, and those who wonder about "such stuff as dreams are made of..."

The following book reviews in this issue are written by the editor, who has little doubt that his style is much less fluent than Beryl Henley's.

THE PARADOX MEN : Charles L Harness. Faber & Faber, 256 pp. 18/-

What an annoying book this is ! After reading the Damon Knight review in Infinity the enthusiastic Brian Aldiss introduction, and the dust cover blurb, I felt ready to begin. It started swiftly, and I settled back. After twenty pages I began to wonder when the fast action would slow up, and the hero would explain what exactly was going on, and'how-the-world-became-what-it-is'. After one hundred and twenty pages I was still waiting.. and by this time I no longer particularly cared. I was there for the ride, but not especially interested in the destination.

The whole thing is strangely reminscent of Van Vogt, whom I never did like at novel length. Only Harness puts an even greater over-abundance of action into his book, with even less time for reflection. The whole effect is neurotic in the extreme.. and the author's writing style is not a good one. It is as if you are reading an uninspired paraphrase of a much better book, it is merely a monotonous account .. all the excitement seems to have been dropped overboard, along with most of the odd touches which make a more successful book come alive.

I'm not sure whether or not all of the loose endings were finally tied up; in spite of Aldiss' enthusiasm, I don't think they were. However, my chief grievance about the book is that some fine ideas have been thrown away to very little effect, and that the book never really gets anywhere .

Sorry, but if a hero has no better way to achieve his purpose (which he doesn't) than to undergo mutilation and let his wife be tormented for ten years, then he's in the wrong business. And an author who writes such a plot shouldn't.

TIME AND STARS ; Poul Anderson. Gollancz, 206 pp. 16/-.

Few people can deny that Anderson is one of the best action-story writers in the business -- he knows every trick, and can always be relied upon to produce a solid and entertaining piece of writing. That his work is often stereotyped and predictable is perhaps a small price to pay, along with the fact that while sound, his work is with a few exceptions, not particularly memorable.

In this volume is assembled a selection that will tell the lie to my last remark. These stories are memorable, each in an individual way, each revealing one facet of Anderson's imaginative talent, each surfaced with the same no-nonsense writing style.

'No Truce With Kings' is down to earth in the manner that Robert Heinlein tells his stories. There is a 'gimmick factor' in that "aliens are taking over", and this has for me spoiled this story by its very superfluity. If only Anderson had confined his story to the Pacific States of America, their Civil War, and the conflicts of loyalty so ably presented ! But even so, the story won last year's Hugo for short fiction, and deservedly so.

'Turning Point' is a moral problem, not so much solved as by-passed, but holding the attention throughout; while 'Escape From Orbit' is another Heinlein-styled tale of the years to come, and one that would have been at home in Analog. Nothing really bri lliant here, only run-of-the-mill excellence.

'Epilogue' contains one of the most breath-taking ideas to ever hit SF. This story, with such a truly magnificent idea, could easily have been expanded into a full-length novel. The characters are the regular Anderson stock figures, but they are not the principals in this story. Instead, the 'hero' is a being so utterly alien, yet so soundly logical, that you will sit and think about this one long after you have finished the story.

The final story says things about literary phonies, and may be an indirect plea for a return to the old days of straightforward story-telling. I'm probably wrong, since Anderson has his tongue most prominently in cheek, but the satirical humour of this tale applies quite aptly to the present SF scene.

There is one story omitted from the US collection of the same title, that being a minor piece, 'Eve Times Four'. The one reservation I have in recommending this book is that if you follow the magazines, you will have read all the stories before.

INTRODUCING SF ; Brian Aldiss (ed). Faber & Faber, 224 pp. 18/-

The only real thing wrong with this book is the pretentiously unneccessary 'Glossary Of Terms'. I'm sure that I've never heard of such presumeably commonplace SF terms as 'radiotronic','eledozer','magnapult', etc. And as for the rest, ..if someone doesn't know what 'ionosphere' and 'interplanetary' mean, then he won't be reading the book anyway.

The stories in the collection, designed to 'introduce' SF, are generally good ones. I'm sure I wouldn't have made quite the same choice of opening story -- it is by Budrys, whose characters are usually neurotic, and this individual is almost frighteningly obsessed.

I think the other items are probably as good as any for a beginner to bite on. There may be better choices, but I'm quite sure that I would not like to have to find them. It is so very difficult to get anyone to form a liking for SF, without having started at a very early age. If they are going to like SF, the odds are that they will find their own way into the field. If they're not going to like it, then the occasional collection like this from Aldiss will do not a scrap of good.

So, all in all, it seems best to evaluate this collection in terms of its appeal to the hardened fan. In which case, I haven't read four stories out of twelve. You may be luckier, and have read fewer... in which case, if you want another anthology, go ahead and ask someone to make it your Christmas present.

THE WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION : Robert P Mills (ed). Gollancz, 349 pp. 21/-.

This is a further volume in Gollancz' series of SF 'bumper' volumes for Xmas, and probably the most satisfying so far in this series of collections. The stories included are the particular favourites of a multitude of top notch SF authors, from their own works. This choice alone provides food for thought, enhanced further by the short introduction that each writer has appended. Who would have thought that Poul Anderson's favourite work would have been the highly experimental (and to me highly unsuccessful) NIGHT PIECE -- so unlike the stories which have made him so well known. Or that Sturgeon's SAUCER OF LONELINESS was written in four hours (it would take me longer than that to merely type out the story from the book.)

A long epilogue from Alfred Bester looks into the problems of an author asked to name his favourite from among his own works.

If you haven't read a fair proportion of the included stories, then by all means go out and buy the book. It's an excellent collection.

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GUEST REVIEW by W.T.Webb.

THE WANDERER by Fritz Leiber.
(Ballantine, 75 c. 318 pp.)

This remarkable book can be guaranteed to evoke conflicting emotions in the breast of the average reader. It makes clear the possibility that one can dislike the general tone of a book, and disagree with most of the attitudes and opinions in it, and yet feel compelled to read it to the end.

There can be doubt about the strength of Mr Leiber's craftsmanship. And the scope of his imagination is breathtaking. But many passages in THE WANDERER will make numerous readers want to throw it in someone else's dustbin.

One remarkable feature of the novel is the constsnt awareness of geography. This side of it can be thought of as a vivid geography lesson, given, as it were, from space. From mid-Atlantic we are snatched across the world to the China Sea; and then on to Somerset, Germany, Harlem, Palm Beach, Brazil, New York... Sea-currents, tides, winds, and the shapes of the islands, gulfs, and continents are constantly impinging upon the reader's attention. And the Earth's place in the Solar System is defined in impressive phrases.

" The other planets were mostly on the other side of the sun, as far away as people at the other end of a big house...
The Earth-Moon pair, huddling by the solar fire were almost alone in a black forest twenty million million miles across.... "

The language of the book is at all times colourful and compelling. It ranges in quality from a sublime lyricism to a remarkable hotchpotch of jargons and slangs. Throughout the story one is impressed with the technique and the wordmanship, and repulsed by the overall flavour of pessimism, depravity, and lack of purpose in life.

The technique of rapidly switching the narrative from place to place and from one character-group to another, makes for lively reading. But in parts of the book this seems too much of a good thing. The reader barely gets time to recognise the character-group about whom he is reading before he is switched to another. This tends after a while to dehumanise the characters. And the reader too, becomes temporarily dehumanised -- a detached intelligence twitching purposelessly from place to place like one in a dream, and seeing nothing but disaster, lust and death.

" ....vultures tore away the last shreds of the flesh of Asa Holcomb's face, laying wholly bare the beautiful grinning red bone."

THE WANDERER is a science fiction novel, written by an established science fiction author for science fiction fans. A notable feature is the number of science fiction references in the book. Numerous science fiction authors are mentioned by name, and many of the characters are imaginary science fiction readers and fans, and such kindred spirits as scientists, stargazers, and flying saucer students.

Characters for the most part are vivid and unforgetable. But they have, with a few exceptions , the bizarre inhumanity of creatures out of some sick comic strip.

There is Wolf Loner, a seagoing lone wolf. And Fritz Scher, who for the glory of the German Fatherland keeps a consecrated and humourless eye upon the tides. Barbara Katz is a self-styled Girl Adventurer who sports a black playsuit and chases a senile millionaire. Margo Gelhorn has three suitors and a companion cat. But she loses her cat and gains a ray gun. Arab Jones and his dope-addict mates smoke hashish in a rooftop tent. Bagong Bung smuggles questionable merchandise across the China Sea. Knolls Kettering III is a millionaire ku-klux-klanner with an eye for all sorts of heavenly bodies, a bone-plastic splice in his hip, and a habit of taking a ten-inch dolly to bed with him. Dai Davies is an inglorious, but hardly mute Dylan Thomas. And Rama Joan is an American Buddhist woman who wears a turban and a man's evening dress suit.

We are inured these days to a certain amount of pornography in our fiction. Much of it reads less like the wanton love-talk of a concupiscent young woman than the erotic wishful thinking of a dirty old man. Few sf readers will object to a frank portrayal of sexual activity, but in this book copulation is combined with death, cruelty, sensationalism, and perversion. There is no joy in it. It seems as repulsive as the deeds of ugly perverts in a smelly urinal.

Against this background of bestiality and chaos, a few isolated incidents of kindness and heroism show up with pathetic radiance. The negro servants with Kettering appear lovable and human. And so does Wolf Loner when he rescues a young girl from the flood.

But although the book leaves, as it were, a nasty taste in the mouth, its narrative is so vivid that from time to time the reader is almost persuaded to look up into the sky to make sure that the huge golden and purple bulk of the Wanderer is not up there swaying our oceans across the continents and nibbling away at the moon.

....Bill Webb, 1964.

ALBERT J. LEWIS—

Illustrated by Dick Howett.

FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD

AN APPRECIATION OF THE NEW BOOK BY ROBERT HEINLEIN.

For a quarter of a century, Robert Heinlein has held unchallenged primacy as the master storyteller of the science fiction field. Yet, within the past few years, he has become also the most controversial of science fiction writers, not on the basis of his fiction techniques, but on the basis of ideas. There are two reasons for this. One is that Heinlein himself, in such stories as Stranger In A Strange Land, and Glory Road, has had a tendency to subordinate dynamic plotting, always one of his major strengths, to philosophical exposition. The second, and more important I think is that many of these ideas are anathema to the liberal-conformist majority of science fiction readers and fans. Heinlein has pushed a great many buttons; the result is that many of these critics have become preoccupied with the validity of Heinlein's political, sexual, or sociological ideas, and have lost sight of Heinlein the fiction writer.[1]

1. In New Worlds SF 145, James Colvin cannot resist branding a bit of 7-year-old, minor 4th-of-July sentimentality as "cosy reaction" and invoking the name of Goldwater.("The Man Who Travelled In Elephants".)

I would like to dissect Farnham's Freehold , Heinlein's latest, to discuss it both as an idea-vehicle and a work of adventure fiction, and to show, if I can, that what may appear as inadequate and frustrating polemic makes perfectly good sense if explained in terms of the rules of fiction.

Heinlein's stories have always sparkled with ideas, some developed as major themes and some tossed away as background detail. In the earlier Heinlein these ideas were mainly of a technical nature: the construction of a spacesuit; the realignment of cities along the moving beltways; the total environment of an interstellar ship. Sociological ideas were there too, but they were primarily presented as character viewpoints, they often tended to be throwaway remarks, and they often resulted in a startling quality of verisimilitude, a " recognition of truth." Heinlein was epigrammatizing things we had all known in incohate form. He also had the devastating technique of following a plotline to a logical conclusion, and then demonstrating that it wasn't a conclusion at all. Above all, both Heinlein and his readers were caught up in the great and shining adventure of the future. World War II did little to dim this. We were all engaged in a great fight against monstrous and present Evil, and the future was the Land of Promise where anything was possible.

But the world changed, and Heinlein and his readers changed with it. There came The Bomb, and the Cold War, and somewhere in those years, science fiction lost part of its capacity to play. One of the greatest charms of science fiction has always been its willingness to play with ideas, to ask "what would happen if...?" and to exagerrate and follow an idea to a remorseless conclusion. And nobody cared about validity, or demanded that the picture of the future be True. But as the nature of the post-war world became increasingly apparent, a sense began to set in that the time for play was past, that it was an over-expensive luxury, and that there might not be a future. The result was (to oversimplify), two conflicting ideas that coloured all other considerations . The first was the great imperative that the Bomb Must Be Banned -- that no other course of events could be tolerated but that war must be made impossible. This was the attitude adopted by the majority of active fans. The second great idea was that however desirable peace might be, man was not going to achieve it, that the Bomb would be dropped, and that any rational course of action must be dedicated to the proposition of coming out of World War III with as much of value intact as possible. This was the attitude adopted by Heinlein. With personal death and the death of all that we cherish as the penalty for a wrong choice, to much of fandom, Heinlein's decision became a thing of monstrous Evil -- and to Heinlein, conversely, the opposing attitude is one of criminal folly.

This is why Heinlein's books are a continual vortex for discussion; for Heinlein, again and again, is urging us to make his choice in what may be the greatest decision confronting our generation. This is why the issue of validity enters into a discussion of the books of Heinlein as it enters into that of no other science fiction writer, and why he has been so bitterly denounced. To concede that Heinlein is right is to admit that we must redirect the entire bent of our personal lives, and to concede that our choice is limited, not between good and evil, but simply to the less disasterous of two evils. (This issue is a far more frightening thing in Britain than it is in America, because in Britain

Farnham's Freehold, Robert Heinlein's thirtieth novel, is attracting the large amount of comment that a Heinlein book usually provokes. As for the past two or three of Mr Heinlein's books most of this criticism has been more than somewhat adverse. In this article, Al Lewis attempts to analyse the book, and speculates on the author's reasons for writing it. The resulting assessment brings out some of the good points in this novel that others have, I feel, ignored. Two especially pertinent articles are 'The Politics Of Nostalgia' in Quark 8, and 'The Political Philosophy Of Robert A Heinlein' in Dynatron 25. Should there be sufficient interest evidenced, I will attempt to get permission to reprint these articles wholly or in part in some future issue.

Farnham's Freehold is published by G.P.Putnam's Sons, at 3.95. A considerably shortened version of the book appeared in IF

Heinlein's choice is no choice at all. World War III means, in all probability, the physical destruction of the island and everything on it. Save perhaps for the Benelux countries, Britain is more vulnerable to atomic attack than any other nation on earth. Were an Englishman to concede the 99% probability of Heinlein's correctness, his only rational course would still be to strive mightily for that other 1%.

The atomic war issue is presented more explicitly in Farnham's Freehold than in any of Heinlein's other books. Hugh Farnham, like Heinlein himself, is a tough-minded pessimist who expects war, and has therefore built himself a well-equipped bomb shelter. Unlike so many of the fallout shelters built a couple of years back[2], this is designed to function; it has an airlock, escape tunnel, stored oxygen, plenty of food, a spare radio, and all sorts of incidentals neccessary for survival in that possible future where civilisation-as-we-know-it, and most means of manufacture have been totally destroyed. The issue is dramatised throught the conflict between Hugh, and his son, Duke, who in this section of the story is used as a stalking-horse for the presentation and demolition of the "ain't gonna be no war" syndrome of ideas. I say "stalking-horse" because Duke is never allowed to present an effective case -- by means of a weak and spoiled character he is immediately cast in the role of a loser. He is Farnham's plot-opponent rather than his philosophical opponent -- and this is one of the things that keeps Farnham's Freehold from being a really effective novel of ideas. When the Bomb hits, and the shelter with all its occupants are cast into the future wilderness, Duke continues to present the "weak, liberal, idealistic" viewpoint, which is continually defeated by " tough-minded, realistic " Hugh.

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2. The fallout-shelter craze in Los Angeles stopped rather abruptly after the Bel Air fire of 1961, which took some 400 homes -- and the smoke settled and lingered in the shelters for days after it had disappeared elsewhere -- including the private shelter of Nobel prize-winner and sometime member of the Atomic Energy Commission, Willard F. Libby.

Hugh's "tough-mindedness" has some interesting characteristics. As one might expect, it is authoritarian -- but Hugh is willing to lay down his authority if the majority so wishes. They don't, of course, and he doesn't. It is also a willingness to face the future without regretting the past. And the other side of that coin is an absolution of oneself for past mistakes. "But I never had control over his rearing," says Hugh of Duke,"and I certainly had no control over what became of him" (p. 305) ..."what a person is can never be somebody elses fault, I think." (p. 95). "It is impossible for anyone to be responsible for another person's behaviour. I spoke of myself as 'responsible' for the group; that was verbal shorthand. The most I can do --or you, or any leader, -- is to encourage each one to be responsible for himself" (p 79).

The second major social attitude examined in the book is the attitude toward sex. As in Stranger and Glory Road, the general attitude taken by the protagonists, the major sympathetic characters, Hugh, Barbara, and Karen, is that Sex is Good, Sex is Fun. They speak out in favour of (at one time or another), nudity, incest, miscegenation, adultery, premarital intercourse, and free love. The weaker or unsympathetic characters, on the other hand, do not Enjoy It -- are self-conscious, unaggressive, taboo-ridden (Duke's unmanliness is emphasised by his acceptance of castration). A great point is made of liberal openmindedness . It is quite interesting to realise, then, that in spite of all the talking, sexual union takes place only once in the story -- and that under the imminent threat of atomic annihilation.

Hugh, for all his intellectual tolerance is thoroughly conventional in his personal conduct. He and Barbara fail to renew their relationship, though the opportunity is not lacking, for the most conventional of reasons; Hugh's respect for his marriage-relationship, emotionally unsatisfactory though it may be. He accepts Kitten as a roomate, but makes no love to her. Hugh (and I think we may infer, Heinlein) is a monogamist. (Again one might infer -- indulging in that dangerous sport of psychoanalysing authors from their works -- that Heinlein is sufficiently content with his own marriage that he feels no real emotional pull toward extramarital relationships -- but he is willing to grant liberty to others). Hugh's expressed attitude toward sex is a healthy one, but in practice it turns out to be far more solemn and serious than his talk would lead one to believe. Except for the relationship between Hugh and Barbara, the sexual relationships are consistently distasteful; Ponce and Grace, Duke and Grace, Duke's castration, Ponce's cannibalistic predeliction for young girls, Karen's fatal pregnancy. Hugh Farnham is hardly sexually freer than Matt Dodson, Space Cadet.

But there is a constructive side to Farnham's moral attitude too. This is a point made once, in passing, of the importance of that " spark " in establishing a worthwhile sexual relationship. And the other point, demonstrated, but never stated, is the most important of all; that only in mutual love is true sexual satisfaction achieved. This is why the incestuous interest of Karen and Hugh is Good, while that of Duke and Grace is Bad. This is why Hugh is uninterested in Kitten as a sexual partner, why he is willing to let Grace go with but passing remorse. Sex is Good, but Sex with Love is better still. Hardly a bohemian attitude, but in our mid-twentieth century society, a somewhat unconventional one, perhaps.

The third, and the best, of Heinlein's sociological explorations, is that into the Race Question. It is only here that Heinlein begins to write true science fiction, and to fully utilise one of his greatest talents; that for creating totally consistent and totally believable future societies. The validity of a Heinlein future society is obtained through the marriage of several devices -- but highest among them would be a thorough thinking-through of the full implications of his postulates. This results in several internal plot-twists as new facets of the society are revealed, and an aura of authenticity as a host of minor details drop almost unnoticeably into place.

Here Heinlein indulges in that most characteristic of all scientifictional techniques; pure play of ideas. The presence or absence of this quality marks the difference between something that is good science fiction, and something that isn't -- regardless of the quality of the writing[3]. This is the paramount quality that made Astounding successful. And it is the quality that provides Farnham's Freehold with its greatest virtues.

After the white race substantially obliterates itself in World War III (and during a mysterious subsequent disaster called the Great Change, which is one of those tantalising hooks that Heinlein delights in) the negroes repopulate the world, enslaving the remaining whites, and treating them as a species of domesticated animal -- with all the advantages that modern science is able to bring to bear on the problem of slaveholding. That they are negroes is of prime importance to the second half of the book, for this carries out Heinlein's theme of freedom, by showing what life is like in its absence (though one might question how free Hugh Farnham is, living with a speaker in his ear and a transistor radio tuned to emergency band so he can get first warning when the Bombs Fall).

Heinlein enters into the discussion of the racial question[4] by two devices; one is that of letting Hugh and Barbara -- and Grace and Duke too, though we really don't care about them -- experience life from Underneath. The second is the device of Joe. Joe is a negro, a servant-of-a-sort to Farnham. In the opening section of the book we see Joe over Farnham's right shoulder, as it were. We are impressed by Farnham's liberal attitude, by his common-sense opinions. Then we join Farnham Underneath, and discover, as we begin to emotionally feel what Joe has felt all his life, that Farnham's Liberality (and our own) is not enough. And Heinlein has still another point to make; that Negroes can be bad, too. We understand and respect Joe and Ponce as people, but we don't really like them, and we loathe the society that Ponce's ancestors

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3. This results in the paradox that a well-written and thoroughly satisfying story may not be a particularly good science fiction story -- and some richly exciting SF is embarrasingly bad as literature. Cf the works of Ray Bradbury, and E.E.Smith, respectively.

4. Here, Heinlein is interpreted as pressing for more liberality in the colour issue. One other review that I have seen, (cf Quark 8) purports to give exactly the opposite meaning to this latest book of Heinlein's, and more-or-less accuses Heinlein of deliberately stirring up anti-negro sentiments! (Editors note)

and their kind have created, while also realising that, given the chance to be on top rather than the bottom of this (or any other) society, we, like Joe, might have decided to stay.

None of the sociological points are completely explored, and the first, at least, is certainly insufficiently explored, but there is a reason for this; they are not meant to be. Heinlein is a storyteller, a purveyor of entertainment. He is putting together an adventure novel out of some old and hackneyed ideas -- but because Robert Heinlein is utterly incapable of writing old and hackneyed anything, and because he is a master world-builder, we find ourselves involved and provoked. Heinlein's ideas have outgrown their background material genesis and have become the focus of attention. Farnham's Freehold is defective, not because the ideas are too weak, but because they are too strong. And it must be confessed that this is partly Heinlein's fault. In writing his adventure he is also being didactic. Some years back he deliberately set out, through science fiction, to educate American youth to the age of space. He has not lost his audience -- this book is addressed to those same youths grown adult. And Heinlein is still teaching.

The character of Hugh Farnham is central to the story. This is a character we have met before, usually in secondary roles. This is Richard Baslim-Jubal Harshaw-Lazarus Long-grown-older. This is the Heinlein character. The identification of Heinlein and his hero is so strong that there is considerable danger in assuming their equivalence. Farnham mirrors many of Heinlein's attitudes quite closely; like Heinlein he has a bomb shelter, likes cats, fails to toe either the liberal or conservative Party Line, is vigourous in expressing his opinions, kind, paternal, and financially secure. He also plays bridge.

But he is a story character, and as a story character, his most interesting aspect is one that is not pointed out, but that crawls to the surface nonetheless. That is, that for all his certitude, Hugh Farnham is a failure. Before the story opens, he has surrendered to his wife, abdicated responsibility in the raising of his child, and accepted a son who is both spoiled and unmanly. His bomb-shelter saves their lives only by dint of being thrown into the future by the proximate explosion of a Grand Slam, and in his major story enterprise Hugh fails to escape Ponce's estate, and his life is saved and a happy ending achieved only through the invocation of a deus ex machina.

Hugh, Ponce, and Barbara are the best-developed characters of the book. Karen is on stage long enough to capture our total sympathy and to die bloodily in one of science fiction's more memorably harrowing scenes. Neither Joe nor Grace are quite believable, and Grace is particularly unsatisfactory, because we never see in the story, except by report, any sign of the superior quality of the woman who was Hugh Farnham's bride[5]. Duke, who performs as Farnham's foil, is frustrating because he is too weak to do so adequately. When Heinlein finally gets him offstage, the reader is relieved. Ponce and Memtok are adversaries better suited to Farnham's mettle. And none of the characters, Farnham included, grow one whit in the course of their adventures.

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5 However much Heinlein may resemble Farnham, Virginia Heinlein bears no resemblance whatever to Grace ! I can certify this personally.

A large part of the power of the book is due the emotional power of individual story situations. In fact, this is a NASTY book. Heinlein has deliberately played on our basic fears and has pushed emotional buttons. And he hits hard. He threatens us with personal death, in atomic annihilation. He threatens us with the destruction of our civilisation and all that we hold to be of value. He threatens us with castration, a particularly primal fear, more potent because seldom brought to the surface. He threatens us with utter helplessness in the face of atomic doom, utter helplessness to save or aid loved ones when Barbara and the twins are taken to separate quarters, and utter helplessness in the face of natural forces, as, in spite of all Hugh can do, we are forced to watch Karen die.

And having touched our basic fears, he reinforces them by touching on our revulsions: incest, emasculation, cannibalism. I repeat, this is a NASTY book.

Perhaps this can be best established by comparing it with half-a-hundred other thrown-into-the-future yarns -- Jerry Sohl's Costigan's Needle will do for a sample. That most competent and enjoyable tale appears as a pallid idyll before Heinlein's brutal struggle-for-survival Yet there is a mitigation; each of the major plot sequences is stopped short of its logical consequences. Atomic death is averted when the shelter is thrown into the future; the breakup of the group is averted by the arrival of Ponce; the death or tempering of Hugh is averted by the wholly gratuitous return to the twentieth century.

For, like all of Heinlein's best novels, this one is episodic. Heinlein seems to work best at novelet length, and one of Heinlein's trademarks is setting up subplots in lineal fashion, so that one is brought to a conclusion before another is begun (Citizen of the Galaxy and Beyond this Horizon are the most clearcut examples). The novels are held together by a unity of philosophical theme and of plot objective. In Farnham's Freehold, the three episodes correspond roughly to the three sociological themes, but they also serve to reinforce one another. In particular, the opening sequence is artfully done. The establishment of characters in the shelter scene does not allow us to accept their death/escape calmly, and the total sympathy generated for Karen sets up the powerful shock of the childbirth scene.

The philosophical theme of the novel is freedom and self-reliance. The plot theme is survival. To neither is a return to the twentieth century neccessary. In terms of plotting, the invocation of the time-machine is inexcusable. This is the one element completely out of place in Ponce's future. It is unprepared; it is unbelievable. It is there by auctorial fiat rather than as a natural outgrowth of the society. And while the conclusion of the book serves to recapitulate the opening arguement, the only unity it imposes is one of geography.

If the conclusion of the book is one of its greatest weaknesses, it is also one of its greatest strengths, because, for no good reason at all, Heinlein tosses in the problem of parallel worlds, and creates the most enjoyable problem in the story. This is old-fashioned play-with-ideas science fiction in its pure form, and long after the reader has had his fill of bombs and negroes and sex, he can speculate on the nature of Farnham's time-stream. How many parallel worlds -- two, three,-- or four ? Is Ponce's world an outgrowth of Hugh's first world, or is

its remembered history accurate ? What engendered the time-split that changed Barbara's gear-shift from automatic to manual and left her keys in the ignition ? Heinlein doesn't tell us. Nor should he.

Farnham's Freehold is Heinlein's best story since Starship Troopers It is a book of considerable weaknesses and of considerable strengths. If it is unlikely to win a Hugo against Davy (ZENITH, P.22-23) or The Wanderer (ZENITH, P. 57-58), it is a strong third against the keenest competition in years.

.....Al Lewis.

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mint condition unless otherwise stated, payment plus postage on receipt of order. List alternatives.

Foundation,by Asimov Gnome Press, d/w, 15/-; Beyond This Horizon, by Robert Heinlein, Crosset & Dunlap, 1948, d/w, 7/6; The Dunwich Horror, by H.P.Lovecraft, Arkham House, d/w, 25/-; Time and Stars, by Poul Anderson, Gollancz, 1964, mint, 7/6; SFBC, at 3/6 each:-- The Darkest Of Nights, (Maine); The Drwned World,(Ballard); Time Is The Simplest Thing (Simak); Dragon In The Sea (Herbert); Fall Of Moondust (Clarke); Unexpected Dimension, (Budrys); The Stars Are Too High (Bahnson).

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A selection of paperbacks, mostly mint and covering the last few years publications in the UK, and also odd copies of many magazines are available for disposal. Send your want list.

----------usual editorial address-----

Now the truth can be told

The covers of ZENITH 6 and ALIEN 10 share a common ancestry. Alan Dodd, while rummaging through his files (he keeps 11 years of letters),found two drawings by Eddie Jones, both circa 1957. He very kindly sent them to me for use in ZENITH. One was used on the front cover (Z6), the other was rejected on the grounds that it would use too much ink during printing, due to large black areas . Both originals were sent back to Eddie. Now, by extrapolation, it would seem that Eddie was approached by the ALIENS, was too busy to do any new work, and gave them this old but unused illo. The ALIENS promptly proved that it was possible to reproduce the illo, although the large black areas caused messiness. It would be a good point for would-be artists to remember; if there are solid areas more than about ½" across this will make reproduction very difficult with a Roneo machine. I am hoping to afford a silk screen for it, but not for some time. PRW.

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