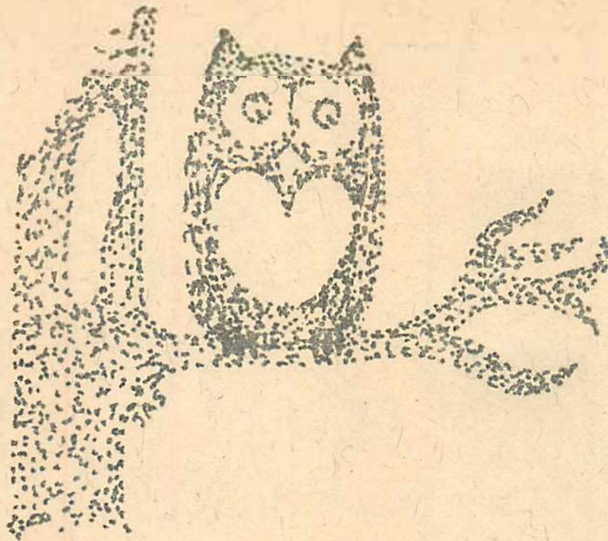


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ASH-WING 23

MARCH 1978

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### THE ARTISTS

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Back Cover by Jim McLeod

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HELP!!! I committed the unpardonable sin and lost the letter of an artist. Can anyone tell me the name and address of the artist who did the illustration on page 26? The initials look like "PeP". I'd appreciate whatever help I can get on this to make amends.

ASH-WING 23 comes from Frank Denton, 14654 - 8th Ave. S.W., Seattle, WA 98166  
It's been so long since the last issue that I won't even attempt to abstract from you any of the usual amenities. Just write and tell me that you received it. Add a word or two of comments and we'll be friends until next issue. Bye.





Hello, again. It's been quite a while. Steve Bard called the other night to ask when another issue of Ash-Wing was coming out. He wanted me to include a flyer of The Northwest Science Fiction Society to tell everyone about Seattle's first convention in many, many years. Norwescon I will be held in March and I hope that I get this issue out by that time so some of you can come to the convention. Robert Blenheim wrote to ask if I had fallen off the face of the earth. He's several columns ahead of me and may be just a smidgin ticked. Hmmm, I wonder how I can soothe him? Reed Andrus called to ask when A-W would be out. He was just trying to show off because he had finished and mailed off Harbinger. Somebody asked me at the last meeting of The Nameless if I had produced an issue last year and was I eligible for nomination for a Hugo. I laughed a lot about that. Local loyalty is certainly sweet.

Well, as a matter of fact, there was an issue or two last year. I produced the last issue sometime around Westercon, the 4th of July. It was imperative to do so at the time because I was leaving for five weeks in England. I certainly thought that I would have finished another issue sometime in the fall. But it did not come



to pass. And it will be a bit longer before I get this mimeod and off into the care of the post office.

Excuses? Of course, there are excuses. We did go off to England for five weeks. When one returns home from a trip of that length, there are any number of things to catch up on, and they are all time-consuming. We had things complicated quite a bit by the death of Anna Jo's mother. She had died the Monday before we got home, and the funeral was kept until Saturday morning. We got in after an extremely long and complicated flight which was caused by the air traffic controller assistants' strike in England. We were very lucky to make it home on Friday. And to be greeted with the news of the death and a funeral the following morning wasn't our idea of a homecoming.

Then it was back to school to prepare for fall quarter. I have been given a couple of extra tasks in addition to my administrative duties as director of the library-media center. I get to be chief honcho for the accreditation review this year. Isn't that thrilling? It involved setting up 26 self-study committees on the campus and seeing that they got off to a good start. It means seeing to it that they complete their work and turn in a report on the various instructional and service divisions and other aspects of the college. It means editing those reports into a meaningful document that can be presented to the accrediting association. It means preparing for the team which will visit the campus for three days in the fall. I will have to provide hotels, transportation, secretarial assistance, a banquet, and other sorts of goodies to the visiting team. Finally I will have to go before the entire association sometime in December to justify our existence.

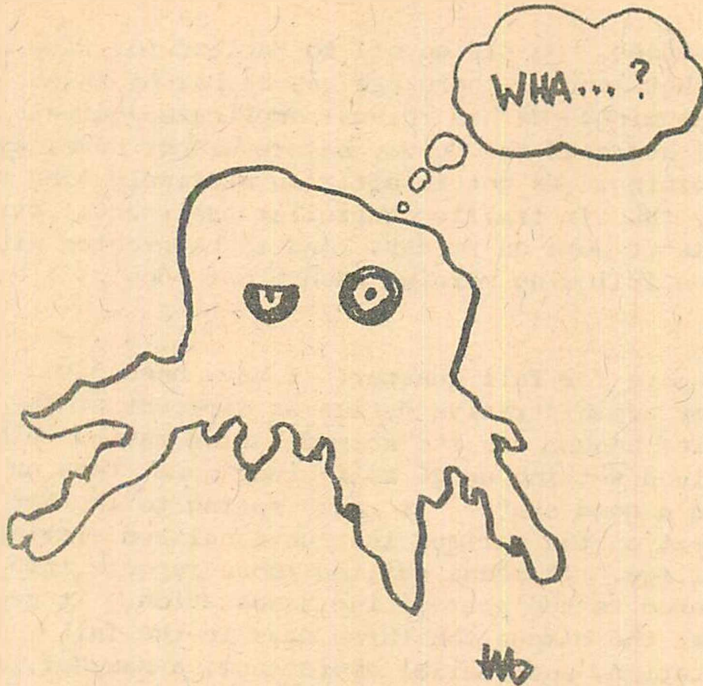
Then along came the new copyright law and who is supposed to be the expert on campus? Yep. I have to get out a publication telling faculty what they can do and what they can't do. And I'm quite sure that they will not like what they hear. And put together some sort of workshop for those interested. Another little time consumer. I find my tail dragging when I get home. And have been trying to devote some time to working on short stories instead of A-W. Are those enough excuses. C'mon, Denton, we don't want to hear excuses. Just publish the damned fanzine.

#### LONDON AND POINTS SOUTH AND NORTH BUT MAINLY WEST

The five weeks in England were superb. I'll try to give you a bit of the flavor of the trip without becoming boring. I think I probably have a tendency to do that. I get so excited about England that I think other people ought to be equally so. To my great disappointment they are often not. I have had some contacts already, however, from people who are beginning to get cranked up about the convention in '79. I've also had suggested (kiddingly, I hope) that I should lead a trip for the worldcon. I chuckle a lot, but what most people don't know is that I guard my time jealously, and I don't think I'd make a very good scoutmaster for five weeks. We intend to spend a week hiking a portion of the Coastal Footpath in Devon, and probably about 12 days in Ireland. My advice to others is that they make their own study of what they wish to see and then set about seeing it. That's what we have done.

Anyway, this past summer's trip was excellent. We visited Cornwall again, taking in some of the small coastal fishing villages which are said to be unspoiled. Hah!! Archie and Beryl Mercer insist that, indeed, they are unspoiled for nine months of the year. But certainly not in July or August. We did manage fairly good looks at Polperro and Mevagissey which are very picturesque. And must be even more so when the tourists go home. Along the south coast we visited the Lizard Peninsula, and it was here that we tasted our first little bit of the Coastal footpath. If the three or four miles that we hiked is indicative of the kind of beauty to be expected, then we want eventually to do the entire 515 miles. Incredible beauty. It was a lovely day and I suppose could be a real bitch if the weather turned on you. But it has done that to us on Exmoor and we discovered that we were not made of sugar.





Exmoor was the next stop and we stayed there for five days. This has become our favorite place in all England and I can't describe exactly why. But it's a place that we will return to every trip as long as we are able to go to England. There is a fascination about the moor, the small towns and villages, the solitary spaces, the coastline of the Bristol Channel that I would gladly move there if I could figure out a way to support myself. We headquartered in Lynton and drove out each day to explore the moor by car and foot.

Then it was on to Wales. This was our second encounter (crap, I didn't mean to do that; it's being done to death and I hate it. But for Truth and Fairness I'll leave it in.) with

Wales and this time we traveled the south coast. We had been warned that this was the industrial area of Wales, but it was interesting to visit Cardiff and to see the magnificent folk museum and grounds at St. Fagan's, just outside Cardiff. The further west we traveled the less industrial it was. One of our main objectives was to pay our respects to Dylan Thomas. The village of Laugharne was interesting; we visited Thomas' house overlooking the estuary of the river, and paid our respects to his grave in the village churchyard. Then on around the coast to Fishguard, a lovely little town. But I really felt more comfortable when we got to the hill country north of Aberystwyth. At Dolgellau we stayed a day to climb Cader Idris, the Chair of Arthur. Then traveled on to Clwyd to visit Presfords and to climb Moel Arthur and look out over the vale. Then a trip to Holmes Chapel to visit with Bentcliffes.

Finally up to Cumbria and the Lake District, more beautiful hills and mountains to hike and climb in. Anna Jo's cousin Margaret was as hospitable as ever and we stayed with her in her home at Culgaith. Day trips into the Lake District, seeing Hardknott Pass and Wrynose Pass. Hardknott has an exceptionally well-preserved Roman fort, one of the best in all Britain. The pass and the surrounding hills are beautiful and the view from up on top is sensational.

As the trip drew near its end, we motored down to Oxford and Henley, the first to buy books and the second to spend some time with Keith Roberts. Lots of books and three fine days with Keith, motoring around the countryside, seeing places that were dear to him and all new to us, stopping at some of the finest pubs in all of England for lunches, coming home late and tired. Fresh brewed coffee and fine music from Keith's collection, talk desultory at first and then stirring up to important stuff like life, and writing, and relationships, and what is important and what is not, and how much a part of our lives music must be. Oh, good times, and I feel so pleased to have made a friendship with this fine author and outstanding man. And having to leave after a few days and Anna Jo throwing our arms around him because we knew that it would be two years before we would have the pleasure again. I hope all of that doesn't embarrass him, but that's how we feel about him.

Then we journeyed on to Ruislip to visit with the Pipers, got hit by another car in the pouring rain, but were able to drive on. The sensation of the visit



was the First Biennial U.S. vs. England Dart Championships in which your obedient servant upheld the honor of these United States and ~~whipped Dave~~ barely edged out Dave with minutes to go before closing time at the Ruislip Football Club clubhouse. It was his own set of darts that he challenged me with, too. Oh, I'll never let it die. Dave will go to his grave with the story ringing in his ears. We had a lovely visit with Dave and his family, and I was able to talk Cathy out of a superb recipe for cheesecake which uses the not-quite-so-rich cottage cheese. We've made it three times and it's been a howling success. If you'll drop me a card, I'll be glad to share Cathy's recipe.

Five weeks is much too short for a vacation in England. Three pages is much too short to tell you all about it. Save your money and go see it for yourselves. Have your own adventures.

#### DENVER

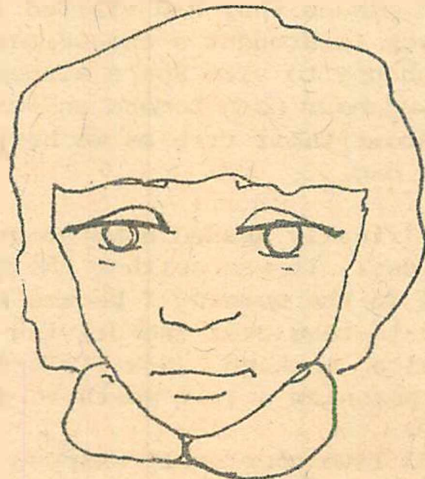
The end of October brought MileHiCon. It was its usual fine convention, chaired this time by Dee Beetem, who was nervous as the proverbial cat. She need not have worried. It was quite well attended, I thought and everyone I talked to had a very enjoyable time.

Our first surprise was going down to one of the rooms Friday evening to meet the authors. There were two of our friends from Seattle, Dan Willott and Susan Mason. They said that they had just come down to return a pie tin in which we had given them an apple pie. Somehow I didn't quite believe that. But they seemed to enjoy themselves a lot, too. It was their first time at MileHi.

Roger Zelazny was pro GoH and had his family with him. He was quite a figure at the Trivia Bowl and the team on which he played was one of the finalists. Although I didn't watch any of this (it goes on for hours; I think there were over a dozen teams this year) I'm told he was beaten out on questions relating to his own work by fans who know it better than he does himself. On the other hand, he was credited with being a whiz at questions on the comics. He gave an excellent speech at the Sunday morning brunch and stayed after to sign all the books brought forward by his fans, including yours truly. He was gracious about it all; I wished that he had been a bit more available during the convention, but I'm told one of the children was not feeling well and that he was staying close to the family.

There was plenty of opportunity to talk with other people and Dee asked me to be the judge of the art show. I had to wring Anna Jo in on that, and although the show was small, it amazed us at how difficult a task that it. I hope that people were pleased with the results, as we spent more than an hour at it.

The trip home was amusing, since one of the stewards on the plane dressed up as a character from STAR WARS and the question was asked, "Name the two robots from the film and win a bottle of champagne, compliments of Continental Airlines." The stewardess was rather stunned when I told her that we were just returning home from a science fiction convention, but it was nice to win something for a change. Next year the convention moves downtown, so I'm told, and that will provide some new delights for this con.





## PORTLAND

Thanksgiving weekend saw us taking the opportunity to drive down to Portland, Oregon to do a little book shopping and to visit Larry and Judy Paschelke. We had not seen them since Westercon, and then too little. As usual Larry and I had a good time talking books and records and art. He's been trying to find all of the books of collected stories of Robert Aickman, the only horror writer whom I try to read when he appears in F&SF. Larry regards his work highly and we talked about some stories we both had read.

After staying overnight with them, we drove down the Columbia past the nuclear power plant to Astoria, then crossed the river back into Washington. Spent the second night at Long Beach, along the Pacific and finally came home Monday. We stopped briefly in Raymond to visit with relatives. It was a nice weekend and we wish that we could do that sort of thing more often. Although, from conversation that I have with people, we do it more than most. As witness the following.

## VANCOUVER, B.C. AND CHILLIWACK

President's Day offered another opportunity for local travel with a nice three-day weekend. And was I ready to walk out of the library and forget the college for those three days. We drove up to Vancouver on Saturday morning and arrived around noon. I can't say that we did anything particularly exciting. Lots of window shopping, bought a few books (seven, all told. For me that's a few.) Saturday evening we went to our favorite German restaurant for schnitzel and had the best of intentions of calling some fannish folk afterward. Instead we came back to the motel and were too tired to move. Early to bed.

Sunday morning we drove out across the Lion's Gate bridge to West Vancouver and on to Dundarave. There we walked out the pier, talked to a young man fishing for rock cod, and to an elderly man who told us of a wonderful boat trip from Port Alberni which we will have to take some summer day. We also watched a man hard at work on the beach salvaging some cedar logs which had drifted ashore. He was obviously cutting them up to make shakes. And there was quite a bit of it that was usable for that purpose.

After driving back into town for a sandwich and a stroll around Gas Town, we headed east along the Trans-Canada Highway to Chilliwack. We arrived at the Livingstone's house about 3 in the afternoon to visit with Don and Shirley. They were full of stories of their month long stay in Scotland and had all of the guide books to various places they had visited laid out for our inspection. We shared a lovely meal with them (I brought a cheesecake from the aforementioned recipe) and after dinner had a chance to view Don's slides. Many castles and lovely countryside. They sort of stayed near Loch Lomond and worked out in circles from there. They were as excited about their trip as we have been and it was fun to share the common experiences we have had.

We finally headed home about 10:30 Sunday evening and promptly ran into fog at the border. It was neither the worst ride I've had home from the north nor the best. About 1 in the morning I became tired of staring at the fog lines and had to wake Anna Jo to take over the driving chores. At least we had Monday to sleep in. Another nice weekend. Now I'm afraid it's a long wait until we have another one, but we are planning a trip south to San Francisco in a month.

And I've completely skipped the Christmas invitational, TanKon, held this year at Dale Goble's new home in Meadow Vista, near Sacramento. Not as big as former TanKons, but enjoyable to all. Bill Marsh, Jim McLeod, Mike Horvat, Laurine White, Bill Garrell, Laurine's room mate, myself and Dale. Enjoyed greatly.



## SO WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

To read the foregoing, you'd think I've done nothing but travel. I should have grown up to be a travel writer, I guess. I could then be paid for it and see far and exotic places.

Some people have written to ask what I've been reading lately. There used to be room in A-W for me to spout off and show my ignorance about books I had read or records I had bought. Then gradually it got phased out. I think maybe with the next issue I'll try to instigate a column with short and snappy reviews ala Buck Coulson. I'm not sure I know how to be as short and snappy as Buck, but I'll give it a valiant try.

I seem to be in a period of non-sf (Extra! Extra! Denton Preaches Heresy!!). A number of things have conspired to put me in that mood, but mostly it was interest in what was being written. Reginald Hill is a fairly new British mystery author and he has a fine novel called Ruling Passion. This one came from the Mystery Guild, sister to the SF Book Club. Sgt. Pascoe and his girl friend journey to the country to visit with some old friends whom they had known at school. They arrive at the cottage to find three of them dead and the fourth missing. Good plotting, and a curmudgeonly superintendent who uncommonly fine as a character.

When a whole row of paperbacks by Robert Ludlum showed up one day, I awoke to the fact that he was pretty prolific and must have a readership. I picked one at random, The Rhinemann Exchange, later to be told that it had been a television movie. Well-plotted, rapid fire writing about a secret agent trying to effect an exchange of commodities between the Germans and the Americans during World War II. Germans need industrial diamonds and the Americans need a high-altitude gyroscope. Pretty tight book that is hard to put down.

As is Thin Air by George Simpson and Neal Burger. Dale Goble has been trying to get me to read Ghost Boat by these same two authors for over a year now, and having read their latest, I'll get to it one of these days. A Naval Intelligence officer is approached with a strange tale of an ex-Navy man from the Korean War period who has strange and terrible dreams about his ship and the men on it disappearing into thin air. When they get too bad, he calls a Navy psychiatrist to help him out. Except there is no record of a Navy psychiatrist by that name, nor was the ship stationed where he says it was. Matter transmission, of course, but another rapid fire book that is hard to set down.

Reed Andrus recommended Nightwing by Martin Cruz Smith, who turns out to be the same Martin Smith who wrote two fine novels with a Gypsy detective (antique dealer). This takes place on the Hopi and Navaho reservations in the southwest and concerns vampire bats who have moved north out of Mexico. It's a proper chiller and well worth the read. Only in hardback so far, but keep an eye out for it when it gets into paper.

John Fowles wrote a book particularly for me. It's entitled Daniel Martin and it pushed so many of my buttons. Things I have been mulling over during the last eight months or so; he touches them again and again. An Englishman movie script-writer goes home to England to visit an Oxford schoolmate who is dying of cancer. He opens up many old relationship, including one with his own daughter, and a new one with the sister of his ex-wife who is married to the dying man. Fowles is such a consummate man with words and thoughts and concepts. Beautifully written and I was sorry to see the 600+ pages come to an end. But he's revised extensively The Magus, so I still have that one to look forward to.

I've rambled for six pages, far more than any Ash-Wing of recent times. I hope you enjoyed some of it. Next issue is an experimental short issue. Stay well.



# *The Red Balloon*

+ CLIFFORD R. WIND +

*/ Clifford Wind's last appearance in these pages was in Ash-Wing 14, dated May, 1974. Much has passed since that time, as will become apparent as you read this column. Your editor is very pleased to have Mr. Wind back once again. /*

When last this column appeared (lo, these many years ago) I lamented a lack of anything to say. Now, however, I have material enough to fill several columns, the several columns, in fact, I would have done had I not gafiated. Those columns actually were partly written, in my head at least.

The first column would have been after my student teaching experience. It no doubt would have included mention of my brightest students, for instance the young man who entered rooms crying, "yahta tuh tahta, yahta tuh tahta, yahta tuh tah-uh-ahh,"<sup>\*</sup> with appropriate fourishes, and the cheery young lady with severe acne who ate spoonfuls of Tang from the bottles she kept cached in the chemistry room. These two, with others, invited themselves to my apartment one morning for breakfast, in lieu of throwing me in the pond the last week of school. They made their own meals and mine (my roommate declined, preferring to sit glowering under his blanket) from the fixings they brought, cereal, bread, milk, and Tang, and the young man presented me with an orchid, stalk and all, which he had grown.

The second column would have been shortly after my roommate left, taking his furniture, gallon jug of Lavioris, and poster of Si Baba with him. Yet another description of fannish living quarters, the column would have detailed the furnishings, shelves, and tables of particle boards and blocks, boards and bricks, boards and wholesale ice cream containers, with a four-by-four pillow for seating and over twenty small sun-bleached milk cartons for window sill decoration.

Had I written that column I might well have digressed to compare the small but sustained pleasure of fluffy new socks to a greater but fleeting pleasure of shucking shoes after a hard day's standing, and considered the implications thereof.

Following that column would have been one depicting my year as a substitute teacher. A lively, fun column that would have been, a sub's life being such a joyful one. Falling out of bed at ungodly:00 a.m. to answer the phone and find what

\* transcription approximate



beautiful children would be mine that day. Would the day be one of running a broken down driver's ed simulator, showing science films at random because the absentee had left no instructions, a day of 'study hall' for boys somewhat less than studious and accustomed to shop class in that hour, or perhaps a rewarding day overseeing a multi-track, variable-paced, self-assessment individualized math instruction program the procedures and complex record keeping of which I knew not a whit about, to a crowded class of 'inner-city' 'under-achievers' who couldn't care less about math or the authority of a sub? Whatever, the day would quite likely include walking down halls to cries of "Mr. Lincoln!" (despite my height and facial fungus the resemblance is minimal) and hearing the same thirty-seven whispered variations of my last name.

If a slightly bitter note is detected in the above, I should hasten to add that I am not bitter, nor was I during that period always or even generally depressed, though there was a day or two after which I raced home, to simply lie on the floor, with a stack of favorite albums on the player, the volume turned high. There were moments other than the bad ones -- lazy ones, boring ones, and good ones. There was even a moment when the world turned itself off.

I was working math problems on an overhead projector. I had begun to notice some internal discomfort a period earlier but nothing severe, so dedicated ~~masochist~~ professional that I am, I persevered. Now, however, with the class suggesting old problems to be explained rather than go to new material, I noticed an increase in discomfort and a fading of my peripheral vision. I leaned against the desk behind me for support. The world began to close in around me as vision faded further. I sat up upon the desk, working still. The world continued to close down, like the image on an old tube tv just turned off. I hitched one foot up on the desk, hugging the leg to my chest. The world became now just a dot of light, a hand in the darkness scribbling equations, and a voice droning thus, therefore, so. I ended with both feet upon the desk, both knees under my chin.

The moment passed, the world came back into view. I made it through the rest of the day, and took the next two off. On the weekend, feeling fine but having a persistent cough, I saw a doctor, who told me to go straight to bed, I was running a temperature of 103 degrees.

I don't think I've had a quieter class, however, than I had on that day.

\* \* \*

The material arising out of the experiences of the twenty months and ten days following that were never organized into columns, not even in my head. Even now I am unsure as to how to put it down here, how to express it. The reason is that that time was spent in another country, Australia. Why I took that step, a large one for a timid soul who had scarcely left the state before then and only left home two years before, I still don't really know. I don't even recall making any conscious decision to move. One day I was looking for teaching positions in the U.S., the next concerned with teaching in a strange new school system and the details of setting up residence, from buying a car and renting a flat to buying a laundry basket and a rubbish bin.

I could of course talk of teaching in Australia, comparing it to here, but not in this column, I think. I have, as all who've taught -- or tried to learn -- must have, my horror stories to tell, of psychotic kids and pusillanimous head masters, and good moments to recall as well, like the first-year girls (say 13-14 years of age) who asked what became of a flame in zero-g (thank Ghu I'd read the Analog story that answered that). Some other time perhaps.

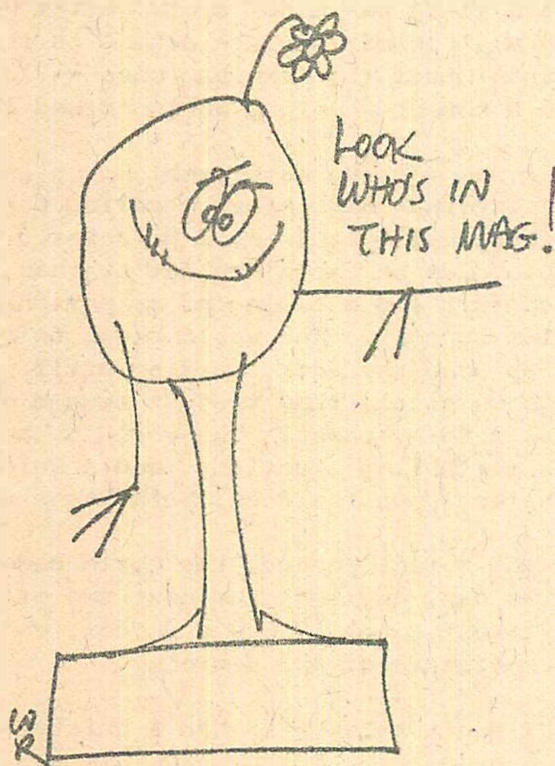


I could talk of diseases, two at least. The first would be trachoma, which I thought I had thanks to the diagnosis of a gov't employee doing her annual free examinations in the country areas. Later doubts led to having my lids scraped with what appeared to be a dentist's picks from a decrepit wooden box weilded by a man who apologized that the doctor whose job this really was, was out. Test results: negative. The second disease, which I did have, was infectious hepatitis. It began with a stomach doing approximately 4 rpm for a fortnight, then a day of students crying, "What'dya do to your skin, ooh, and your eyes!", and ending with Christmas vacation a week early during which my colleagues stood a block away with one hand on their bum to rub the site of the gamma globulin injection and the other hand cupped around their mouth that they might yell, "Howya goin?"

I could talk of the strange animals of Australia. Kangaroos, with their corpses littering the country highways, noisy kookaburras, strafing magpies, emus crushing themselves against the miles-long fencing as drought forced them southward toward farmland, lovely white cockies and pink and grey galahs becoming bloody nuisances as they swarm in raucous hundreds and so gorge themselves on grain fallen from harvest-full trucks that they could no longer fly, flies so numerous at times as to explain the prevalence of trachoma, accustom one to swallowing one when speaking, and give rise to the well-worn joke that the national salute is a slow wave of the hand past the face, and 'blowies' or blowflies of such size, slowness, and stupidity as to permit almost plucking them out of the air.

I could talk of places. Of Dalwallinu, the small country town in the wheat belt of Western Australia where I lived most of those twenty months, so flat that the two foot rise the teachers' gov't housing stood on was referred to as 'the hill' by the natives who envied the better telly reception there; so isolated, so bare, so dark on a cloudy night that the duplex I shared, lit by one lone street lamp, seemed a stage set by a surrealist designer. Of Perth, the lovely capital of W.A. and only City of the state, where I spent some months and most weekends, though it lay 250 km away. Any place with a jazz society, however, small, and restaurants Pakistani, Egyptian, Lebanese, and Greek has got to be a good place.

It's people though, I think, that most deserve mention. Not Aussies in general, I don't know them any better than I know Americans. Specific people. My roommates: the born again Christian, a far from dour Scot who supported me through my hepatitis by bragging of the 'Chrissie pressies' his kids had given him, with whom I had many a fine argument, including whether the Bible specifically forbade the consumption of human flesh, and who by setting fire to a former resident's Mormon text gave me the startling experience of finding how truly upset I could be by the act of book-burning, no matter what the book; and the ballet dancing, champion go-kart racing, shop teacher whose parents' place I came to use almost as my own on weekends in Perth. The young ladies who shared the other half of the duplex: Hođ, the French





teacher who refused to translate certain phrases on a record of mine by Ange, and Pud, who sometimes took showers fully clothed, not altogether willingly -- nor unwillingly, either. All the staff at Dalwalliny District High School: the secretary who sometimes giggled for hours, Brucie, who raced horses before leaving teaching to enter a monastery, the home-ec teacher who was jealous of the American delicacies I made: fudge brownies, and all the rest who made morning teas a riot. The town's intelligentsia, the Dalwallinu Music and Drama Society, erstwhile Gilbert and Sullivan group, in a production of whose I had a nearly starring role as a dead Jewish tailor and to whom, with the help of a Canadian woman, I introduced Halloween (albeit a week late, on Guy Fawke's Day) with such strange Americanisms as Pumpkin, Cherry, Apple, and Mincemeat Pies, bobbing for apples, marshmallow roasting, popcorn with beer, and trick or treat.

The night life was not the only reason I made the two and a half hour trip to Perth most every weekend. There were people there too. Tony, a Pommy\* writer (one story sold, at last count), Gloria, and their three pointy heads, whose lounge I so often invaded on a Sunday morn with sf war game and newly bought records. Old Wally with floor to ceiling stacks of Burroughs and Howard, even if he did like John Norman, and Nancy, who, liking jazz and carnival glass, had somewhat better taste than her husband. And the people of the Western Australian Science Fiction Association, who came together at Swancon, ignorant of fandom until introduced by Tony (whose new ducklings were our mascots), Grant (whose conniving got us free films, projectors, and video equipment), and myself (appointed the Yoken Tank).

Ah, Grant. I cannot thank enough Grant or Sheryl for so warmly receiving a Yankee stranger, with only a letter from Eric Lindsay anming Grant as 1/3 of his W.A. subscribers as introduction. Nor can I thank enough Sheryl's family for adopting me, though I gained a stone and four with the Sunday suppers Sheryl's Mum cooked so well.

Should I continue these notes of gratitude and affection I might well become mawkish. Should I skip to January '77, telling of my trip over East from 5-day bus ride to Q-Con, Brisbane, to sharing an Adelaide hotel tv lounge with a drunk deaf cricket team, to Robin Johnson and all of Melbourne fandom, to Eric Lindsay in the Blue Mountains with the Three Sisters, to the Jazz Festival and King's Cross, Sydney's Sin Center, I'd take too long. And should I tell of life after that, months of sitting back in the U.S. on my unemployed arse, I'd be rather boring.

With all this indecision over what to write about in these pages, it seems this column will no more be completed than the last few. Which is a pity, because I'd rather promised Mr. Denton I'd have one for this issue. Ah, perhaps next time.

\*English, from Pom, Prisoner of Mother England

# # #



## Reply to Eric Bentcliffe

+ KEITH ROBERTS +

I was very interested by Eric Bentcliffe's article THE SECOND DIMENSION in Ash-Wing 22, as it represents a point of view polar to mine in almost every respect. Eric has a whole raftfull of sweeping and I think inaccurate assumptions there; so sweeping, and so inaccurate, that I'd like to put the opposite point of view.

I must stress at the outset that I'm not getting at Eric personally; Ash-Wing is a sercon zine (I'm proud that I've at last found out what that means) and so I treat all its contents with appropriate gravity! As I said, I read his article with great interest and feel it raises a fundamental point that's been bothering me on and off for years. But first, the inaccuracies.

These so-called 'main camps' of sf. I know Eric takes care to point out that many gradations exist in between, but his overall assumption is still a little pat. For instance, he seems to feel that anybody who tackles, say, a pollution story automatically belongs to the 'New Wave'. Now, I was in London, working as an sf editor, when this phenomenon first broke out. I was in, as we say, on the ground floor. As I see it, 'New Wave' was the single-handed invention of an enterprising American authoress (now an ex-American authoress) who was in Town at the time hopefully gathering material for a new anthology. What actually happened was that a whole load of young, aspiring writers raked over their slushpiles for introverted fragments that otherwise would have stood no chance; some goofballs flew about as prizes for the best drug story, and it was all very jolly and amusing. The anthology that was produced, I hasten to add, was a very good one; a lot of hard work had been put into it, and it made an intriguing and very different read. But it was an ephemeral; and New Wave, for my money, went into the pulp bins along with the returned copies.

What I'm saying, I guess, is that New Wave never existed outside that one book; it wasn't really a movement with a discrete centre of its own, and never developed into a school. At its best it was more concerned with individual tummy-rumblings than with major socio-political issues; and we're in 1977 now, most of the way through a new and more savage decade. 'New Wave' is dead, Eric; laid out stiff, with pennies on its eyes! In the sixties, Armageddon was a pretty conceit to play with, like Flower Power and the permissive society. It's coming closer now; we can all smell its lousy breath.

The next presumption is more insidious. The article describes the 'second



camp' as being more concerned with 'form and style' than with 'content and idea'. In short, Eric seems to be saying that there's a group of writers who sit down, cold compress on the head, to write 'beautiful' but meaningless stories. The corollary, I suppose is that there's another group, heads throbbing with epoch-making 'Ideas', who usually express them in scruffy, inept or otherwise vulgar prose. Now this, with the greatest possible respect, is bunk. It seems patently obvious to me that content dictates form and ideas control style; you just can't split the writing process down the centre like that, like a ripe walnut. I never met a writer yet that sat down to produce consciously beautiful prose. If they did, the result would invariably be failure. (The big failure, I mean; it wouldn't get into print.) Conversely, how can a writer inadequately equipped with the tools of his or her trade get any sort of idea across, good, bad, or indifferent? Admittedly, there is a type of space opera that's been around since cars had tillers, that's bereft of both style and content; if that's what Eric means by good sf there's nothing more to be said, of course. But I'm not at all sure that it is.

Building on this: 'Whilst they have beautiful handwriting,' says Eric of his 'second camp', 'their imaginations aren't too hot.' There are so many confusions of ideas in this that it's difficult to know where to start. But let's explore the metaphor for a moment. There seems to be a notion that beautiful handwriting is somehow suspect. Well, I work very closely with a friend who at one time was trained as a calligrapher. He's in business now, like most of the rest of us; but his inter-office memos are still things of wonder. They're also extremely legible, and easier to read than any typewriter font. Clarity of communication is the purpose of beautiful writing, Eric; ponder that for a moment, please! Beauty is invariably functional; as an experiment, read any ten verses from the Authorised translation of the Bible, then spend ten minutes staring at an Olivetti.

What it all comes down to is that form, content, style and idea are terms so inextricably mixed as to be interchangeable. Or meaningless. From the mixture, if it's properly proportioned, comes that very subjective quality we call beauty. But it's a compound substance, not a cellulose varnish. To charge any writer or group of writers with creating 'beautiful' but otherwise vapid prose is to misunderstand the problem, or to abuse the word.

One last point on the business of the 'two camps'. 'They often call their genre Speculative Fiction, or even Fantabulation. . . ' Well, I've never even heard the second horrible word before; and as for the first. . . I'm afraid this just ain't on. If 'they' refers, as in context it seems to, to writers; sorry, Eric, but have another think! I've yet to hear of any writer of sf who habitually referred to his or her work as anything. We just write stories, hope to sell them and occasionally get paid; this sort of endless classification (I call it the pigeonhole syndrome) is strictly the province of publishers, booksellers and -- I'm sorry, but facts are facts -- fans. Publishers and booksellers claim they do it for commercial reasons; why fans do it I've never been too sure. Perhaps someone will write in to Frank and explain.

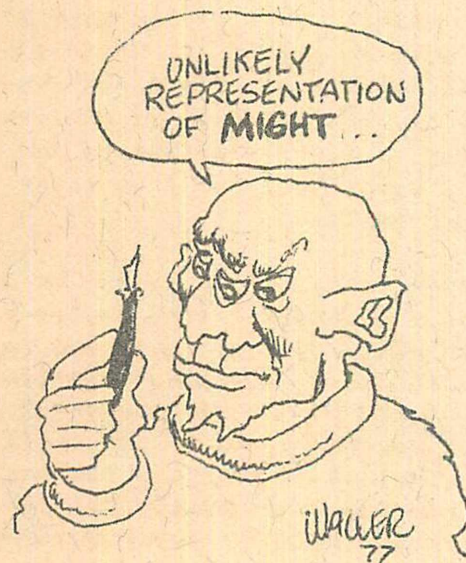
Eric starts out by saying he doesn't want to back himself into too tight a corner. I'm afraid in the latter part of the article he does exactly that; leastways his chain of logic gets too tangled for me to unravel. Again, I'm not knocking, I'm sympathising. Getting a little snarled-up in definitions is the inevitable end result of the pigeonhole process I mentioned earlier; and of sf criticism generally. Which is why there are so few really good critics. Other sorts of critics share the problem, of course; try reading the music page of any national daily for a week or so, the result's usually hilarious! But one point, I think, does deserve further airing; this much-vexed business of imagination. It seems -- and I only say seems, if I'm wrong I apologise -- that there's a feeling running through the



article that the farther out in time or space a story is set, the more imagination has to be called into play in writing and reading it. And conversely, of course, that stories set in our time or in the immediate future are somehow short on that vital commodity. Now if it wasn't for my British upbringing I'd be very inclined to shout 'bunk' again. All any writer has, when sitting down to produce any story, is the sum of his own experience as a twentieth century human-type being. (I know there are sometimes claims made for mystical experience and drugs, but the former are deeply suspect and the latter demonstrably useless; I've read drug-induced fiction many times, and it's invariably as boring as hell). So any character an author invents, whether he's got three heads or six, is only, at rock-bottom level, a human being with a funny hat on. His scope of awareness, his mental limitations, will be ours; and if you doubt that, just sit down quietly someplace and try to 'see' a new color. The unimaginable is meaningless to us by definition; and the rest -- the space warps, the FTL's, etc. -- is merely hardware. Clever hardware no doubt, sometimes exceptionally clever; but hardware nonetheless. There's no more inherent imagination, really, in a spaceship than in a slice of orange cheesecake.

There's a similar eccentricity in Eric's demand for 'timeless' characters. If we could really step outside time -- our own narrow, keyhole view of phenomena and events -- why, then we'd be dead. Everything that's written -- even one of Eric's ingenious 'monotypes' -- springs from its own time, is imbued with a sense of period just as surely as the little green men and BEM's spring from writers' minds. If you doubt, try looking at the Edwardian chorus lineups in Griffith's evocation of Babylon, the bikini girls posing as Cleopatra's handmaidens in the last movie of that name; or more pertinently, compare Flash Gordon (a 'monotype,' surely, if ever there was one) with something like 'Destination Moon.' A truly 'timeless' character argues a super-human viewpoint; which, again by definition, none of us can have. It's the wholly timebound quality of 'monotypes' that gives them most of their charm; and makes things like old copies of 'Amazing' so collectable. If by 'timeless' one means archetypal of course, that's a different thing entirely; it leads on to the Arthurian legend, and oddments like that. But that, as they say, is out of the scope of the present brief note!

Which brings me to the important point raised by the article, which as I said has been bothering me for some time. Years back, when I was working with Kyril Bonfiglioli on the old SCIENCE FANTASY, he gave me a detailed comparative criticism on two novels. One was my own first book, The Furies; the other was an urbane thriller by a top-selling, and highly professional, American sf author. It had all the hallowed and time-tested conventions; an alien planet to be opened up, psychological troubles among the team of Terran investigators, a Baffling Problem that kept the reader wondering until the payoff. (As a matter of pure information, it hadn't kept me wondering as I knew the formula.) But it certainly had all the things Eric demands of good sf; minimal characters, tight plotting, loads of hardware, etc., etc. And I'm certainly not knocking it, it was a damned good read. Mine, on the other hand, had some in-depth characterisation after the style of Wyndham (not as much as I'd have wished, but I was very young in the craft!) and some fairly personal asides and observations; it was set in the present, or the very near future, and it concerned a part of the country I'm extremely fond of, so here and there there was even some good old-





fashioned Passion. 'But this book,' said Bon, indicating the thriller, 'is a better book than yours in absolute terms. Because it accepts its own limitations as genre writing, and is consequently more rounded and satisfying.' (Those almost certainly weren't his exact words, but they convey the gist.)

Now this took me very much aback. I was quite prepared to accept that the thriller was a more commercially successful book than mine; indeed, it was already painfully obvious. But this wasn't a commercial judgement; it was an aesthetic one. And I had, and retain, sufficient respect for Bon's formidable critical ability to take it very seriously indeed. At the same time I've never really been able to accept it, although it's been made to me more than once in the intervening years; the last time only a matter of weeks ago, by a very famous fantasy writer indeed whose critical judgement I likewise healthily respect. Now, in effect, Eric says it again. So the proposition is this, and I'd like to throw it open for general comment through Frank's good offices: Is a piece of 'genre fiction' (sf, detective, cowboy or whatever) aesthetically more satisfying if it keeps within the conventional limits laid down for it? Is a writer who attempts, however slightly, to give his characters more depth and life automatically going to produce a worse book than somebody who employs Eric's aptly-named monotypes? I'm not talking about which books you prefer to read, or which are most likely to attract Nebulae and all the rest; because I think we all read according to mood, and I enjoy a 'clunker' just as much as the next. (I also watch silly television, if I want my mind turned off.) But we are, dammit, dealing with an art form, however downtrodden; can we for once let the gumbo hit the fan and have some aesthetic opinions? A little bit of critical absolutism?

I can't go along with this idea myself, mainly because you can do a reductio ad absurdum on it so easily. For instance, using it as a yardstick, it's easy to see that, in detective fiction, Agatha Christie's bony little 'crossword puzzle' books are aesthetically better than Sayers' richly-developed, very thoughtful Wimsey novels. But where does that leave Father Brown? He's such a strongly-developed, deeply felt character that he can't possibly be a detective at all. And yet he solves crimes; so what is he? Maybe I'll go to my bookshelf and find he's vanished; like the 'mono-type' in the space/time paradox, he could never have existed. And good heavens, what about Sherlock Holmes? Those creepy Dartmoor fogs that you can actually feel on the skin? Conan Doyle must definitely be swept under the critical mat; and we'd best put James Blish with him, for on this reckoning Edgar Rice Burroughes, who as far as I can tell, never thought about anything, is infinitely his superior. Still, James will have some good bedfellows -- or bad ones, according to the Writ. Wells, for a start; and Wyndham, Clarke, Golding, Peake, Disch. The list is more or less endless. We might even include dear old Bill Shakespeare; after all, Jean Renoir once, very sensibly, described Hamlet as a whodunit. If it really is a thriller, what's that ageing Fairy doing dashing about in a jockstrap, holding up all the action?

One last thought; or rather, two. If these very strict rules on what not to do, admirably outlined by Eric at the end of his piece, really are absolute criteria, why haven't they always been apparent? I've never found much in Lucian that smacks of genre-writing; or, for that matter, in Dean Swift. Or maybe I'm just not looking in the right places. Secondly, if a character work is denied the genre author, where is its place? It hasn't got one at all, it seems to me; because today, as a result of the 'pigeonhole syndrome' I talked about, everything is genre-writing, aimed at a specific market. Are we all to stop it, in case we go blind?

Answers, please, to Bran and Skolawn Publications. I'm sure Frank will be fascinated by them!



# Linus Absolved:

## The Great Pumpkin Cometh

- REED ANDRUS -

Robert Ebert, syndicated columnist for the Chicago Sun-Times, recently listed two science fiction films among the year's ten best. It shouldn't take too much imagination to figure them out, but his comments are interesting. His verdict on CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND: "The sense of wonder is not dead. Not when director Steven Spielberg can wrap us in wonderment and dreams with the sustained passage of 40 minutes at the end of the film. The director of JAWS told of a series of UFO sightings, leading up to mankind's first face-to-face encounter with an intelligent being from another world. And the presentation of that moment -- with Douglas Trumbull's special effects creating an awesome spacecraft and a curiously moving alien -- is one of the great moments of movies."

And on STAR WARS: "The neatest wind-up toy of a movie all year: pure comic book, pop art fantasy. Space opera. Escapism, R2D2 and C3PO and Ben Kenobi and The Force, which sure was with us, all right. STAR WARS is the new all-time U.S. box office champion. But don't tell me it's better than 2001, or more moving than the conclusion of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS. It's just great fun, that's all. And that's enough."

Amazing perception from a critic who just leaped to the top of the list of film analysts in my opinion. I saw STAR WARS four times before the cotton candy aspect became too much. I enjoyed both quantity and quality immensely, but figured my aesthetic sweet tooth was ripe for a root canal, and the thought of a prohibitive mental overkill forced a reluctant farewell. I was just taking up the seat destined for a 12-year-old potential Harlan Ellison. I await the sequels with the anticipation of my daughter awaiting next Christmas: not too sure what will be coming, but knowing that it will be good.

To date, I've seen CLOSE ENCOUNTERS twice, and surprisingly find that is probably enough. The film is an emotional experience, rare for any sf film viewer/fanatic. At the first showing I came perilously close to tears on at least two occasions, neither of which had anything to do with the price of admission, and that bothered me. I am not Linus waiting stoically if not altogether silently in the pumpkin patch for the rising of the Great Pumpkin; I didn't run off to the woods of Oregon or Washington to await the saucer that would swoop down and take me off this Godforsaken planet; I don't pin my hopes of salvation on the second coming of the Messiah. I am a normal cynic, scoffing at the actions of the lesser-informed, sneering at those who clutch wildly at brightly-colored, empty straws, shaking my head in wonderment as I watch the National Enquirer consistently sell out.



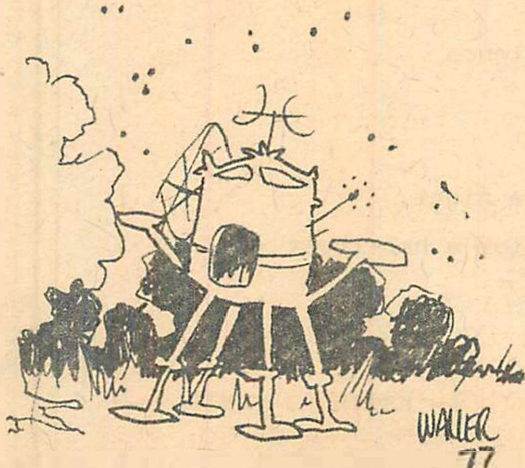
But, oh my Gawd, did I suspend my disbelief for this one! Samuel Taylor Coleridge's definition is justified.

The theme is first contact. Basic, simple sf. The gentlefolk from Out There come down, provide a series of spectacular incidents designed to stimulate the more intelligent in our midst, then sit back to see if we can figure out how to communicate. And along the way they "invite" a few dozen people to come along by means of random sample through telepathic suggestion.

Hold it. Stop the music. The key words are "random sample." For years we sf buffs have known that alien intelligence, being light-years ahead of us, would probably pick those most likely to understand galactic culture shock, most willing to allow a landing in the pumpkin patch, most eager to accompany them as foreign exchange students. It's only logical, right? Perhaps. But it sure ain't realistic. In the film, the main protagonist is a middle-class family man who likes to play with model trains, a lineman for Indiana Power and Light who most likely couldn't spell "telepathic" because the word wasn't in his job description, a poor schmuck who has something unbelievably weird happen to him, who can't understand it, but must follow the compulsion even though it jeopardizes his sanity, his family, and eventually his existence on this planet. This is what struck a chord in me -- that, given the same situation, I could do nothing more even though I had a better grasp of what was happening.

A couple of years ago, in a fit of chronic depression, I wrote a mediocre poem about the same theme. A man is invited to go a'farin' with a space trader, the chance of a lifetime, the dream of all us sf nuts. But the man in the poem said no, he couldn't just drop everything and leave his family and responsibilities. Perhaps that man was too sane; perhaps it takes someone just a tad around the bend to appreciate what Richard Dreyfuss does in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS. I personally couldn't identify with his ultimate action, but I yearned with him to understand and observe and communicate.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS speaks on at least two levels. There is the "happening" with the magnificent special effects we have come to expect from Doug Trumbull. And there is the intensely personal reaction level, where each of us must examine what he or she would do. I suspect the latter is a bit too sophisticated for most of the movie going public. Already there has been quite a lot of criticism leveled at Spielberg for providing a "documentary with special effects." The price of presenting science fiction realistically, I suppose. We live in an age of STAR WARS mentalities where people prefer comic book plots to intelligent, thoughtful rendering of basic science fiction concepts. Extrapolating from the data I have gleaned, I submit that science fiction has never really been "ghettoized," but rather the ghetto minds of the masses has embraced and polluted it; that when someone speaks disparagingly of "Buck Rogers stuff," he is speaking only of what he can understand. A sad, sad commentary, indeed.



But what of those sf fans who are badmouthing the film? Yes, there are some, mostly youthful fans, who have clutched STAR WARS to their bosom with a grip greater than the tractor beam of the Death Star. The time element is the villain here. If CLOSE ENCOUNTERS had



been held back for release in 1978, we might have seen science fiction films take Best Picture Oscars two years in a row. As it stands, the erroneous but inevitable comparisons are being made, and it is possible that these two may cancel each other when the awards roll around.

If comparisons must be made, look to THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL and you'll find some interesting differences, and similarities. The military plays an ignorant, almost evil role in both pictures. The paranoid in me says that is justifiable, but its' getting a bit stale. The principle deviation is in motivation, and I think this is what grates on the nerves of most viewers. In the earlier film, the alien is patently benificent and misunderstood, but he can be understood on a most rudimentary level. In CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, we are given no such reasoning; the aliens appear and wish to communicate, but we wonder why. Is there a hidden motive? Unbidden, the thought of Damon Knight's "To Serve Man" intruded itself as Richard Dreyfuss climbed into the spacecraft. Deep down, I think, people cannot understand why an advanced civilization would wish to contact them, and this attitude may be especially true in sf fans. What makes us so worthy? It's the existentialist abruptness of the contact that is bothering the viewers of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS. Unfortunately, if we are ever contacted, I have a hunch Spielberg has come dreadfully close to providing a true picture.

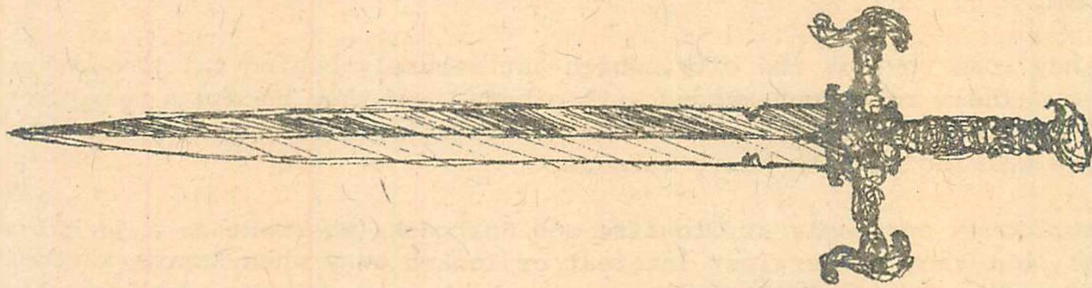
CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND, then, is truly adult science fiction. It will not be universally popular as was/is STAR WARS for it says too much. It is, however, the single -- bar none -- best science fiction film ever, ever made. Dissenters, the floor is yours.

#### BLUE MOON

Two boulders gnash together  
Like millstones in the desert,  
And crumble into fine dust.  
A dark miasma from a swamp  
Envelops frogs --  
It leaves a legacy of silence  
And tiny skeletons.  
A junkyard flivver  
Goes drifting through the night,  
And the moon turns blue for a heartbeat --  
While nobody watches.

-- KEITH A. DANIELS --





## Demon Eve

ROSS F. BAGBY

He rode without destination or purpose, on his horse without a name. Behind him crouched Snargack, his sole companion, a loathsome demon who dreamed of his monstrous doom. His name was Giouffre di Mourle; a warlock who served and worshipped Evil, who killed without mercy or hope, whose sword was Heartseeker that warned of danger and changed size to meet the danger -- in fact, it could only be called a sword because it most often became one.

Giouffre di Mourle rode, leaving death and ruin behind him, scouring the land so a cleaner one might emerge. But of that he neither knew nor cared. He was the greatest of the warlocks of Neris\* but for a good portion of his life he had never even heard the name, Neris. Giouffre di Mourle was what he called himself, and some call him Giouffre the Wanderer or Giouffre the Accursed.

Giouffre di Mourle looked at the city ahead. A fair sized metropolis, he judged, with some ruler of importance enough to construct a palace. There had been farms on the road behind which showed signs of being run for profit, instead of merely for survival. Even from this distance, he could make out markets and bazaars which looked prosperous though not overly so, as if some recent event had caused a slackening of trade.

"Snargack, we have a destination," he wryly commented, and the familiar gazed speculatively at the city.

"You have no destination save death, master, and I am your death," corrected the demon. "One day, you will scream helplessly while I devour you, drinking your blood, crunching your bones, - "

"Enough!" commanded the warlock, striking Snargack with his whip. "This night we shall sleep in that city, come what may. I have had enough of the countryside

\* Algar Man-Tekel, The Warlocks of Neris



for now." And he shuddered as he recalled that eldritch inn of the witch and robbers, who had had unholy dealings with the strange wind vampires before Heartseeker destroyed them.

So they rode towards the city, which sat securely behind thick walls and heavy iron gates. Their road soon merged with others, and they became a mere drop in a stream of horsemen, wagons, an occasional nobleman's carriage, and endless numbers of peasants walking beneath heavy burdens.

A few looked curiously at Giouffre and Snargack (who went as a jackal-headed crocodile), but they either lost interest or looked away when Snargack scowled. The river of traffic flowed slowly to the city, which seemed to be named Cirelan, and squeezed through the open gates.

A large sign stood beside the road, proclaiming that all persons must state their name and business before entering Cirelan. A second proclamation revealed itself behind the first, its sign less weather-worn than the other and therefore presumably more recent. As soon as he could, Giouffre read it, aloud but softly, as if digesting it.

IT IS HEREBY PROCLAIMED

That Any Person Who Reports, Brings Evidence Of,  
Or Otherwise Aids Our Holy Program Of Wholly Eradicating  
THE VILE AND BLASPHEMOUS PRACTICE OF WITCHCRAFT  
Shall Receive A Generous Reward From Our Treasury  
His Supreme Majesty, KING EDMOND OF GREATER CIRELAN

"A witch-hunt!" exclaimed Giouffre involuntarily, causing more odd looks. He shuddered as the memories came to him -- the dungeons, the curse-immune servants of the Nameless Ones, the screams of the burning witches. He alone had escaped, with Snargack's aid, to wander homeless evermore. His knowledge that this was but a minor skirmish in the struggle between El-Zathan-Mulk, the Father of Names, and the Nameless Ones had not healed the wound.

Giouffre was pushed into the gate, where a token guard ritually asked his name and work. Giouffre hesitated about what work he should claim to perform, then stated, "Mercenary."

"Blade for hire, heh? You might try the palace, but the king's witch-mad. Maybe the guard corps of a nobleman. Move on, now, and stop blocking traffic," advised the guard.

The warlock rode into Cirelan, and watched for the signs of a witch-hunt. He found them; the uneasy looks everyone would give each other now and then, the great quantities of holy symbols that adorned buildings, people, and animals. Fear of devils generates respect for gods.

Giouffre passed one stall whose proprietor shouted "Witch-candles! A witch-candle protects you from spells! Buy a witch-candle, and be safe from the Devil!"

Giouffre reined his horse to a stop, and looked at the vaunted candles. They were short, not well dipped, and of inferior tallow. "I am something of a traveler and I have heard of many strange things," he commented, "but never have I heard of a witch-candle. What is it?"

"A most powerful charm, great sir. Made from the remains of a burned witch,"



the merchant explained. Giouffre looked at him for a moment, then rode off without another word.

As he rode, Giouffre shifted the level of his consciousness to one in which he could communicate telepathically with Snargack. *Since I have declared myself a common mercenary, it is best you be nothing but a strange beast I found and tamed during some campaign. Being a beast, you cannot speak or reason, of course, Giouffre ordered.*

*Of course. And if I seem to be performing rational acts, why, those are but clever tricks you have taught me, agreed the demon readily.*

*Now, what of this witch-hunt? Are servants of the Nameless Ones present in Cirelan?*

*I sense none who wear the Mystic Sign. There is a great deal of witchcraft about, however, though they revere another as greater than El-Zathan-Mulk. Perhaps that one is, in this area. It matters little.*

True. Be quiet now. And Giouffre rode up to the gates of King Edmond's palace.

A guard halted him. "What is your business?" he enquired wearily. "Another tale of witching? The treasury is near empty for the kings' enthusiasm."

"Invisible foes are not my concern. I am a wanderer whose blade joins the service of any willing to pay for it, and always I enquire first of the monarch," Giouffre answered dryly. "If he have no need for me, there are always nobles who desire protection from such enemies as may be, and if not one of them --" he shrugged. "Always there are rebels willing to pay for an extra sword to swell their ranks. There be other countries, if nought else."

"There is talk of rebellion in the provinces," agreed the guard. "The king fills the air with the stench of burning innocents, and some gain by the hunt. Old gods are being sworn by -- I think the king makes more witchcraft than he destroys. But that is treason," he hurriedly added. "Seek among the nobles, hire-blade, though now that I look I spy no sword."

"Trust not always your eyes," Giouffre retorted, and turned to leave.

"What goes on, guard?" asked a voice, trembling. Giouffre turned and beheld the exact kind of person he'd think that voice would belong to; pale, thin, extremely nervous, and wringing his hands. A shock of tangled black hair topped a rectangular head, with eyes alternately staring and blinking nervously. "I asked you, guard, what goes on?" repeated the pathetic questioner. "Does this man bring news of more witches? Is he a nobleman, a merchant, a seaman?"

Giouffre answered before the guard could. "I knew nothing of this witch-hunt till I came to this city. If there is any nobility in my lineage, it is bastard. I





have never sailed or sold. I am nought but a refugee and a mercenary, calling no man lord unless he pays me to."

The questioner gazed up at him in astonishment. "You are very arrogant, whatever you be. And what manner of thing sits behind you?"

"A pet I acquired during a war far from here. I have taught it a few tricks."

"Show me," demanded the sickly one.

Giouffre shrugged, and turned his head. "Snargack, dismount." The demon obeyed. "Stand on your head. Beg. Roll over. Play dead. Salute the guard. Bow to the gentleman." Each command was sullenly obeyed by Snargack, and both guard and nobleman (as Giouffre guessed the sickly one to be) backed away in amazement as the familiar obeyed the last two commands.

"A most interesting beast," commented the nobleman. "I forgive your brashness, mercenary. You shall come to the dinner tonight, and sit at my right hand, and that shall entertain." Then he walked away.

The guard mopped his brow. "Man, you don't know luck that beast brought you. Torture and death were the least he might've given you for that insult." Giouffre lifted his eyebrows questioningly, and the guard looked at him with pure incredulity. "You mean you really don't know?! Man, that was King Edmond himself who invited you to dinner!"

## II

Snargack was led to the stables to await dinner, and Giouffre instructed the stable-hands to feed him the most rotten food they could find. "He's especially fond of dead mice -- if they're foulest carrion, that is."

Giouffre was then led into the palace, a gloomy affair of unlighted halls, damp rooms, and he suspected, highly unpleasant dungeons. The sole decorations were mold-covered tapestries, gloomy affairs at that best, decided Giouffre. He could understand how King Edmond might go mad in this place.

He was led to a room where a servant attempted to remove his cloak, where he kept the knife-sized Heartseeker hidden. A blow persuaded the servant that Giouffre was capable of dressing himself.

Suitably attired, he was taken after a time to a bedroom where he was to sleep. He amused himself, awaiting the summons for dinner, by searching the room; and, after satisfying himself that there were no secret passages or spy-holes, Giouffre proceeded to secure a lunch by thaumaturgical means.

The sun had begun to set when a messenger came for the warlock, and he was ushered into a dismal, torch-lit dining hall. King Edmond looked at him uncertainly for a moment, finally venturing out with "Your name's Jeffry, isn't it? The warrior with the trained animal?"

"Giouffre di Mourle, mercenary." The rest of the diners showed amazement at his curtness and failure to append "sire". The King gestured vaguely to his right, and Giouffre appropriated the seat right next to the bewildered monarch. King Edmond began hesitant introduction, only showing confidence in his memory when it came to the aged crone beside him.

She, it seemed, was his old nurse, a hag named Grunek. Giouffre sensed something disturbingly familiar about her, and would have sworn he felt Heartseeker



changing shape in its hiding place. To try removing it to see if it shone red with warning would mean suicide, though, with these paranoid courtiers around.

The food was excellent, and he began to glut himself. He shoveled ample portions of the food being passed around the various tables. He noted that it was customary to season the whole tray to ones' liking, which meant they were almost inedible by the time he got them.

Conversation seemed limited to muttering or falsely enthusiastic discussions of the current witch-hunt. A sort of nervous pedantry possessed King Edmond on this topic, forcing him to not only dominate the conversation but to repeat certain phrases over and over, as if repetition made it true.

"Horrible things," repeated the king for the twenty-third time, then turned toward Giouffre and asked, "Do you know anything about witchcraft?"

"I am slightly acquainted with the subject," Giouffre dryly answered, and King Edmond wasn't listening.

"Horrible things, horrible doings....they -- witches -- call it the 'old religion' and claim to do nothing but worship heathen gods. But they really worship the Devil, and he gives them servants from Hell," the King was saying. "Familiars, they're called. And they get powers from him, too -- curses, control of weather, that kind of thing. Monstrous! Abominable!"

"Doubtless," agreed Giouffre absent-mindedly. "Do you wish to see Snargack perform now?"

"Snargack?...oh, yes, that odd beast. I suppose so."

Grunek looked up sharply. "Snargack? 'Tis an odd name for a beast. From whence did you get him?"

"It has been so long I have forgotten," stated Giouffre. "Fetch him from the stable; he will be the most repulsive thing there. If he gets nasty, whip him and mention my name ominously."

Servants were reluctantly dispatched to fetch the 'beast.' They returned, holding Snargack and bearing witness to a struggle. Giouffre got up and frowned at the struggling demon, who glared venomously at him. The warlock gestured the servants away, and commanded Snargack to be still. He then proceeded to humiliate the demon by making him perform the most childish tricks and stunts. The court watched in amazement as the self-styled mercenary made the ugly thing do the most amazing things, with only an occasional glance of pure vitriol to show any discord.

Grunek in particular seemed interested in Snargack, staring at him with odd intentness, sometimes watching Giouffre as if he were something other than what he claimed. Perhaps, thought Giouffre, she thinks I'm trying to replace her as the power behind the throne.

As a grand climax, Giouffre forced Snargack to bow before each gentleman and kiss each lady's hand, though the last action caused several faints, one case of hysterics, and general discomfort.

"Excellent! Marvelous!" applauded King Edmond, for once not showing the least sign of fear in his childishly happy face. Grunek scowled and wrapped her shawl more tightly around her. Giouffre knew he had most definitely gained an enemy at



the court of Cirelan, but the knowledge troubled him little since he planned to leave on the morrow.

As servants led Snargack back to the stable, the devil beamed a telepathic warning to Giouffre: *The Sabbat is tonight.*

Giouffre was both startled and troubled. This night had never been associated with the great rite of witches by any he knew, and why should he take warning at the rituals of other devil-worshippers? But Snargack was, in his way, as reliable a danger-senser as Heartseeker.

He retired to his rooms as soon as possible, and lay on his bed without changing. Sleep seemed impossible, for the strangest thoughts kept running through his mind, as though they were connected but he could not perceive the relationship yet. King Edmond and his witch-hunt, Grunek, Snargack's strange warning about a Sabbat that night, the guard's talk of rebellion and revival of ancient religions in the provinces -- all seemed linked, but for the life of him he couldn't see any but the most obvious connections.

He frowned and shook his head. Was that music he was hearing? He was suddenly dizzy, and seemed to be in another place. Strange sounds seemed to force themselves on his hearing, visions superimposed themselves on reality.

Ackumen...ehzar nal megten alkari...malshar! disembodied voices suddenly chanted, and a wild hallucination of a vast cavern with abandoned palaces dominated by a huge statue flooded Giouffre's mind. Then he plainly saw Grunek standing before him, leaning on a staff.

"Come, warlock! I conjure thee to come by all darkness, by all demons, by great Ackumen, Lord of Stone, whose Sabbat night this be! Come!"

Giouffre found himself rising, and mentally cursed himself as seven kinds of fool. Of course, he had been an easy target for some hell-brew, stuffing himself with all that food that was so heavily seasoned. A courtier need do nothing but implant the potion, and it would only be thought they were seasoning the whole dish, as was custom. He began walking, without will or power.

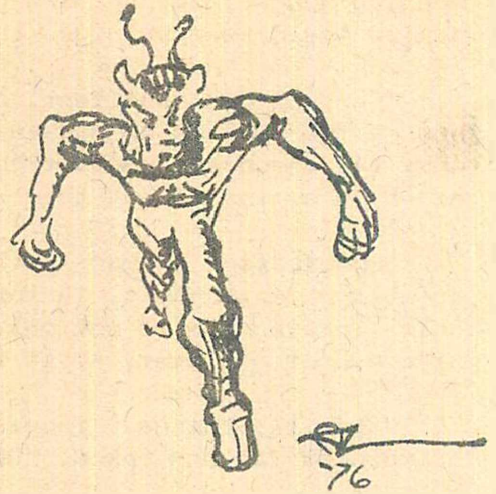
*Snargack!* he summoned.

"Calling your pet, warlock? We already have brought him here, so he may amuse us by his tricks," the stich's voice cooed sweetly, and a vision of Snargack bound in iron chains danced mockingly before him.

He was going down a hall now, and suddenly he met King Edmond, looking even worse than usual. "Giouffre, help me! Witches -- chanting in my head...the old city of the Devil's statue...by all gods, help me! whimpered the monarch, holding his head painfully. Giouffre managed to look at him, and decided there was another explanation for his condition than sickness and insanity.

Like Giouffre, he was bewitched.

Down, down, always down they went. He descended stairs, entered the wholly dark region of the dungeons, and made his way to a certain empty cell whose door





hung open. Was this how Grunek planned his doom? Either forcing him to sit in a dungeon til he starved, or til she revealed him a warlock to King Edmond and thus ensured a burning at the stake.

He bent over and lifted a floorstone. He squeezed into a narrow tunnel that action revealed, crawled for some time, and emerged in --

-- another world.

### III

It was a vast cavern, stretching for miles. Torches made gallant but futile efforts to illuminate even a small part of this cave, revealing ancient and crumbling structures that might once have been mighty palaces and temples.

"It is Old Cirelan, the city beneath the city," cackled Grunek. "Is not an old city a fitting place for the old religion, warlock? Here Ackumen was worshipped by his people, as he still is. Hail, Ackumen, Living Lord of Stone!"

"Hail Ackumen, Living Lord of Stone!" chorused others. By now Giouffre could see the coven, and he recognized several of his fellow diners among them. He saw Snargack lying helpless in bonds of cold iron, and cursed. And then he looked up and saw the statue.

It was huge, standing straight to the cavern's roof. It represented a wolf-headed, bat-winged man in the act of reaching down for something with his left hand. It was black and perfectly carved, showing no signs of age.

Grunek turned to this and began chanting -- the same chant, noted Giouffre, as he'd heard in his room, a guttural thing that must make the witch's throat sore as hell. She raised her arms in time with the incantation, and finished by shrieking, "Ackumen tkli nortas kre!" three times, then striking the statue thrice with her staff.

And the statue moved.

Its left hand began to move toward Giouffre, while frenzied witches and warlocks screamed, "Hail, Ackumen! Behold the Sacrifice to the Living Lord of Stone! Hail Ackumen!"

Ackumen's jaws opened, its eyes blazed hungrily, and its stone hand closed on Giouffre. It began to raise the struggling warlock to its open, dark mouth of fangs.

"I demand a contest by the Law of Duels!" Giouffre shouted.

"You would fight me, warlock?" mocked Grunek. "But I have already proved myself better in witchcraft than yourself!"

"Let our demons battle in our places!" demanded Giouffre. "Pit your Ackumen against my familiar, Snargack, and the victor has his will with the loser. Thus, witch, we shall know whether the servants of Ackumen or El-Zathan-Mulk are greater!"

"Your devil against Ackumen!" Grunek exclaimed incredulously, then burst out laughing. "Very well, warlock. Oh, Living Lord of Stone, release your Sacrifice so the honor and greatness of Thy people may be shown!" Then, aside: "Someone let that mangey, filthy devil of his loose. This should be amusing."

Giouffre weighed his chances of escape during the conflict, and found them wanting. His gamble that Grunek would accept his challenge had been solely to gain





time; his familiar didn't stand a chance against the possessed statue. In fact, unless you counted the oft repeated prophecy that his destiny was to be eaten alive by Snargack, there was little hope that either of them could survive this demon's night. And Giouffre again wondered what role Heartseeker would play in his destined doom.

Snargack advanced wrestler fashion on the titan Ackumen. The latter swiftly raised his fist, and swung it downwards

upon its opponent exactly like a man squashing an insect. The fist crashed on empty air; Snargack had leaped aside at the last moment. Again and again, the statue tried to crush its adversary, often causing a wild scramble as its worshippers fled a fast-fallin fist. Snargack began making obscene remarks concerning his opponent's aim, ancestry, and personal habits, and the statue began pounding furiously.

Grunek raised her staff -- but just as quickly Giouffre whipped out Heartseeker from its hiding place. It glowed blood-red and changed to a rapier, which the warlock brandished threateningly. "Hold, witch!" he commanded. "Not for nothing is this sword called Heartseeker, nor is its motto an idle boast. Yours would not be the first witch's heart it had, nor would it be the last." And the witches shivered as they read what fiery letters of crimson spelled out on the rapier: I seek the hearts of enemies.

Ackumen, meanwhile, had given up trying to smash Snargack. Now it stood motionless, watching Snargack watch it. Suddenly it grabbed, and held the squirming familiar in a tight fist.

"The victory is Ackumen's!" exulted Grunek. "Accept as a Sacrifice that which you hold, Living Lord of Stone, and then devour its master! Thousands shall be your sacrifices when Kind Edmond is dethroned and given to you, Ackumen!"

The statue stuffed Snargack into its mouth, chewed, presumably swallowed, and reached toward Giouffre. Then it grabbed at its own belly, grimaced, thumped its chest, and generally indicated gastric troubles.

"I always knew Snargack was inedible," remarked Giouffre.

Ackumen opened its mouth and gestured wildly, finally contorting insanely and voiding, at last, a perfectly whole and healthy Snargack, several bones, and large chunks of black stone - portions of its mouth, throat and stomach.

"Devils of stone should take care not to swallow devils who are as iron!" Snargack taunted the agonized statue.



"Arise, Living Lord of Stone, and smite your enemies!" begged Grunek.

"It seems to me," interrupted Giouffre, "that Ackumen has already done his share of enemy-smiting. Concede, witch, and I will allow you and your followers to flee to the countryside, where the name of Ackumen is being heard again. I will not tell King Edmond of you until you have all departed, so you may not burn after all."

Grunek screamed malediction on him, but he stood unmoved. "This is the Sabbat of Ackumen, when he is supreme. You are but his Sacrifice! Rise, Ackumen, rise!" she pleaded with the groaning statue.

With a cry of rejoicing, she saw it raise itself up on an elbow and reach towards her and Giouffre; then she screamed, for Ackumen seized her instead of the warlock. She was heard screaming even when it chewed, and did not stop until it swallowed.

Giouffre di Mourle turned and faced the trembling witches and warlocks. "The Sabbat of Ackumen is ended. I am victor, for my demon Snargack crippled your so-called god, and it will not recover. As victor, my will with you is law; and my will is that you flee into the palace, shrieking, and when King Edmond and his guards ask what is the matter, you will tell them of Ackumen and Grunek and Old Cirelan."

"Of myself, you will say I was bewitched so Ackumen might devour me, but my pet Snargack battled the statue and caused it to eat Grunek. Aside from that falsehood, you will each speak truly."

"Begone!"

#### IV

"You will always be welcome in Cirelan, Giouffre di Mourle," stated King Edmond. He was a different man than the sickly, nervous witch-hunter who had met Giouffre at the gate. He had grown straighter, more self-assured, and had regained his judgment; by royal decree the witch-hunt had stopped, all cases were to be re-examined, and the innocent pardoned, their families given money and sympathy.

That part of this change was due to Grunek's death was certain, for King Edmond had, upon hearing of the witch-courtier's confessions, ordered the cellars and dungeons searched. Old Cirelan had been found, still containing Ackumen, so the king ordered the whole palace torn down. When sunlight entered Old Cirelan, it turned the statue into dead rock, which King Edmond ordered smashed and scattered. The deaths of the treasonous courtiers who dealt with devils would probably mark the last burning of witches in Cirelan for a long time.

Old Cirelan was destroyed, and a new palace would be built on another site. It was the King Edmond who caused this that bid farewell to Giouffre, who had announced his departure.

"I thank Cirelan. But I am homeless and friendless, so I must wander." And the warlock began to ride off, then stopped and shouted back, "If you wish good fortune, pray I never return."

"You will not, master," whispered Snargack, ducking the lash aimed at him.

Giouffre started his horse which he'd never bothered to name moving again, where and when he did not care.



# A QUESTION OF LIGHT/ IN SPACE

+ DOUGLAS BARBOUR +

a coast summer a prairie fall & the return from seacoast & mountains to flat rolling plains brings the eyes opening outwards to sky once more much sky almost too much sky except too much is barely enough if you open to it & looks

most of the time it's simply sky pure blue or grey & overcast or usually as there's so much of it a huge quilt full of miscellaneous patterns lots of cirrocumulus cumulus strato-cumulus al gradations all over the sky & just slipping out of sight beyond any horizon you turn to but on good days the days of accidental glory dusk turns the sky spectacular & tricks are performed you wont easily forget

like the other evening we were driving up to Edmonton from Mulhust the little village on the northern edge of Pigeon Lake where we're spending six months of my sabbatical it's an hour's drive & the hour was ripe with light dimming light playing among the clouds & aery firmament

so it's a question of light how sun sets & gives of itself in our atmosphere & also how space the sense of near-limitlessness only the largest prairie allows gives the sun's giving room to devastate the receptive eye

we were driving north & east so the main heavy reds were behind us & to our right as we drove the sky was mainly clear but some clouds hovered near the horizon & one magnificent arct path moved to point on the north northwest horizon & the whole was a process not a static composition so even as I try to tell what i saw i will be missing the gestalt if for no othe reason than i could only take in 180 degrees at the most at any second of viewing & the changes were continual thruout 360 degrees horizontal & 180 degrees vertical

the sky ahead was slowly darkening & that banner of cloud moved from burnt orange towards mauve as we drove but the subtlety of the shifts down the spectrum which took place thruout the hour i watcht it are beyond my skill to try describing them & besides i was trying to watch other changes in other parts of the sky so much to see & trying to keep enough attention on the road as i drove to avoid any accidents & i couldnt write down my internal & immediate articulations of what i saw the words & phrases fading like the very light-filld sky they were a response to

it is a power of light i am responding to here nothing less



the sky is filled with it at dusk especially here on the northern plains because there is so much sky but also because it is far enough north that the long sunset holds the light horizontally amber turning to umber so i can almost touch it certainly feel almost that i see the light itself palpably crossing before me rather than the colourful effects it has on the bare trees so burnisht bronze as i stare at them the air the air is alight lighting up the mundane world of trees wheat grass & man-made artifacts all around us this horizontal light effect strengthens as the sun sinks to just above the horizon & then is gone & the sky inherits the light as it disappears below the land's edge sky lit with pale glory skylight & here the subtle colours begin to enhance the air & fade away to darkness slowly enveloping everything

pale blue above a darker blue in the northeast the wide belt of cloud now umber slowly darkening to black but still to the south & west there's light in many shades of blue of red & orange of green yes green & aquamarine colours unexpected of sky but found here on Canada's western plains at dusk & that too fades the green to blue & deeper blue the pink to red & umber or mauve & darkness finally

the lights of the city glowing among black cubes while the last thin strips of light hold the night back awhile longer

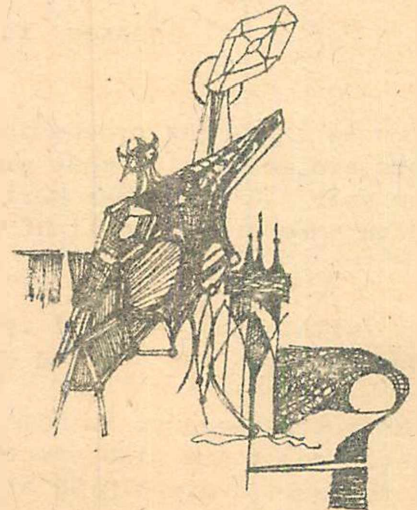
& all this happening all around us because the huge dome of the sky is all there is to engage our senses sensitive to space to light

& so lucky are we sometimes another sunset of great power occurred two days later when we returned to the cottage sitting in our darkening room & looking out across the lake while the light went out of everything for two hours or more & this time i wrote much of my response down as it happened the lake especially smooth that night no wind to disturb its burnisht surface reflecting all the changes in the sky above so that we were given a double dose of dusk glory

in the southwest a curve of cloud rises from the horizon holding the light a range of embers brooding dark orange bridge reflected in the smooth water & above/below an arc of dark cloud almost touching the beach i stand on straight south another bridge of grey cloud encircles in lake & sky a pale platter of light / the double slope of shore & that proceeds to yellow & darken further every moment passing every moment passing the embers darken too the moon half full floats southeast in the sky & on the lake a bronze age mirror slight distortion of everything in the almost imperceptible ripples across its flat surface almost touching the shore it brightens as sky darkens but the pale blue sheet floats above the gone sun the dark clouds float still in the lake of dimming light above/below & the fir trees beside our windows are chinese calligraphy on a page of subtly shifting colours delicate alterations in the message the whole sky sends as process as gift

change the sky still light tho darkening & lights on the far shore appear against the black low hump of the hillocks pinpricks of light and even lighter lines into the lake

you can see the like in the great landscape of the Dutch Vermeer Rembrandt & a





few others who saw a similar light sleight of the eye in the sky across their tended dike-lands & the ocean/horizon beyond or if you come north see it in the landscape paintings of the prairie painter Norman Yates who has dedicated his art to this light in this space & who knows it intimately in his very hands

the room  
we sit in is dark now almost too dark to write but beyond the big windows there is still enough light to blackly etch the trees & fenceposts to ikons emerging from lastlight almost lurching upwards palpable darkness in clearly carved shapes against the fading light

& still where the sun disappeared the shore is a black pennant floating in fire the burnt orange sky fading from flame to ash above/below the lake the mirror & the alchemist/sun sky process of each day's dying thru beauty a lightness to be borne with eyes wide open & the slow dilation of pupils studying it all swallowing it wholly

to the east now lake & sky are one heavy cloak of bluegrey there are no distinctions tho the lights float in a minimally darker flannel strip at the centre of sight or is the site of the light only darker because i know it's there there are no easy discriminations in the east now except for the pinpricks of light & now only embers dying glow in the west above/below & slow the go to ash / greyblue the night at last so slow in coming the remnants of light float still lightly as daown & empty into darkness still

&  
on this night most clear the lake remains a clear mirror of the sky those patterns of light immemorial above/below

delight it's so

& tonight another night the lake was an impressionist canvas of the clouds & aery kaleidoscope among them the sun a huge geodesic dome of pure fire for a moment on the ridge of the far shore & then just a memory burning & a plain of russet & flame lightly rippling beneath my gaze & this is the immanent being of light & the passing season here on clear days by a lake on the western prairies north tho not far north under the largest of skies

16 - 19.10.77

an afterword

season is the word or fall

falling towards winter falling upon us & the precession of the equinoxes is perhaps the reason the autumn sunsets are most gold most precious yet the sunsets are incredible at any time of the year the amber horizontal light is a function of the fall of the sun to the south however & the light across the fields is especially of the autumn

(entropy  
within the seasonal cycle & the slowing of the slight shift to the red end of the spectrum the drawing away of light)

on the other hand im noticing the sunsets mostly because im home in them after many months away the sunsets over the Oregon coast are also spectacular but so much of the spectacle is the sight & sound of the surf overwhelming all else here it is the sky which dominates & to which we pay our vision to the process / precession of light & our hopeful participation in that continual change

24.10.77



# **Blenheim a Cappella:**

## **Ludwig Who?**

+ ROBERT E. BLENHEIM +

This article begins under the assumption that a certain axiom is known by all who read here: than any figure who has managed to achieve a synonymity with any field such as music must be basically invulnerable to any attack. If it were not so, li'l me could not freely piddle-about philosophically as to the achievements of a great artist. I would, though, like to put forward another precept: sometimes the pedestal on which such a mortal god sits needs a good shake once in a while or senility begins to set in. No one stands up as the Best Composer really: it is a hat that even Bartholomew Cubbins couldn't've worn, and it doesn't fit any better on Ludwig Van Beethoven's head. This article's intention does not presume to denigrate such a great genius, but to show that Beethoven is not able to support such a pre-tentious label and is not perfect. I admit this article is a mixture of fact and opinion, and perhaps more of the latter than the former.

Discounting the "warhorses" I played over and over again (Suppe overtures, Tchaikovsky's "1812", Dukas' "Sorcerer's Apprentice," to name only a few), my really big loves in music when I was a young music lover were Gilbert & Sullivan and Ludwig Van Beethoven. I still love the former the few rare times I get into a G&S craze (about once every couple of years), but something has happened to my love of Beethoven. It came upon me slowly, a many-headed monster, each head with its own knife-wielding arm. It didn't creep upon me soundlessly as a lion stalking its prey, but advanced out in the open, each step a loud resounding thud, but there was nothing either I or Ludwig could do. Finally at one fatal point, Ludwig was seized, gutted and dropped lifeless into the mud. The great American composer Charles Ives (ironically his face was one of those on the monster) put it well many years ago:

"After two and a half hours of (Beethoven) there is something...that is gradually missed -- that is, it was with me. I remember feeling towards Beethoven that he's a great man -- but O for just one big strong chord not tied to any key...THE MORE THE EARS HAVE LEARNED TO HEAR, USE, AND LOVE SOUNDS THAT BEETHOVEN DIDN'T HAVE, THE MORE THE LACK OF THEM IS SENSED NATURALLY."  
(italics, mine.)



Through much varied listening to all periods of music I just learned to love sounds that Beethoven didn't have and began one day to miss them in him. But for the moment I want to leave my own case history and jump into qualities of Beethoven which could be considered objective flaws or weaknesses.

The most obvious weakness about Ludwig was his distinct failure as an opera composer (in spite of his one opera) for composing in the operatic medium has always been thought of as the very apex for a composer in many respects. Even today the number of real musically-central composers not fluid in opera (even if more famous in other musical forms) are very small: Bach and Brahms are two. Richard Strauss, Tchaikovsky, Berlioz, Stravinsky (to say nothing of basically opera composers like Verdi, Wagner, Weber) and -- before Beethoven -- Handel, Haydn, and Mozart, all were fluid composers of opera and all totally mastered the medium, more or less, without "growing pains" of any real note. The great Austrian symphonist Gustav Mahler was similar to Beethoven in that he did not master composing in the operatic medium because he didn't try to (only juvenile attempts); Mahler differed from Beethoven in that he didn't want to write operas while Ludwig did, and badly, and the latter agonized over it and barely managed to finish one and the one which he did write -- "Fidelio" -- is a revelation in a sense: it displays in an extremely telling manner how probelmatic writing an opera was to Beethoven. "Fidelio"'s composing has been detailed time and time again so there is no need to go into it here. It will suffice to remind the reader how many times Beethoven kept re-writing it (it is reported that he rewrote one aria over thirty times, and we all know of his four different overtures) and about his continual struggle to give the world just one operatic composition even remotely near the quality of a Mozart opera. He did not come close.

"Fidelio" has been and is admired by many as a sort-of musical "black sheep" because it is the only opera we have by "the Most Famous Composer", but when one considers the entire period of the world of opera it is seen that "Fidelio" sits curiously somehow outside the mainstream of the repertoire. It is, quite bluntly, one of the most flawed operas and if anyone else's but Beethoven's name had been on the manuscript it is quite possible it would today be an obscure one. Of course, the work has a few undeniably beautiful arias, a march, at least two effectively big moments, a toe-tapping fianl chorus, but there is not a trace of the kind of overall total cohesiveness of form displayed in, for example, a Mozart opera. And it has none of Mozart's charming scrutiny of society, his insight into human psychology, his eloquent structural characteristics displayed at their zenith in, according to many critics, "Don Giovanni." After a diet of Mozart's operativ meat-and-potatoes, Ludwig's "Fidelio" seems curiously shallow, unenlightened, pretentious, even banal, while musically interesting and sometimes dramatically effective in a superficial and intermittent sense and one begins to comprehend Charles Ives' statement if not altogether agreeing with it.

And historically?

While having undeniable historical value (especially as a curiosity for those studying Beethoven) is is astonishing how little importance the work seems to have when one considers the overall development of German opera, for one can follow a firm, clear line from Mozart through Weber up to Wagner and Beethoven's opera doesn't seem to have inflicted much of a dent. Carl Maria Von Weber, a contemporary of Beethoven's, is really the forerunner to the great German Music Dramas of Richard Wagner and it can pretty well be assumed that Wagner's Gesamtkunstwerk-form evolved with as little a glance as possible toward "Fidelio," if any at all.

Although technical aspects of composing I can claim no expertise at, I would like to bring up certain criticisms directed against Beethoven's vocal writing,

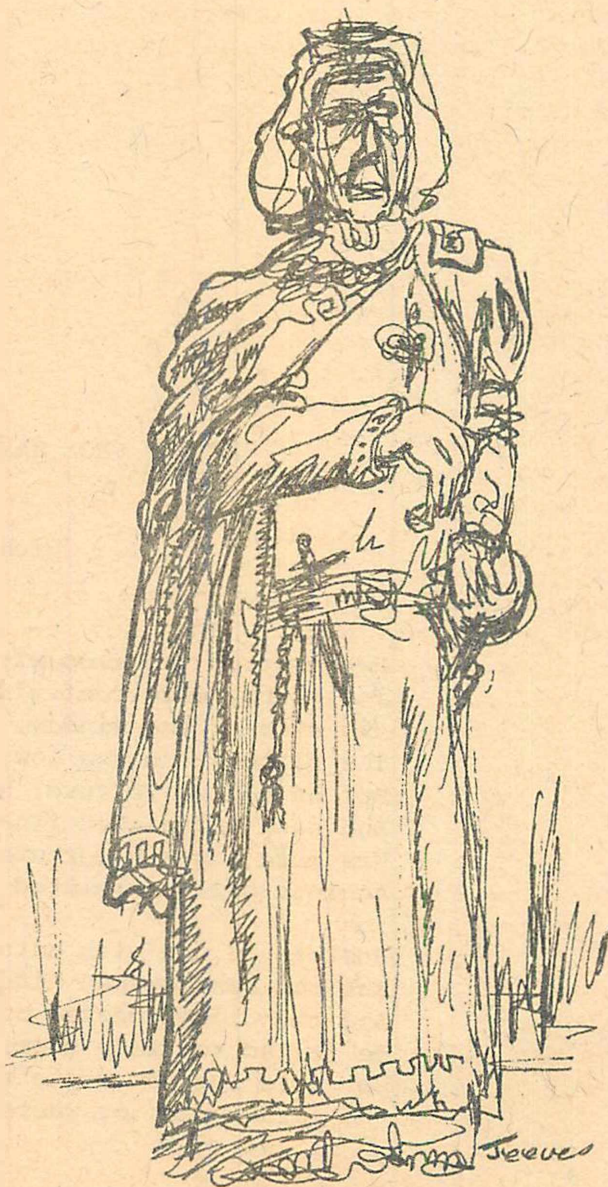


criticisms not aimed solely at "Fidelio," but at his "Missa Solemnis" and -- yes -- his monumental Ninth Symphony as well, a work I would never impugn in any way, however. It has been said by more than a few that Beethoven could not write well for the human voice and it is more for extra-vocal reasons these works are so effective, even profound. It is a criticism, though one may not be able to fully comprehend unless one has really sung in a chorus (I have for years), primarily a part other than what is relegated to those meoldy-singing sopranos. When one sings Handel, for example, one is dazzled at how perfectly natural each of the vocal parts are separately, how independently smooth is, for example, the tenor part in the Hallelujah Chorus or any of Handel's other famous choruses. The tenor part in the final chorus ("Welten singen Dank und Ehre dem erhab'nen") of Beethoven's oratorio "Christ on the Mount of Olives" (the chorus is sometimes erroneously referred to as Beethoven's Hallelujah Chorus) is clumsy and crude in comparison and grossly difficult to sing -- not because of any intrinsic vocal demands but because the parts seem illogically composed and only written to either support the soprano part or to repetitiously echo back and forth themes. At times, vocally, it sounds like a mess. The key to remaining oblivious to these flaws is not to listen to the music in any respect outside of listening for a basic symphonic response.

Beethoven's "Missa Solemnis" is also vocal chaos at times, even whiel "symphonically" effective. It has a highly dramatic symphonic surface sound, but vocal internal structural sense seems occasionally out-to-lunch.

The Ninth is uniformly declared as one of the undeniable masterpieces in all music. To me that is inarguable and I would not denigrate its profundity. Yet even it shares the chaotic part-writing of his other choral works, if transcending these clumsinesses into a perfection of symphonic writing.

Even if a reader ultimately disagrees with these criticisms, sources of these shouldn't be too hard for any reader to discover, so for the most part I have stayed within the boundaries of unoriginal safe ground. But, egad, even my enthusiasm for Ludwig's symphonies (once blazing brightly as a neo) has waned and gone on to bigger and yes, better things. Once a hater of Mozart (I thought him dull) is now one who swoons at "The Magic Flute" and loves every single bar; much more appreciative am I now of the inward subtleties in Mozart devoid of any pretentiousness and his music is like drops of crisp, delicate life. Every note of his best music exists totally for itself alone; each bar is accessible to those who go to it, but won't stain an atom of its civilized purity by the slightest beckoning to draw anyone to the music.





Nothing created by an artist anywhere is so squeaky-clean of the slightest patronization as is Mozart's music. One feels as if the entire human race, or all Earthly life, could vanish overnight and Mozart's music wouldn't even notice. All other composers' music -- especially Beethoven's -- would have heart failure.

Back now to my own case history: what else have I gone on to since? Name it; I've been excitedly rampaging about in all but Russian music, expanding my lungs and taking in Handel, Bach, Ives, Pendercki, Berlioz, Berg, Weber, Nielsen, Delius, etc., etc., etc. -- culminating in my Big Three: Wagner, Richard Strauss, and Mahler. All provide me with different kinds of musical appeasement Beethoven doesn't and didn't. And, frankly, Beethoven just doesn't seem to have much to offer me anymore. Today I seem to hear his symphonies more for the performances than for the music and only his Sixth remains meaningfully moving to me anymore. Beethoven's music remains uncontestably great works of art, so what has happened to me? Like Charles Ives, I have learned all too well to love sounds Beethoven didn't have. With that, this column has evolved from criticisms of Beethoven's vocal writing to a highly personal confession which proves absolutely nothing except to demonstrate what CAN happen to an individual music lover who progresses deeper in the field. It can be costly and I caution those who love Ludwig to proceed at their own risk.

Robert E. Blenheim  
7-9-77

#### RETURN FROM HAMPSTEAD & READING KEATS

by

Michael R. Carlson

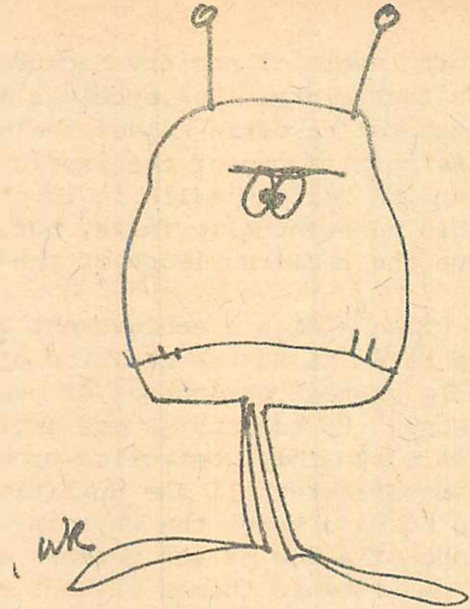
He measured the room with a fury of pacing;  
It shrunk, more confining with each angry stride.  
His eyes at the window, through dim glass were tracing  
The flight of a swallow, its leisurely glide.  
But he had no leisure; he was bound to his writing;  
And each unfinished line made his solitude worse.  
His muse was his torture; each thought fled him fighting  
Against being committed to the prison of verse.

Just to be one with nature, his footsteps cried out;  
But the swallow had hidden, in a corner of the sky;  
And the clouds passed him quickly; the words came and went.  
He failed to grasp them, while they lingered about;  
He could not now write them; his pen was bone dry:  
The words gone, or wasted; the energy spent.



# THE RED BOOK OF WESTMARCH

## reviews



The first three books under review differ in many ways: one is 'a work of intellectual science fiction' by an American novelist who has not tried this kind of fiction before; one is a sparkling alternate universe romance; one is a collection of fictions fantastic and speculative. Yet they converge towards a single target: sf as literature.

In Plus, Joseph McElroy pushes a traditional sf idea into wholly new areas of literary possibility. In a sense his Imp Plus, a disembodied brain in an orbiting satellite, is simply another kind of cyborg and there are lots of stories about cyborgs. But unlike those stories, Plus is no space adventure full of narrative suspense, for McElroy comes from a different tradition than genre sf.

Plus is a story of discovery in the midst of metamorphosis, a story told through a dense poetic quest of language. As the brain of Imp Plus slowly discovers what it has become in a new symbiosis with its vegetation complex aboard the satellite, we share its questioning and discoveries through the highly complex and difficult movements of McElroy's language. Although Imp Plus cuts itself off from Ground Control for most of the book -- exploring its reawakened memories of past life as a man and its newfound symbiotic life as a part of a 'great lattice' filling the satellite we see nothing of Ground's reactions except by implication. The adventure here is intellectual and it is Imp Plus's. Although it is difficult to follow because McElroy's language is attempting to map in its hesitations, repetitions, transferred puns and rhymes a wholly new experience, this scientific/philosophical meditation of a mind in metamorphosis is truly an exciting work of fiction. Austere and demanding by genre standards, Plus points one of the directions sf must go if it is to grow.

Brian Aldiss's The Malacia Tapestry is something else entirely, a vital and entertaining rogue's progress through a society locked in stasis. Malacia is an age-old city-state living under a curse against change, a curse an ancient Supreme Council enforces rigorously.

In this other world of early Renaissance dream (or nightmare), people live, love, hate and carry on as in ours but Aldiss's sprightly prose casts a charm over all their actions. Thus dukes, merchants, bankrupt families, actors and actresses, priests, courtesans, magicians, astrologers, soldiers, slaves, poor laborers, and all the rest parade before the eyes of Perian de Chirolo, an adventurous young actor whose story The Malacia Tapestry more or less presents. Perian moves through the



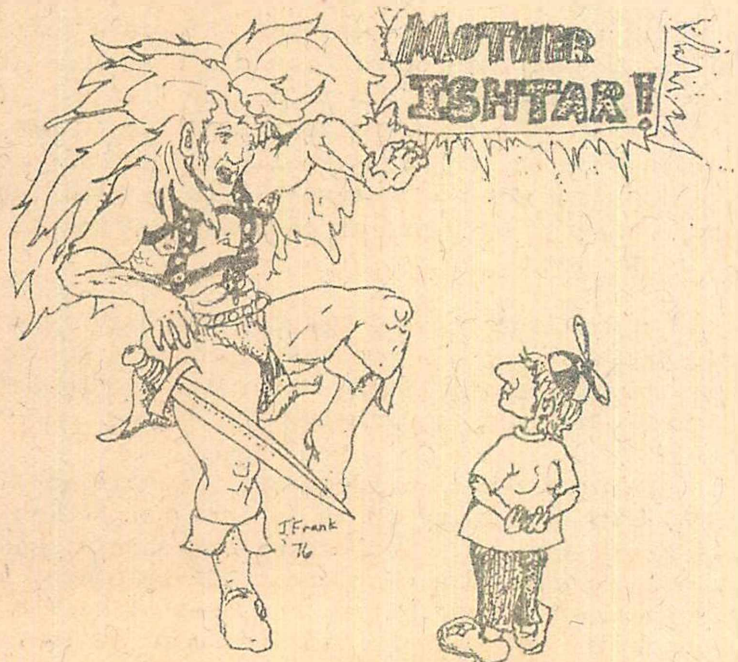
various levels of society because his profession allows him a certain freedom from class restraints. He perceives and comments upon others behavior with both wit and insight yet he often misses the point about his own actions and thoughts; this failure on his part is one of the ironic delights of Aldiss's picaresque tale. Swiving his way around Perian 'falls in love' with a high-born lady and tries to win her hand. In this he eventually fails, but his adventures during his attempts eventually increase his real knowledge of the ways of his world.

Brian Aldiss's achievement in The Malacia Tapestry is more than telling Perian's comic tale; it is the creation of a world full of history, myth and philosophies and grandly present personages of every class. Although Malacia exists in some alternate universe, its tapestries are profoundly felt cultural and social documents. Moreover, Aldiss's superbly controlled prose is itself a source of joy throughout, confronting and encompassing all the dualities by which mankind pursues its visions. Much more could be said about the ways in which Aldiss portrays a whole culture through the actions of a few of its members and of how he uses those actions to engage his various philosophic themes without ever lecturing his readers. Perhaps I will essay an attempt at saying some of it later. For the moment, it's enough to say that The Malacia Tapestry is simply a magnificently energetic and humane entertainment.

Keith Roberts is an English writer who marries the mythico-historical romance of Kipling's great 'Puck' stories to an ethico-philosophical vision not unlike Conrad's. In major works like Pavane and The Chalk Giants, he has achieved a compelling mythopoeic intensity of atmosphere. In his new book, The Grain Kings, Roberts essays a variety of shorter fiction, all of which display his craft and a few of which add substantially to his stature.

Roberts is especially good at rendering the inner worlds of his characters, their emotional turmoil and inchoate intellectualizations. As well, he follows Conrad's dictum to make the reader truly see. The perceptual intensity of his descriptions carries a great weight of implication in all of his best stories.

In The Grain Kings, the title story tells of huge UN combines, small towns on caterpillar tracks which harvest thousands of square miles of wheat. It also shows us the struggles of a love-lorn reporter as he fails to build his life anew. Roberts beautifully combines the details of the harvesting with the emotional changes his protagonist goes through. There are two stories set on the planet Xerxes which, along with 'The Passing of the Dragons,' suggest that mankind will wreak havoc on indigenous cultures wherever it goes to exploit worlds. All three stories contain evocative descriptions of alien ecologies while their characterizations are far fuller than one expects in short stories. 'The White Ship' is a disturbing psychological fantasy about a young woman's emotional coming of age in a repressive Celtic world of primitive religious beliefs. Finally, there is 'Weinachtsabend,' an incredible story of personal betrayal in an alternate world where England allowed Germany to conquer it in 1940, and thus acted like the





Weimar Republic in France. Here Roberts uses atmosphere plus convincing psychological detail to develop a feeling of political repression and terror that is superbly realized on every page. His protagonist is a sub-minister who is being tested by his superior while a Freedom Front tries to reach him through a woman he has loved in order to get him to assassinate his Minister. What is most impressive is Robert's superb control of mood and tone throughout. This is one of his most riveting and profound stories. Keith Roberts' vision is dark but essentially humane. The Grain Kings is a superior collection of literary sf.

What is on the whole more straightforward but still mostly superb sf can be found within the covers of The Hugo Winners, Volume 3, edited by Isaac Asimov. The good doctor provides his usual humorous commentary but it's the stories, novelettes and novellas which make this collection so worthwhile. All the material in Volume 3 is from the 70s, and this collection alone justifies Terry Carr's statement that the Golden Age of sf is now. Ursula K. Le Guin, James Tiptree, Jr., Harlan Ellison, Fritz Leiber, Poul Anderson, Theodore Sturgeon, George R.R. Martin, Frederick Pohl and C.M. Kornbluth and Larry Niven are the winners and in about every case I feel they deserve the honor. One interesting point about his collection is its eclectic nature. The fans of the 70s have chosen stories ranging from the superior s&s of Fritz Leiber to the recent 'myths' of Harlan Ellison, and they've twice honored Larry Niven's 'hard science' stories. I suppose the real point is that the general level of the writing is superior to earlier years. That's a question-raising statement, but then sf in the 70s is beginning to realize that the raising of questions in fiction is the whole point of it all. The fact is, this collection provides a good cross section of the better sf of the 70s. Upon review, this sf looks very healthy, very vital indeed.

-- Reviewed by Douglas Barbour --

Charles Fort Never Mentioned Wombats by Gene De Weese and Robert Coulson. Doubleday, 173 pp., \$7.95

Frostworld and Dreamfire by John Morressy. Doubleday, 186 pp., \$7.95

Mind of My Mind by Octavia E. Butler. Doubleday, 169 pp., \$7.95

The Ophiuchi Hotline by John Varley. Dial Press, \$8.95.

Gene De Weese and Robert Coulson are science fiction fans. Their second novel, like their first, takes place at a World Science Fiction Convention. This time their protagonist, Joe Karns, a reporter with serendipity -- the ESP ability to somehow be where trouble is happening -- is sent to Australia just when the fans are gathering there and Charles Fort Never Mentioned Wombats is his story of that strange trip.

Basically this often funny book proposes that science fiction fans, though they read all those weird stories, are among the most sceptical of audiences for those, like Von Däniken, who say they have the 'real' answers about UFOs, etc. Alas, a group of real extraterrestrials attempts to fool the fans with a fake 'invasion from the stars' and fails miserably. As light reading, this novel is fun but it's my suspicion that one needs to know something about fandom in order to enjoy the jokes, most of which are decidedly 'in-group' in nature.

John Morressy's Frostworld and Dreamfire is a future space fantasy with some rather pessimistic philosophical overtones. Set mainly on a desolate 'frostworld,' Hragellon, the novel tells the story of the last Onhla, strange humanoids who have various psychic and empathic powers as well as great strength and endurance.

Hult's quest to find others of his kind on a legendary other planet is difficult but successful. His dealing with humans are not so successful, for humans renege on agreements and act out of greed and power-lust, concepts unknown to the Onhla. Eventually Hult, now an ancient third-stage Onhla with vast psychic powers, must



watch his reborn race die out a second time when they are attacked by humans. When he contacts them the humans kill themselves (out of twisted guilt it seems). Hult eventually discovers new resources of hope in his realization that Onhla is a way of life and not a single race. At the novel's end he has adopted a tribe of human outcasts who have over the years proved themselves capable of becoming Onhla.

Morressy tells his complex tale of betrayal well, and his sense of the alien Onhla is intriguing in its insights.

Frostworld and Dreamfire offers no easy adventurous solutions,

yet it's not utterly despairing at the end. It is a good, thoughtful and empathetic novel.



Mind of My Mind is Octavia E. Butler's 'prequel' to last year's Patternmaster. It is the exciting story of a 4000 year old mutant's attempt through selective breeding to produce a new race and of what happens to him when he finally succeeds.

A fairly complex story told from several points of view, Mind of My Mind explains how the first telepathic Pattern, the joining of a large number of Psionic actives under the mental power of one person, is achieved. Of course, Mary, the first Patternmaster, has finally to confront her father/lover/master, Doro; and only one of them can survive the confrontation. By the time it happens she has learned from her particular power that she must serve it with a conscience, something Doro never needed to develop.

Like so many such stories, Mind of My Mind betrays an obsessive fascination with power. The implications of the conclusion are far from settling in their ambivalence, for the Patterners can and will control ordinary humanity for their own purposes. This novel is set in the present while Patternmaster is set in the far future. Yet the basic outlines of Patternist society are already established, implying that that society is almost deadeningly static. I hope Ms. Butler writes another novel set in the transition period, for she still has much to explore and explain about the Patternists and what they represent.

John Varley, one of the most highly praised young sf writers of the 70s, has written a number of stories set in a consistent future of the Eight Worlds, when man lives scattered about the Solar System having been driven off the Earth by powerful Invaders. Now his first novel, The Ophiuchi Hotline, explores the possibilities for humankind in a crowded universe where they are definitely not on the top level of intelligence but somewhere in the middle of the third level. It does this through the adventures of a brilliant young geneticist whose various cloned selves discover different aspects of the whole situation.

Varley reminds me of Alfred Bester in his ability to throw off one brilliant idea after another and of Samuel R. Delany in his ability to construct a coherent and different future culture from the inside. The Ophiuchi Hotline is a complex net of stories far too complicated to unravel here. It is exciting to read, partly



because Varley always manages to keep all the narrative strands clear. More importantly, in this future where changing one's sex is almost as easy as changing one's clothes, he presents characters who are interesting in themselves as well as because they behave as people for whom the term 'sex roles' has no meaning.

I am not sure if the conclusion is wholly satisfactory and I would have liked slightly more fully developed characterizations (his sense of different characters' speech-patterns is not as good as I would expect from such a pyrotechnical writer). On the whole, however, The Ophiuchi Hotline is both entertaining and provocative. We will be hearing much more from John Varley and I look forward to that with pleasure.

-- Reviewed by Douglas Barbour --

Challengers of the Unknown by Ron Goulart. Dell 11337, \$1.50

For those of you who do not follow comic books any longer, the Challengers are from one of the better quality comic books currently around. The concept is that four men and a woman investigate the unknown and the mysterious; the strange, the unexplained, the dangerous. The series is not tied to one kind of comic, such as superhero, war, western, etc.

In this first of what looks like a series of paperbacks based on various D.C. characters, Ron Goulart writes an entertaining novel spinning a web of interest and intrigue. The Challengers are called to a small South American country. Although the country is a democracy, there are some who are looking forward to a military overthrow of the government. They will set up a typical fascist type government, and it seems they are aided and abetted by corrupt American officials and big business. The Challengers are there to look into the mysterious monster of Lake Sombra. What they uncover, of course, is a nest of Nazis who have discovered a method by which they may achieve immortality.

Goulart's characters are certainly a bit more rounded than the original comic book characters, but still tend to have that which is cardboard about them. It's tough to do much with comic book characters. Goulart has managed to keep the characters recognizable to readers of the comics and make them interesting enough to readers who might not know the originals. I enjoyed this cross over much better than the Doc Savage movie which went the other way. I'm sure that we can expect Goulart to be writing more books in this series.

-- Reviewed by Blackwolf --

Frankenstein Unbound by Brian Aldiss. Random House, \$5.95

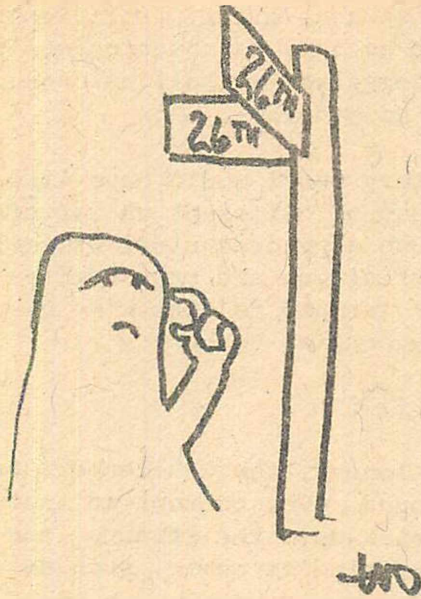
Aldiss, of course, is going to say that Frankenstein's error is what's wrong with the modern world. So what is the Frankenstein error? That a reformer, from the highest motives, will do something without thinking of the consequences because he is isolated from nature. Thus, Frankenstein is the father of the think tank and the research center.

The novel itself is deliberately modeled on Mary Shelley's: it begins with short letters to a loved one, then becomes a long unbroken narrative dictated by the protagonist near the end of the story.

The book begins in 2020, when the United States and Latin America are fighting a war in orbital space with remote controlled missiles. Down here on earth one Joseph Bodenland, a former Presidential advisor out of favor with the current Administration, is living in retirement in New Houston, Texas, amusing himself with his bugs and spy-eyes by watching his grandchildren and a neighbor bury a motor scooter.

Scientists learn that the missiles are wrecking the time/space balance; 'time-





slips' begin, displacing people and things by miles and milleniums. It's Judgment Day, or at least Armageddon, as the future ceases to exist.

A timeslip lands Bodenland in the Lake Geneva area, 1816. Almost immediately he meets Victor Frankenstein and encounters the monster, who has just killed Frankenstein's brother and framed an old family servant. When the servant is condemned, Bodenland drives a little ways in his nuclear powered 21st century car and visits the Shelley-Byron party to get more information from Mary Shelley herself.

Bodenland finds that Shelley didn't quite grasp a-l of her characters. Victor, for example, has a neurotic hangup about sex and created the monster partly from a desire to make something 'pure' of sexual procreation; Frankenstein's fiancée, Elizabeth Lavenza, is a chilly dark-haired Valkyrie; and his old childhood friend, Henry Clerval, is jealous over Elizabeth. The monster himself is not ugly, his face an 'abstraction of sculptured bone.' All this can be excused by remembering that she lived before Freud blessed us with the knowledge of what rotten things rattle in our unconsciousnesses; surprisingly, Aldiss misses that bet.

Our hero returns to Frankenstein's hometown, and the book starts deviating from Shelley right here. All time is being wrecked by the future catastrophe, so first there's a flood and then everything is surrounded by an Arctic plain. Frankenstein finishes the female monster in a tower just outside Geneva, after knocking out Bodenland with the monster's help. Bodenland then takes over the role of pursuer, hunting the hideous couple in his car with its mounted machine gun.

Gradually the setting shifts from Frankenstein to Byron's "Darkness," as reality itself breaks down. Who really wins the final confrontation is open to question.

Running all through the story is the image of the dance, at once sacred and profane, spiritual and sensual, beautiful while unspeakably horrible, blasphemous while sublime. It is this image that bonds Bodenland's grandchildren and their friend as they hold a 'Feast' around the motor scooter's grave, Bodenland himself and Mary Shelley as they skinnydip in Lake Geneva, and the two monsters who circle and wheel beneath two moons and a nightful of double stars. The dance underlines the paradox of the monster, that in seeking the highest we find the lowest and that joy comes from horror in a Faust-like bargain.

Frankenstein Unbound is loaded with philosophic reflections, largely because the characters do so little they all have plenty of time to think. Bodenland is the main meditator, gloomily deciding we went wrong about 1870 and there's nothing to do about it, while Byron symbolizes the ideal man, balanced between head and heart; Percy Shelley and Frankenstein deliver defenses of progress and science, and even the monster claims we'll destroy ourselves because humans make lousy gods.

Of course, only he who is free of stain should throw the first stone, and how free is Bodenland from the Frankenstein flaw? After all, when the story begins, he stands accused of having encouraged a black revolt through well-meant reforms of which he forgot to anticipate any ill effects.

Not recommended for those who like blood-and-thunder, but a good thought-provoker.

-- Reviewed by Ross F. Bagby --



Star Wars by George Lucas. Ballantine Books, \$1.95

To say that this is a very good bad book and, at times, it is almost as hard to read as, say, A Clockwork Orange, is severely overstating the case but, at least, it gets us pointed in the right direction. For one thing, Anthony Burgess is primarily known for his novels and so if he chooses to write a work that is mostly spoken in secret code and private languages then it is a case of a craftsman mishandling his tools. George Lucas' strengths are the muscles he uses when he makes movies, constructing visual images and sequences. So it doesn't reflect on his talents so much if he flops in a fairly unfamiliar and unique (for him) venture. But the book, Star Wars is not a flop; at worst it is a heavily qualified success. To be sure, the movie that it grew from outclasses it by far but, like I said, making movies is Lucas' chosen work.

A friend of mine (hello, Phoebe) who now buys the number of books I used to - glommed onto this soon after it first came out, December '76. (In fact, she bumped into handsome Mark Hamill at MidAmerican and chatted with him for a bit about the rigors of movie making. She now regrets that she didn't get him to sign her arm, or some other handy object, 20 or 30 times so she could now auction it off at a HUGE PROFIT.) I looked at it while she described it, thought the guy in the helmet on the cover looked kinda neat and passed up reading it because I wanted to re-read Lafcadio's Adventures and there was always the "Skylark" series to snort up if I were in the mood for space opera by an acknowledged master (Did you know that E.E. Smith used to work as a chemist in a donut factory in Jackson, Michigan?). Well, I knew about Iggy Pop before he appeared on the Dinah Shore Show so at least I can sorta say the same about Star Wars.

Had I read it then I would have much the same impression of it that I do now, except for one thing -- I wouldna gone to see the movie. I mean E.E. Smith wrote better than this guy (or, at least, more gracefully)! Overall, the narrative is turgid, the exposition slunky, and the dialog could stand to have at least a third cut (which is exactly what happened in the movie to provide much of the sparkling humor and dazzling pace). But when read in conjunction with the movie, the book develops its own charm. Apparently the novel was written after the final script for the movie, because it bridges plot gaps that gape in the movie. Like why does C3PO worry about the princess when the courier ship comes under attack and fails to recognize her hologram? The most glaring gaffe corrected is Hans Solo's claim that he and his ship can make the Kessel run in under twelve parsecs (which is something like saying you can beat everybody else's time driving to New York by fifty miles.)

But this novel is also worth considering on its own merits. If I had read it before the movie had come out I would have enjoyed the segments where Lucas' at times unwieldy fictive abilities integrate themselves and produce passages more unique and far better than E.E. Smith ever wrote: "I don't like you, either," the smiling man went on with brotherly negativity." Wotta line, 'brotherly negativity!' I hear tell that the novelistic sequel to Star Wars is going to be written by Alan Dean Foster of Dark Star fame. I've also heard speculation about how it wasn't really Lucas at all who wrote this one but some luckless hack writer of sf potboilers. I would have to say that a hack with any experience at all wouldn't have written a book as bad as this one but, then, he wouldn't have Lucas' talent of molding and melding images so he wouldn't have written a book as good as this one either.

-- Reviewed by Bruce Townley --

Music from Other Glaxies and Planets by Don Ellis and Survival. Atlantic Records SD 18227

Even though movie music is usually built like muzak, background continuity -- smooth n slimey, easy to swallow and fill spaces -- it can, at least, evoke the



memory of the pleasure that viewing the scenes it accompanied brought. So, since I'm currently as obsessed with Star Wars as I was with the Blue Oyster Cult when I sent Frank Denton a Blue Oyster Cult t-shirt, I got the double album set featuring most of the music from the movie, several stills, quotes and explanations from various people and had almost as much fun with it as I did with the BOC's On Your Feet Or On Your Knees. So Don Ellis figures to do the Star Wars album a couple of steps better by converting short bits of it into hip easy listening with lotsa saxaphones and synthesizers and a lot of other mindless tunes to fill out the package and maybe cash in on the craze. Guess again, Don! Interesting only because the Krypton (a little premature Superman throwaway, hm?) and Arcturus are misspelled. Get the disco version first if you must. -- Reviewed by Bruce Townley --

Jabberwocky, a film by Terry Gilliam.

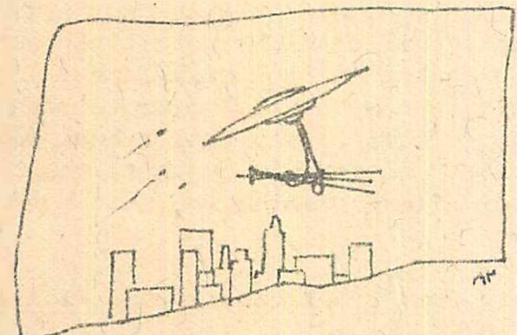
The first scene of this movie features Terry Jones as a medieval animal trapper as he captures first a bunny and then a fox and then puts them both, still living, in the same bag. Then Jones is bodily lifted to tree top level by an unseen menace (Jones' properly appalling histrionics and facial distortions are about all that are visible) and then dropped to the ground again after his body and most of his arms and legs have been gnawed away, leaving only his face and head intact. As his remains are shown with grotesque realism we can understand why he wears the expression that he does. The title then appears and starts bleeding. As R. Crumb says in a somewhat different context: "And I thought this was a 'comic book.'"

Is such a beginning scene as funny as John Cleese's goofy dismemberment in Monty Python and the Holy Grail? Fact is nearly any gains Gilliam makes in this movie are quickly slapped down again by his own hand, making this as difficult to feel affection for as Taxi Driver, but for different reasons.

But there are rewards deserving respect once you get used to the back breaking St. Vitus dancy rhythm of the thing. The fact that the trapper is himself entrapped is quite subtly pungent, evidence of a penetrating wit. The texture and bearing of this movie are marvelously intricate, filled with delightful throwaways (a food taster who is able to identify the vintage of plaster is but one example, there could be at least 45 more) and scents of a now nearly imaginary age. A pretty much Python-esque logic guides this thing, too; that potatoes would be munched like apples in that desparate time and the monstereous the monster the nastier the excrement. Gilliam brings to Carroll's lunacy a violence almost as apt as Eric Idle getting machine gunned while reviewing a Sam Peckinpaw film. And, lastly, regardless what the ads say, this is at best a three-Python production (Terry Jones and Gilliam who are both eviscerated by the monster and Michael Palin who eventually destroys it) along with one honorary one (Neil Innes of "Urban Spaceman" and Rutle fame). Which might explain why the crazed cartoonist can make a film that looks a lot better than Monty Python and the Holy Grail but lacks the appeal of its predecessor.

The Rescuers, a film from Disney Studios

Listen, I like this movie. I'll say it again. I LIKE THIS MOVIE. This statement, you should realize, comes from a man who, when he was a boy, was subjected to forced multiple viewing of Mary Poppins (a movie which almost turned me away from an actor



BOEING TO THE RESCUE AS  
EVIL BEINGS FROM ARCTURUS  
STEAL THE SPACE NEEDLE...



as gladsome as Dick Van Dyke). You should also understand that my sort of musical is more along the lines of Marat/Sade and that Alice Cooper is usually the closest I get to Walt Disney these days. And, anyway, Walt's dead and so we get stuck with unoriginal jerks like Ralph Bakshi.

All of which you should by now understand contributed to the queasy feelings I experienced before viewing this picture.

But not to worry. The Rescuers approaches Fantasia in entertainment values (and, on a lesser scale, animation technique; most of the points scored here come from Disney Studio's willingness to experiment) though in a more contemporary urban direction. Worth seeing for hearing Bob Newhart speak the sort of paranoid hero mouse's lines. The villainess is pretty convincing in a funky sort of way even though nowhere near the depravity of the dragon queen/witch in Sleeping Beauty. Even though there are some songs sung, they are forgettable enough so the movement of the picture isn't delayed but not so mindnumbing that the highpoints of the movie are forgotten. So you can say that this isn't really a musical. Maybe we can now, finally, kiss Walt goodbye.

-- Reviewed by Bruce Townley --





# *THE FEATHERS FLY*

*10cs*

*Last issue, as I outlined some of the things we hoped to see in England, I mentioned Limehouse. I had particularly wanted to see Limehouse because of my growing interest in Sax Rohmer and the "Fu Manchu" novels which often had scenes set in the then predominantly Chinese Limehouse. This touched off the following response from Ian Maule. Ian, by the way speaks of having been recently married and of being involved in two convention committees. No wonder we've not seen a zine from him in a while. Note also a new address.*

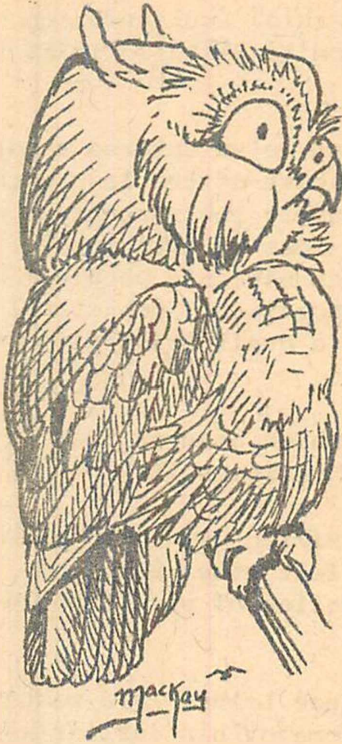
IAN MAULE, 18 Hillside, 163 Carshalton Rd., Sutton, Surrey SM1 4NG, England

What prompted me to write was the mention, in your editorial, of your intention to visit Limehouse during your visit to England. If you did manage to visit the area I might have met you. I'm a customs officer and have worked in the Limehouse area of London for the past 2½ years. My office is at Aberdeen Wharf on Emmett Street, just 50 yards from the site of the actual Limehouse causeway. If you did manage to get to the area you will know that very little of the East End of London remains as it was in the 19th century. Perhaps the only places that have the flavour of that time are some of the riverside wharfs, similar to the one where I work. Most of them have remained almost unchanged since the late 18th century. Dunbar Wharf in particular, just round the corner from Aberdeen Wharf, has been in constant use since about 1720 by the same company. Originally ships would tie up there but when this became uneconomical they accepted barges from the larger London docks down the river. Today the wharf still operates but on a very much reduced scale.

The populace of Limehouse, and the East End in general, has also changed a great deal. Many Londoners moved out of the area after World War II to be replaced by British passport holders from India and Pakistan. These days any trip through the area will reveal that these groups make up a large percentage of the population. Even the famous Chinatown of Limehouse is just a shadow of its former self. Many Chinese live in the new Chinatown centered around the Gerrard Street area in the heart of London's notorious Soho.

To be truthful about the East End and the dock area in particular: the whole place is dying on its feet. Wharfs and factories close down, no new developments planned, lack of adequate transport with the consequent result that many people leave the area. The one glimmer of hope on the horizon is the new underground line planned for 1980s to connect central London with these previously unconnected outer regions.





Unfortunately political turmoil might mean the scrapping of the whole thing - back to square one in effect.

I can vouch for much of what Ian says, even though our visit was short. Council housing, a rather depressed air about the region, and particularly bad transportation. We waited well over an hour for a bus back to central London. Yet, I am glad that we made the effort to see the area, even as much as it has changed since Rohmer's time.

Just as Eric Mayer's article stirred up much response a couple of issues back, so has Eric Bentcliffe's article last time stirred up a certain amount of controversy and much mail. Keep it up; let's you and him fight.

DAN GOODMAN, 1043 North Curson, #7, Los Angeles, CA 90046

I find Eric Bentcliffe's division of sf and its readers into two camps nearly useless for my purposes. Which is to say, I don't fit neatly into it. Most of my preferred reading in sf fits into his "science fiction" category - but not all, and much in that category does not fit my taste in the least.

I prefer realistic fiction about the future. I will fairly happily read sf in which the writer is doing this in addition to his or her main purpose of writing about science, or universal truths, or providing entertainment. I can even hack something like Fred Pohl's Gateway, in which the whole point of the book is the protagonist's psychoanalysis. I also have a minor taste for cross-time journeys.

What I don't care for is fiction set in the future but ABOUT the present. That includes a lot of the more Literary stuff. But it also includes a whole lot of less literary material. All those "future war" stories in which the armies and issues are much like those of today, for instance. (Actually, usually like those of yesterday as seen through a distorting lens.)

I have a strong dislike of fiction set in the future that deals with the PAST. If I read one more sf story about the Viet Nam War by someone who doesn't care that there are newer issues already, I will arrange for the author to be hanged from the highest guillotine.

On Bentcliffe's thesis that the only successful sf movies are those which minimize personality: I think Star Wars has proven him wrong. The characters fit stereo typed roles (though not quite exactly); but they're definitely something more. Star Wars had not been to England yet when Eric wrote the piece. It will be interesting to see whether that does change his mind.

Tsk, Frank, as editor you should have caught Bentcliffe's goof in attributing The Mote in God's Eye to Larry Niven. It was co-authored by Jerry Pournelle, and is distinctly different from what Niven might have written alone. (Or Pournelle, for that matter.)

Mote brings up another matter. Will history repeat itself, bringing the same



types of people around again? Pournelle definitely believes this; Poul Anderson has written stories which use this assumption and others which don't; Blish's CITIES IN SPACE series is firmly based on it.

My feeling is that history as we know it has ended. That we've entered a period of change greater than any in written history -- because part of the last such change was the invention of writing. Simply having an incredibly low percentage of people engaged in agriculture (and it could be lower with no loss of efficiency) is a large change from a situation in which most of any civilized nation's population lived on the farms. Add in television, pinball machines, spaceflight, pocket calculators, automobiles, and all the rest, and I think there's a qualitative difference.

I can happily read a work of fiction set in the future which assumes that we're still in the same cycle. But only if I feel that the author believes it.

On to reviews: Doug Barbour apparently is in favor of sf/fantasy works which reference previous work in the field. The late James Blish felt otherwise; he thought that such incest would produce a deformed next generation of sf. I would agree more with Blish.

It doesn't weaken Our Lady of Darkness; but that's because Leiber is a master writer and knows exactly what he's doing. (And Blish used some of his earlier work as horrible examples.) Newer writers, less aware that the ice atop the tar pit is thin, should probably leave it alone.

Or spend a week doing nothing but reading Cthulhu Mythos stories written by authors other than Lovecraft. THAT should impress upon anyone the dangers of using too many references to previous work in the field.

And here Barbour praises A Scanner Darkly, which from his and other reviews seems to be a near-perfect example of a kind of sf I dislike. A story set ostensibly in the future but actually in the recent past is not likely to attract me.

ROBERT BRIGGS, P.O. Box 1508, Punta Gorda, FL 33950

As for caricature vs. characterization, this may be a conflict, not of tastes (high brow vs. low brow) but of culture groups. Sf is a product of a different culture than mainstream. Japanese painting knows both portraiture and caricature. However, old Japan's culture reversed Western value judgments. Portraiture (well-rounded characterization) was a minor art produced by mere craftsmen. Caricature (which revealed style and personality) was a major art. Are we to say that the Japanese had no taste in painting because they reversed accepted Western value judgments? Maybe Anderson is right.

STUART GILSON, 745 Townsend Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3T 2V5

Robert Blenheim's column threw considerable light on several aspects of orchestral music that have long fascinated me. At the same time, I couldn't help but be amazed by the relevance of his discussion to avante-garde jazz, of which I am a devoted listener. I say 'avante-garde' because with a musical genre as widely inclusive and broad as jazz, it's necessary to distinguish between serious practitioners of the art form and the commercial musicians who have sold out in search of greener pastures elsewhere (though one can hardly blame them for their decision; jazz enjoys a limited audience, few musicians can play the music with integrity and expect to live above the poverty level. As a result, many of the more influential figures in jazz support themselves by teaching or writing, and play the music only for their own enjoyment).



Jazz can become extremely sophisticated and complex, and to be fully appreciated, requires deep listener involvement; "listening" in jazz, as in concert music, is frequently an intense, demanding experience, and one can scarcely hope to comprehend all aspects of a composition in a single sitting, if in fact it's possible to comprehend them completely at all. Unlike concert music, however, jazz can be totally unintelligible to some, even offensive, if they lack the training and musical appreciation necessary to interpret the various forms it can assume. Avante-garde performers like Sun Ra, Don Cherry, Cecil Taylor, Archie Shepp, or Anthony Braxton produce sounds -- musical happenings -- which, to many people, amount to strident chaos without direction or purpose; to others, however, such music conveys a clear "message", albeit in a somewhat unconventional fashion in which time signatures and ordered harmonies and key signatures may not be present. But then much jazz, by its very nature, does not lend itself to the strict and regimented conventions to which most music is confined. Musical tastes differ, and it would serve no purpose to try to account for why jazz appeals to only certain individuals, individuals who, paradoxically enough, frequently have extensive training in classical schools of music (for instance, The Creoles, possibly the most significant contributors to early jazz in North America, were for the most part all well-schooled in classical methodology, many having studied in France and Germany; but then classical music has always been looked favorably upon by jazz artists who recognize it as an excellent technique-builder because of its technical complexity).

The principal distinguishing feature of jazz, regardless of the period considered, is its emphasis on improvisation (though one mustn't neglect composers outside the genre, such as Bach, for instance, who is indisputably one of the greatest improvisers ever to have lived). Jazz performers engage in what amounts to spontaneous creativity, and nothing so far as I'm concerned is as exciting or miraculous, and it is here where listening to jazz differs from listening to other music. Whether the appeal of jazz is emotional or intellectual -- the emphasis is usually on the latter -- the improvisational process is demanding to both listener and performer (as an aside, it's worth noting that while listener identification with classical music is normally

with the composition rather than performer, jazz is concerned, the case is usually the reverse; this is because each jazz musician possesses a style of improvising exclusively his own, and in consequence the entire character of a composition can change depending upon who's playing it. The composition becomes secondary to its interpretation). Jazz requires a listener's full and uninterrupted attention, and because it is thus inappropriate as background music, this might explain why many people find the music disagreeable. It takes work and emotional involvement to "listen" to jazz in the manner Robert describes with respect to classical music; taken to its extreme, some people have actually suggested that the only experience closely comparable to getting "into" jazz is making love, from both the listener's and performer's standpoint.



While it may seem absurd that such musical communion is necessary, it must be remembered that improvisation is a spontaneous process, and as such, occurs almost instinctively without a musician's knowing in advance what will happen. Thus, the driving force cannot be mechanical but must come from within; to merely read the notes transcribed on paper by someone else's hand is to repress the



creative energies, and furthermore is a lot easier on the imagination. Bennie Goodman and Artie Shaw both played and recorded classical music, but they claimed to do it for relaxation because they had to play notes already recorded on paper instead of creating their own notes spontaneously. Not that I'm attempting to draw any value judgments between jazz and classical music, you understand; I'm merely pointing out what I consider to be several interesting differences and parallels between the two. Perhaps the most important point of similarity is the "listening experience" associated with each; the conception of a composition as a whole, as an "entity", as a character consisting of individual notes and musical passages joined to produce an animated entity. Certainly these features appear with less prominence, if at all, in rock, pop, and commercial music. The one difference here is that classical music is limited -- although not necessarily constrained -- by such things as conventional harmonies, rigid time structures, and the like, whereas jazz is free of any such checks on creativity. In spite of this, however, both musical genres are capable of achieving the same ends -- the same depth and emotional pitch -- for in the end, both depend upon the interpretations of music by individual performers, and it is ultimately here where their main strengths and weaknesses arise. (By the way, many of us who are into jazz deplore the term "jazz" just as "classical" music is considered inappropriate by its followers, and some have suggested that it be replaced by "creative music" or something similar.)

DON LIVINGSTONE, 8555 Southlands Crescent, Chilliwack, B.C., Canada V2P 1A8

Much has happened since I last saw you. We made our trip to Scotland and were there for four weeks, returning here on September 12th. We had a wonderful time. My aunt was overjoyed to see us at last.

We travelled a total of 2700 miles by car and saw many of the most historic areas, including Edinburgh, Glasgow, Stirling, Bannockburn, Glencoe, etc.

Our major emphasis was on castles -- we visited over 20, including Doune -- a fabulous 15th century castle in almost perfect preservation. Others included Stirling, Edinburgh, Eilean Donan, Culzean, etc., etc. The kids loved roaming the battlements almost as much as I did.

Glasgow Museum is a fascinating place. They have an extensive collection of armour, swords, flintlocks, etc. and I lost myself there for some hours. The art gallery is also superb, containing many excellent examples of Italian, French, Dutch, Scottish and English painting.

I took over 500 slides and have just finished editing and organizing them.

We stayed on a farm in a place called Glen Fruin, near Helensburgh. The farm building dated back to the time of Mary, Queen of Scots -- in fact, her husband, Lord Darnley, once owned and stayed in the older part of the building. We neither saw nor heard any ghosts when there, unfortunately.

In another part of the Glen, a bronze age burial vault was discovered some years ago. The vault or grave contained the bones of a man seated upright in what remained of a wooden throne-like chair.

It was a fabulous holiday -- one I will long remember with great pleasure. We hope to go back in the next few years and explore the rest of Scotland and visit England and Wales. We did not have time to venture south on this trip.

*//See how easily the fever is caught. Those of you who are planning to get to England in '79 for the worldcon had better start planning. There is more to see than you will ever have time for, and you, too, will be promising to go back again. fdd//*



TONY RENNER, P.O. Box 851, Panama, IL 62077

I wish Bob Spale had spent some time on rock music because just saying he likes rock music doesn't tell me a whole lot. Does he like hard or soft rock? Or both?

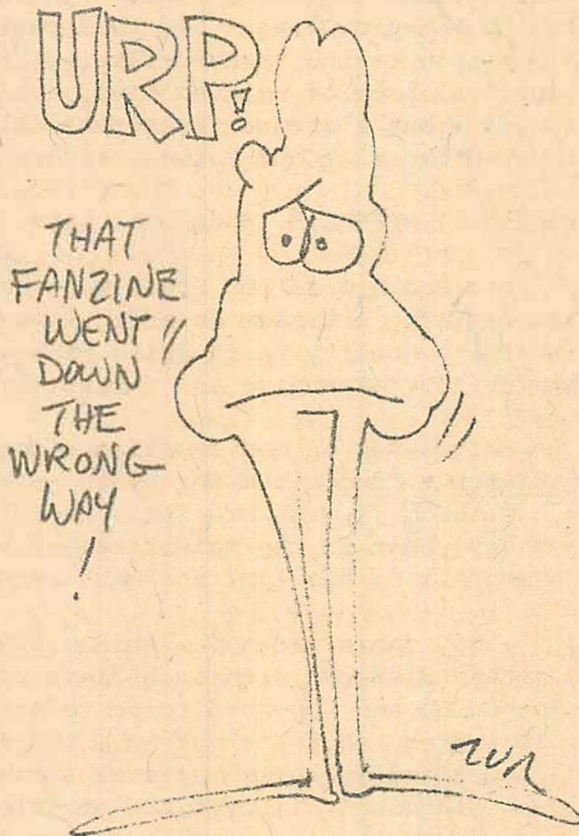
On the same subject I bought a Steeleye Span album (Please To See the King) through the mail a while back, but it was badly warped and I had to send it back. I did listen to one song, though. It sounded pretty good. Any advice on the next Steeleye album to get. I imagine you've got Richard Thompson's albums? I've got Live (More or Less) and Pour Down Like Silver; both are among my favorite albums. If you don't have them you really should get them, if only for the live version of "Calvary Cross" and "Poor Will and the Jolly Hangman." Now can you recommend some albums?

One more thing before I go. Do you have or know where I can get a copy of any Clifton Chenier albums? There's an article on him in the Elvis issue of Rolling Stone.

// Well, I don't know who might handle Clifton Chenier records. I have the impression that you are rather isolated and in order to get anything that you want to buy must deal through the mail. Sam Goody in New York used to be pretty good; King Karol advertises in some of the hi-fi magazines, but I don't think they give you any real price breaks. // Yes, I do have Richard and Linda Thompson and they are fine. Two new Steeleyes are out. One is Storm Force Ten (Chrysalis CHR 1151) and an import called Time Span (B&C Records CRD 1). This latter is four sides and has much interesting stuff on it. // Gay and Terry Woods also have some nice albums; they were associated with Steeleye at one time. The Dransfields are another fine group. // Speaking of Cajun music as you were with Chenier, several Cajun musicians will be here in February; the Balfa Brothers and Marc Savoy. I don't think I'll be in town on the date of their concert. // I had intended to do a column on folk music records this time and ran out of both time and space. I will try to do one for the next issue. //

SEAN K. SUMMERS, 2703 Wheless Lane, Austin, TX 78723

On Eric Bentcliffe's article, I have a few musings. He seems to place too much emphasis on entertainment, and then neatly describes the category as being too grim to be enjoyable. All 'Literati' sf? I think entertainment is being defined too tightly, though science fiction was not. Also, I enjoy 'thoughtful' stories, those filled with ideas, of use to me now or not. The ideas need not be the gadgets of older sf. Now personally I think that many of today's authors who write about ecological disasters or other gloomy subjects, write about it because they can see possible trends which might lead to that sort of thing. And what better place to





explore these possibilities than science fiction. Sf has a long history of using projections from the present into novels and stories of the future. Just look at some of the books by mundane authors telling of the possible future, and you will see that most of their concepts have already been explored by sf writers, and usually with a great deal more depth. The intent behind the gloomier sf of the day seems to be thought-provoking. "If this could possibly happen, should we not give some consideration to the road we take; otherwise the road may lead to a place we do not want." I know of no Muad'dibs, able to see the twisting roads and paths of mutable futures, but everyone faces that dilemma of choice/chance; and considering the probable outcomes of our actions either by Spice or SF Story is not a bad thing.

ROBERT E. BLENHEIM, Wade East Apts., #625, Broad and Wade Blvd., Millville, NJ 08332

...And now to Bob Spale's piece, "From Bach to Rock"; it was one of the most entertaining articles on music I've read in an awfully long time. It had an utterly disarming quality to it which exposed clearly his own lives in music, and they are wonderfully expansive and versatile.

His owrds on music satire I loved -- I've been trying to get that Gukheimer Sauerkraut Band album for years -- and I am a big addict of both Stan Freberg and P.D.Q. Bach (I wish Mr. Spale had discussed more of the former but I guess it would not have been in the mainstream of his article). I am a GIGANTIC Freberg collector having all of his lps, and many rare items.

Now, there are a few things I wish to comment on in response: statements which I either disagree with or believe to be false. A past loc to another fanzine was chopped up and appeared to be to one reader a 'diatribe' against the original article writer, so let's not make the same mistake here and think that if I manage to get emotionally worked up over a comment or two in Bob Spale's wonderful article it is a 'diatribe'; I LOVED his article.

His words on Wagner, though.....

Bob Spale: "Wagner inisted that his operas...had to be seen as well as heard." Well, for that matter, ALL operas were made to be seen as well as heard: Puccini, Verdi, you name it. But Spale's insinuation is actually the opposite of the truth, Wagner's designing of his Bayreuth Festspielhaus notwithstanding. Wagner's Music Dramas (he hated them called operas) require the visual stage representation LESS than any other opera composer; Wagner is ruined by too much visual distraction and for the last forty years the tendency has been toward SUGGESTION in the production of his works, in Grandson Wieland Wagner's versions, for example. I saw at the Met his "Parsifal" which portrayed NOTHING literally (it was even hard to see the characters at time as there were throughout the production thin-layered curtains separating the performance from the audience like a misty fog.) Not only did it work splendidly but anything else BUT this kind of treatment would have detracted from Wagner's tapping the audience's imagination with his music (other composers, like Puccini, for example, do not do this but strive for 'realism' usually), and would have detracted from Wagner's superb suspension of normal time. As in "Tristan Und Isolde," "Parsifal" has NO real physical action to speak of but is an indulgence into psychological states of mind and spiritual development. And how ludicrous have been all attempts in the past to literally show Siegfried slaying Fafner in "Siegfried" or the destruction of Valhalla in "Gotterdammerung"! Without exception every attempt at literally portraying moments in Wagner like these have been a failure, sometimes even laughable. (Keep in mind the exception is "Meistersinger": a human and 'realistic' comedy set in a very historically-real Nuremburg.)

I don't think Mr. Spale will disagree with me here, but he hasn't so much come to any learned conclusion about Wagner as much as he seems just not to have gone



INTO Wagner. He simply doesn't seem to KNOW Wagner. There are many reasons Wagner turns people off (I used to be one of them) but none are reasons which stand up too well when one goes into his music seriously as art and learns the wrongness of "... (taking all music -- e.g.: Rock, Jazz, etc.) with the same degree of seriousness". Some music HAS to be taken more seriously to appreciate it as some music is written to dance to, other music to indulge one's mind "seriously" to. No naming examples, exceptions, nor pointing at music which embraces both disproves this simple fact. Wagner REQUIRES to be taken more seriously than Chubby Checker, Segovia or John Denver. If one doesn't, then one's reaction will be the same as Mr. Spale's when coming up against Wagner. To say "As music, Wagner is usually boring" shows that Mr. Spale hasn't. (And he doesn't know what he's missing!!)

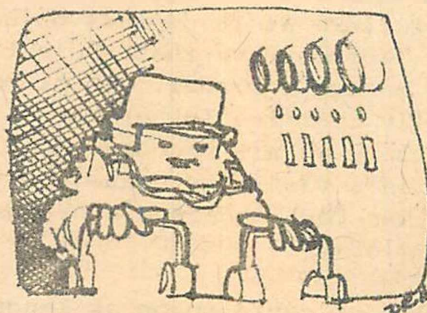
And "The Flying Dutchman" is the ONLY Wagnerian work he's seen? No wonder. It is the first of Wagner's "Music Dramas" (his almost-never-performed three earlier works are conventional operas) and is rather shallow, even banal, to many. Although "Flying Dutchman" is Wagner's shortest stage work time-wise, I believe it is his LONGEST, if you get my meaning. It is hurt, too, by being the "transitional work" away from the "Italian-type" opera stuff of "Rienzi" to his mature Music Dramas, and its intrinsic Wagnerian anachronisms can grate on one in the sense that it has the stuff of the former but the overbloated pretensions toward the latter. Mr. Spale: spend your time and money on "Meistersinger" or "Götterdämmerung" or -- if you can get serious enough -- try "Tristan" or "Parsifal". These four are Wagner's masterpieces and have no parallel in all of music.

Gee -- a 'diatribe'? No, but sorry if I got carried away. There are other slight disagreements I have with Mr. Spale, too, but they tend to be more like differences of opinion: he's ignoring, hence underrating, Handel who (besides having been Beethoven's favorite composer) could be said to be superior to Bach in many ways (except that he wrote too damn much music!); Berg and Webern should NOT be grouped together when one speaks of popularity for the latter is NOT popular, but Berg is one of the most popular of all modern composers as witness the many performances of both "Wozzeck" and "Lulu" all around the world; Nicolai Gedda is NOT the definitive Alfredo, although I do like him a lot, as well as Caballe, but I DESPISE Beverly Sills' singing; I consider "The Stoned Guest" to be P.D.Q. Bach's WORST album.

Where do we agree? I like Alan Hovhaness, too (especially his "Lady of Light" and his Symphony #14); I love Cesare Siepi; I am fond of Khatchaturian; I am crazy over Bach's "Mass in B-Minor"; I share his views on Country and Western music but hate rock more; I like Verdi, but not "Aida" -- the Verdi for me is the one who composed "Otello"; I agree with his opinion on the film of "Greatest Story Ever Told" and its "blah" portrayal of Christ, but think the Zeffirelli film on Christ (aired on TV) was superior to Pasolini's generally boring and artsy film.

Oh, well, what a dull world if all of us agreed on everything! But, Mr. Spale, give Wagner a chance, a fair chance, before criticizing him! And in spite of my few squabbles, thanks for a superbly entertaining and informative article.

// Gee, that almost amounts to a second article from Robert. I hope you don't tire of him. Opinionated he may seem, but he certainly knows more about music than I do, and I'm pleased to learn from him. //





ROBERT COULSON, Route 3, Hartford City, IN 47348

I'd like to point out one irrelevancy in Eric Bentcliffe's article in A-W 22. He says that "the only successful sf films have featured unknowns in roles which minimized personality". Yes -- but all of the unsuccessful sf films also featured unknowns in roles which minimized personality. Until STAR WARS, big name actors didn't generally appear in any sort of science fiction movies. (They may not now, but I assume the success of SW will put more "name" actors into sf.)

With a few exceptions. Cliff Robertson was a big enough name so that he could get his own production of CHARLEY, which was certainly one of the best science fiction films -- and one that depended entirely on personality for its impact. But then, that personality was explored in real depth, in a near-future setting that needed a small bit of real scientific background for realization. New Wave, if you like, but damned good New Wave. The best of all science fiction films is still probably THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL; I'm not sure at the moment how big a name Michael Rennie was before that film, but he was fairly well up there later. Again, you have depth of characterization -- or at least enough of it to provide more than the usual Hollywood stereotypes. (And of course there was Alec Guinness in THE MAN IN THE WHITE SUIT, but I suppose that can't be considered a commercial success, however entertaining it was.)

Basically, I agree with Eric, but I can't help nit-picking. There are no formulae for writing entertaining science fiction; there are only authors of varying caliber.

DOUGLAS BARBOUR, 10808 - 75th Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6E 1K2

One of the nice things about the last ish was the Edmond Hamilton memorial. Hamilton doesn't mean much to me personally; I'm not sure if I ever read any of his books, and maybe not even any of his stories, though that I can't vouch for/or against. You can't hang around sf for very long without hearing about him and others of his generation, however, for they were the pulp pioneers, and whatever we may now think of that heritage -- or rather, despite the fact that we can no longer accept that heritage uncritically -- he stands as an important early writer in the field. At any rate the personal touches of E. Hoffmann Price's elegaic piece made it worthwhile despite my lack of acquaintance with Hamilton's work.

And then there's Eric Bentcliffe and what he has to say; which I for one find a bit confusing -- mainly because I think I perceive some (at least semi-) contradictions in there. Of course I am one of the Literati or a camp follower, so maybe I'm simply missing the point. At any rate not all New Wave writing was set in the near future, and one of the most delightful examples recently of both British (see Brian Aldiss's little essay in MAYA 14) and New Wave sf is Moorcock's Dancers at the End of Time series -- which is definitely about as timeless as you can get. The problem with discussing characterization is that for each of us evaluation of success or failure at it depends on how well we felt it too place within a particular story. I do believe that the better writer any writer is, the better s/he will be able to engage a reader. In sf good style will surely go toward creating a more powerfully realized 'other world'. If we enjoy adding our own bits to the story, again surely we are encouraged to do so by good writing rather than bad. Ursula K. Le Guin's vast future and the individual worlds and their stories within it are better than Poul Anderson's because she is a superior craftsperson and writer. It's that simple.

Hmmm. I could go on at length, couldn't I? But I won't. I'll say instead that I enjoyed Bob Spale's talk of various music. I'd recommend he get in touch with some recent jazz, especially the solo concerts of Keith Jarrett, a superb improviser and very Romantic musician.



