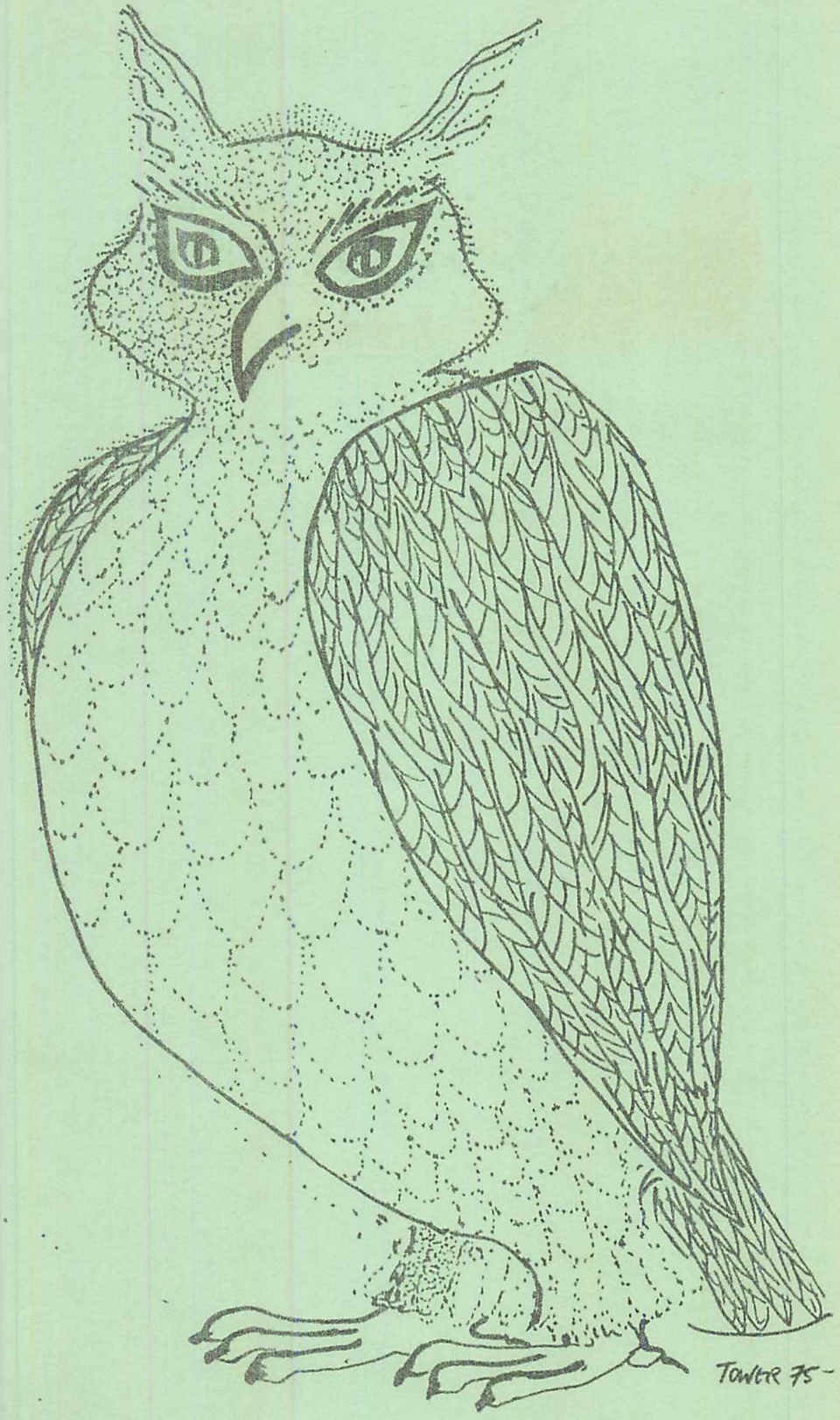
ASH-WING 24



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ASH-WING is a publication of the Bran & Skolawn Press and comes to you for the usual from Frank Denton, 14654 - 8th Ave. S.W., Seattle, WA 98166. Erdlatz Shrdlu!

THE FREE COMMOTS

+Frank Denton+

It's hot, folks. I'm sitting in my back yard, clad only in shorts. The time is 9:30 in the evening, and the house is still too hot to be inside. Doesn't that sound just like some eastern fan, sweltering in one of those big eastern cities? Well, this is the Pacific Northwest, friends. You remember, where it rains all the time. Today the temperature was something over 94 degrees. There is not a cloud in the sky and the next few days will be the same. It's comfortable out here; I've written a couple of letters, and I thought I'd read a little of James Michener's newest book, Chesapeake. But Ash-Wing has been poking around at my brain ever since I returned home from Westercon in Los Angeles, and I haven't known quite what to do about it.

So I thought, why not? Just roll a stencil into the machine and let her rip. Several fanzine reviewers have not thought too highly of A-W lately. Several friends and acquaintances to whom I talked at Westercon told me that the only things they read in A-W are the lettercol and the editorial ramblings. Needless to say, that disappoints me. So I've been mulling over what to do with the old rag. A-W is ten years old now, and I'm wondering whether I'm wearing out. Ah, well, enough of this self-pity. I'll ramble on about what I've been up to and see where it all leads.

I do intend to shorten the issues somewhat. I find that I'm not really up to producing a 40-page zine any more. Every time I receive a YANDRO from Buck and Juanita Coulson I marvel at it. Over the years it and they have become old friends to me; the zine is most welcome in the mail box. 240+ issues they've done now and it's always nice and thick. And A-W is only 24 issues old, a veritable upstart.

Speaking of the Coulsons, a fan fund has been started to take them to England. The Coulsons have been fans for over 25 years and certainly they have given fandom a great deal besides their longevity. I was going to say that I couldn't think of anyone more deserving, but I probably could come up with several. The point is that the Coulsons are at least as deserving as a lot of others. I'd like you to really consider contributing to this fund. I know that they are best known in the midwest, but what the heck. Even if you've never met them, which I've only had the privilege of doing once, and then for much too brief a time, go ahead and cough up a dollar or two. Send the money to Paula Smith, 507 Locust St., Kalamazoo, MI. If you have anything that can be auctioned, send it to Steve Simmons, 3825 N. Zeeb Rd., Dexter, MI 48130. This is a good cause, people; please support it.

Now you see how the Denton pages are going to go. Whatever strikes my fancy will simply roll out on the stencil. In a way, it will be a lot like THE ROGUE RAVEN, which was my personalzine, and which was only sent to about 80 people. I guess the past tense of the previous sentence marks the demise of the old Rogue. That doesn't mean that it can't be resurrected sometime in the future, but I think that for the time being, it will have a rest.

I've been dismayed by the demise of a couple of fanzines in the recent past. This seems to be a time of change in fanzine production. Donn Brazier's TITLE is

gone. I just received an AMOR from Susan Wood in which she said that with the exception of one more final issue, there would be no more. Eric Lindsay was through here recently (about which more momentarily) and says that he is folding GEGENSCHEIN. All of these are old and respected zines and they will be missed.

On the other hand, there have been xome phoenixes rising. Peter Roberts came through with an EGG and Leigh Edmonds and Valma Brown produced a huge RATAPLAN. Every day new fanzines spring up and new apas appear. I wish some of you could see some of the writing in the Cascade Regional apa. (No, I don't belong. As a matter of fact, I've been cutting down on my apa activity, along with everything else. But I do know a couple of nice people who are kind enough to send me copies of their contributions. Hi, Doug. Hi, Denys.) So, while I miss the zines whose publishers have decided to hang it up, there are old ones making comebacks and new publishers deciding to make their marks on the fanzine scene. And, of course, some old standards who just keep on chugging. All of these things have been running through my head as I try to sort out where A-W is going at the present. I don't know for sure, but I think I'll keep on trucking for a while yet.

A BIT OF AUSTRALIA COMES TO THE U.S.A.

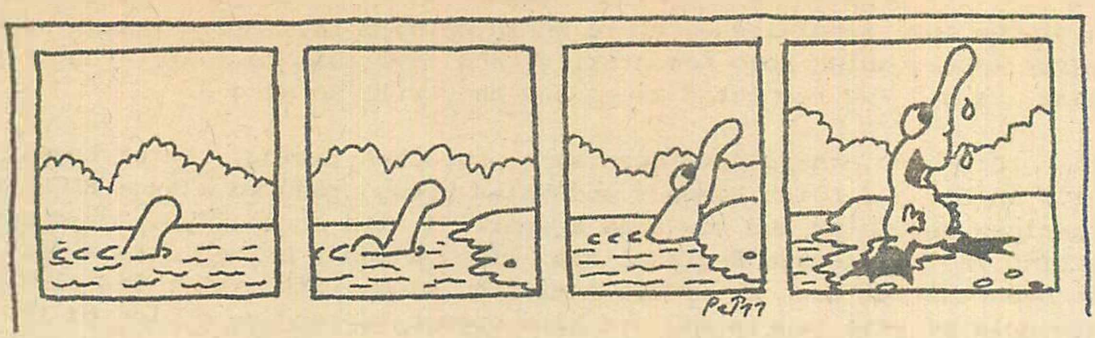
Sometime around the second week of June, Eric Lindsay came to town. I remember it vividly, since it was the second Friday of the month, the evening on which The Nameless meet. I walked in to the Horizon Bookstore as I usually do, greeting people left and right and heading for the refrigerator to stow my few beers for the evening. This slender fellow said, "Hello, Frank" as I went by. I did a double take and did not recognize him right away. At a loss for words, I finally said, stupidly, "Do I know you?" "Yes, I think so. We met a couple of years ago." Meanwhile the thought was running through my head that this was Eric Lindsay. But he hadn't written or mentioned that he was coming back to the states for a visit. Not that he isn't allowed to do so without my permission, you understand, but still...he might have warned me. Finally I caught my breath adn said, "Well, hello, Eric;" followed by recriminations for not warning any of us.

Eric had flown in that day or the one previous to Vancouver, B.C. and since a couple of social functions were on that weekend in Seattle, he had come straight on. We didn't get much of a chance to talk that evening, but the following evening was a housewarming for Jessica Salmonson's new apartment. There, between plates of sumptuous food, brought by all of the guests, we had a nice long talk. I had hoped that he would be in the area for a while, but he said that he was going back up to Vancouver.

A week later he called on the phone. I hadn't expected to hear anything from him again until Phoenix. He had come back down to Seattle and was staying at John Berry's home before continuing on his travels across the states hitting conventions right and left. He was going to spend Saturday wandering about Seattle. I asked him if he had any plans for Sunday. He said that he didn't, and I asked him if he would like to see a bit of the country outside of the city of Seattle. It all worked out well.

We picked Eric up after Saturday night's soccer match so we have him stay at our house overnight and get a reasonably decent start in the morning. The day was fine, albeit cloudy. Yet it didn't seem to be threatening rain. So we headed for Mount Rainier, hoping that it might clear up enough for Eric to catch a glimpse of 'the mountain that was God.'

On the way to the mountain is a marvelous park called Northwest Trek. Anna Jo had visited there on a teacher outing, but although we drive past it every time we go to our cabin, I had never stopped. The property once belonged to a doctor and it



This is as good a place as any to offer some apologies. You may remember that last issue I confessed to having received some illustrations and got them separated from the person who did them. Well, from his name, at least. In a recent fanzine I discovered some other cartoons by this person and was able to identify him by name. So my complete apologies to Paul E. Thompson of Birmingham, England. I owe you a beer, and you can collect next year at Brighton. Just look me up. Obviously, after all of this hoopla, the cartoon above is by Paul.

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(continued from previous page)

covers five square miles. A few years ago he made a deal to deed the land over to the Pierce County Parks and Recreation Commission if they would allow him to live out his life there. He had begun to develop the area into a wildlife park, a sort of 'safari park' for native animals. the park commission agreed and has continued to develop it into a fine attraction.

Buses, which consist of three articulated sections, were running every twenty minutes. After a few minutes look around the gift shop, we walked down to the loading area and climbed aboard the third section of the bus which was loading. I was anxious that we see all of the animals which roam the park. Both for Eric's sake and for my own.

Our driver introduced himself and told us a bit about what he expected us to see if luck was with us. He also told us to sing out if we spotted something which he missed. However, I must say, he knew quite well where certain animals were likely to be. Within a few minutes, he pointed out to us a small band of mule deer. Shortly thereafter we drove right into the middle of a herd of buffalo (American bison). He stopped the bus, and they were on both sides of us. The windows were large and had no glass. I could have reached out and touched one of them. One cow, just outside of our window, had a relatively new calf; it was only a few days old, I suspect. She nudged it and it got up and went around to her other side, completely hidden from us. Talk about protective.

Later we saw antelope (not native to Washington, but some range in eastern Oregon), elk or wapitit, mountain sheep. The driver was even able to point out a large bull frog and a turtle basking on a log as we passed a small pond. The various lakes had mallard ducks, Canadian geese and Whistler swans.

At one point we passed within a few feet of a young moose, recently introduced into the park. They are very careful to manage the size of population of any given species, so that there is terrain to give them sufficient feed. The ride took nearly an hour, and Eric was shooting pictures like mad. Near the end of the ride, we passed an enclosed area which contained a big black bear and two timber wolves. After we disembarked we were able to walk back over a bridge and look down on them.

Nearby were excellent displays with the smaller animals. We could see otter swimming under water through glass, racoons both inside their dens and outside, and just barely could see a porcupine in a hollow log. I think that the only animal in the park which we did not see was the mountain goat.

Just as we were leaving, we could see that there was some attraction at the main office. A woman had a pet ocelot on a lead. It was a beautiful animals, very tame and well-mannered, but I'm told that they will turn wild around the age of seven.

So the trip through Northwest Trek was deemed a success.

We drove on up to Mount Rainier Park, being surprised that a bridge was out on the road we usually take from Eatonville to Alder Lake. Just inside the park we stopped to picnic, and the wind decided to blow up the Nisqually River. It wasn't very comfortable so we made quick work of it. It did not augur very well for the rest of the day. But we got fooled again. After stopping at a couple of minor observation points to look at falls and running streams, we pulled off at a point where one can look back at Nisqually Glacier, the source of the river which runs on down out of the park to the west, passes our cabin within a couple of hundred feet, and continues on all the way to Puget Sound. You can see the ugly black face of the glacier which has been advancing and retreating for centuries. And when you look in the other direction, you can follow the river's course hundreds of feet below as it twists and turns until you lose it in the forest several miles away. As we stood there looking, I realized that the clouds were moving. I said to Eric, "Look up!" And there stood Mount Rainier in all its 14,410 foot grandeur. I couldn't have asked for anything better to show a traveler from Australia. It made my day, and I hope that it made Eric's day, also.

On up to Paradise, the furthest the road runs in the park. It tops out at about 5,000 feet. Eric got to take photographs of the snow, which he says his mum dearly loves. We had a chance to look around in the old lodge, which is completely buried in snow during the winter. We also visited the relatively new visitor's center, and had a nice view of the Tatoosh range where I climbed many peaks in my foolish youth.

When we descended and drove out of the park, we stopped at our cabin just a few miles outside. Sean and Loni and some friends were staying there for the weekend. We had thought to take them out to dinner, but they already had a barbecue going over a fire in the area behind the cabin. We walked back along the river to show Eric what destruction the forces of a river turned loose can do when there's a flash flood. Earlier this year a combination of warm weather and lots of rain turned the river loose. It didn't get to our property, but a quarter of a mile back up the river it washed out a pond that we had dearly loved and put a good layer of river silt over a fairly wide area. Further upriver it wiped out a whole recreational development and took out a bridge, now replaced with a Bailey bridge only capable of handling one-way traffic. The cabins in the development sat on fairly flat ground, and although there was a short dike, it didn't keep the water out. Nearly every cabin now sits at an angle on someone else's property.

A good way to end a very fine day was to drive back up to Alexander's Manor, a restaurant owned by the brother of a fellow who teaches at the college where I work. He and his wife looked for many moons for a place which they could buy and build up. Alexander's has been there for generations and has been owned by only two or three previous owners. Old man Pappajohn had a restaurant there when I was a kid, but he died about ten years ago and the place has been empty. Well, Jerry is one whale of a cook and the food is superb. Nice ending for the day. Except that they were out

of strawberry shortcake. A long drive back, but the day had given us a nice long time to talk with Eric, who is one of the very interesting people in fandom, and one of the nicest chaps I know. We got all of the news of what's happening in Australian fandom. It's growing; there are more conventions, more fanzines, more people. It's just like everywhere else, I guess. Well, that's enough about Eric's visit. Thanks for the good time, Eric, and you're welcome back any time.

WESTERCON XXXI

Let's see what I can spin off the top of my head about the Westercon just past. Westercon has always been my favorite convention, largely because there are usually so many people there whom I know and like, and it is long enough to see to it that there is time for conversation. This time was no exception.

Friday evening started the con off in a fine fashion with an ice-cream social. It was a rather nice tie-in with Westercon℄, as the con was called this year. There was a huge freezer full of Baskin and Robbins ice cream and I think that everyone ate their fill. Since it was held in the large ballroom there was plenty of room for all of the people and sooner or later there was a chance to talk to a good many of them for the first time of the convention. I recall seeing Don Keller, whom I hadn't seen for a couple of years, and we got to exchange some recent likes and dislikes in music. Dale and Mona Goble were there, and we spent quite a bit of time with them during the convention, since they are close friends. Jim McLeod and Debbie were also there and we did likewise with them. Bob Alvis from Boulder shared some recent mystery discoveries with me, and had a glowing report of a movie entitled Dona Flores and Her Two Husbands. He seems to have gotten into South American novelists lately and the movie recommendation was a spin-off from that. We spoke briefly with Roy Squires for the first time of the convention, and I had a lively conversation with Jim Langdell, who has moved to Los Angeles and is working in an electronics firm. Later in the evening, when the ballroom was closed I found myself in a good conversation with Bill Rotsler, Allyn Cadogan and Craig J. Hill, editor of Monochrome. This lasted for a couple of hours, and somehow gathered quite a crowd of listeners around it. I think it may have been Rotsler's inimitable tale telling that did it.

Saturday morning was spent in hanging some art in the art room. We had offered to agent for Vicki Poyser of Olympia. After breakfast we took our first swing through the huckster room. It was well laid out, and rather huge. A lot of good stuff, but I controlled myself and didn't bring too much stuff home. I think that the only program event I attended that day was a nice round-robin discussion of Protecting and Preserving Collections. Forey Ackerman had some interesting tales to tell about being stolen from. It became obvious that people from different climates are faced with different problems. I think Bob Brown has given me the best advice for packing away items for storage after the shelf space is completely gone. The big problem for me is that what is to be stored must be done in the garage and its storage loft, and in the winter we sometimes get field mice. Bob suggested placing each item in a plastic baggie, putting a heavy plastic bag (such as a lawn bag) inside a cardboard box and putting the items inside that. Outside the lawn bag, but inside the cardboard box, place moth balls. The smell won't get into the books, but will keep the rodents away. Up here we aren't bothered by silverfish, so my main concern has been the mice.

I seem to have digressed quite a bit there, so back to the con. Saturday was the day I met Terry Whittier for the first time. Terry is from California and is the editor of Altair, a pretty fine fanzine. I found him to be rather quiet, a bit droll, and thoroughly enjoyable. I also ran into Joe Pearson, a fine artist, whom I also had not seen for a couple of years. Joe has graduated and is a free lancer now, doing some pretty nice things. Sometime during the convention I got a chance to look at his portfolio. That's always a lot of fun; I was impressed.

Saturday evening Anna Jo and I went to a round of bidding parties. We stopped briefly at the Seattle in '81 worldcon bidding party, which seemed to be going fine without us. Then we sashayed along to the Los Angeles in '80 for Westercon party, where Elayne conned us into buying our memberships. She was selling like a demon and Bruce Pelz was egging her on and acting as general host. The party was nicely set up with adjoining rooms; one for non-smokers and one for smokers. To tell the truth, I don't remember who was going against L.A. for the '80 Westercon, but L.A. won quite handily, it turned out. Then we wandered along to the Sacramento in '81 for Westercon party. This was one which I think many people tought might be a hoax. But the Sacramento people are serious. They are led by Jim McLeod and Mike Garrels and had a very nice party, at which we ended the evening. I can't recall going to bidding parties before, but we sure made the rounds this time.

Sunday was a sleep in sort of day, although we made certain to rise early enough to take advantage of the champagne brunch which the Marriot has on Sunday around noon. Mariachi band playing in the lobby and an exce-lent brunch. We got together with Dale and Mona Goble, put our name in for a reservation, and had to wait only about 20 minutes. There was a huge salad bar, fresh melon, scrambled eggs, sausage, hot sweet rolls; just a splendid meal, and all the champagne you wanted. Unfortunately, sparkling wines of any sort and I don't mix too well, so I couldn't take much of an advantage of the champagne.

One of the highlights of the programming for me on Sunday was a slide show of some of the work being done on the Bakshi Lord of the Rings movie. There were about 54 slides of characters, some animation cels, and quite a few background paintings. I must say I was impressed. And the crowd of about 300 people who crowded the room broke out in spontaneous applause at some of the background paintings. Bernie Zuber, who is acting as fan liaison for Bakshi, announced that the film would be in two parts, since the story is too long. The first half will be released November 15th. I don't recall whether it was said that the second half would be ready for release by Christmas of 1979 or 1980. But it looks pretty good to me and I'm looking forward to seeing the film. I'm sure everyone will have something to pick at when the film does arrive, but it may be better than we anticipate. One thing I heard was that the Tom Bombadil section is not to be included. And in a few places two characters have been combined. Well, we shall all see; in due time, in due time.

I had a wonderful long conversation with Gil Gaier on Sunday afternoon. This may have been one of the highlights of the convention for me. Gil and I met several years ago, but it seems that we have never had any time for a really good talk. Anna Jo and I were wandering back down the hallway to return to our room, just to relax for a while. We ran into Gil and invited him back for a drink, soft or otherwise, and for once he was not surrounded by his admiring fans. By golly, he accepted. He stayed in our room for well over an hour, just chatting. Dale Goble wandered in and got hooked into Gil's PPEN (the Project). I even found myself trapped and going through the master list. Dale found this to be right up his alley; he's always doing just exactly this kind of thing. Gil was a kindred spirit. Dale hasn't been active in fandom for a few years, so he hadn't heard about Gil's Project. He was delighted.

Sunday evening we had a very small party with some close friends. Sometimes our parties seem to get out of hand, but this was quite nice. Roy Squires, Alva Rogers, Bob and Sharon Brown, Susan Mason and Dan Willott, Dale and Mona, Jim and Debbie McLeod. Lots of good conversation. I was delighted to hear about Alva Rogers involvement with Pennyfarthing Press, which will soon be out with some collectors editions. I'm looking for a quality product, and he tells me that they have an unpublished Pangborn manuscript which will be forthcoming when they get underway. That will be very nice.

Monday was a day spent in a most leisurely fashion. I don't seem to recall that we did a great deal. Sometime in the middle of the afternoon we went to see Wizards, a film I had not seen previously. Of course, I had heard many comments about the film, most of them bad, but I tried to keep an open mind about it. On the whole, I enjoyed the film quite a bit. There were some bits that I didn't like, and there were some animation techniques which did absolutely nothing for me, but altogether I would have to say that I was more glad that I had seen it than not. How's that for hedging? I'm not a film buff, so I'm not about to stick my neck way out there for you people who are.

Monday there was also a fanzine round table/circle discussion. I don't know exactly why I go to them any more, but I always do. There isn't a lot technically that I can do to improve, and you should a-l have given up by now if you think I'm going to write and layout any more beautifully. But I enjoy seeing the other people who show up, sometimes meeting new people, occasionally being able to share some experience which might help others along. Don Thompson and Mike Glyer were there, and if they still go to such discussions, I guess I should also. Actually it was a bit of fun, and when Mike Glyer had to leave momentarily, I was given the task of keeping the discussions going. It didn't need much help, really.

For the first time, I had a really close look at the huckster room, instead of just a run through. I didn't find much that I couldn't do without. For once I did not attempt to buy rare pulps or old collectors' items. So, as mentioned before, I got away fairly cheaply this time. Saturday night was the Denton party, which a great number of people came to. I don't want to sound like a name dropper, but I know that some people like to see their names in con reports, and it lets them know that they were remembered. So follows a list. Many of the people have already been mentioned elsewhere, so we'll just presume that they were there. But some new ones were people like Liz Lynn (Elizabeth Lynn has a novel out now entitled A Different Light -- I'd like you all to put this down right now, and go out and buy a copy. It is a fine book.). Jerry Jacks came by sometime with strangers in tow; they turned out to be Rick Sternbach, Asenath Hammond, Ted White, Virginia Aalko, none of whom I had met before. Gail Barton, ex-Slan and soon-to-be-married, came along for awhile. Gary Farber and Anna Vargo were there, perhaps not at the same time. And Gobles, and McLeods, and Mike Garrels, and Joe Pearson, and Allyn Cadogan, and ghu forgive me if I've left anyone out. Yes, Terry Whittier. Mark Anthony. And on and on.

Tuesday it seems that I spent all day in the art auction. Not really true, because there was also a LASFS auction which I attended. But the art auction was long, because there were so many items up for bid. I did bring home a couple of things by Gary Green and a ink and color by Lela Dowling which is quite nice. Again, I did not go hog wild, but managed to garner a few nice things. We tried to make arrangements to visit Gil Gaier's house, but that got screwed up some way and we never did make it. In the evening we walked down to the Hyatt House, about ten minutes away. Gobe had remembered that there was splendid sandwich called a Kentucky Jack. So we had to have one. English muffin, smothered in slivered ham and turkey, and covered with a cheese sauce. Yes, it was good. Gobles, Allyn Cadogan and Joe Pearson went with us, or vice-versa, and we had a long, liesurely dinner and much good talk. Back at the Marriot we sat in the lobby for a while, and played some computer games in the games room before going to the Dead Dog party.

At the dead dog I had a chance to meet and talk with a splendid young English fan by the name of Cyril Simsa. I took the opportunity to pump him about things English. We roamed back and forth over such topics as English theatre, rock music, the present state of English politics, hiking in Scotland and some others which I have forgotten. It was an excellent conversation and I'm looking forward to seeing him again in a year at Seacon. Others whom I had a chance to talk to at some length

were Bill Rotsler again, Charlie Brown, and Mike Glyer. I also got a chance to tell Craig Miller how much I had enjoyed the convention.

Wednesday morning at breakfast I had another chance to talk with Charlie Brown as he had a last cup of coffee before heading for the airport. Mostly we talked about new books which were forthcoming, especially sea stories. Charlie and I both have an affection for the Hornblower type story, and he told me that there would be a new Patrick O'Brian book along. Also a new one from Patrick White. Recently I managed to find a copy of the book, The East Indiaman by Ellis Meacham. I've been looking for that one for quite a while and it is my current breakfast book (you know, read only at breakfast -- I manage to knock off about ten pages each morning over my coffee. That way it doesn't get read too fast, but that's a sub-genre that's even smaller than our ordinary one.)

After we said goodbye to Charlie, we picked up a Toyota Corolla from the rental agency and drove down to San Diego, or to be more specific,to El Cajon. Shannon, our daughter, and Aaron, our grandson, are living there, and we had not seen them since Christmas. We knew that it would have been less expensive to fly down, but we had never driven south of Los Angeles, and thought we would like to see what the country was like. Sometime I want to spend some real time in California, not just running down to conventions and straight back home. Sometime in a few years, after I retire, we should be able to do that. Back around 1970 we did do some touring in the Napa and Sonoma valleys and enjoyed ourselves greatly. I'd like to see some more of the coast.

We had a nice visit with Shannon and Aaron. Anna Jo stayed on until Sunday evening before flying home. I just stayed a couple of days, since I had work back at the college which I was anxious to see to completion. Shannon did take us around the San Diego area on Thursday before I flew home. We visited briefly the Cabrillo Monument, the Ocean Beach section of San Diego, and Balboa Park, where we took a look at the Conservatory and stopped briefly in the Timken Museum of Art. Then she drove us to Old San Diego, where we wandered in and out of shops, had lunch at the Casa del Mundo, and visited the Church of the Immaculate Conception, the earliest church in the area. 5:30 p.m. came much too soon and Shannon dropped me off at the airport for the flight home. Those of you who remember me writing about the burn on Aaron's arm and the skin graft will be pleased to know that it is healed quite nicely, although he is still under a doctor's care to make sure that it continues to do so. There is a scar on the arm which I don't think looks to bad, and I have great hopes will be even less noticeable as he grows older. There is also a scar on the hip where they removed skin for the graft. The kid is over three now and growing into quite the boy. Ol' Grandpa Denton has promised not to tell grandson stories so I'll shut up except to say that I was delighted to be with him again, even for so short a time.

Thus ends the con report. And just think, you're going to get stuck with another one next issue as the result of Iguanacon. I told you that this was going to be a lot like the Old Rogue.

TALL SHIPS

We didn't get a big batch of tall ships here, although I think that the expectation for more was there. This is the bicentennial of the Captain Cook voyage and it is being celebrated in Canada with lots of events. The Japanese training ship was here earlier, and tragically, an eight-year-old boy fell from the dock where the ship was moored, hit his head on a boom log and died. That took a bit of an edge off of the visit. Last week, The Eagle, the Coast Guard's training tall ship was here. Anna Jo and I went down to see her one night, but the crowds were immense and we never did get on. There were also some Class B tall ships moored a little over a mile down the waterfront and we walked down to see them. Good exercise and a lot of act-

ivity to be observed along the waterfront. The days have been hot, and a lot of people were taking advantage of the breeze off of Elliot Bay. Of course, anywhere you go these days, you will find runners. Here they had to wend their way through the walkers and strollers and most of them managed to do quite well without breaking stride. One fellow had it all figured out, however. He ran in the street, in the opposite direction of the traffic, and had a nice small lane all to himself. No problem.

In a basin where a small waterfront park has been developed, the smaller tall ships were tied up to barges which had been placed there for their moorage. This was rather nice for the spectators, as you could walk out on the barge between a couple of ships. The nicest one was the Robertson II, a three-masted schooner. She was originally built in New Brunswick, but now makes her home as a cruise and training ship in Victoria, B.C. She still needs some restoration, but is in fairly good working condition. Another beauty was the Lady Frei from Aalborg, Denmark, a two-master very nicely finished and outfitted. The Oriole and the Yankee Clipper were smaller sloops with two masts which are local. The Adventuress was from California, I think, and looked ready to sail off to the South Pacific any moment. A couple of mornings later I saw the Robertson at sail in the bay as I drove to work. They are awfully pretty with the sails set.

Of course, the ferries, whose terminal is just a couple of piers down, were coming and going on their regular runs to Bremerton and way points. And the commercial jetfoil, which was undergoing an experimental trial period, was running back and forth to Bremerton also. It takes maybe a couple of hundred yards for it to plane up on its foils and then it really skims along. There is also one which has been running up to Victoria. I wish I had a chance to take it. The run is just a little over an hour.

So we had a nice walk and saw a lot of harbor activity. When we got back to the Eagle's pier, the sun had gone down. The sky was a lovely pink behind the Olympic mountains across the Sound. I took a couple of photos through the rigging and masts with the evening sky behind and the mountains outlined. Hope it comes out.

ODDMENTS

Well, I had better wrap this up. It does feel like the old Rogue Raven and I guess I'll see what sort of acceptance there is to this sort of column as a regular thing.

The King Tut Exhibit is here and I've been reading I.E. Edwards magnificent book about the tomb and the treasures which it held. We'll be going down to view the exhibit on Monday night and I'm looking forward to it a great deal. The curator of the Cairo Museum says that Seattle has the exhibit displayed the best of any city it has been shown in. Buildings have been remodeled at the Seattle Center especially to house the exhibit. It is hoped that with the facility, other exhibits of this sort can be brought to Seattle. Anna Jo and I went down to San Francisco at the end of March to see The Treasures of Irish Art at the De Young Museum. It was worth the long drive. Incredibly beautiful things. Seattle is anxious to bring that level of exhibit to the city and the Tutankhamun exhibit is certainly a fine way to start off.

Not too long before it will be time to board the plane and fly off to the flaming furnace known as Phoenix. This will be our first worldcon since Los Angeles in 1972. I'm looking forward to meeting some special people with whom I've been in contact for many years now and have never met. God grant me that the convention is not so large that I never find them. And also that everyone who said that they would be attending, actually do so. Maybe I'll even see you there. And certainly, you're going to hear a lot about it in this same place next issue. Stay tuned.

BLENHEIM A CAPPELLA

BLENHEIM A CAPPELLA

"Illuminations
and
a
Leavetaking"

by Robert E. Blenheim

My birth -- in one particular sense -- began on a certain day (I don't know the exact date) when I was six. Ray Bradbury recalls -- in his "Illuminations" section of Dandelion Wine -- the first day he really knew he was alive and the world opened up to him in all of its sensual glory. Nothing after that moment ever looked, sounded, smelled, felt or tasted the same as it had, but was imbued with a new intensity, a new reality.

My father was over sixty and in bad health. I knew nothing about his past and had cared not a whit at the time, but he had been an opera singer of some note around the turn of the century, in fact he was at one point the most honored and praised pupil of the great Wagnerian singer, Emil Fischer, the definitive Hans Sachs of the Metropolitan Opera. My dad -- who sang under the name Earl Blenheim -- had quit singing due to the temperament of the people in the operativ field which he loathed and had gone into business. When I "appeared" he was a big man in the burlap business, on the verge of becoming president of his own company. Music must have remained in his blood, but I was not even aware of serious music in my father's life until after his death when I was twelve. After that, however, it was too late to converse with him about music, a fact which today remains my greatest regret.

Nevertheless, one day when I was six, my father took me to a movie, making not a single comment before or after the film. And at that age I had hardly ever seen a film and never consciously thought about them, reading children's books voraciously most of the time, or drawing, the latter at that point in my life my main interest.

The film was Walt Disney's "Fantasia."

Like when someone goes into shock, I literally plunged into a new kind of existence, coming home that day (I can visualize it as if it were yesterday) in a trance, all my senses alive and bursting with power which I could not comprehend or contain. For the next three or four days I lived through the film in my head again and again, chained to its colors and sounds. Its images haunted me painfully and its music danced in my head and I was totally oblivious to any other kind of reality. That single day I can pinpoint as one of the most important and influential in my life. Dinosaurs screeched and battled, enticingly beautiful fairies skated on ice and transformed leaves into gold, centaurs and flying horses gamboled through rainbow-colored hills and lakes, Mickey Mouse stood on a cliff commanding the ocean, stars and comets, and I heard the music booming in my head to all of these images, as I walked, as I ate, as I lay in bed trying to sleep. The sights and sounds of "Fantasia" would not leave me alone for it was an experience, an "illumination," which awakened me; art had -- in the guise of a "cartoon film" -- charged into my soul and kidnapped my being. And somehow looming over all of this was a large figure of a man with long flowing grey hair and hands raised as a God to burst forth the gates of my mind with

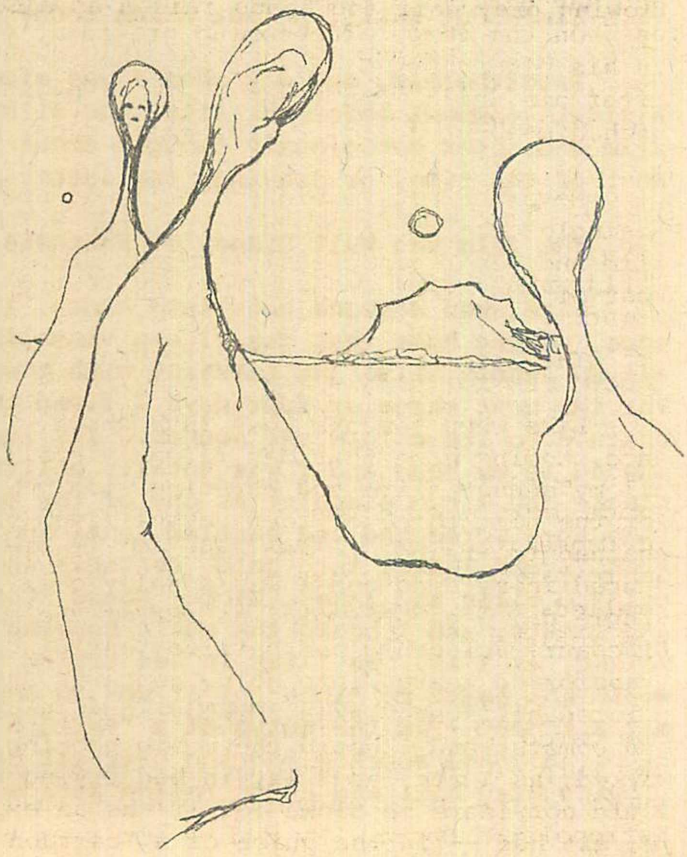
the music, O God, the music which I could never, ever, shake off.

That man was Leopold Stokowski.

How can I write of the passing of this God? It seems impossible that such a man could ever have died -- I truly believed in his immortality, I always did, I still do! It has got to be some sort of joke.

Since my boyhood my musical tastes, of course, have become more sophisticated. I became first superficially knowledgeable, then critical, then ultra-critical, then more appreciative of the simple beauties and less tolerant of the obviously strained showmanship of some conductors. My liking for Solti came and went, it giving way to a greater, even a sublime, love of the inner subtleties conductors like Eugene Jochum or Karl Bohm could bring out in a piece of music. But through it all my love of Stokowski has remained, past all phases and through all of my musical growth. I can assure you that nostalgia has nothing to do wit it, for my love of a conductor could never be sustained on memories alone, no matter how intense they are, for this kind of love requires constant reassurance. In my last music column I detailed how Beethoven's influence on me lessened in recent years (not the recognition of his greatness, but his particular relevance to me), and my love of Stokowski was just as vulnerable had I been exposed to reasons which could have nullified it. You see, while deifying Stokowski I was never indifferent to objectivity and never unable to criticize him when I thought criticism was due. But his greatness always outweighed all criticism.

I admit: I have not liked some cuts Stokowski has made in the past or some of his re-orchestration of pieces. I despise his re-arrangements of the Love Music from "Tristan Und Isolde" and the Act II music of "Parsifal" into "symphonic syntheses" which to me are completely infaithful to the spirit and meaning of Wagner. His Bach transcriptions, on the other hand, I revere for they show the magnificence and beauty of Bach in full orchestral sound without jettisoning anything of the clarity of Bach's contrapuntal lines, which is the way Baroque should be handled when orchestrating (and rarely is); it cannot, too, be denied that generations of young people (and old!) can now understand and like Bach when otherwise untranscribed Bach would be lost to many. As for Stokowski's cuts and rearrangements of the works of "Fantasia," for me to criticize them is to bite the hand that fed me my love of music and should be relegated to the totally irrelevant anyway when one examines the purpose behind the film "Fantasia" and how well it succeeded in fulfilling this purpose. The relating of just one single human



-- my own case in point -- should vindicate Disney and Stokowski from any charge of "tampering with the classics" and be compensated by the sheer amount of people the film has reached throughout the years and how much it has stirred people like me into a deep love of music.

As for the performances of the works in the film, Stokowski's interpretations with the Philadelphia Orchestra are,almost without exception, paragons. He had built the Orchestra to the status of what arguably was the finest orchestra the world has ever known (which Ormandy has done little to sustain in all the years since Stokowski's leavetaking other than to provide good-sounding pretty music to the society people of Philadelphia at best, saccharine music at worst). The highlight of the film to me is Stokowski's incomparable reading (cuts and all) of Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony with strings in the last movement so perfectly rendered in that heart-rending passage where night comes to Mount Olympus in the film and the mythological beings yawn and prepare for sleep; so beautifully is this and other sections of the symphony executed that this symphony has been spoiled for me for life and I have never found any version on records at all satisfactory to me. (1)

But Stokowski -- he was an old man even when "Fantasia" was first released in 1940! -- never ceased growing. He continually experimented with the phonograph disc until his death, deeply involved in the production of his records. And -- after the age of ninety -- he was recording many new discs for London, RCA, Columbia and others, with new vigor, with fresh approaches and without a trace of senility or even nostalgia. He truly died a young man.

The wrath he poured on late or noisy audiences, the many temperamental eccentricities of his earlier days, his lusty personal life, all provide enough engrossing stories to fill an encyclopedia and are being related copiously in all of Stokowski's obituaries, so I won't go into them here. His accomplishments are also too numerous to mention except I personally would like to note a mere few of his American premieres of which he conducted many, many important ones: Stravinsky's Rite of Spring, Berg's Wozzeck, Mahler's Eighth Symphony, and the world premiere of Ives' Fourth Symphony. (The full story of how Stokowski witnessed Mahler conduct the world premiere of the Eighth Symphony in 1910 in Munich gravely ill -- Mahler would die shortly after -- and was so inspired he literally "smuggled" the score into America, makes fascinating reading.)

But I do have a personal story to relate. About four years ago I got to see Stokowski conduct his American Symphony Orchestra in New York City in Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 2, the "Resurrection" Symphony. It was one of the greatest moment in my musical life, perhaps the greatest since that day at age six when I saw "Fantasia" for the first time. When the dynamic, awe-inspiring concert ended, I wandered in a daze up the aisles and out into the lobby of Avery Fisher Hall past busts of composers, not realizing where I really was, hearing nothing but the glorious last-movement music which still echoed through my head. Ironically enough, I stopped beside a copy of Rodin's famous bust of Mahler. Compulsively, I turned toward the right and strode forward determinedly as if nothing could stop me. I pushed through a mist-enshrouded group of people and entered a small room. There, two feet in front of me, sat the Great Man himself on a couch, and people were around him but nobody was speaking to him. I leaned toward him and the silver-lined wrinkles of his gorgeous skin shone into my eyes with a singular presence and his eyes looked at me. Of course I

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(1) - A tragic footnote: Stokowski had just signed a new contract for recording which would have gone well past his hundredth birthday and one of the discs he was scheduled to record next year under his contract was a new recording of Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony.

mumbled something incoherent as people like me are apt to do in such a circumstance, and one of his great cracked hands reached up and held mine. I was suddenly swept by the importance of this man and embarrassed at my relative unimportance and backed away and out of the room. It was like the man meeting Picasso on the lonely beach in Bradbury's "In a Season of Calm Weather": what does one say to such an extraordinary human being; what does one say to a God?

It was only one short moment in my life, yet the grasp of his hand shines through me still and is a part of my life I wouldn't give away for Wagner's golden Ring. Seconds of reality have given me an experience which colored and will continue to color all the days I have left in this life.

What else can I say? Stokowski died in Hampshire, England on Tuesday, September 13, 1977 at the very young age of ninety-five.

Or so the papers told me.

APPENDIX

Of the many phonograph records Stokowski made since the early days of the recording industry, I have picked six discs which I consider to represent his very best on records, and are consequently my favorites. All are modern stereo lps, the majority made after or around his ninetieth birthday. It just happened to come out that way, but I am convinced it proves something about the genius of Leopold Stokowski.

BACH, JOHANN SEBASTIAN: "Stokowski Conducts Bach: The Great Transcriptions" (London Symphony Orch.) (RCA ARL-1-0880). There have been three or four other discs in Stereo of Stokowski's remarkable transcriptions of Bach from the early classic Capitol disc (re-issued on Seraphim) to the dismal London recording with the Czech Philharmonic of a few years ago. None compare with this first-rate disc in which Bach's music comes across with the greatest clarity and control. Sound is unsurpassed. Selections include "Komm, Susser Tod," the "Little" Fugue in g minor, "Ein' Feste Burg," and the incomparable 18-minute "Chaconne." The best orchestral Bach on records.

BEETHOVEN, LUDWIG VAN: Symphony no. 9 ("Choral"). (London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus; Harper, Watts, Young & McIntyre) (London SPC 21043). An absolutely stunning performance and the best Beethoven's Ninth in modern stereo sound. Most brilliant is the unsurpassed way Stokowski weaves in the chorus and the quartet of soloists in the final movement with control that defies belief. You've never heard the Ninth like this before and hearing this performance is as if you are hearing it for the first time. (Added plus: London managed to squeeze this on a single disc.) Stokowski, with a swish of his hand, tumbles down all competition on records.

IVES, CHARLES: "Orchestral Set # 2" / MESSIAEN, OLIVIER: "L'Ascension." (London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus) (London SPC 21060). Two modern works given such definitive treatment that it strikes me as one of Stokowski's milestones on records. I have found myself recommending this to many who say they don't like modern music

and they have been transfixed and won over by this disc. On the best equipment it is one of the best-sounding discs ever made and what Stokowski does with sorting out the complexities of Ives' score to an almost incomprehensible simplicity wherein real beauty emerges out of the chaos is an achievement, and the sheer dynamics of the Messiaen piece -- less important musically than the Ives -- will shatter you. A real turn-on disc which could appeal to a much larger group of music listeners than would ordinarily like modern music.

IVES, CHARLES: Symphony no. 4. (American Symphony Orchestra, Schola Cantorum of N.Y.) (Columbia MS 6775). For over a decade, Leopold Stokowski had been planning out the premiere of this work, perhaps Ives' greatest masterpiece, and this recording was made shortly after the 1964 world premiere performance at Carnegie Hall with the same artists. It is a milestone in American music, certainly the greatest American symphony ever written, and as a performance is is one of the most notable of the century, winning unanimous praise which forced music critics and public alike into searching for whole new superlatives to describe it. The sound is very good, but Columbia has not been manufacturing its discs very well of late. One of the great phonograph records of all time.

KHACHATURIAN, ARAM: Symphony no. 3 for full symphony orchestra, organ and fifteen trumpets / RIMSKY-KORSAKOV, NIKOLAI: "Russian Easter Overture" (Chicago Symphony) (RCA LSC-3067). Khachaturian's Third is probably the most unconventional symphony ever written, and especially under Stokowski's baton, is a mammoth sound spectacular with trumpets blaring out from all sides and featuring a gigantic percussion section. The composer himself called it a "Symphony-Poem" when he composed it in 1947 and it was denounced by the Soviet government. 21 years later Stokowski was to introduce it to the United States and it stirred much controversy. It is a work of real individuality and is performed with all of its biting sonics and intervals of melodic beauty intact by the Maestro Stokowski. The filler is mild stuff by comparison, but I have never heard the "Russian Easter Overture" performed with such beauty of strings and with as much emotion in my life.

MAHLER, GUSTAV: Symphony no. 2 ("Resurrection"). (London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Fassbaender, Price). (RCA ARL-2-0852). It is ironic that Stokowski -- one of the greatest champions of Mahler's music since the early part of the decade -- waited until he was over ninety to record his first Mahler disc: this one. And his death means this is Stokowski's only Mahler recording, a tragedy for which there are n words. But there is this disc and Stokowski's mastery of this monumental work is so complete that no recording comes closer to a realization of Mahler's total conception. Stokowski paces the first movement slower than usual but it adds unity to the work and builds the climax to one of which there is no equal on records. It makes all competition seem mild by comparison and shallow. His handling of all the forces in the last movement (the chorus, the soloists, the full orchestra) denoting the last judgment and our final resurrection has never been done with such forcefulness and with such overwhelming beauty. Listening to this recording is an experience of rare inspiring glory and hits the level of the sublime. Indescribably moving, and a recording for the ages.

-- Robert E. Blenheim --
9/26/77

"THIS IS A FINE MESS YOU'VE GOT ME INTO, R2D2!"

+ Eric Bentcliffe +

Damn, but this hair shirt itches! However, it appears the article that's now causing me to itch raised a rash of comment for Ash-Wing; interesting comment too, so I hope it will prove to be a benevolent affliction.

Now, it isn't easy for me to continue the discussion...as you'll recall it was sparked by comments made by Eric Mayer, and I tried to carry those thoughts of his a step or two further - and quite possibly along lines he hadn't intended me to - adding a conclusion, theory, thought or two of my own along the way. I wrote the piece in such a way that I thought would provoke comment, obviously I simplified things along the way for the sake of coming to a fairly black-and-white ending... Equally obviously, I hope, your readers will have realized I'd have had to fill the whole of Ash-Wing to do justice to the cosmic scope of it all....

I'd probably have to take up a big slice of this issue to reply to Keith Roberts REPLY TO ERIC BENTCLIFFE which read nicely; which I enjoyed, and which did veer a little toward the end away from A REPLY TO ERIC BENTCLIFFE. But....I think most of what is needed to be said along these lines now has been and whilst I'd love to sit down with Keith and a glass and (I'm sure) reach a mutually agreeable point of view at the end of a pleasant bull-session...I think a written reply to a reply to a reply et al is overdoing things. *((Ah, yes, but you wrote it so well, and gave it such a nice title, that I couldn't resist.))*

However, all this fine and noble reasoning doesn't mean that there are no comments I want to make, only that I intend (to try) to make them brief and, it is hoped, pertinent...brief, because we are off to Italy in a few days time and there are a lot of other things Beryl tells me I should be doing - and pertinent, well, because I'd never dream of being anything else! Firstly, I must take Keith up on his assertion that Ash-Wing is a sercon zine - the original definition (and as far as I know still the true one) of sercon being'an over-serious fanzine or fan'...a minor cavil, I know, but I often see the word misused these days. *((Shucks, I didn't know that.))*

I'd also disagree with Keith on his assertion that "NEW WAVE is dead," although I'd go along with the thought that it was born with a death wish. I'm quite sure that he is correct in saying that it was intended to be a one-off publication of someone who is nameless...but while the song may be ended the malady lingers on. It may have a new name now - I haven't been reading publishers' blurbs lately; after one came up with 'Speculative Fantabulation! I developed a phobia against these 'fine' examples of hyperbole - and some of its elements are now accepted parts of the sf scene and no longer, strictly speaking, NEW WAVE, but it didn't end with that one book.

Surely, I realize that it is difficult for a writer to make his characters 'timeless' ....and I'll re-state what I intended to infer by 'timeless' just to clarify things; that the people and places in a sf story should not be immediately recognizable as the town or people next door by their mores or by their opinions, actions, etc. To give an example, Michael Coney's otherwise well-told tales are always spoilt for me by being set in a Cornish fishing village - on a planet far, far away. To give another example: A.E. Van Vogt's Slan is a more effective science fiction character than Bob Silverberg's David Selig (in Dying Inside), because the latter is dated by his characterization - his more explicit characterization as a believable 'present-day' member of society. Over-characterization in an sf story can be as bad as under-characterization. Obviously, I'm talking abstractly....I enjoyed the Silverberg more than the van Vogt story, it was better written, but it was dated as of the time it was written and even now could not be read as a future novel of a telepath; Slan can!

Having said that, let me confuse (?) the issue by saying that I believe that characterization is one of the most important elements of a good sf story: but characterization that does not create a place or a person out-of-time. I'm starting to repeat myself now - re-read what I actually wrote on this on page 10 of Ash-Wing 22, please. And, I'm sorry, Keith, but bringing in Lucian, Dean Swift, and Conan Doyle is irrelevant to the argument, there wasn't an sf genre in their time...in my opinion these can only be read now as Historical-Romances (very good ones, too) and the fact that they still can be read with pleasure reinforces my argument because they have "Timeless" characteristics....but not science fiction ones....they are set in a time and place which can not now be thought of as the future.

If you'd like me to give an example of believable 'timeless' characterization, or two...well, I'd start with Keith Roberts' own excellent Pavane stories, I'd acknowledge Richard Cowper as equally adept at the art; John Wyndham - yes. Arthur Clarke? No, I don't think so, apart from in his original version of Against the Fall of Night; Ego's characters are almost all cardboard. Poul Anderson often succeeds in creating good, timeless, characters and he is better than most in putting them in a right setting. I could go on, but I won't, because only a listing of my likes and dislikes would eventuate. And, as to aesthetics...I find Keith and myself much in agreement, I like and enjoy stories where the author has created believable worlds and peopled them well, but that wasn't what my article was about.

Star Wars, yes, I've seen it now...greatly enjoyed it...but I certainly would not say that the degree of characterization (or lack thereof) therein effects my conclusions in Ash-Wing 22. Indeed, I'd say it was an excellent example of THE SECOND DIMENSION, the characters were developed only sufficiently to stimulate the audience into playing their part in sf by fleshing out the characters in their own mind. The name actors in the film, the accomplished actors in the film, Alec Guiness and Peter Cushing were not allowed to do anything more than cameo performances. And in R2D2 you have a perfect example of the type of sf 'character' which I believe to be most successful. Not, necessarily, the type I most enjoy, but that which I believe most sf readers/viewers want in sf.

((Well, Eric should know better by now. He intended this as a letter, and it ends up as an article. I really must try to get Eric and Keith together next year at Seacon. I'll buy both of them a beer and sit by while they discuss all of this. I do suspect that they are not all that far apart, and having spent some time with both of them on the last trip, I know that they'll get along famously. Thanks for taking the time again, Eric. And I hope the trip to Italy was smashing.))

THE RED BOOK OF WESTMARCH Barbour

Reviews Barnes

Benedict

Denton

Lucifer's Hammer by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle. Playboy Press, 1977. $10.00

At the time of this writing, Lucifer's Hammer has already made history. As reported by Locus, Fawcett Gold Medal Books has paid $236,500 for the right to put this book in paper covers. This is the largest advance, ever, for a science fiction novel. Of course, the word is out that the publisher plans to market Lucifer's Hammer as a mainstream disaster novel, rather than science fiction. Indeed the hard cover edition simply says, "a novel by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle." This marketing strategy might explain the huge advance for a novel that retells one of the oldest stories in the science fiction genre.

This is an end-of-the-world story, and knowledgeable fans will know that it has been done before. It's been done by H.G. Wells, J.G. Ballard, John Wyndham, John Christopher, and others. But believe me, this isn't just another run-of-the-mill treatment of a tired old theme. Recall that Niven and Pournelle in their first collaboration, The Mote in God's Eye, took another old theme (first contact), and made an extraordinary novel full of wonder and imagination out of it. The value of Lucifer's Hammer, like that of their first collaboration, is in the different way they tell the story. Earlier end-of-the-world novels have focused on a very small cast of characters, with most of the action taking place off stage. In Lucifer's Hammer, Niven and Pournelle have tried to give the feel of a truly global catastrophe. They do this by using a multiplicity of viewpoints and a plot structure which begins with a diffused overview of many people and places, and narrows at the end to the War of Harry's Truck, fought by two groups of survivors in the mountain valleys of Southern California.

This is such a large book that it's difficult to give a decent plot synopsis, but briefly it's about the discovery of a new comet, its collision with the Earth, and the subsequent collapse of civilization.

The first third of the book describes the discovery of the comet by an amateur astronomer, the production of a television special about comets which involves scientists at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory at Pasadena, and the preparations for a joint U.S.-Soviet orbital mission to study the comet as it passes the Earth. In this portion of the book, the main characters are introduced, and Niven and Pournelle manage to painlessly impart a great deal of what is now known about comets. Included is an explanation of why the scientists were unsure that the comet would collide with the Earth until it actually does. Actually, there is not a single impact, but a whole series of them. Shortly before the day the head of the comet splits into several large masses. A process known as calving. In the authors' own words, "It would be as if the Devil had struck /the Earth/ with an enormous hammer, repeatedly."

The events of the day of the collision are told with the scientific precision that one would expect from Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle. Tidal waves, thousands of feet high, sweep over the coastal regions of the Earth. The enormous shocks of impact trigger earthquakes and volcanoes along fault lines all over the world. The destruction of Los Angeles is described in loving detail. I can picture the authors traveling around the city and the surrounding hills, visualizing how it would look and feel. The end of Los Angeles is typified for me by one scene: the suicidal

surfer and the ultimate wave. Riding the crest of a three thousand foot tidal wave for more than a mile as it thunders over downtown Los Angeles. A ride suddenly interrupted by a thirty story apartment building.

The final long section of the book tells of the aftermath in such vivid and believable detail that I wonder to just what lengths a so-called civilized person will go to live through the collapse of his or her civilization? The authors give answers to that question that may cause you to lose some sleep, but remember that this is just a story. It can't really happen...can it?

You may not find Lucifer's Hammer on the science fiction racks, but do search it out, find it, read it, and enjoy. The paper back, that is. Playboy Press has put Lucifer's Hammer in a Science Fiction Book Club quality binding, and is charging $10 for it. This is an outrageous price to pay for a poor quality binding, so unless you are a collector or simply can't wait, I'd advise you to wait for the paperback. With that large advance, the paperback will probably run at least $2.25, but will be well worth it. After all, this book has made history. I really don't care how it's marketed. This, by damn, is science fiction.

-- Reviewed by Bob Barnes --

Dragonsong by Anne McCaffrey. Atheneum, $7.95
Dragonsinger by Anne McCaffrey. Atheneum, $7.95
The Devil in a Forest by Gene Wolfe. Follett Publishing Co., $5.95
The Riddle-Master of Hed by Patricia McKillip. Atheneum, $7.95

For those who love high fantasy today there are some difficulties in finding new examples of it. Because such fantasy is still somehow associated (wrongly, I believe) with childhood reading many peoples' minds, it has tended to surface in the so-called 'juveniles' (all except The Lord of the Rings, that classic 20th century example of high fantasy). When you consider that Alan Garner's books, Patricia McKillip's The Forgotten Beasts of Eld and Ursula K. Le Guin's Earthsea Trilogy -- all high fantasies of great imaginative power -- have been published as 'juveniles,' the near-meaninglessness of the category becomes clear.

Anne McCaffrey, a successful sf novelist best known for her two science-fantasies about the dragon-riders of Pern, has now begun what I believe will be a 'juvenile' trilogy set on that same planet. Dragonsong and Dragonsinger are juveniles, however, and though I enjoyed them I doubt I shall return to them as I do to those just mentioned.

These books tell the story of Menolly, the gawky, ungirlish young woman who desparately wants to make music and has the training and ability to do so but is prevented by conservative parents from entering the previously all-male craft-guild of Harpers. Menolly runs away from home and sorely tests her self-sufficiency before she gains the Harpers Hall. Her encounters with fire lizards, smaller cousins to the dragons of Pern, proves fateful, but basically these stories tell of her Cinderella-like achievement of the life she must have to live fully (and in the second book her continual tone of apology plus everyone else's continual praise of her makes her a bit of a prig, alas.)

Although the pseudo-medieval life of Pern is good science-fantasy, the real problem with these books is that they are too-nakedly wish-fulfillment fantasies of escape from parents and others who 'don't understand,' and, unlike the Earthsea Trilogy, say, they don't ever indicate the real difficulties even the most talented people must face in life.

Gene Wolfe's The Devil in a Forest is authentic in its presentation of medieval

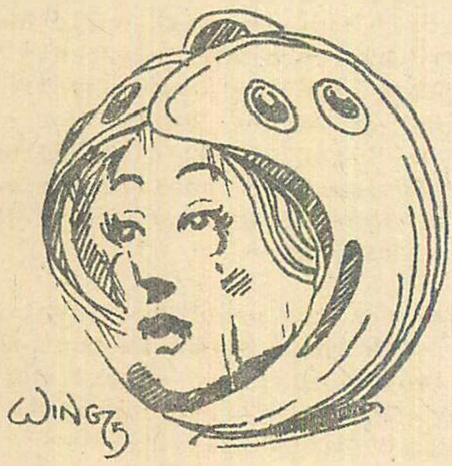
life. Mark, a fourteen-year-old peasant apprentice, lives in a small village near St. Agnes' fountain underneath the mountain (yes, Wolfe did begin with 'Good King Wenceslas'). The lief he and his fellow villagers know is not only nastly, brutish and short, but overwhelmed by superstition.

During the few weeks the novel covers, Mark becomes a man as Wat, the highwayman, and the abbé of St. Agnes' Fountain, the now nearly abandoned site of ancient miracles, battle symbolically for his soul. Mark is intelligent but terribly limited in knowledge and understanding. Wolfe manages to show us the various happenings mostly as he perceives them, yet reveals more than his often uneducated perceptions can know. The story is exciting yet also ordinary in that Wolfe manages to suggest the grain of these peoples' ordinary lives, which were hard. Mark survives violence, some extraordinary hallucinatory situations and a lot of contradictory teaching, and matures through his encounters with them. There are hints of witchcraft and other magic, but in fact they exist, if at all, only in the minds of those who believe in them, and although he doesn't fully realize it, this is the major lesson Mark learns. Gene Wolfe has fashioned a taut, suspenseful story of coming of age in the middle ages that smacks of authenticity in every scene.

Patricia McKillip delivers the real goods in The Riddle-Master of Hed, a richly complex and satisfying fantasy that is utterly adult whatever its publicity listing may be. Hed is a small island kingdom renowned for its peacefulneess in a world of warrior kingdoms, yet Morgan, Price of Hed, finds himself caught in a huge quest which was shaped thousands of years before his birth.

Unlike the other farmer-princes of Hed, Morgan went to the College of Riddle-Masters at Caithnard and became the best pupil in its 700 year history. But when Morgan tries to retire to Hed, the times and his destiny prevent him. He carries three stars on his forehead which no one has ever been able to interpret; there is a harp with three stars which he alone can play; and finally there is a sword with three stars which only he can weild, however reluctant he is to take it and break the tradition that princes of Hed cannot kill. Try as he will to evade his destiny, Morgan finds he cannot: the riddles of his double heritage and the fact that, no matter which capitol of which other kingdom he goes to, violence and new discoveries about the past and present dog his footsteps and draw him onward.

McKillip has created a world with its own geography and history, and the history, especially, is complex and fascinating. There are the Earth-Masters of the deep past,, the High One (and who is he?), the wizards (also believed to be long dead) and the hereditary Land-rulers of each kingdom, and, as well, there are the strange sea-people who seem bent on destroying the whole.



The Riddle-Master of Hed is superb fantasy, with good characterization, rich descriptions, and no obvious borrowing from Tolkien. The only thing wrong with it is that it is the first part of a trilogy: now I have some sense of how Tolkien's first readers felt when they had to wait for the second and third volumes of The Lord of the Rings.

-- Reviewed by Douglas Barbour

The Shape of Sex to Come
Edited by Douglas Hill
Published by Pan Books, Ltd.,
Toronto, London, Sydney.
Cavaye Place, London SW10 9PG,
1978, 176 pages, $1.75

+ Reviewed by W. Ritchie Benedict +

Oh, boy! Just from the title, I decided that I was going to have problems doing a review of this, mainly due to the fact that some people prefer sex and no science fiction, and others prefer science fiction and no sex. Then, too, some science fiction is sex -- a science if you carry it out well, and fiction if you do not. In the old days of the 1930s and 1940s, any mention of such a subject in a short story was strictly taboo, although the pulp magazine covers did a pretty good job of promoting what the publishing codes clamped down on.

Logically, there is no reason that sex should not be covered extensively in science fiction stories as a legitimate field of human involvement. However, it was early apparent that this is easier said than done -- for a number of reasons. In the first place, any would-be writer is treading a fine line between what is considered legitimacy and pornography. Most people have a hard enough time relating to the many facets in ordinary human sexual experiences without introducing the somewhat alien concepts of sf. Then, too, you are going to run into the problem of those who would ban any discussion of the subject regardless of any psychological benefits that may accrue to the reader.

I will say that this new collection of eight stories manages to walk the tightrope between sensationalism and relevance with reasonable success. The editor, Douglas Hill, is to be commended for utilizing sf authors such as Robert Silverberg, Brian Aldiss and Michael Moorcock who know the sf field well and can handle this loaded subject with artistic flare. The stories range from Hilary Bailey's deadly serious "Sisters" to John Sladek's satirical "Machine Screw" with all points in between covered by the ather authors.

Robert Silverberg, in his story "In the Group," not only deals with the age-old subject of polygamy (or should I say group sex), but with the very human and valid concern of trying to assert the individual's uniqueness when everyone else wants to go along with the herd.

Thomas M. Disch has a faintly mordant tale of what happens when the two sexes are so isolated from each other that any get-together is a weird occasion for them both.

A.K. Jorgensson relates a narrative that covers the adjustments made by an adolescent in an excessively prurient future society in "Coming of Age Day."

Anne McCaffrey contributes a piece about an astronette who experiments with alien sex on the planet Barevi, and Brian W. Aldiss in "Three Songs for Enigmatic Lovers" deals with the sensations of two amorous holograms who don't feel like holograms.

The strongest piece in the book, in my opinion, was Michael Moorcock's "Pale Roses," about a jaded aristocrat at The End of Time who learns the meaning of love versus sex.

Generally speaking, I will say that every story in this book is handles with a certain amount of elan. I can recall only two or three other books in the history of sf that have had the audacity to do an sf anthology on sex and they were not

overly successful. Either other themes have predominated or the quality of the story lagged in favor of the sexual elements. Whatever your views about sf sex, you can't help laughing at John Sladek's take-off on a passion-mad robot that goes mad in the streets and attacks sexually every automobile he can find, ala a 1950ish movie monster.

Although it is not impossible that eventually we will get a science-fictional treatment of sex on television (or in the movies), it may yet be a long time in coming, as even a perfectly innocuous show like "Soap" or "Three's Company" is highly castigated by the blue-nosed networks. How they would react to filmed versions of these stories is all too easy to predict. In the long run, though, an emphasis on something other than violence and murderous cop shows is far more healthy.

I would certainly recommend this book for science fiction fans whose interests are not solely confined to future technology, and hope it will set a standard for others who may want to contribute to this highly specialized field or sub-genre of sf.

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The Panorama Egg by A.E. Silas. DAW #302, $1.75

I don't know where this person came from but he or she writes awfully well. This is a sword and sorcery story, but it begins with an appealing idea; the protagonist enters an egg which contains a scene on the inside. Collector's items, except that this particular egg has scudding clouds and blowing grass. An alternate world contained inside an ostrich egg. This is very well written; many times better than the average s&s. The lawyer, Archer, must learn a whole new life, and the woman, Mera, is a great deal more than she appears to be. I enjoyed this one greatly, and await a sequel.

+Reviewed by Frank Denton +

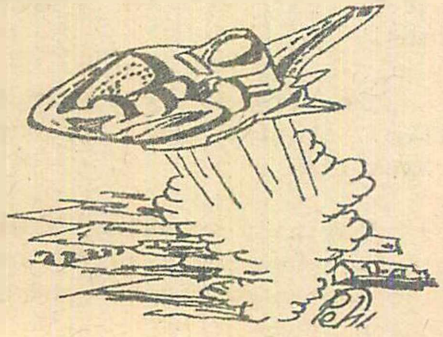
Star Winds by Barrington J. Bayley. DAW Books No. 294, $1.75

I think that Bayley had good fun with this one. In some future Earth an old alchemist is still searching for a way to make a Philosopher's Stone so that he can turn base metals into gold. His young assistant persuades the ship captain to sail to Mars to find the secret and to make a bundle by obtaining materials for ether sails. Yep, a big old sailing ship moved through space by ether sales. And lots of talk about infusoriation, azoth, primus agens, and other alchemic talk. The characters are pretty flat, but the plot moves right along, sometimes leaping some mighty big gaps. All in all, to be read for the same fun as the author had in writing it.

-- Reviewed by Frank Denton --

The Green Knight by Vera Chapman. Avon Books, 33795, $1.50

Vera Chapman is a Tolkien fan from way back, member of the Tolkien Society where she goes by the name of Belladonna Took. Someday I hope to be able to attend a moot held by this English group and to meet Vera. Meantime she's busy doing a bit of writing of her own. This is the first of three novels set in Arthurian times. The other titles are King Arthur's Daughter and The King's Damosel (all Avon). In The Green Knight Vera retells the story of Gawain and the Green Knight. She stays pretty close to the story left by the "Pearl Poet." There is some anachronistic language, but the feeling of the age is satisfactory. Fantasy nuts and lovers of the Arthurian age should like it a lot.



--Reviewed by Frank Denton --

could have done the same thing and, since his knowledge of music is so much greater than mine, mentioned some other works by other composers which apparently evoke the same response.

Felix showed also that the differences between Mozart and Beethoven were not only their personalities but the set of tricks which they, as composers, had been brought up to use.

Getting away from that and back to the point of the article, I guess I am writing to say that, all things being equal, I have progressed a lot deeper into the field of music since I first discovered Beethoven and every so often since then I have caught a piano concerto or a quartet or a symphony on the radio and have been reminded all over again of the greatness of the composer. Nobody has ever come close to making expressions of such outstanding clarity (clarity being something Robert's Big Three do lack) and such forcefulness. During the performance of a Beethoven work I often find myself making exclamations of agreement and offhand, after five minutes of thinking names, I cannot think of anybody whose compositions are such powerful expositions of the "force of will" as Beethoven. Ultimately I regard Shostakovich as a greater figure, but for other reasons -- simplest to explain the mere fact that he is more contemporary. Berio, even though more contemporary and just as lucid as the other two, is still prone to lose concentration. But Beethoven is still in his music with as much will power and concentration as he could muster 200 years ago. The intensity hasn't diminished and I, for one, appreciate such determination in wishy-washy times.

DAVID LEWISON, 428 Via Los Miradores, Redondo Beach, CA 90277

Clifford Wind's article reminded me that I also now have a really weird mental picture of Australia since I saw an incredible surrealist film called "The Last Wave," which, if it gets an American distributor will probably be a sensation at the box office. Unfortunately, the title makes it sound like a surfing film, which it certainly isn't.

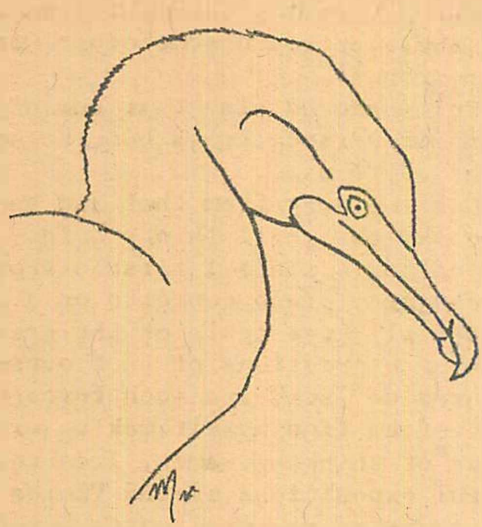
Thank Ghod someone else thought of "To Serve Man" as Dreyfuss took off for parts unknown (pun intended). I was beginning to think that I was some sort of manic-depressive for looking at the end of the film that way. While I thought CE3K _did_ have some incredible moments (and I'm talking about the first 20 minutes in that case), and some nice adventure elements (Roy Neary is a perfect Hitchcock "Wrong Man" character), the whole film went down the drain as far as I'm concerned in the middle. Actually, the middle probably dealt with the subject matter as well as possible, so it's a little hard to criticize _any_ part of the film without feeling like Scrooge. I don't think that anyone in their right mind would try to compare CE3K to "Star Wars" than comparing _Gateway_ to _The Skylark of Space_.

Bruce Townley was obviously more impressed by the novelized version of SW than I was, but what do I know? While I disagree with the contention that an sf movie should be judged on its literary merits, the novel itself must be so judged, and really, if there had been no SW movie, the book would have gotten no more attention than the last Cap Kennedy of Perry Rhodan.

Also disagreeing, I think he sloughed off film music much too quickly. As Miklos Rosza pointed out, the best film music is not background but _foreground_ music, an integral part of the movie as important as editing or cinematography, and often able to stand alone as music in its own right. Good examples of this are almost anything by Herrmann, such as "Fahrenheit 451," or a more recent example, William's score for "Close Encounters," though it's not entirely original. But that's not a problem unique to film music. Just to even things out, I want to say that I agree totally with Bruce about "The Rescuers," and that he writes just about the most readable fanzine reviews I've seen.

// I meant to append a comment to Leigh's letter above. When he first mentioned Berio in his Big Three, I immediately thought Hector Berlioz, that great Romantic. But it is Luciano Berio, the Italian composer born in 1925, whose specialty is electrophonic music. Leigh doesn't make spelling errors, but I must confess I had to look it up in _Groves_. I've not heard any Berio compositions.

DAVE HULAN, 3313 S. Park Dr., Santa Ana, CA 92707



I did want to comment on Keith Roberts' letter; it irritated me enough that I remember what I wanted to say even without the zine handy.

The principal source of irritation is the slam at Burroughs. Now, I'll admit that Burroughs is not, by the traditional canons of literary criticism, an artistic writer. Since he wasn't trying to be, though, it seems gratuitous on the part of writers who envy his lasting popularity to criticize him for this lack. I haven't read much of Roberts' material; I enjoyed Pavane, although it had a number of flaws, and I tried Chalk Giants but gave up after twenty pages or so. There may be good reasons for writing repulsive fiction, and it may even be artistic, but I don't feel any burning desire to read it. Anyhow, I'd be entirely willing to bet that Roberts will be long forgotten when people are still happily reading Burroughs and Christie by the millions, and his letter gives strong evidence that this rankles a lot with him.

It's easy to put down the popular taste, since it rarely coincides with the teachings of the literary critics, and to a certain extent this is true; there are a lot of very popular books and writers whose merit lies entirely in vogue. Jacqueline Susann, Harold Robbins, whoever writes Perry Rhodan, Barbara Cartland - those are vogue writers, who are popular, inartistic, and have no discernible merit outside of their ability to capture a popular mood. They have their uses, but one seldom sees other writers stabbing out at them in envy the way Roberts did at Burroughs (or the way I've heard Silverberg stab at Norton, for example).

But when a writer remains consistently popular over generations, and his early works continue to attract readers long after any possible vogue has passed, then I think it's clear evidence that his works possess some quality that lies outside the canons of literary criticism, but which is significant nevertheless. If the purpose of art is to please literary critics in their critical mode, then you can't say there's much art in Burroughs. But that's a pretty narrow definition of art; I'd say that a valid criterion for something's being successful art is its ability to please intelligent people consistently over a reasonable period of time. By that criterion, Burroughs is probably more artistically successful than Roberts, and Christie than Sayers. I'll never read Pavane again, and I'll never finish Chalk Giants, but I've read most of Burroughs half a dozen times, including recently, and still enjoy the experience. Same for Christie. Sayers I've re-read, but I can't do so nearly as often as Christie. Burroughs, Christie, Heyer, John Dickson Carr, Rex Stout, Richard Lockridge, and a few other writers fall into the category of what Marcia calls "teddy-bear books" -- an old friend you can always go back to, knowing where they are, being sure what you'll get out of them, undemanding, but pleasurable over and over again. That kind of book doesn't draw much critical acclaim, but damn few writers can do it well. Each individual has different tastes in that kind of thing, of course, and so a writer who does it well for some is ineffective with others (a lot of people, for instance, find Conan Doyle and various Western writers to fall into that category, but I've never turned on to them in that way -- not to say that I haven't read and enjoyed Doyle and a lot of Westerns, but I don't return to them). I think that this is a major criterion for writers who, without their works being pushed by schools, still sell consistently well over many decades; They are people who write books that are good teddy-bear books for a lot of people.

And who's to say that writing a book that's a critical success is more important, or more artistic, than writing a book that will be aid and comfort to millions

of people over scores of years? Mostly, I suspect, only writers who can't write that kind of book (possibly because they don't want to, but I doubt it) and literary critics whose whole bag would be blown because they rely on people's respecting their judgment as to what's worthwhile and what isn't. And, of course, people they've brainwashed into believing that some set of aesthetic canons originally propounded by Aristotle is the only one of any consequence.

This has gotten a bit more polemical than I intended, but periodically I get bugged at literary pretentiousness, and when it's expressed in the way Roberts did it (or the way various others, like Silverberg and Ellison, have done it, but those were in speeches and there wasn't an opportunity to argue with them at the time) with a loud whine at the injustice of it all, I sometimes let it bubble over.

JIM MEADOWS III, 31 Apple Court, Park Forest, IL 60466

It is nice to see Clifford Wind back again, though I don't remember much from his column except the name, but his word on life in Australia was interesting, and made me wanting for more. I'm hoping for a Big Exposé on What Rupert Murdoch Is Really Like, or something. But, definitely more.

Reed Andrus seems a little hung up on deciding Once And For All, What Is the Greatest, Yep, Absolutely, No Doubt About It, Most Terrific Science Fiction Film Ever Made. This, of course, is very tempting to do, since we have so few substantial films of sf, anyway, but I think making a decision like that will tend to make things more exclusive than is good for appreciating sf film in general. The best sf films (or those with the widest appeal, or whatever) hit different bases. Star Wars, and 2001, and Close Encounters do very different things where they succeed. And they all fail to do certain things, too -- some because they weren't trying to do it; others because they just...well, failed.

I saw Close Encounters, and enjoyed it, but I've come across many who did not, and many others who were much more moved by it than me. In comparison with the first group, I did have the advantage of the 70mm film, and the stereophonic sound (for a lot of that first group were disappointed that so much of the film was spent with telling a story with no special effects). In comparison with the second group -- well, yes, it's a good movie, but it's not exactly new, you know. Science fiction film does not, as a rule, blaze new trails as sf in print can. So, while I wouldn't pin it down to a specific piece of work, it seemed that Close Encounters was an awful lot like a lot of sf (even some sf on film) that came out after WWII, and in the early 50's, just as Star Wars was one big happy space opera that had been done in print hundreds of times, but which no one ever bothered to do on film with any care.

We are in an sf boom right now, in film and in print, and I don't know what sort of work will result in it (it seems to be resulting in a lot of bilge in print, as the demand for sf exceeds the supply), but I don't want to put any Citizen Kane labels on any cinematic efforts before the industry gets past Doc Smith, Van Vogt, and Jack Williamson. Maybe in five years, if this boom doesn't go bust like the boom in the 50s, we will get filmmakers, and film financiers, who understand that sf on film isn't just dependent on a safe solid story and ten million dollars worth of special effects.

By the way, it was interesting to note Reed noting the perceptiveness of film critic Roger Ebert on those two films. Roger Ebert used to be in fandom. In fact, he used to publish fanzines, back in the 50s. This tidbit of info I got from the blurb of a short story published in Fantastic earlier in the decade. For Ebert published a grand total of two stories in 1972; "After the Last Mass" in the February issue of Fantastic, and "In Dying Venice" in the May Amazing. Not earthshaking stuff, but enough to show that he had some appreciation of the genre, an appreciation that has shone consistently in his film criticism.

Robert E. Blenheim seems to have O.D.'d on Beethoven; that seems the most reasonable explanation for his great desire to tell us what's wrong with his music. His break with total adoration seems to have been recent, too, since, while finding major flaws in his works, he is still willing to call him Great with a capital G. Despite that -- or because of that, perhaps -- I found the piece interesting, especially for

me, trying to add to my meager knowledge of that area of music. A minor note, though: Blenheim, in praising Mozart, seems to assume that Mozart wrote all his own librettos. He might have, true, but did he?

Out of the reviews, the one by Townley for The Rescuers annoyed me a good deal. I liked that film, and I don't feel ashamed to say it. I'm glad Bruce liked it too, but I wish he could have done a better job of doing a review of it.

Of course, The Rescuers isn't a musical. It is an animated film done along the usual Disney house style lines, and that includes often comic villains, cute little animals, a relatively straight lead (here, a little girl, but it could have been a prince or princess or Dalmatian) and a few songs. The formula is not in itself a strength or a weakness, but the Disney Studios, it is a fact of life. After all, Walt is dead, and not there to do what he pleases, and a company with stockholders is not going to take any risks in a limited market item like an animated film. So the strength in the film lies in how the filmmakers cope with the formula. Here they coped well. By melding the storyline of a children's book and its sequel together, they came up with a plot which contained all the required elements. The success of the human characters in this film is a result of pure animators skill. The Rescuers will be an interesting mark in Disney Studio history because it represents a changing of the guard. This is probably the last Disney film to show a substantial influence of the "Nine Old Men," the animators who were with Disney since the 30s, when he was shaping the studio and its technique. At the same time, the film also includes work by new people, animators recruited and trained after Disney's death when the studio realized that animated features could still make money, and since no one else was producing animators to their standard, they had better train their own before all of the original crop died.

One of the main strengths of The Rescuers is consistency. The studio is not attempting Great Art here, and Disney's animators were always at their best when not being goaded by Walt to produce Klassics. In that sense, this film is best compared to works like Dumbo and The Jungle Book, unpretentious films that worked. Bruce brings up Fantasia and Sleeping Beauty, films with high targets and many flaws. I don't see why.

I do agree with Ian Maule about A Scanner Darkly. Although he hasn't read it, I think he's guessed correctly from the reviews. A Scanner Darkly could be a fine novel, but Dick saw fit to put it in a near future setting. This allowed him to introduce technological advances essential to his plot. But it marred the heart of the novel, which is how drugs and the drug culture affected Charles Freck, Bob Arctor, and the others in the novel. In an author's note, Dick writes that he based the characters on people he knew. There's nothing wrong with that, but they just didn't fit in the 1990s. It shouldn't have been a science fiction novel.

MIKE ROGERS, 233 Barton Ave., Chattanooga, TN 37405

Robert Blenheim is a perceptive fellow, and his Beethoven essay is quite good, even if totally subjective. Any statement of a composer's quality must consider the writer's personal prejudices; when talk turns to The Greatest Composer Of All Time (whomever he may be), 99% of it is unsubstantiated bullshit. In these circumstances, the personal approach is valid.

I very much understand Blenheim's change in feelings about Beethoven. I still like Beethoven's music a lot; the finale of the 5th Symphony still thrills me. But the composers of this century have used so many resources that earlier composers could not use if they wished to remain intelligible.

Here is an example. Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 2; Op. 2, No. 2; 1st Movement. This piece (which I played last semester at school) was advanced for its time (circa 1800) because the second theme did not go to the dominant key and stay there, but modulated through two or three other keys. It's hard to imagine that such a practice was once considered daring. But it was. Another example: his First Symphony used a dominant seventh (V^7) chord before the tonic (I) chord. Outrageous! Barbaric!

These were real restrictions. To the modern ear, which has heard almost every possible dissonance, consonance, chord, discord, and chicken squawk that one would

want, Beethoven's works sound a bit simple in their rhythmic and harmonic language. Powerful, yes, but simple.

My favorite symphonic work of all is Shostakovich's 5th Symphony, written in 1937. The intent is much the same as Beethoven's 5th. But Dmitri has so much more to work with. I can't identify the harmonic progressions by ear as I probably could in Beethoven's 5th. But I love them anyway. The finale is so exciting, it drains me. The scherzo is absorbingly grotesque; my personal sub-title for that movement is "March of the Mutants," and it would fit in perfectly with a Gahan Wilson cartoon.

Blenheim probably has sung a lot of Beethoven in choirs; in my limited choral experience I never ran across the Missa Solemnis. But I can pass on a criticism of Beethoven's vocal style that I have heard. He tends to write instrumentally for voices. Of course, he never worried about composing gracefully for the instrument he was using. He was quite willing to ask a string instrument to play fast Alberti basses, figures more easily executed on the piano.

I doubt that you want your fanzine to become a music journal, but I must ask Blenheim one question: what is his favorite P.D.Q. Bach piece? Mine are Iphigenia in Brooklyn and the Pervertimento (especially the bagpipe sections).

Keith Roberts is so right in his comment on the mixture of style and content. I just read Heinlein's The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress and Le Guin's City of Illusions simultaneously. Le Guin is usually thought of as the "prettier" writer, yet I could visualize a scene from Moon just as easily as I could from City, and one possible measure of stylistic prettiness is the vividness that a writer's scenes have. The style of City of Illusions may seem more pleasing to read, but only because the world she has created is a lot prettier than Heinlein's Luna Colony. Both have found the style that best expresses their particular visions. That is a big reason why both books are so good and yet so different.

In answer to Roberts' request for debate on sf as genre writing: aesthetic satisfaction depends on what you're looking for. Staying within the genre is good if you want to write a novel that costs neither the author nor the reader much effort. But if sf is to remain alive and interesting, the authors have to keep pecking away at the boundaries. I would call the novel that breaks the rules more aesthetically satisfying.

So far, I've only added to others' statements, so I'll throw in one before I close. My lady likes Star Wars; I don't. She says that I should turn my mind off and see it again. After thinking about it, I realized that I can't turn my mind off and relax for certain books and movies, but not for sf. I want the sf to be serious; I'll get my relaxation from People or some other rag. Does anyone else out there feel the same way.

// Boy, lots of food for thought. I surely don't want to turn A-W into a music fanzine, but I'm finding the conversations with Blenheim fascinating and enjoying every minute of it, as well as learning something. I wish I did know more about music, and I particularly wish that I could write about it. I've tried a time or two and it is difficult. One of these days I may say a word or two about folk and folk-rock recordings in my collection for the benefit of others who are into Steeleye Span and Fairport Convention types of music and might want some recommendations. Maybe I could even entice Randy Reichardt into doing it. // I generally like my sf serious, also, but only in the novel. I accepted Star Wars for what it was and how well it was done. Come to think of it, there is not much written sf which is not serious. We have gone beyond that or lost the writers who could do it well. //

GENE WOLFE

I want to write briefly to the point brought up by Keith Roberts: "Is a piece of 'genre fiction' aesthetically more satisfying if it keeps within the conventional limits laid down for it?" (I will assume, by the way, that by these "conventional limits" Roberts means those established by a majority of critics.)

It seems to me that we have once again to do with the ancient division between Classic and Gothic art. Men who the first love Praxiteles and Picasso, and the sort of women seen in Vogue. Those who love the second buy pictures of Chinese dragons and posters made from record jackets, and send roses to women they meet on the beach. (I won't try to say what women like - other than the admiration of women like themselves.) Clearly the first group is "classy" and the second vulgar; but the key point is whether the two standards are equally valid. If they are - or if only the first, the Classic, is valid - then the answer to Roberts' question is plainly yes. Critics favor the Classic almost to a man.

It has occasionally been argued that only the Gothic standard is valid. No doubt Chesterton did it for one - it would be just like him. I will not attempt to do it here because I do not believe it.

But I will point out that the argument as I have presented it is a fraud: the critics set the standard, then prove by that standard that what they like best - small perfection - is also most beautiful.

Then there is also the higher question of whether that which is most beautiful thereby confers the greatest pleasure. All the most ordinary men, and all the most extraordinary men, would surely say no. The ordinary man likes to drink cold beer in front of his television, and although everyone has heard him say that baseball is like ballet, everyone has noticed that he does not watch ballet. The saint prefers God to beauty; the hero prefers glory, and sometimes even home; the poet worships beauty, but writes to Annabelle Lee - I have seen a picture of the original Annabelle Lee (Virginia Clemm Poe)and you would be more likely to find her in Teen than in Vogue. What does seem to give great pleasure is truth, and a certain largeness and strangeness, as in God; energy and familiarity, freshness.

// There you are, folks; Gene has not only given some succinct remarks as sparked by Keith Roberts' earlier remarks, but has dropped about three story lines in your laps for free. // I had the brief opportunity to speak with Gene during Worldcon and those of us who have been waiting for the long, looong book are going to have to wait a while longer. Nothing definite on it as yet, but interest is being shown and it may turn into four books. God help me, I hope I've remembered that part of the conversation correctly. //

ROBERT COULSON, Route 3, Hartford City, IN 47348

Brief correction of the fact on the review of Wombats in A-W #23; it's not Gene's and my "second novel". It's the second novel in that series, but it's our fifth jointly-written novel. (Well, fifth that has been sold and published; there are a couple of rejections floating around somewhere.)

I can't argue with Keith Roberts on writing; he's so much better at it than I am. But on history, now....."New Wave" wasn't just an invention of Judy Merrill's. If anyone invented the term, it was Mike Moorcock, as a sales and promotion gimmick for New Worlds. I don't suppose Mike ever expected fandom to take him seriously, but who can predict fannish reactions? Anyway, it was taken seriously, and kept in circulation far longer than Mike probably had intended - though he was arguing over it in fanzines long after the one anthology that Keith talks about was dead and buried. Moorcock not only impressed the term on fan minds, but - quite deliberately, I'm sure - set up fannish hackles at it. And he did it before Merrill's anthology was published (though perhaps not before she started collecting stories for it) and kept it up after the anthology was off the stands.

Even on the business of writing....of course, nobody sits down to write gorgeous style and nothing else, or grandiose ideas and nothing else. But some writers come very close to doing those things, whether they intended to or not. There are stories which flow beautifully and keep the reader entranced until the end - when he realizes

there wasn't really anything there under the fluff. (Roger Zelazny is probably the foremost practitioner of this style.) And there are fascinating scientific ideas presented in a rather pedestrian prose that doesn't obscure the ideas but certainly doesn't enhance them, either. (Hal Clement is notable in this camp.) Now, I happen to like the fiction of both writers named, but they're illustrative of Eric's thesis, anyway. And occasionally you find somebody who can put interesting ideas into at least acceptable and sometimes brilliant prose (Keith Roberts being a notable example) and at that point "New Wave" and "Old Wave" don't exist. But damned few writers ever reach that point. The rest of the writing profession can, if you like, be considered partial failures (or worse. Rember Sturgeon's Law!). But all of us like to read some of the crap, and Eric - and I - prefer the scientific crap to the emotional crap. I wouldn't say, as Eric does, that it's"better" - but it's a damned sight more interesting than exploring the inside of the head of someone who knows less about the world than I do. The New Wave - Old Wave can't be divided on quality, but it can on personal judgment.

That's Roger Ebert (Boy Fan) of the Sun-Times, not "Robert". And Close Encounters is an emotional experience only if you can keep from laughing at its myriad idiocies - which I couldn't. (And emotional it may be - an "intelligent, thoughtful rendering" it most certainly is not. It's very pretty garbage, and I enjoyed it, but its intellectual level is about on a par with Poseidon Adventure.

DENTON/THOR, 514 West 213, #1-H, New York, NY 10034

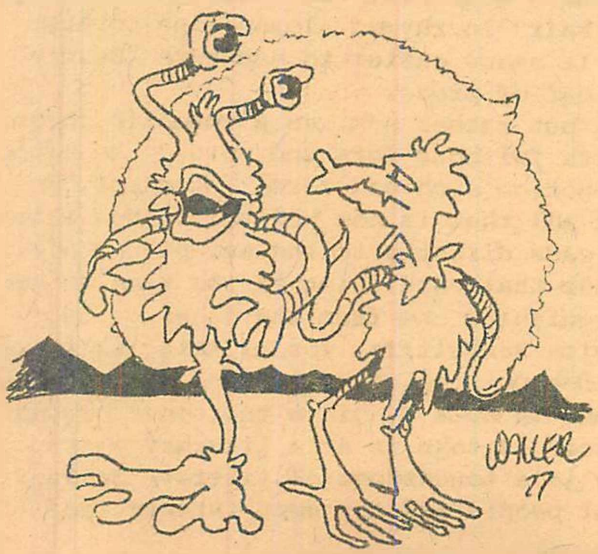
Regarding Keith Roberts bit on genre writing: I think the problem here is in an attempt to consider the writing in absolute terms. There are no objective standards by which we can judge books. Books and writing are too subjective an experience to view them in this way.

Joanna Russ seems to be one of the "bright stars" in sf just now, at least the literary types all like her. I personally find her work unreadable and often repellant. I don't understand her books. To me she is a "bad" writer. Yet my friend Jim Freund is very excited by her books. He gets all kinds of great stuff out of them. Who is right?

Each individual gets something different out of a book, and one should not be considered wrong, simply because his experience does not match up with that of a particular critic, or the prevailing literary critic.

CHESTER D. CUTHBERT, 1104 Mulvey Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3M 1J5

Can you explain the collecting instinct? I have more books than I can read, yet I have just made arrangements to dispose of the collection ammassed by one of the early members of the Winnipeg Science Fiction Society who died last February, and I am tempted to buy much of it myself. In some cases, like his Max Brand collection, I don't know anyone who needs the books; most of the Max Brand collectors known to me having already accumulated large collections. In other cases, like Robert E. Howard material, I did not collect some of it myself years ago, and now am considering trying to complete my own set, even though I have most of the stuff in paperback or hardcover. His Arkham House collection is quite good, though lacking a lot of the early titles (he was younger than I am), but he was the kind of collector I sympathize with most: a man who collected only what he personally liked, regardless of the fashions



in collecting through the years. And his tastes, like mine, tended toward fantasy rather than science fiction. I helped him buy this collection through the years, and it seems to have been a good investment for him as well as giving him entertainment. Too bad his widow didn't share his literary interests.

I wrote Chuck Yenter in 1976, but haven't heard from him in reply and am wondering if you know him and his fanzine, Presenting Moonshine. Any news of him? Ned mentioned him in It Comes In the Mail, but nothing recent.

// You may be speaking of two dead fanzines in the same breath there. We know for sure that Ned Brooks has folded It Comes In the Mail. Unfortunate. It was a very interesting fanzine for the collectors among us. Now, as to the matter of Chuck Yenter. I just don't know. I tried to call him the night that your letter arrived and got no answer at his home. Chuck is not really a science fiction fan, but more of a bibliophile. While he collects Ursula Le Guin, he also collects Roald Dahl and some others. Maybe that example is not disparate enough, but Chuck is not a collector in the sense that many of us are. He's a teacher in the Tacoma Schools. and loves to develop lists. I haven't heard from him or seen him in some time. He has been instrumental in trying to bring H. Warner Munn to the attention of a lot of people. Anyway, I'll try to get in touch with him and see what's happening with Moonshine. //

ALEXANDER DONIPHAN WALLACE, 2119 N.W. 21st Street, Gainesville, FL 32605

The Bentcliffe- Roberts exchange was notable. In Fractured French one has the equalities: New Wave = Nouvelle Vague = Present Indefinite. It is apropos to outpoint that the New Wave existed even perhaps before Sf&F and can be dated as that period in which the verslibristes broke from the stasis of rhyme and rhythm. Some decades elapsed before prose writers adopted (or adapted) it. Among its devices are stream-of-consciousness and the use of different fonts. This was in the mainstream before Judith Merrill published England Swings SF, so long before that it was regarded as an ineffectual curiosity, though still in use by some freedom-fighters. Evidently the new writers had a particular vision and needed a certain voice for their message. Douglas Barbour's decapitated A Question of Light / In Space is a reflection (or refraction) of the New Wave. It can be mentioned that Brian W. Aldiss (Billion Year Spree) has a larger, if no more pleased, view of the New Wave in SF & F than Keith Roberts.

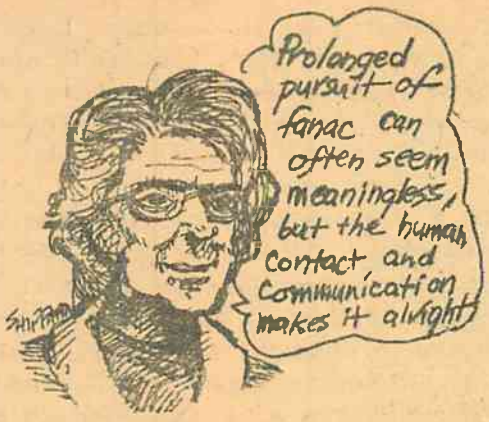
Roberts' innate courtesy forces him into a lapse of logic - stating that England Swings SF is a compilation of pieces that stood no chance of publication, and yet that it is a very good anthology. Perhaps he means that, in this small instance, the New Wave served a useful purpose, that the whole is greater than the sum of its disparate parts, a non-Euclidian argument.

Swinburne wrote beautiful, if frequently vapid, poetry, the most mellifluous verse in the language. On the other hand Browning generally wrote cacophonous verse, and only he would have written "Fifine at the Fair" in rhymed Alexandrine couplets. But almost always his things are contentful. It seems easier to separate "Beauty" and "function" on the level of verse than on that of prose.

Clearly Roberts has no care for tasonomy, but rather admires a romantic chaos, an untidy disarray of concepts, a critical earth "without form and void." He makes his position clear in identifying as a single notion such as "form," "content," "style," and "idea." He will acceptnothing at all that is not holistic. Now this is a legitimate philosophical stance, but it leads directly to the acceptance of nihilism and anarchy. It leads to the inference that each thing is the same as each other thing, that there is no manner of distinguishing one from the other.

As to timeless characters I must concur with Bentcliffe, for of this ilk there are Mr. Pickwick, Samuel Weller, Kim, Merlin, Don Quixote, Jekyll-Hyde, and a great host of others. But they are hardly to be found in SF & F, since the genre has not existed sufficiently long to test their presence. I take it as a literary postulate that the creation of timeless characters is a touchstone of literary greatness. And this is a corollary to the fact that people are the most interesting things there are.

DAVID C. MERKEL, 1409 Grissom Lane,
Blacksburg, VA 24060



Keith Roberts I tend to agree with. SF encompasses an extremely broad spectrum of different types of writing, and while I think that some stories can be characterized as stereotypes, most cannot. I find that unless a story contains at least moderately interesting ideas, and is well written, I don't like it. I do prefer 'adventure type' stories to 'thought type' stories, but I don't pretend to believe that SF is either one of the other. All stories have at least a little of both.

I do not agree that a story is more aesthetically satisfying if it keeps within the conventional limits of its 'genre'. The reverse is true. In general, the more a story sticks to a specific format or model type, the more skillfully it must be written in order for me to enjoy it as much as a story that presents the unexpected and the not yet experienced. I must admit that I enjoy reading stories that belong to a specific well-defined type; I like some of them very much, but they are not as timeless, or longlasting, or re-readable, as stories which surprise as well as please me. I prefer deep characters, characters who are fully expressed enough so that they are real people. In short, I agree with Keith Roberts. On the other hand, 'genre'pieces are, if well-written, just as enjoyable to read, and just as objectively good aesthetically, as stories which are not so restricted.

CHRIS SHERMAN, 700 Parkview Terrace, Minneapolis, MN 55416

Dan Goodman had an interesting thought in his letter that I thought I'd comment on. He writes about the notion of history ending as we know it, and attributing this change partially to the invention of writing. Well, there is an argument among the top theory honchos working in communications that not history, but the very form of human communication is coming full circle again, this time with a few added technological toys. McLuhan especially says this, describing the three periods of communication as the aural period, the written period, and now the technological period. The first, obviously, was everyone talking to each other, the development of spoken language, etc. The second was the invention of the printing press at the beginning of the Renaissance (I've been writing a piece lately that ties together the genetic history of man, who arrived at the era of the renaissance by slaughtering all of our intelligent competitors, with the rise of the common man and the capitalist system of economics, to the current attitudes towards art and photography in particular. I'll leave off with this parenthetical tangent for a moment...), which stressed the importance of the individual, and caused a whole bunch of rules to be developed concerning language, including how history was to be recorded (the so-called "objective voice"). Now, recently, back to radio and especially television, which can once again be a "communal" form of communication, and lays stress on aural rather than written communication. When the language a group of people uses is fluid and still remains highly precise (which is the trend of English today), the culture begins to become a bit more free, and creativity is sparked. Since I was in high school I've been hearing cries of woe and lament for the "breakdown" of formal English grammar - these coming mostly from "scholars" who have focused their attention on writing since it became a sort of science a few hundred years ago, and are in favor of retaining a structure in a strict sense regardless of whether the use of the language requires change or not. In our society, with the increasing number of events and objects that we must deal with, language and our very conception of the world (which is absolutely language based) must undergo some definite changes, and become a much more dynamic and living thing.

Phew! So, in a sense, although we are "reverting" to aural communication in one sense, the fact that that aural communication is precipitated through a technological medium makes the change more of a spiral than a circle, which usually is the case when history "repeats" itself.

* * *

I'm going to interrupt the lettercol right here and put in a list of We Also Heard Froms. I always have the best of intentions to do this, and always run out of room. As a consequence a lot of fine people who write to me never even get the mere mention of their name. So, in no particular order, here goes: Jon Gustafson, Richard Brandt, Robert Blenheim, George Wells, Craig Anderson, Marty Levine, Nicholas J. Polak, Robert Briggs, Ben P. Indick, Peter Presford, Darroll Pardoe, Doug Barbour, Ed Bryant, Ray H. Zorn, John Thiel, Sal DiMaria, Dale Goble, Dirk Mosig, Bill Bridget, Harry J.N. Andruschak, Bill Marsh, Mary Long, Eric Mayer, Michael, T. Shoemaker, Jim Bittner, Stan Woolston, Paula Lieberman, P.M. Altenburg, denton/Thor, Susan Wood, Jeff Frane, Clifford R. Wind, Kipy Poyser, Paul S. Ritz, Charles Jensen, Greg Hills. Rose Hogue, Dorothy Jones, Flieg Hollander, Tim C. Marion and probably others whom I have forgotten and will be embarrassed over when they mention it to me. Thank you one and all who write, however briefly, and especially thank you to the letter writers who made this such a lively letter column this time. Some of the unpublished letters may still see print the next time around. In the meantime, don't cease and desist. Keep them coming. Oops, forgot Galen Peoples.

* * *

MARY LONG, 1338 Crestview Drive, Springfield, IL 62702

A local channel just recently ran The Man in the White Suit, but I suspect this was probably more because of the interest in Alec Guinness than anything else. Having done so, I'm hoping now for a revival of interest (and showings) of the gentle British comedies he did so well a decade or so ago. Such things as Passport to Pimlico, The Lavendar Hill Mob, and Kind Hearts and Coronets, one of those so-called "black comedies", in which he played nine roles. And, of course, there were the more dramatic roles such as ThBridge on the River Kwai; as someone else remarked, has he ever done a bad performance? (And, incidentally, did you see that he recently was - and still may be - on the London stage in a play about a defector to Russia who gets a chance to return to England?)

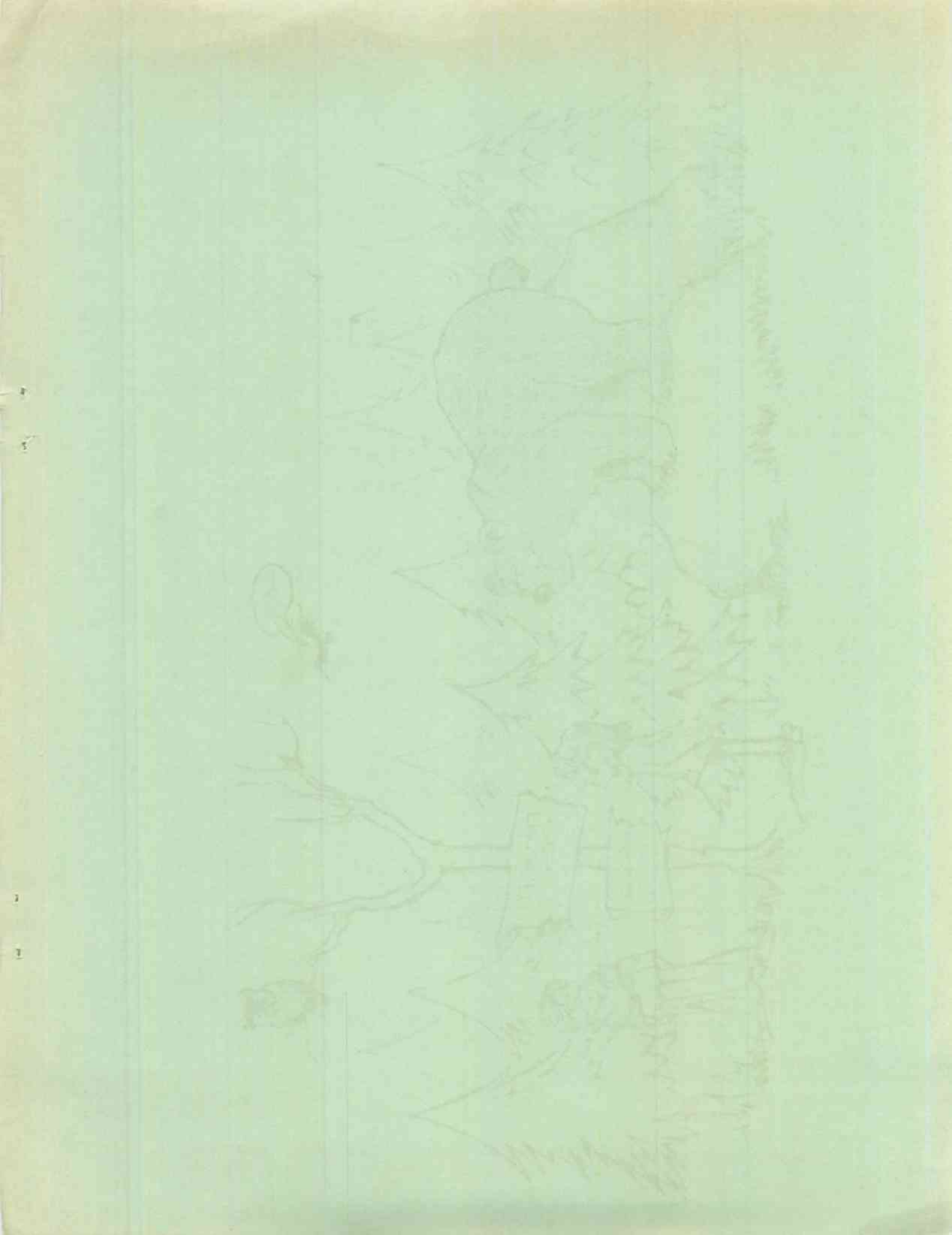
// I was lucky enough to catch Guinness in a play in London a few years back. The play was awful, and I forget what it was entitled or what it was about. But I recall vividly the mere presence of Guinness. Every move he made, every line spoken was superior to the rest of the cast, and far beyond the importance of the play itself. I only wondered why he would have taken such a role. In our young married days, foreign movies were hard to come by where we lived. Not many people would seek them out, but being venturesome sorts, Anna Jo and I would take a whack at whatever came along. Guinness was an early discovery for us, and we saw all of the movies mentioned, plus some that you didn't; in other words, we became confirmed Guinness fans. I never regreted that. //

HARRY J.N. ANDRUSCHAK, 6933 N. Rosemead, #31, San Gabriel, CA 91775

Reed Andrus is like many fans; he has been taken in by the phoney pretentiousness of CE3K. It is inconsistent on every level, and a bore for the first hour. If Star Wars was 1930s pulp adventure brought to screen, Close Encounters of the Third Kind is a 1940 Shaver Mystery and Flying Saucer Stories. Neither is what I would call modern science fiction of the 1970s.

Neat comments by Blenheim. As I am a trumpet player, I can assure you that Ludwig was poor on orchestration. Look at a typical trumpet part in any Beethoven symphony. Of course, he was stuck with natural trumpets. One wonders what he would have done with valved instruments.

So ends another issue of Ash-Wing, the fanzine that brings back irregularity!!!

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