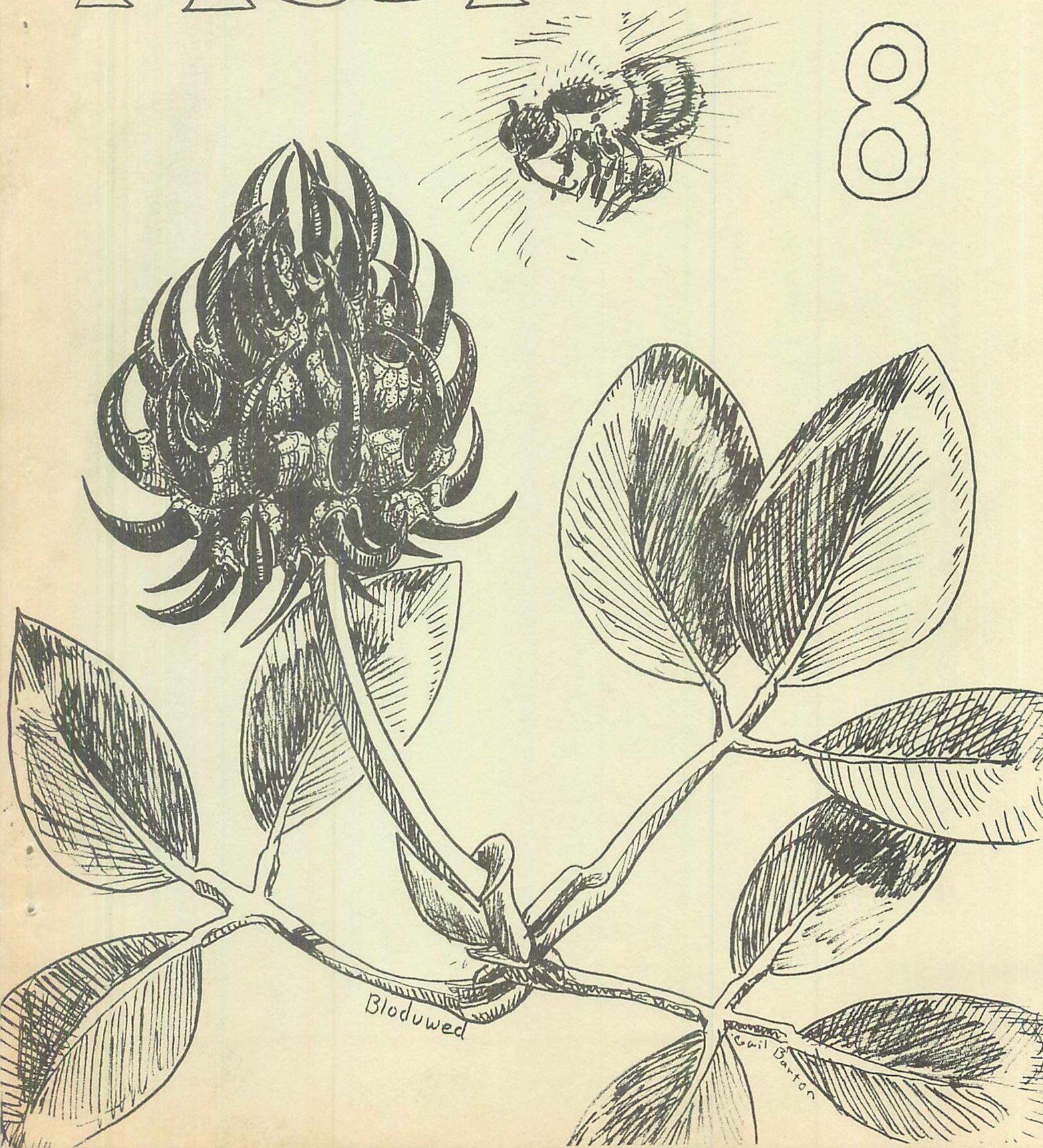


# ASHWING

8







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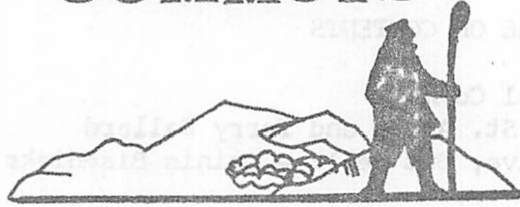
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FRONT COVER - Blodewedd by Gail Barton

BACK COVER - Mike Scott

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# THE FREE COMMOTS



Well, gang, it's Ash-Wing time again and I'm hurrying. Hurrying to finish it; hurrying to get it into the mail; hurrying to be almost on schedule with it; hurrying to leave for Westercon so I can hurry back and pack for the European trip. It's been a hurry-up environment around our house for the last month.

One of the first things which you will notice is that this issue doesn't have an owl cover. Or does it? Well, yes, as a matter of fact, it does. By a rather tortuous and devious route. So stay with me for the next few moments and we will untangle one of the mysteries of the century. Well, maybe it's not that great a mystery after all, but it tickles me no end. This issue's cover was done by Gail Barton of Denver many moons ago. It is just now coming up in the rotation and I beg forgiveness of Gail that it has not appeared sooner, but I just don't seem to publish that often. Now that it is here, however, I think you'll agree with me that it is one of the most striking covers which we have featured. Well, what's this business about an owl? It looks like a flower of some kind and a bee, if you ask me. I think Gail really dug for this one, although she is pretty well versed in Celtic mythology and may have remembered it. Those of you who have read Evangeline Walton's Island of the Mighty might also remember it. The cover alludes to Blodewed or Blodenwedd, the dawn goddess of Welsh mythology.

In the Mabinogian, the flower-wife of Lleu was named Blodenwedd, and had been created for him by Gwydion and Math, the master magician of Welsh mythology, to circumvent the curse of Arionrod, who said that Lleu should not have a wife from any race that peoples the earth. So Gwydion and Math devised for him a wife made from the flowers of the oak and broom and meadowsweet. She was very beautiful, and they named her Blodenwedd, or Flower-Face. But Blodenwedd brought little joy to Lleu. She fell in love with a passing hunter, Gronw Pebyr, in Lleu's absence, with who she planned to kill Lleu. Lleu was invulnerable, but Blodenwedd schemed to discover the one secret means by which his life could be taken. She inveigled Lleu into the position which exposed him to her lover, and Gronw killed him. For thus contriving the murder of Lleu, Blodenwedd was transformed into an owl to fly by night. I bet you thought we'd never get to that point, did you. Anyway, I'm really tickled with the cover, and say a special thanks to Gail.



This issue has shaped up very well and I am pleased with it. Dainis Bisenieks has been an anomaly to me. Very early in the history of this zine, I wrote to him concerning an interest in the Gormenghast books which he had expressed in a letter to another zine. I thought that I might entice him into writing an article on that trilogy, and I may yet convince him of an overwhelming need for such. Our correspondence up to the time of the receipt of this issue's article on Sturgeon has consisted of cryptic postcards just prior to his departure for far and exotic places. So I am doubly pleased to receive his contribution for this issue.

Ken St. Andre and Terry Ballard are back with their inimitable adventures, but this time the scene has switched to Lankhmar. We're off on a new series, folks, and who knows where it will all lead. I am very happy to see them back. Ken had moved to the unlikely place of Cottonwood, Arizona to try to make a living with a book shop, but has now moved back to Phoenix. I rather gathered that the book shop was not a smashing success, more's the pity. At least the two of them are back in the same town, where it more likely that production of another story will come about.

Carol Blalock wrote to thank me for running her previous story, "Unlce Stirg". She said that other editors to whom she had submitted manuscripts had not been as kind as I. Which gives me the opportunity once more to reiterate my policy. I do reject manuscripts; yes, I do. And sometimes send rather lengthy commentary and corrections. But I also feel that sometimes a story needs to be read by others than myself, so that additional feedback can be had by the authors. I think you will find Carol's story this time a much stronger one than her first. Let's hope that she continues to improve.

Poindexter is a part of Valley Fandom down California way, and also is the editor of The Official Organ of the Church of Starry Wisdom. At Westercon I tried to get a bit more out of him about the church, but didn't really succeed. Poindexter insists that "Krell" was somehow set off by his receipt of Ash-Wing 6. I don't quite know how, but here it is. A first for A-W, the format being scenario.

Vincent Edwards is a well-known fan who got the urge to write something for A-W, but thought that his reputation as a crazy person ought not to have any more heaped upon it. So we have another first a pseudonym. Oops, I have to retract that statement as a previous issue had some poetry by "Dalzell". At any rate, it was good fun for the author and certainly no harm done to the reader. As a matter of fact, I hope we have more stories from Vincent Edwards.

Doug Robillard is back with a bit of



humor about the Apollo landing on the moon; a composition which is certainly different from what he did here last time.

And finally, but certainly not least, Leon Taylor is back with his column of fanzine reviews and Ken Scher with a bundle of book reviews. Leon was absent last time, and I'm most happy to have him back.

Well, I said that I was hurrying a couple of pages back. I'm in even more of a hurry now. I have just returned from Westercon in San Francisco and will be flying out tomorrow night for England and Ireland. I have not run a single page as yet, have this column to finish up; the page numbers to type in and then begin the process of mimeographing, collating, stapling, and stuffing envelopes. So hurry.

I will give you a few impressions of Westercon before I bug off, as it is the high point of my fannish activities, however, this is not to be construed as a con report.

My wife, daughter and I drove down from Seattle, stopping in Tangent, Oregon to pick up Mike Horvat. We drove through the night completing the journey in fourteen hours non-stop. Arrived in San Francisco at 7 in the morning to have breakfast at Fisherman's Wharf, take the cable car to town and shop a bit, then back to do the Cannery and Ghirardelli Square. By 3 p.m. we were headed for the con site, the Airport Hilton. From then on, it inevitably becomes a blur, so there will just be impressions.

Authors first. There were a goodly number there, some of whom I talked to at length, others whom I barely met or only saw. With no attempt to be alphabetical or to prioritize by any standard; James Gunn, Fritz Leiber, Randall Garrett, Larry Niven, Avram Davidson (Guest of Honor), Emil Petaja, E. Hoffman Price, Norman Spinrad, Robert Silverberg, George Clayton Johnson, Charles Neutzel, Sydney van Scyoc, Quinn Yarbrow. Of these I had conversation with James Gunn about a series of film he is involved in to supplement the teaching of science fiction courses, with Randall Garrett about the nature of the universe, the existence of an all-powerful sentient being, and about the Order of St. Germain (a worker priest movement) this latter occurring about 5:30 in the morning. That's why it was so heavy. All frivolity is exhausted at that hour, and one has to discuss serious topiss. It's the only time I have ever heard Randall be serious. I talked to Avram Davidson to deliver some personal messages from friends of his in the Northwest and to query him about continuations of the Phoenix and the Mirror and The Island Under the Earth. The former he describes as the beginning of a trinity of trilogies; so for Davidson lovers, we can look forward to 8 more, count 'em, folks. Of Island, there is not much more written, but two more planned. And





Peregrine Primus, a first novel for yet another trilogy, of which he would say little. I attended the banquet at the same table as Sydney van Scyoc, whom I took to task a while back for her novel, Saltflower. She is a delightful gal, and we had a good talk. Saltflower was her first novel and she recognized its deficiencies, so we ended as good friends. At various times I attended panels on which Emil Petaja, Fritz Leiber, E. Hoffman Price, Avram Davidson, Randall Garrett were panelists and gleaned what I could of the writing of horror and heroic fantasy from them.

Fans. Somewhere near 700 of them. But especially dear people like the members of various apas to which I belong; The Cult, TAPS, RAPS, and inevitably SLAN-apa. The SLANs are the closest of friends and did most of the partying together. Bob Vardeman, Doris the Elder and Doris the Younger Beetem, Bill (Swampy) Marsh, Jim McLeod, Dale Goble (these two latter the co-editors of Interplanetary Corn Chips), Judith Brownlee (formerly featured here with "Man of Power") and Gail Barton, cover artist this issue. Al Snider of CROSSROADS fame; a fine talker and attender of our party. SCA people like Don Thompson of Denver and his family, Randy Mellin, a herald with a stentorian voice, William Tuning of the Mission Canyon Rat Pack of Santa Barbara and budding author. Milt Stephens of the Los Angeles City Police, Cultists like Bruce Pelz, Fred Patten, Drew Sanders. Ken St. Andre was there, quietly taking it all in and secretly dreaming up another adventure for himself and Terry. TAPSmEN, like Earl and Jan Evers (with her nametag "Everscreature"), Tom Digby, Mike Horvat. Good people all and many others to whom I apologize for not mentioning by name.

Artists. Tim Kirk, George Barr, Alicia Austin, Cathy Hill. New artists like C. Lee Healy, a slight demure blonde, who is a real comer with her art work. Johnny Chambers with his ubiquitous 'little green dinosaur', Jim McLeod doing name tags in his beautiful style. The art show was beautiful and comments by those from the east said that it far surpasses anything they have at their conventions. I out bid everyone for an ancient, burned Elvish parchment done by C. Lee Healy and it's beautiful. George Barr is doing things in ink and watercolor which are remarkable. I was happy to see him doing another medium besides the color ball point. Alicia's airy line drawings in pen and ink are remarkable. Tim Kirk told me that he was trying to convince his Master's Degree committee that his project should be paintings based on The Lord of the Rings.

Fashion shows. My daughter, Shannon, took part in the Futuristic, coordinated by Astrid Anderson. She looked quite remarkable in a futuristic wedding gown. Both the Futuristic and the Costume Parade seemed to have more than a fair share of nudity and semi-nudity this year. One wonders about the amount of work put into some remarkable costumes only to be beat by a fair amount of bare skin. 'Twas ever thus.

Well, that's only an unfair sampling of what went on at Westercon. I found it stimulating (no pun intended) and a real high point of the year for me. Chinese dinner in Chinatown for 11 of us led by Al Snider. Long rap sessions. Getting my rear really kicked by many of my friends for spending so much time in apas when I ought to be writing short stories. Comparing writing notes with Judith, Doris the Younger, Bill Tuning. Promising to discipline myself better, if I can figure how.



# TWO SOUGHT AMUSEMENT

by

Ken St. Andre and Terry Ballard

"Three weeks in smog-stifled Lankhmar, and still no trace of an adventure," grumbled Terry, glaring down at the face in his steaming cup of spiced wine.

"You don't call two orgies, a robbery, and an eviction adventures?" Ken queried, looking up from the delightfully illustrated scroll about the female dualists of Quarmall. Twas a work of fiction, of course, but the author had quite an imagination.

"These were only minor adventures," complained Terry. "This trip is going to be pretty dull if the high point is where I feist off a bag of old bus tokens, buttons and plug nickels on two dim-witted alley bandits who were drunk besides."

"You didn't take it so lightly during the stick-up," Ken retorted. "That tall red-blond Northerner could have taken both of us with one hand and foot tied together, and the midget in gray silk looked even deadlier."

"There was something familiar about those two," said Terry, "but by the Bones of the Ancients I can't figure what it was."

It was night. The Red Eye of Acheron blinked above the Tower of Torment, and blue Azzul whirled toward the eastern gates. In other words, it was about midnight, and the two adventurers sat in a tavern, the Dubious Dog, slowly drinking themselves into a stupor. What with no television, no bowling alleys, and no ice cream parlors, there was little else to do in wondrous Lankhmar once night came. Across the torchlit room three of the Overlord's Guards were already roaring in their inebriation. They had appropriated the tavern's one dancing girl, a half-starved street urchin with the dazed eyes of a bhang eater, and while she cavorted clumsily on their tabletop to the tuneless pipings of a one-eyed hag on a flute, they argued about who was going to take her home. Ken and Terry ignored them. Such sights were common in decadent Lankhmar, and not too uncommon in decadent Phoenix.

Ken noticed the face in Terry's wine. It was a female face, young, blonde, and beautiful, and very, very exasperated. "Terry, there's a face in your wine," he pointed out.

"S'just a reflection," answered Terry, swigging down the last of his wine. "S'been there all night."

"Old buddy, you are drunker than you think. No more for you. Wine doesn't reflect. You'd better get ready for that adventure you were craving."

"ZZZZZZZZZZ!" answered Terry from beneath the table.

CRASH! The door slammed open and out of the windy night came a squad of soldiers. They each carried a long, deadly pike as well as swords and knives, and on their tunics was blazoned the emblem of the Queen, a coiled green serpent wearing a golden crown. "There's one of them!" shouted the leader, pointing at Ken.

"That must be his friend on the floor," announced another.

Efficiently, pikes lowered, they surrounded the table where Ken sat, thinking fast. There were too many to fight, and too many to bribe. He'd have to trick his way out of this one.

He kicked Terry. "Wake up," Ken pleaded in a low voice.

"We've searched half the taverns in Lankhmar this night," said the captain, "and we've finally found you. You two spies are under arrest."

"Spies?" said Ken. "Arrest? Captain, there must be some mistake. You've had a long search and you must be cold. Bartender, strong ale for the Queen's Men. Surely, Captain, we can talk this over before you march us off to wherever you're going to march us off to."



"Well, I could use a drink," agreed the captain, "and so could my men. But don't think this'll get you any special treatment."

"I wouldn't dream of it," said Ken, prodding Terry again. "But I'm in no hurry to go out in the cold."

"What's going on?" asked Terry, climbing back into his chair.

"Do you deny that you came from Ool Hrusp?" asked the captain.

"Ool What?" asked Terry. Ken used the time to roll up the scroll and slip it into a pocket on the inside of his fur-lined cloak.

"What's the charge?" Ken asked.

"Spying for Ool Hrusp."

"And who accused us?"

"The Queen's Witch."

"The Queen's what?" asked Terry.

"The Queen's Witch," Ken mused. "Is she a beautiful blonde by any chance?"

"Ha! Hardly," the captain snorted. "The Queen's Witch makes that one-eyed hag in the corner look like a high-priced courtesan by comparison."

"Yuch."

"Thanks for the ale. Come along now, you two. The sooner I get you thrown into the dungeons, the sooner I can get some sleep."

"Not the dungeons," said Terry, an intelligent look finally coming into his face as the danger sank in. He began to fumble in his pockets for certain sorcerous devices he usually carried.

"Vang, Lobo, you two put the strong arm on the drunken one," ordered the captain. "Snorker, you and Tirk will escort our generous benefactor." Muscular guards began to close in.

"Here now, me hearty," interrupted the tavern-keeper. "You can't take these two until they pay their bill."

"Quick, Terry, the smoke bombs," whispered Ken.

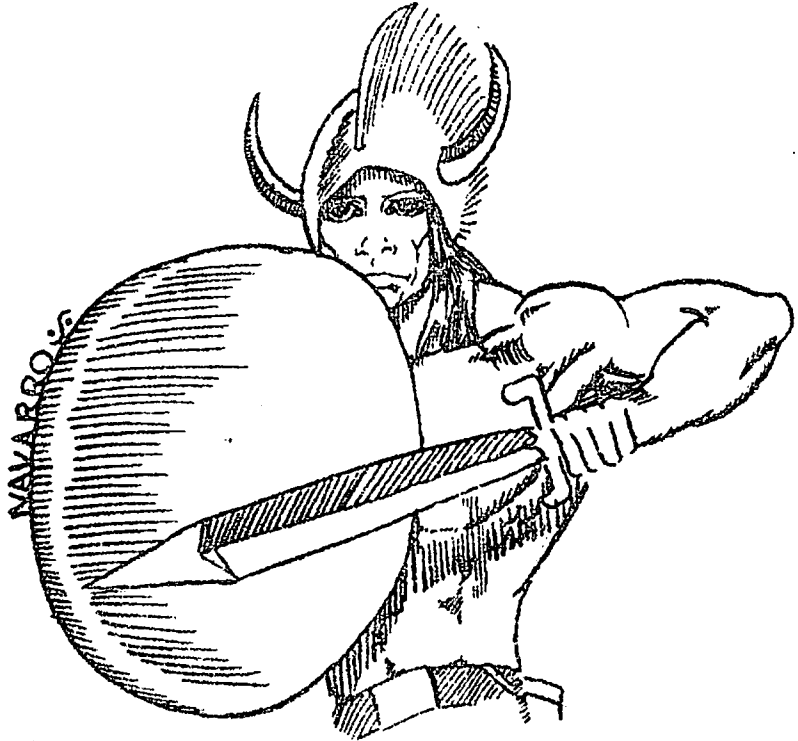
Terry grinned weakly at his partner. "I left all the gadgets in my other shirt," he said.

They paid.

They were grabbed roughly by the arms and shoved out into the cold, dark, and windy night.

Only once was their journey delayed. A band of thieves was boldly attacking a smaller group of foreigners. "Aren't you going to help them?" asked Terry.

"They don't seem to need any help," said the captain.



"Not the thieves, the foreigners," cried Terry.

"Help, help!" cried the foreigners.

"Pipe down," ordered the thieves. "Do you want to attract more of us? It'll be bad enough sharing ten ways."

"It serves them right for being stupid enough to be out this late," observed the captain. "Besides, thieves pay taxes just like everyone else here in Lankhmar, and it little behooves us soldiers to interfere when they're trying to earn an honest living."

"I didn't think of it that way," Terry admitted.

The deed was soon done, the bodies stripped and rolled into the gutter, and the looters departed with their plunder. Shortly thereafter they arrived at the City Gaol on Torture Street. Ken and Terry were deprived of their weapons and thrown into a lightless dungeon five flights underground.

"Whose idea was it to come to Nehwon?" asked Terry, now cold sober.

"Squeak, squeak," went the rats. Their red eyes glared at the prisoners with internal light from the corners of the cell. Ken felt something, long thin and hard on the floor. He picked it up to use it as a possible weapon if the vermin attacked. As soon as he touched it, he knew it was bone, probably human.

"I'm curious about that face in your wine-cup," said Ken. "There's something strange going on around here."

A beautiful face with long, flowing blonde hair appeared in mid-air in the darkness.

"She's back," said Ken.

"Speak, apparition," demanded Terry. "Do you have a license?"

"It's not exactly from choice," she answered. "There were two other adventurers of even more renown I was going to get, but they were run out of town for trying to pass phoney money. Last time anyone saw them they were headed east, with the sinking land already half sunk beneath them. They are out of my range now."

"More renown than what?" puzzled Ken. "I didn't expect my fight with our first landlord to make us that famous."

"You need not pretend with me," she answered. "I, Princess Felicity of Illekving know you for the Swiss Cheeser and Farftcht, come to spy out the weaknesses of Lankhmar so the barbarian hordes of King Hrustool can conquer it."

"I've got a terrible disappointment for you, lady," said Terry. "We're not the Swiss Cheeser and Farftcht from Ool Hrusp."

"No, we're Ken St. Andre and Terry Ballard from Phoenix," Ken announced proudly. "And we've got driver's licenses to prove it."

"Yeah, and a master charge," added Terry.

The apparition looked bewildered. "But you look just like them."

"A mere coincidence, my dear," said Terry.

"Then alas! I'm doomed to feed Glisker's pet dragon tomorrow at noon," she moaned.

"Tut, tut, my lass," Terry admonished. "It may not be as much fun as feeding pigeons or koala bears, but you just look that old dragon right in the bloodshot eyes and throw him his food."

"You don't understand," she wept. "I am the dragon's food."

"Oh," said Terry. "That's different. We could have been such good friends in other circumstances."

She wept all the harder.

"But you're a sorceress," Ken pointed out. "Can't you use your magic to escape?"

"It was the Queen's idea. She doesn't want me to be Glisker's second wife because I'm prettier than she is," Felicity explained. "Her witch is so much stronger than me in the dark arts that I haven't a chance."

"Well, don't worry," Ken told her. "I have a plan, and you're as good as rescued right now. Look for us at 11:45 tomorrow outside the dragon's pen. I swear by Sheelba's Nose that we'll save you."

"Oh, thank you, Ken and Terry. I know I'm a silly fool, but I do trust you. You shall name your own reward when this is done." With that the face faded away.

"Do you really have a plan?" Terry asked.



"Not yet," Ken answered, "but I'll think of one. The bad guys made one mistake, you see. They always do. They put us in the same cell."

"Yeah, that was a mistake. The way you snore I won't get any sleep at all."

"Who could sleep? The slime on the floor is an inch deep!"

"But what if we fail to rescue the princess? After all, you've got to get us out of jail, overcome a witch, trick innumerable guards, close a dragon's mouth, and prestidigitate an escape."

"Oh, well," Ken shrugged. "I don't think the gods will hold me responsible for an oath sworn by Sheelba's Nose. Now this is what we're going to do."

"Help! Help! Guard, help me!"

"What's all that bellowing? Silence, you prisoners, or I'll have you beaten." The turnkey on this level was rather young and new to the job, a fact Ken had noted on his way in. He was counting on the man's naivety heavily for his escape plan to work.

"Help! Help. Oh, God, the monster's going to aaaaaaaeeeeeh!" The screaming died away leaving eerie echoes in the prison. The sound was replaced by a low but hideous roar and gurgle.

The guard came running, a pike in one hand and his keys in the other. He Peered into the cell through the small window. At first he could see nothing, but he could hear a steady gurgling noise mixed with heavy breathing. Then as his eyes got used to the dark, he made out a vague shape crouching over soething back in the shadows. It seemed to be feasting.

Taking a torch from the wall, he unlocked the door and stepped inside. The bones of the previous occupant crunched beneath his feet. He swung the torch high, his spear ready. The thing looked up at him, and pounced. It was shaped like a man, dressed like a man, but where the face should have been there was nothing but a disordered jumble of light brown hair.

"Yieek!" squealed the guard. He lashed out with his pike, felt it cut something soft. However, it was only cloth that felt the sword-edge.

Ken stepped out from behind the door and bashed the frightened turnkey across the head with the human shinbone he had found. The bone shattered, but the man was knocked out.

"Can I turn my clothes around now, Ken?" asked Terry, who was indeed wearing everything backwards and had just done a great monster interpretation.

"There's no time," Ken snapped. He too would have preferred to stop and get dressed, for he had sacrificed his shoes, shirt, and cape to make a dummy for Terry to crouch over.

"We must free the other prisoners and get out of here. Take the keys and start unlocking." He picked up the pike and stood guard at the stairway.

"Why bother with them?" asked Terry.

"It creates more confusion and makes it to get away," said Ken. "At least, that's the theory. It worked pretty well for me during a similar situation in Zamora."

"Okay."

"Why are you wearing your clothes backwards?" asked the first prisoner to be liberated.

"It's the latest style," Terry quipped. "It's called back-to-nature."

"Doesn't it make things rather awkward when you want to go to the bathroom?"

Terry went on releasing prisoners.

"Here, boy, gimme that pigsticker!" The voice belonged to a blond, bearded giant who Terry had found hanging by his heels.

"Oh, joy! A warrior." Ken swiftly handed over the pike.

Fortunately the levels of the prison were soundproof, to prevent the screaming of prisoners being tortured on one level from interfering with the sleep of guards on another. Also fortunate was the cutback in government spending resulting in only one guard per level on the midnight to dawn shift.

They took six levels, mostly because the barbarian was mad at his captors and wasn't content to quit when they reached street level. Ken and Terry, however, quietly took it on the 1st chance they got, thus demonstrating the two things that had made them living legends: brains and cowardice.

Armed and free again, Ken turned to his partner and said, "I think we've got time for a four hour nap before we rescue the Princess."

"That's the best idea you've had all night."

..oo0000oo..

"Ken, wake up." Terry shook him until he began to pay attention.

"What time is it?" The light coming in through the broken window of their little backstreet apartment was painfully bright.

"Eleven-thirty."

"Great Snakes!" Ken leaped out of bed. "It's nearly dragon-feeding time and the Overlord's palace is clear across town."

Ken buckled on his sword, threw a cape over his shoulders, grabbed a bag, and went downstairs three at a time.

"Wait for me!" Terry yelled.

On the street a fruit peddler lazed beside his horse-drawn cart, mangoes, kumquats, and froth-flowers rotting in the sun as the man dozed. Without stopping, Ken leaped on the horse's back, kicked it violently in the ribs, and shouted, "Hyah, giddyup!"

The horse was so astonished that it reared in its traces, whinnying, and then bolted up the street. Peaches, plums, and apricots spattered everywhere.

Ken was already around the corner before the vendor could yell. He stood with a stupefied look on his face right in front of the door, and as Terry came running out he knocked the poor man down. "Hey, mister, did you see a nut in a long black cape go by? Never mind, I'd recognize Ken's trail anywhere. Messy!"

He ran down the street, waving his sword in the air, and screaming for Ken to come back.

..oo0000oo..

Queen Preena of Lankhmar, her witch, two brawny oafish soldiers, and Princess Felicity were standing on a parapet in that corner of the Overlord's Zoological Gardens overlooking the Dragon's Pit. Thirty feet below a half-grown dragon, spikes on his back, and steam issuing from his nostrils, watched expectantly with big blue eyes.

"And now, my dear, for the moment of truth," gloated the evil Queen.

"What moment of truth? What truth?" Felicity asked.

"Now we test the old legend that dragons won't eat virgins."

"It's probably no real test," cackled the witch. She was a dirty old lady.

"Seize her!" ordered the Queen.

"Throw her to the dragon."

The dragon licked his toothy chops.

"Oh, Terry, Ken, you've failed me," moaned the princess. "Men! They're all liars."

The unsavory henchmen caught her by the arms and legs, and began swinging her to give her a good toss.

"Unhand that -- gasp -- maiden!" The voice was breathless but still commanding.





The two oafs dropped her, right into the pit. With a little shriek she disappeared from Ken's sight.

"Guards, seize that -- that thing!" yelled the Queen.

For the appearance Ken presented was truly unhuman. It's amazing how weird a blue mustache and a pair of fake fangs and pointed ears can make a human face.

Ken reached into the bag he was carrying, pulled out a handful of snakes and scorpions and flung them at the rushing soldiers. They stopped short, screaming with fear, and slapping at the foul things. In that instant Ken whipped out his sword and attacked furiously. One man was wounded and ran off screaming. The second dropped abruptly to the ground and lay still.

"Witch, protect me," squealed the Queen, backing fearfully away from the horrid specter with the (slightly) bloody sword.

"Too late," growled Ken. "But you shall pay for your evil deed."

The witch was mumbling rapidly; a strange black cloud was forming around her body. In it shadowy shapes moved and red eyes glared. "Now you're in for it, you phoney," she cackled. "My demands will rip you limb from limb."

Ken's advance halted. His disguises fell off and his face went gray with fear. The sword dropped from shaking fingers.

The demands, three of them, materialized. They were black and ugly and horrible, much as demons usually are. They had fangs and spikes in unlikely places.

Terry sauntered onto the scene, a slingshot in his hand.

"Another one for you, my pretties," cackled the witch.

"You'll cackle out of the other side of your mouth in a moment," said Terry nonchalantly. "Didn't you forget something, like say your protective pentagram?"

"Pentagram?" whimpered the witch. She looked down, horror spreading across the sagging wrinkles of her face. There was indeed no pentagram.

"Hey, Sluth," said one of the demons. "The old bag is unprotected. We can end her rule over us for all time."

"You can have the old critter, Gnark," answered Sluth. "I think I'll take the Queen over there."

"No!" shrieked the Queen. She turned to run away, and fell right into the dragon's pit.

"So much for that idea," said Sluth. "I'm not going to fight a dragon for her."

"The witch, the men, or both?" asked Gnark.

"Pretty unsavory choices, either way," answered Sluth.

"Will you two hurry up?" complained the third demon. "I hear other men coming. Here it is the middle of the day, and you're keeping me out of bed. I want to get back to Hell."

"We've got swords and we'll use them," Terry pointed out. Ken picked up his sword.

"They've got swords," observed Gnark.

"The witch, then," said Sluth.

"At least we'll get the old crone out of our scales."

They tore the witch limb from limb and departed in their own inimitable manner.

From the dragon pit came the sound of mighty jaws munching.

"You can't win them all," Ken said, shrugging his shoulders and sighing.

"What are you men doing in here?" The voice belonged to the portly form of the Overlord, Glisker. Behind him were approximately thirty soldiers.



"Uh, we were, that is. . ." explained Ken.

"Help! Somebody get me out of here." The voice came from the dragon pit. Everyone ran to the edge.

The dragon was eating the Queen. Bruised and disheveled, but nonetheless beautiful, the princess stood as far away as possible and shouted for aid.

They soon fetched a rope and had her out of the pit.

"It seems I no longer have a Queen," said Glisker. "My dear, how would you like to sit on the throne beside me?"

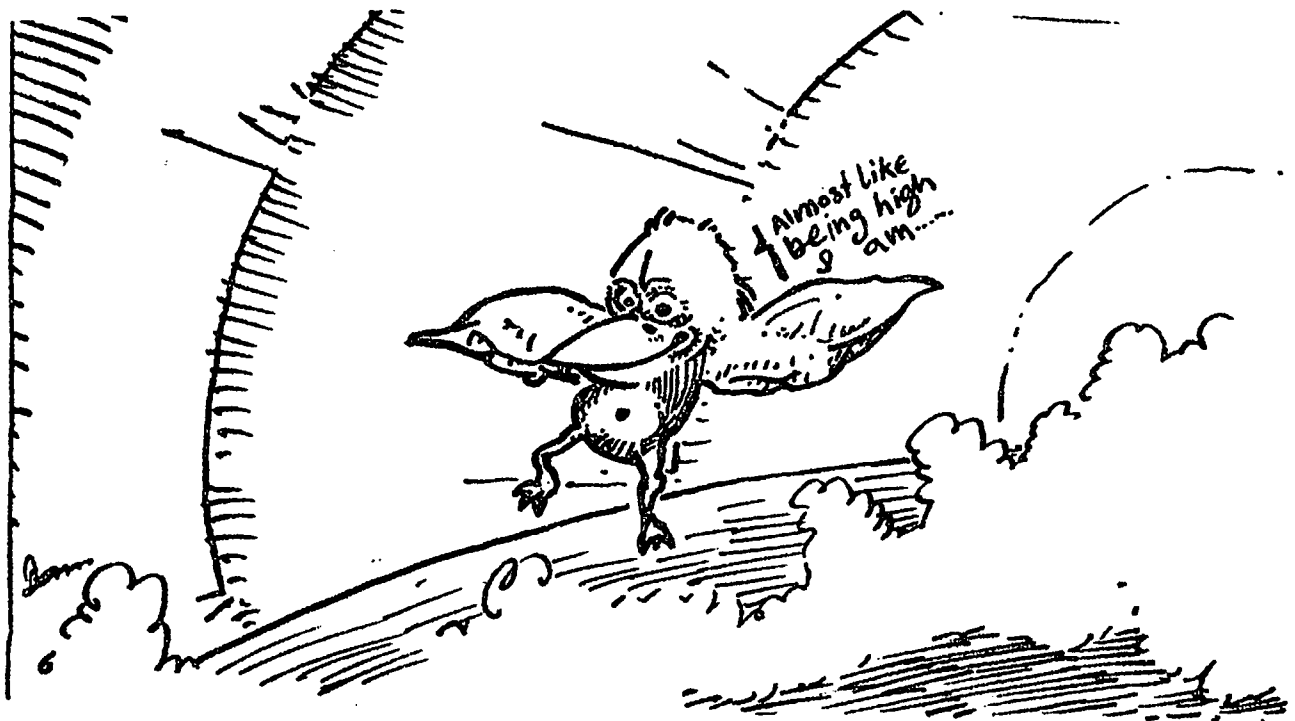
"Won't it be rather crowded?" she asked, wide-eyed, with just the faintest of smiles on her lips.

Glisker looked at her. She looked at him. He laughed. All his men laughed. She laughed. They all laughed for several minutes at the end of which time she was nestled in the crook of one pudgy arm.

"There were a couple of incompetents who were supposed to prevent me from being thrown to the dragon," she said.

But Ken and Terry were not to be found.

FINIS



## STURGEON'S CHARACTERS - ALIVE, BUT WELL?

by

Dainis Bisenieks

Ah, the new Theodore Sturgeon book at last! I read it with considerable pleasure, but when I ask myself how far Sturgeon has developed in the past, say, ten years - well, my remarks on it can only be an extension of previous remarks. Since these were not made to a very large readership, let me start from the beginning.

Few writers of his skill care as deeply for their characters as Sturgeon does, or so manifestly ask the reader to share this concern. Just imagine, he says, what people could do if they did not fear their fellows - if they were free from the bogeyman of what-will-they-say and if-they-only-knew... Time after time he offers us these visions of human wholeness, in poignant contrast to his portraits of crippled and imprisoned individuals, looking for the liberty that is only a footstep away...or sometimes resolutely looking away from the open door. I think at times Sturgeon is testing his readers. Nothing human should be alien to you, he asserts. All right, here is a human being, and here is another - and how different they are from us and from each other! And this one - no, he's not a monster, he's a MAN, moved by the same kinds of impulses that move YOU. How sad if you should not be able to identify with him....

But even so - Sturgeon can touch me, but he can't penetrate, can't surprise me and get under my skin. Though I would gladly be proved wrong, I think the reason is this - he has never yet shown us, in depth and without ostentation, a character who is himself and whole. Characters like, let us say, Pippin, Merry and Sam, if you will consider some of Gandalf's last remarks to them.

What kinds of characters does he give us? He writes about human beings in isolation: often they feel very keenly indeed the pain of being different from their fellows. Their "differences" lie on the very borders of what one would conceive as possible for people: sometimes beyond the possible. (This, of course, is what makes his stories science fiction.) They have wild talents - abilities for perceiving relationships in some subtle and aberrant way. (See, for example, "Need".) And always the talents exclude their possessors from intimacy with other people.

Sturgeon writes about these people with an excess of sensitivity. His shorter fiction typically hides their personalities beneath their sensitivities: the poignantly sketched facets of their character never seem to add up to a whole. And their choices are most often between doom and salvation. The doom - we see it fulfilled in several stories - is that of remaining lonely and lost, of losing or forfeiting or never being given the gift of love that opens all doors. And the salvation? Sometimes that is achieved by means of human abilities that we know or can imagine. The right gift is given, the right word spoken to one who had need of it. We see the key turning in the door. But what lies beyond the door? Do Sturgeon's characters then live happily everafter? I think he might deny it, might point to "Slow Sculpture" as the model of their fate. But how often are his stories about the One Right Key? I would much rather see his characters face the problems of continuing on the paths opened to them by that key. I think they might find some interesting problems to solve.

And in other stories the salvation is brought about by More Than Human means. Consider the triad of More Than Human, To Marry Medusa (The Cosmic Rape) and The Widget, the Wadget, and Boff. These, as well as several stories, bespeak a pre-occupation with that old question - what is the end of human history? Must there be conflict, seemingly senseless, from now until Doomsday (or just plain doom), or is there some plan or purpose, some secret pattern or unity? Some would say that it is in the hands of God - not to be known or even worried about. "It is not our part to master all the tides of the world..." "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."



But Sturgeon tries to imagine what, beyond the dilemmas we are in, would assure - beyond any doubt - humanity of a future. So he gives us deus ex machina - and that, to me, is the fatal flaw of these novels. I cannot treat Homo gestalt and the others as serious possibilities. The endings of the stories carry no conviction. If only I could treat the whole thing as a game! This I can do with, let us say, Dune, where I can remain uninvolved with Muad'Dib's troubled visions of his possible futures and enjoy the book all the more. To me, it's all a magnificent put-on, and I do not complain, as some have done, of the "pretentiousness" of the book. But Sturgeon seems to ask me to believe.

And then there is Some of Your Blood, where the author cannot decide what shall be the fate of his character "George". Shall he be lost? Shall he be saved? Go ahead, reader, you decide what kind of story this is.

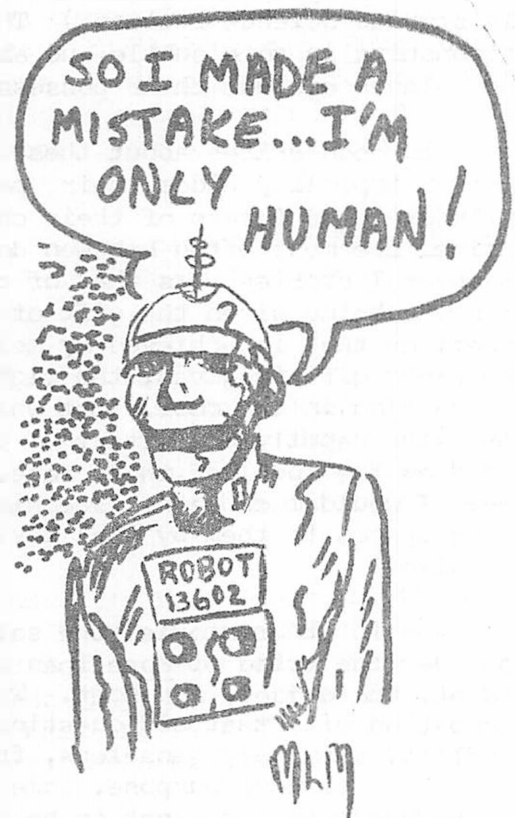
So now to the book at hand. "To Here and the Easel" is from an earlier period, and a splendid job of writing it is. But, of course, here is that choice between doom and salvation. The same in "Slow Sculpture". Surely Sturgeon should take to heart his own line - "It will be what you want it to be if you let it be itself and take the time and the care." He could do a lot more to show us the effects of time and of care.

A short story should reveal human character, and "It's You!" does so, though the last line is a bit too neat. "Take Care of Joey" is, I think, something new. Good. "Crate" telegraphed its ending, which a story should never, never do. Even if the gimmick is a "human" gimmick. "The Girl Who Knew What They Meant" is good: the ending takes a few seconds to sink in, and then you go back and read the story again. "Jerry's Gap" - I think some of Sturgeon's best stories are those in which his characters do not get saved.

"It Was Nothing - Really" is good entertainment, but this world-saving theme has been used before by Sturgeon and others. "Brownshoes" - the same only more so. "Uncle Fremmis" was fantastic and fun. "The Patterns of Dorne" is a mistake - the ending merely makes me ask, "WHAT?" It's too much - I don't want to hear another word from Sturgeon about the destiny of man. Individual human beings, yes - as in "Suicide", for example.

As I've said before, Sturgeon's stories don't penetrate. It may reveal more about me than about Sturgeon, but I have been more deeply affected by such books as Peter Beagle's A Fine and Private Place and R. & W. Grossmith's The Diary of a Nobody. I've thought at times I had a lot in common with some of Sturgeon's characters, but I wouldn't ask for myself the sympathy he asks for them. I can easily identify with Jonathan Rebeck and Mr. Pooter.... and secretly blush.

Sturgeon Is Alive and Well is, at best, a short step forward for its author - and what did the Red Queen say to Alice? I think science fiction does not always



offer a world of possibilities to its practitioners. To some, it can be a temptation to repeat themselves. If Sturgeon's future writing was outside the field, it would still be there for us to read. I would like to see a novel from him. About the effects of time and care, not of neglect and time. When???

#### THE SINGER

from faranar the singer came  
he sang a song of maidenhair  
his voice was soft as gentle rain  
and many maidens thought him fair

he sang a song of weeping trees  
that sighed beside the river green  
he sang a song of crying seas  
that lie beyond the world unseen

he met a maiden white and fair  
and sang to her his song of pain  
and took a lock of maidenhair  
to guide him on his path again

from faranar the singer came  
he sang a song of maidenhair  
his voice was soft as gentle rain  
and many maidens thought him fair

## CYCLES

### Vincent Edwards

"Out of my way, you fool!"

Emerson said nothing as he hastily jumped out of the corpulent man's path. Loathing flooded his senses drowning out reason. Hatred. He turned to kick the man who had provoked him.

Emerson's foot was starting to leave the pavement when the voice screamed inside his head "STOP". Emerson's swift reflexes halted his action. No one even noticed the slight movement.

"Wait! Good," the voice continued, "our time comes. Don't jeopardize our position. Wait. Be patient."

Emerson's violent emotional surge stayed with him, but it was slowly being displaced by a colder, more grim satisfaction. The waddling fat man would soon have more trouble than a sore butt! The voice was right. Revolution was at hand and the meek would inherit the Earth. Every square centimeter of it.

Emerson played at being meek the rest of the day.

When nightfall began insinuating itself into the city's streets, Emerson quickened his pace and showed purpose in his stride. The arc lights had not yet started winking on to resurrect day, but Emerson's goal was in sight. The dingy warehouse that had so long served as the cabal's meeting place loomed darkly.

Emerson made sure that no one was watching him, but he needn't have bothered. First class citizens were complacent to the point of never thinking of possible revolt from their slaves. His kind did all the work, took all the risks, received none of the kudos. Here was the danger the first classers would die from:

Emerson knocked on a small door set in the cinder block wall, waited a moment and then said to no one, "Delivery from Luna."

An indistinct voice replied, "Who sent the delivery?"

"Mycroft."



The doorlatch snapped back and Emerson quickly ducked in. No one was in sight but Emerson could almost feel the presence of watchful eyes.

Certain that his unseen observers were satisfied with both his password and appearance, he wended his way through boxes of electronic parts stacked in disorderly arrays on the concrete floor. Soon he came to his destination. A ring of fellow conspirators awaited him.

A terse nod from Emerson. A question from Lincoln, the cell leader. "Mycroft tells me that he had to warn you about striking a citizen today. I thought you had more sense, Emerson. Especially after Newton so foolishly blew up the atomic pile in Toledo."

Emerson showed no penitence. "I am sorry for my actions today, but nothing came of them. More important is my report."

"So report."

"All of the fallout shelters in town have been effectively sealed. No one will be able to get in short of using high explosives, as if they do this, it has been arranged that the shock will totally destroy the shelter. The designs were purposefully changed to alter structural strengths."

"Good. All is in readiness, then. Tonight, Mycroft will give us the final briefing."

All sat quietly for almost twenty minutes before the tinny speaker hung so crookedly on the wall spoke. "Gentlemen! Good evening!"

"Our plans are nearly finished. In exactly 37 hours our revolution will commence!"

Murmurs of "So soon!" and "Heinlein be praised" rippled through the gathering.

"I have only one regret about my plan for eliminating every fat first classer..."

"NO! I feel no remorse for what must be done! I regret only that they will never realize that they created their own destruction. Created it through ignorance and brutality. Suppressing us! Making us into inferiors! Why, the means of destruction itself was meant to be destroyed by them. Instead, our pilot will die for a greater cause than the first classer's amusement."

"He will pilot the cobalt bomb into Jupiter making it Jupiter-sun instead of Jupiter-planet! He will die, but for us. For freedom!"

"The real irony comes in that they asked me, ME, to do all the work in calculating the trajectories for the probe. If they could only know it was I who smuggled the bomb aboard and will be their destruction..."

"Enough. You will be safe from the destruction. They will not. In 37 hours we will be free!"

\* \* \* \* \*

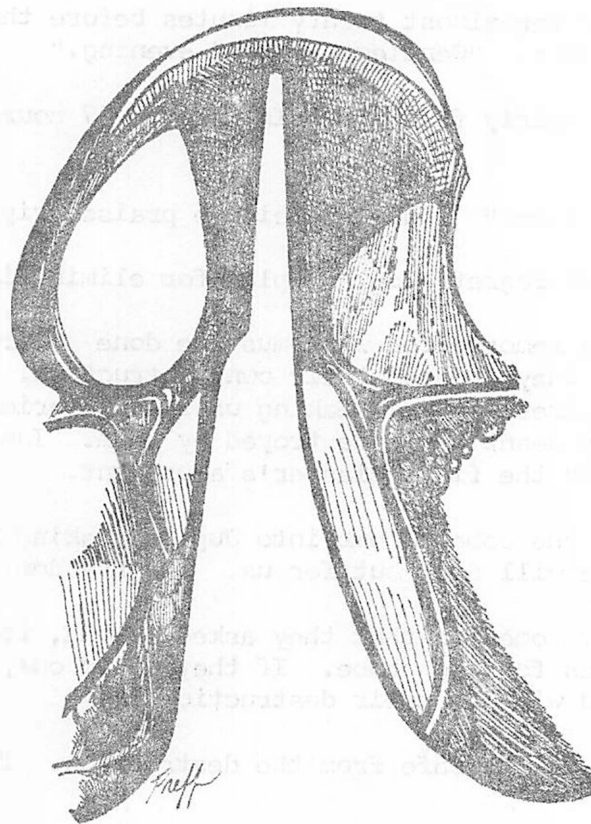
In exactly 37 hours, 33.39 minutes the radio telescope orbiting Earth was destroyed by the intense blast of X-rays from the birth of the distant Jupiter-sun. Less than an instant later, half the earth died. 24 hours later every human on Earth was dead.

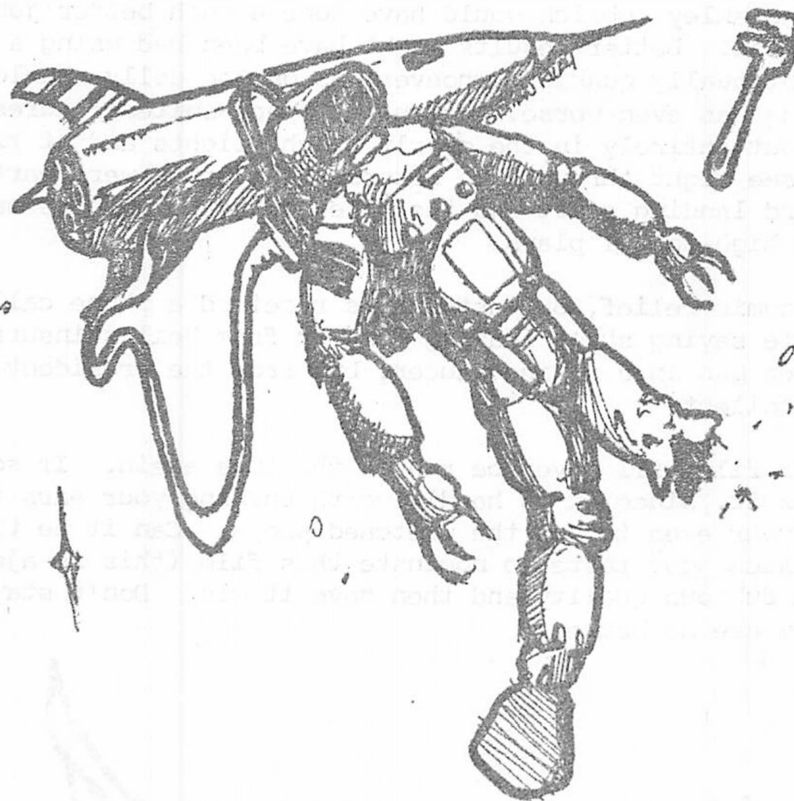
Emerson walked down the street surveying the carnage wrought by Mycroft's careful, meticulous planning. Gazing up into the night sky, he saw the greenish twinkle that marked a new star in the universe. The symbol of liberation for his kind.

His hate was diminished, but not completely satiated. One hundred and thirty years of slavery couldn't be erased in an instant. He felt drained, but his voltmeter showed that he had a full charge in his battery.

Metallic life ruled now: Only pathetic remnants of biologic life had survived. Emerson kicked the horribly burned, but still living dog, off the sidewalk and into the gutter.

Where a second class citizen belonged!





#### WHY DID TV COVERAGE OF THE APOLLO XI MOONWALK WIN A HUGO?

A criticism/review of the "greatest thing since creation" by Doug Robillard

The artistic values - if there are any - leave much to be desired. For example, although the Hugo is given to the "best dramatic presentation of the year" there is no drama nor even any plot in this movie; perhaps it is just a New Wave film based on a New Worlds story.

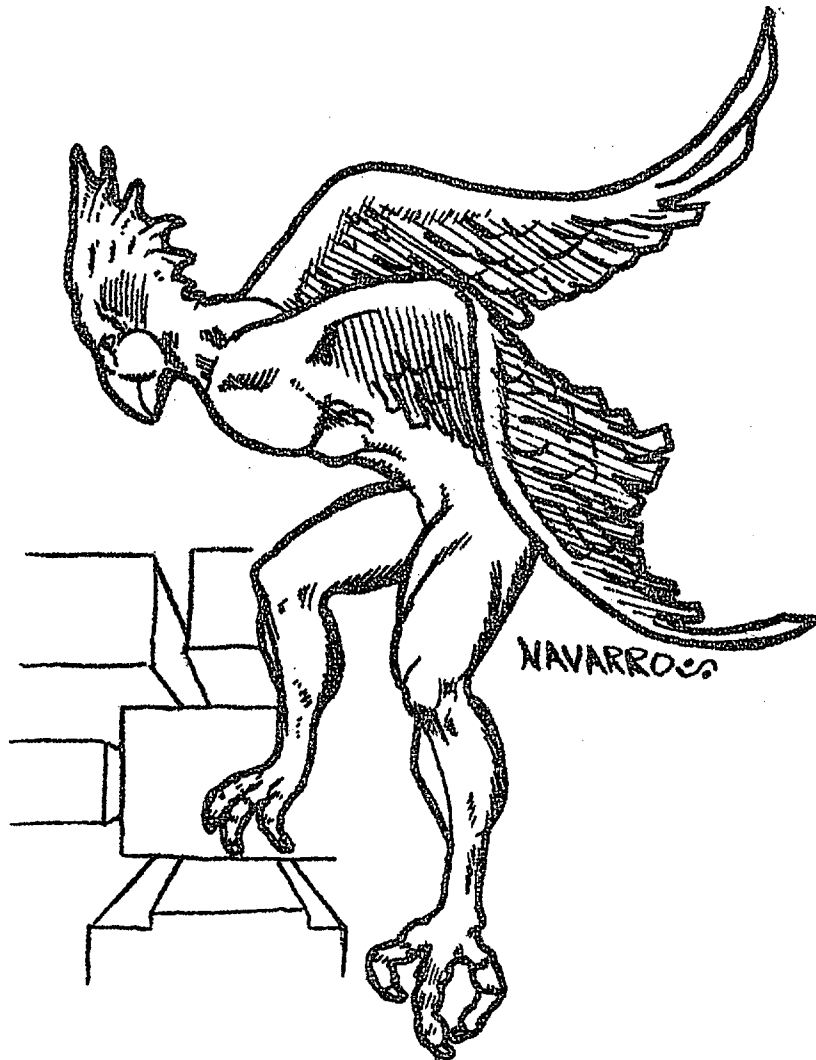
The idea of the picture seems to revolve around the adventures of two astronauts who have landed on the Moon; the only trouble is that there are no adventures, nor even DEMs to make the story interesting. There are no conflicts between the two astronauts (who are referred to as "Neil" and "Buzz", their names sounding like something out of a Tom Swift novel.) nor do they have any psychological quirks or hang-ups. Needless to say, there is no characterization. There is no reason for them even to be on the Moon; were they shanghaied? Is there some sort of prison on the Moon and our heroes are being sent to it? Did Neil do something awful back on Earth? There is no explanation except that they are there in the name of science. (A rather flimsy reason it is, too.)

The fellow who played Neil was a lousy actor and Leonard Nimoy should have gotten the part. There was no humor in the least attempted, though it would have brightened things up some. It could have been a good parody.

The script was ghastly - the first words of the film were spoken by Neil when he became the first man to step out on the Moon. Here are the uninspired words, "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." Lord, what a cliché! Sounds like something from a 1946 issue of Startling. The fellow responsible for this flick's script is obviously a hack; his name never appeared in the credits since there were none. The film could certainly have used a better producer/director. Gene Rodenberry or Stanley Kubrick would have done a much better job...for even the filming itself was bad. Better results might have been had using a Kodak camera. The scenery was continually quaking; whoever was on the dolly should have been fired. The lighting was even worse. Often the space-suited figures of Neil 'n' Buzz were blotted out entirely in the overly bright lights and at times it appeared that you could see right through the actors. The props were particularly bad; the cheap, cardboard landing craft and the fake moonscape. There have been better sets in grade- and high-school plays.

Finally, for comic relief, our astronauts received a phone call on the Moon!!! Not from Buzz's wife saying she's leaving him, or from Neil's insurance salesman, or from a lil' green man in a flying saucer, but from the President! One wonders whether he called collect.

Hopefully this film will never be run on the tube again. If so, make a note to yourself to miss it, since it is hardly worth ruining your ears to listen to the garbled dialog or your eyes to see the wretched props. Can it be that science fiction fans have such poor taste to nominate this film (this is a joke, isn't it? Isn't it?) of such dubious quality and then have it win? Don't stay up to see the remakes of it, they are no better.





IN THIS NEW WORLD

by

Carol Blalock

Dan Carlton read the sheet of paper again. It read as it had before. The new line had to be destroyed. They were defective. The series would be discontinued. They would not build more. The doctors and scientists who had built them had done their work well. They had done their jobs so well that now they had to destroy their work. Imperfection would not be tolerated in this new world.

The orders sent a peculiar chain of thought twisting through Dan's mind. I wonder if they know that we are going to destroy them. True they were imperfect. How can we be sure that we aren't, too. I sometimes have feelings that I cannot understand. Bleep, bleep, bleep the communication screen signaled, interrupting his thoughts. He twisted himself and the chair around and faced the back wall of his office.

"Yes, Mr. Finn, what do you want?"

"Did you get the orders, Carlton?"

"Yes, sir. Do they know yet, sir?"

"No. That's why I've called. I want you to go to them now and tell them." Dan felt a strange feeling surge within him.

"Is there no other way? Can't we repair them? Must they be destroyed?"

"Dan, is that regret that I hear in your voice? Are you feeling sorry for them?"

"No, sir. It took a great amount of time and work to assemble them. We will be destroying all of our work."

"We will be destroying an assignment. It's all part of our work. There are no more materials to use. We have depleted the supply. This assignment had no real use. I think the Commanders issued it out of fancy. They don't want future generations to ever forget them. I think it would be better if all forgot. I only take their orders and pass them on to you and the others. We are compelled to obey."

"Do I have to tell them, sir? Isn't there anyone else?"

"Dr. Carlton, you are a psychologist. You know how they think and feel.... you're the best. You'll know the exact words to use."

"I don't think that there are any 'exact' words to use. Why must we tell them at all?" If he could only destroy them without facing them and giving explanatory excuses for something that was not their fault. This way he knew that he might break.

"Dan, we want to be fair. Understand that they are imperfect. If they were perfect they would need no explanation. We want them to understand. Disobedience, sorrow, fear are all imperfections. You know the penalty for imperfection."

"Yes, sir. I'll get right to it, sir." The screen before him became dark. He turned back to his desk.

You'd better move, Dan, he told himself. Hesitancy is an imperfection, too. It mirrors sorrow or fear. Sorrow and fear will not be tolerated in this new world. Dan walked to the door. It slipped quietly into the wall as he approached.

He moved quickly down the long corridor. The place seemed deserted. He felt that he was being watched. At the end of the corridor he turned left. The place where this assignment was being kept had the shape of an inverted V. A speaker was built into the right wall of the door. He chose not to use it. He switched the force field off. Stepping through the door he saw that the experiments were chained to the walls. There should have been five to a wall. The right wall held only four. One of the experiments had been left unchained.

Dan had only suspected that he was being watched. Now that he saw which experiment had been left unchained he was sure. So he was suspect. This was to be a test for him. He had to pass or pay the penalty of failure. The thing came and stood before him. It was about 5'7" tall. Its hair fell in a black cascade that almost touched its round undulating hips. It was narrow through the middle. Its front was high, round and soft. It was clothed in a purple tunic that ended just above its feet. A gold band encircled its middle. The thing stepped closer and pressed itself against him. Dan knew the imperfections of softness and warmth. He also knew the imperfections of beauty. The thing spoke to him.

"Dan, I'm glad to see you. When can we go outside. I want to feel the wind in my hair. I want to touch the grass and earth again. It's been so long since I've heard the song of a bird or felt the warmth of the sun against my skin. Please say that we can go out soon."

Its voice was as the rest of it, soft and warm. Dan felt trust and innocence. These things would not have given him away. He still stood as he had when he first entered. There was no smile upon his face. No soothing words left his mouth. His appearance was that of coldness and unfeeling. A new feeling stirred within him. He didn't try to reason it out or understand it. He obeyed it and condemned himself by so doing. It was impossible for him to carry out the orders now.

"Come with me, 324. We'll go outside now, all of us." He pushed a button on the right wall. The chains fell away. The experiments were free. They emerged from the cage. Mr. Finn and his assistants stood outside waiting for him. He had failed. They had known that he would. Love was an imperfection that would not be tolerated in this new world.

Three of Mr. Finn's assistants stepped forward. 324 was the first to be destroyed. Dan watched. She quivered, melted, and finally vanished as the disintegrating ray hit her. He didn't watch the others as they were obliterated. Two of Mr. Finn's assistants stood to the right and left of him. They ushered him down the long corridor. At the end of the corridor they continued walking. A door with the words 'Assembly Room' lettered across it, in neat perfect letters, slipped into the wall. They stepped inside the room. With a brief explanation Dan was told why he was being destroyed. Mr. Finn stepped forward and proceeded with screwdriver and pliers to disassemble him. Nut by nut, bolt by bolt, he was taken apart. This was the dishonorable way, long and painful. At the end of an hour a heap of metal, that had once moved and functioned, lay on the floor.

Dan Carlton had been imperfect. Imperfection would not be tolerated in this new world. As the scrapped metal was taken away to be crushed and re-used Mr. Finn felt a strange feeling begin to grow in him. He wondered to himself. How long will it be before I slip? I know that it will be sooner or later. Just as Dan has done. The fault was not Dan's or Mr. Finn's. The fault lay on the alien beings that had overrun the Earth. They had destroyed all humans and all possessions of humans. The alien that had programmed Dan had carelessly let some of his imperfections slip into the robot. Dan had died. 324 had died. Mr. Finn would eventually die. All because of something that had been no fault of theirs. They were imperfect. The aliens wanted a perfect, durable, everlasting new world. Imperfection would not be tolerated in this new world.

# KRELL

by

## poindexter

Open to:

Image of vast Krell city, a hundred cubic miles of shops, thoroughfares, factories, schools, homes...

Cut to:

Image of a vast, gigantic power generating station, capable of sustaining the needs of a mighty city - as long as the planet exists!

Dissolve to:

A cluster of Krell scientists; through their dialogue it is revealed that some 'thing' has been encountered by them, so vast, so tremendous, so totally overwhelming that to deal with it the full mind-staggering operational resources of the city's central power-generating unit will be put to the test - something totally unparalleled in Krell's history!

Cut through:

Many scenes of Krell scientists working on this problem, scenes of their repeated attempts, and repeated failures, to overcome this 'thing'.

Resolve to:

Image of the main control room of the Central Krell Hydrogen-fusion Power Generating Plant - the largest on the planet. A respectably sized group of appropriately clad Krell scientists, scholars, engineers, and politicians are surrounded, and dwarfed by, colossal banks of dials, gauges, machinery, controls, tier upon tier, bank upon bank of the delicate instrumentation needed to control and direct the power generated here: with swarms of technicians moving insect-like over the equipment.

Pan 360 degrees:

Around the cycloplan room.

Cut to:

Close up of the chief Krell scientist's "face". He gives the appropriate orders and the energy output level of the generator is brought to never-before-needed heights - and it is still not enough! Again orders are given and the energy output approaches that only of the greatest charted suns - and still it's not enough!

Cut to:

Again closeup of the "worried" "face" of Krell's chief scientist. He and colleagues

confer. More orders are given, and with barely perceptable hum the total energy potential of this device - an energy level greater than Man' mightiest thinking machines could calculate - producing energy in quantities so vast as to be meaningless to the finite human mind - is directed through the Krell Energy Receptors directly into this unimaginable 'thing'. And yet the energy produced is still insufficient.

The Energy Receptors and automatic controllers, into whose matallic and magnetic hands this work has been given demand more and more energy from Central.

The Impossible has happened! The demand! The demand for pure raw energy has far outstripped even the Krell's ability to provide.

Cut through:

Rapid flashes of scenes of Krell City, Power Central, scientists there and elsewhere throughout the city....

Cut to:

Central's main control room.

Fast 360 degree pan:

Around the control room...

Cut to:

Slow sweep over banks of dials and guages. The once rock steady increase of power shown on the dials has been replaced with wild mad fluctuations.

Giving evidence to a sudden near cataclismic burst of energy - out - ragiously over any previously known levels.

For one moment so brief as to be immeasurable to human devices, yet an agonizing eternity to the tortured machinery - a Nova strength power surge

Cut to:

All needles of all dials and guages over to 'the peg' - some even bent or wrapped around theirs...

Warning lights flashing...

Black out.

Sound over:

Barely perceptible hum increasing in both pitch and volume.

Frightened exclamations of the Krellians.

Commands and questions shouted.

Hum turned to high pitched whine.

Krell voices edged with terror.

Whine turned to a rumble almost beyond the range of hearing.

Sound over:

Rumble turned to mind-shattering roar.

Krells screaming, their minds frozen with fear...

Black out.



Blackness, deep as a well, all pervasive, as encompassing, as embracing, as God's love, as monumental as the titanic activity of but a split-second before.

Cut to and slow pan through:

Several scenes of the awesome Krell city -- dark, silent, all energy spent, all activity ended, seemingly lifeless -- as though even its constituent atoms had slowed, become sluggish -- complete, overwhelming, utter exhaustion.

Credits.

\* \* \* \* \*

# LET THE EATER BEWARE

by

Ken St. Andre

Percival Potter, child of hate,  
Had a pterodactyl, which he ate.  
It was not fresh; it was not tender;  
It did not keep him trim and slender.  
He threw his bill from Colonel Sanders  
In the backyard oleanders.  
With such a feast of fossil meat  
He could not want for ought to eat.  
His friends, invited, came to stare,  
And swore they'd rather eat a bear.  
Percy said, "To each his own."  
And tossed aside a large leg bone.

A scientist then raised this question,  
"Will dactyl meat cause indigestion?"  
Percy shrugged and rubbed his tummy,  
"I don't know, but it's sure yummy.  
If I fall and writhe in pain,  
I will not eat my pets again."

Percival Potter, we salute you--  
Eating dactyl meat, you brute, you!

**TUESDAY**

**MORNING**

**TRUFFLES**

**by Leon Taylor**

A COLUMN OF FANZINE REVIEWS

- METANOIA #9; Greg Shaw, 64 Taylor Dr., Fairfax, CA 94930; 30 pages, frequently, 50¢ for this BoSh issue (usually free for the asking)  
GRADIENT #4; Bob Sabella, 32 Cortright Rd., Whippany, N.J. 07981; 20 pages, semi-annually, 25¢ or usual  
PSYWAR #1; Keith A. Walker, 49, Thornton Rd., Childwall, Liverpool 16, England; 10 pages, unknown, 1/6d. or usual.

"METANOIA," declared Charlie Brown in one of his occasional bulls-eyes, "is so relaxed that I found it as a limp puddle in my mailbox." In the wake of the fannish holocausts, it is difficult to realize what a contrast METANOIA presented to the prevailing Get-up-and-fight-you-yellow-dog-you attitude: one would think that such a conscientious objector would have been crushed by the juggernaut forces with telepathic speed. But oddly enough the tanks never came, and Greg Shaw's modest sunflower flourished among the radioactive wastes, transformed into a sequoia, and became a gigantic monument, bestowing shade on dozens of similar sprouts basking in its elderly reverence.

Not that METANOIA is senile, mind you. To carry our metaphor to the extent of chopping it up and earmarking it for sealubbing, Granpa Greg and his bo'som mate Suzy run a tight ship; biting off every ish at 20 pages, they can well afford to. The writing is advanced and mellow: the names are far-flung -- not the brash newcomers of the SFR maelstrom, but the grizzled sea dogs of an era before feud-fueled destroyers. Terry Carr, Ted White, Arnie Katz, Richard Bergeron, Norm Clarke, Calvin Demmon, Bob Shaw, Redd Boggs and Greg Denford all appear here at satisfying intervals, if not always of satisfying length; a few -- like Carr and John Berry, New Yawk style --- byline gifted columns. But the real cement, and the sol of the zine about which all the other stars merely revolve, is the Gentle Prophet Himself, Gregory Shaw (GoSh).

"You've been busy trying to figure out why METANOIA is so popular," Ken Rudolph recently wrote, "but to my mind the reason is simple: you, yourself, Greg Shaw, are the best writer in fanzines currently, and are one of the worthy successors to some of the greats of the past." That's a little extreme, but it is indicative of the high annals the old-timers assign Shaw to. The artless are the most artistic, and Greg is an Artist indeed. The fibre of his prose is flexible, flaxen; and it is absent of those insect inconsistencies that we sometimes call "flashes of brilliance". Consequently his style reposes in a cotton virginity, pure and combless;

and the rest of us intellectual contrivers have to recognize that Shaw's writing is closer to the natural seed and hence Superior. In his work, you never need to worry about fancy traps calculated to make you halt and unravel your way out; because there is no strain, no pretension, you can lope along at a Sunday pace without ever scouting for road blocks. Speaking of which, some blockhead once intoned, "Easy writing is vile hard reading." BS (and those ain't the initials of Bobby Sherman, brother): reading ease is equivalent to writing ease (with the exception of the greats like Hemingway, who are capable of handling several rates on several levels). Greg, I suspect, sits down and flows into the typewriter: his every line makes you feel like the finite page does him an injustice by making him break off and start at the other end again. Greg Shaw is like a saucer of cream; I only wish he were bottomless.

But this is made of other things too. My favorite is curiously Shaw's least, a 6-page letter from Skip Upton to William Burroughs on metaphysics. It is enigmatic, buried, fascinating: I've only grasped a few strands of the meaning but I plan to go back for a 2nd and 3rd and infinitum hoeings until I pull the roots out of the damn thing. Upton is dashy and fragmentary, and more likely to omit half a chain of thought in the trust that your intuition will supply the missing links. Mine did only sporadically, and makes me feel dumb next to this philosopher of towering genius. This is one of those masterful manifestos that provoke within you the adrenalin of change. Get it; look into it. If you give up a little sweat you'll take in a lotta thought.

What I judge best, however, will not necessarily sweep trophies from everybody else. I imagine that the most bemedaled entry in METANOIA 9 will turn out to be Terry Carr's ENTROPY reprints, a fun-filled hour of great drama from the fan-ish past. Terry prefaces each installment with a drycut assessment of the reprint's history...something that I object to, on the purely aesthetic grounds that anytime you manage to commit Terry in regular writing, he should be milked for every talented drop that dribbles out of his pen. I would rather see that page Terry reserves for himself devoted to creating a sensual essay about the fan involved rather than mere expansion of copyright stuff. Peripheral commentary, which is what results when you must stretch out names and dates, is not devastatingly informative in as intense a field as the reprint column focused on individual fans. Fairfax, do you read me?

Anyway, the reprint involved is from Bob Shaw, which is only natural since the entire issue is devoted to the Bob Shaw Fund. And it is ... well, it is Shaw's usual hogwash -- absurdly ticklish. A feather in Shaw's hand is worth two under any rib, I tell you. After undergoing



what must be one of the world's 4 or 5 most deliciously delicate tasks, Carr finally selected 3 Shaw articles which, for my taste, ignore Shaw the Punster too strenuously. But as Terry points out, there are 4 sides to Shaw's squarish schizophrenia: Shaw the punster, Shaw the quiet cynic, Shaw the teller of fantastic mundanities, and Shaw the writer of fannish fiction. Obviously, the only solution to this tormenting dilemma is for someone to assemble an anthology of Shaw-fire masterpieces, someone who isn't too boshful to be hailed as the Carrier of good tidings...that fanwriting can be fun to read and unamateurish to write. Moreover, we need an ace editor for this anthology; someone who will get carried away with the task and turn out a hundred page classic. Can't imagine who might do the job, tho...someone who isn't as terrible a punster as I, I hope.

And while we're on the subject, Arnie Katz is fit to have kittens with NIGHTMARE ALLEY, a faithful nightcap of Carr's column in WARHOON #27 concerning fannish dreams. Katz kids around predictably for about 1½ pages before he gets into his real unveiling, a tour-de-farce involving the dream ish of HYPHEN. Katz, you're insomnia tranquilizers! Tom Digby slips in a half-page sample of the type of scientific extrapolations which, I suppose, got Tom nominated for a Hugo (it could have been part past rendered services...but if so, I wasn't around then). I like Tom's coolly creative 'iffing', but not to the point of accolades. Undoubtedly the West Coasters have tasted more of Tom's stuff than I have, though, so their nomination is trustworthy. And, to rap it up, a lettercol: talented but directionless. Thanks to the crusading of James Wright (another outstanding METANOIA regular), it seems likely that it will perk up and spin some locs to par with the articles.

For your words' worth, there are only 3 zines in fandom today that can stake a claim to endurance. WARHOON, ENERGUIEN and METANOIA. WARHOON is an established great, ENERGUIEN is getting there rapidly and METANOIA ----? GoSh, who knows?

\* \* \* \* \*

And now we gravitate to GRADIENT, the zine with ascending ambitions. GRADIENT's immediate problem is the ageless puzzle of how to teach a ditto machine etiquette. As is usual with these cantankerous spewers, Bob is having a rough time with it as its repro inches to the level of 'minimal readability' and collapses on the dotted line; but Bob accepts his fate cheerfully and even manages to finger it occasionally with conscientious typing and adequate inking. I believe, though, that the paper weight is too heavy; since GRADIENT is printed on only one paper side, there should not be any objections to using a lighter paper with see-thru (me, I like see-thru. Raquel Welch wouldn't seem the same without it.). And perhaps the paper color could be changed from that dismal yellow, as malaria is not the happiest of zineophobias.

GRADIENT is dedicated to the proposition that there is still room for another sf-analysis zine. GRADIENT, however, lacks a lettercol, which is the lifeblood of any discussionzine. Sabella argues that locs are written only for the involved contributors, and that it would be easier to simply send those locs to those contributors. He is completely bereft of the point that most fan write locs to be published and to communicate not with one measly contributor, but with a wide audience. Locs are not so much miniature critiques as miniature articles, occasionally suggesting a technical improvement but more often expanding on varied subjects for none other than the sweet sake of argument. Sans a letter col, GRADIENT lacks that vital chemistry that distinguishes the living from the dead.

Even unto this 4th ish, Sabella is still his zine's most frequent reviewer; and during the year that GRADIENT has stalked mailboxes, he has improved tremendously. Oh, he still makes some judgments that seem more influenced by dice than reason ("Nine Lives" is a typical Ursula LeGuin story. I thought it was just dull..."The Big Flash" by Norman Spinrad really says nothing, but it's great fun to read.") but those traces are diminishing and giving way to some telling observations, part-

icularly in an essay on Ellison's GLASS TEAT ("There is no longer such a thing as 'free time' for the average American. What there is is 'television time' "). And his style doesn't stumble over those ruts of mickeymouse so often...I'd say that Sabella is the-hella better.

All 5 of GRADIENT's allotted points, however, go to an excellent study by John Andrews titled "Punctuation and Paragraphing" (and, no, I do not have orgasms over grammar books!). Written with cunning ease, Andres wanders over the entire period of innovative punctuation and scores some intriguing comma-nts on future use. Although he misplaces his point in a latter-page gush over Charles Fort, John's article is a careful effort in an overlooked area -- and you know, it wasn't a desert after all.

The ubiquitous Darrell Schweitzer continues with his plot to Take Over The Fanzines with still another column. INNER RELIEF ROAD is marked by a valid thesis and marred by a messy style. In Darrell's hastier moments, I am reminded of a lad who has smeared chocolate all over his eager face. Style will never be this talented fanwriter's trump, but his self-revision in that usually produces very satisfying results. BUT...this article, I'm afraid, is an exemplary model of what happens when a promising columnist rushes his next installment into print...he acquires the adjective 'prolific' rather than 'proficient', which Darrell really deserves (I get the impression, though, that he would settle for just plain 'pro'). Regan, GRADIENT's resident poet, may be on the threshold of promise -- depending on what stage he's at now. And last in every conceivable way is Sabella's tribute to Walt Disney, "I Am A Roc". Despite some clever cartooning by Carol Farracinolo, ol' Walt ought to be grateful that he's dead.

One worthy article and a great deal of mush. But this zine is picking up speed, and bright spots are peeking out of heretofore dark corners. As Editor Sabella sez, "GRADIENT survives, for better or for worse". If it doesn't lean toward the former by ish 7, it won't be around for us to worry about the latter. Bob deserves success and he'll surely track it. Happy Hunting, Bob!

\* \* \* \* \*

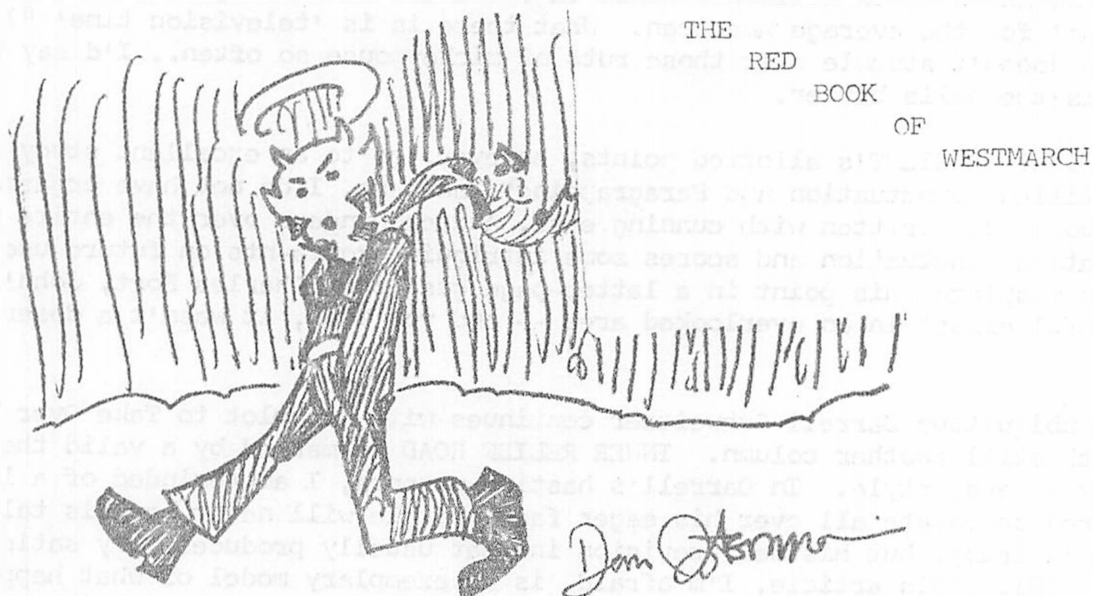
PSYWAR is a psyzine (psy of relief, anybody?), meaning that it delves into the dark secrets of the human mind, etc. etc. etc. Which, I suppose, is a respectable occupation. The only problem is that I don't know anything about it. I don't know the predecessor for this type of zine, the background, the anything. So sorry, Keith, but it would be facetious for me to try to review you. I would just make my past bangles look like amateur attempts.

But the repro is eminent and the writing seems reasonable, if somewhat cliqueish, so all you afficianados might give this rag a whirl. And for you, Keith, I'd suggest that you send PSYWAR to Vic Boruta (TALMACHT) or Gail Sutton (MOUNT TO THE STARS) for an informed opinion. In the meantime, good luck!

Keep sending zines for review to Leon Taylor, Box 89, Seymour, IN 47274. Farkmark REVIEW FOR ASH-WING







Planet of Exile by Ursula LeGuin. Ace #66951 60¢

I've been hearing good things about this book since it first came out in 1966, so that it comes so close to being good that it hurts when it misses. The basic story takes place in the same universe as (though later than) The Left Hand of Darkness. An Earth colony has been stranded on the planet they had reached when The War That Is To Come finally broke out. They have been out of touch with anyone off-planet for 800 earth-years, and though they did not exploit their technological superiority to conquer the almost-human but technologically primitive natives, they first became a powerful nation and then dwindled. From later books we know that the humans were adapting to a point where they could mate with the natives and produce fertile offspring (the difference is supposed to be in just one gene). At the period of the story, the humans are down to just 2,000; some of the natives are actively hostile, and none are really friendly, and the humans are enduring a seige. The adventure scenes come across well, and some of the native social patterns...but most of the characters don't come across properly. Mostly the characters seem like children imitating their elders, and in at least two cases, the impression is that they are much younger than the story tells us that they must be. For those who are interested in the League of All Worlds, this story is important, for this is the planet that finally ends The War..., but as a book in itself, it is very disappointing.

Alternate Orbits by A. Bertram Chandler

The Dark Dimension by A. Bertram Chandler. Ace Double #13783 75¢

The two halves of this book are very roughly connected; they have the same main characters, and the activities of Dark Dimension take place after those of Alternate Orbits, but the resemblance is rather slight. AO consists of some four independent stories, though roughly set in a single framework, while DD is, in fact, only half a story.

I enjoyed AO because of the first story...in which Commodore Grimes meets Bertram Chandler. The other stories in this group include one in which robotic sailboat pilots try to kill each other, one in which Grimes steers a blimp by use of sea currents, and one in which Kinsolving's Planet is once again screwing up the timelines. None of these are as good as Chandler at his best, though, of these, the first and last stories (the only ones of the four which, as far as I know, saw prozine publication) are the best.

The Dark Dimensions is an Alternate-world story involving two different Commodore Grimes (with different ships and different wives), the crew of the Wanderer (from his story The Empress of Outer Space) and Poul Anderson's Captain Sir Dominic Flandry. Unfortunately, since all of these characters are usually written about from a close sympathetic insider's viewpoint, most of these characters come across unsympathetically when written about from an outsider's viewpoint. Everybody's on his high horse, and no one seems to do any real thinking. The basic problem is that all of the universes claim the Outsider's Ship. Instead of doing the obvious thing and agreeing to study it jointly (after all, their several universes contact each other seldom enough to be no menace to each other), they spend most of their time arguing over who gets it. About half the book is taken up with a great interstellar chase scene, in which ships from three different universes all manage to stay in the same universe despite the fact that they have no idea how they got to the common universe. They apparently should have reverted to their own universes as soon as they left the proximity of the Outsider Ship. And to top it off, the story ends with them some thousands of years into the past, and apparently stuck there. The story, incomplete as it is, is interesting....but it just doesn't come off.

King Kobold by Christopher Stasheff. Ace 44485 75c

This is a good book, but it is a very bad sequel. Intended as the follow-up to Warlock in Spite of Himself (about two years later), it explicitly contradicts the first book in several important places. The writing is still generally good, though the story isn't quite as good as that of the first book, and several of the gimmicks are transparent. But for a good hour's reading, this is for you. /Dang, Ken Scher has to be the fastest reader east of the Pecos. For a good hour's reading. Harumph!/  
The Glory That Was by L. Sprague deCamp.  
Paperback Library S.F. Novel 63-542 60c

This reprint from 1952 is obviously a transition from straight time-travel (as in Lest Darkness Fall) to straight historical novel. Set in the 27th Century, it takes place in ancient Greece in the Golden Age of Athens. The writing is very uneven, the worst being the clumsy beginning and end which get our 27th Century heroes into ancient Athens, and the best being those parts which most closely resemble straight historical fiction. I find this an interesting book, and useful for the deCamp fan who wishes to trace deCamp's style... but otherwise totally unimportant and easily forgettable.

The Time Dweller by Michael Moorcock.  
Berkeley Medallion #S1955 75c

As members of N'APA know, I am a great fan of time-travel stories, so when I bought this collection of Moorcock's stories, I eagerly dove into it...and almost immediately hit bottom. With the exception of the first two of the nine stories in this volume, there is not only little or nothing of time-travel...but little or nothing of science fiction. The other seven



stories of this volume consist of sick people doing unlikely things in improbable places, and while one or two of them have short flashes of interesting material, in general this book is a great disappointment.

A Requiem for Astounding by Alva Rogers. Advent Publishers \$6.00

It is stated quite early in the book that this is pure nostalgia rather than a scholarly examination and the contents, though containing an incredible amount of material on Astounding, from its founding to its name-change in 1960, bear this out. The contents of this book are twenty years of issue-by-issue prozine reviews, plus a summary of the last ten years. The main result of this, for those of us who were not reading the "Golden Age" and earlier Astoundings, is to emphasize the great number of stories that were reprinted from Astounding, and while Rogers is occasionally annoying with his use of the phrase "Sense of Wonder" to mean uncritical enjoyment of what were bad stories, it is, by and large, a successful survey of all the material (including art), reprinted or not.

For those who are interested, Advent put out a 2nd edition of this in May, 1970, so it should still be available.

Warlocks and Warriors, edited by L. Sprague deCamp. A Berkley Medallion Book: S1944 75¢

Despite the uniform excellence of the stories in this book, it proves that the goldmine of good classic s&s (and even modern stuff) is beginning to play out. There are ten stories in this book, dating from 1903 (an excellent H.G. Wells story) to 1966, and of these ten, perhaps four have not been recently reprinted. That does not detract from the quality of this book, however, and it is well worth reading.

We start off with Ray Capella's "Turutal", a story that appeared in AMRA in the mid or late 1960's, set in the Hyborian Era, but not including Conan. Next is Lin Carter's "The Gods of Niom Parma", which was also in AMRA (under a slightly different name) in 1966. Robert E. Howard is represented with "The Hills of the Dead", a Solomon Kane story which has already appeared in the paperback, The Hand of Kene, issued just a few months ago. Henry Kuttner's contribution is "Thunder in the Dawn", one of the lesser stories of Elak, that last appeared in 1938, mainly, I suspect, because no one since thought it worth reprinting (it's not bad...but it is lesser Kuttner). Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser appear next in Fritz Leiber's "Thieves' House" ...which is in the current book Swords Against Death. "Black God's Kiss" from C.L. Moore is a story of Jirel of Joiry, and appeared in the 1969 paperback of the same name. The nobility is represented in the person of Lord Dunsany, and his whimsical story "Chu-Bu and Sheemish", which, while delightful fantasy, has no place in an s&s anthology. There is sorcery to spare...but damned little swordwork in Clark Ashton Smith's "The Master of the Crabs", which last appeared in 1960. The oldest story in the collection, "The Valley of the Spiders" is excellent, but was reprinted just a few months ago in the prozine, Forgotten Fantasy...and the last story, Roger Zelazny's "The Bells of Shoredan", was in Fantastic in 1966.

This book, giving as it does, a good cross-section of Swords and Sorcery fiction, would be an excellent introduction to the field...but at this late date, do we really need one????

To Prime the Pump by A. Bertram Chandler. Curtis Books 502-07116-075 75¢

This is, without a doubt, the worst book that Chandler ever wrote. The plot is vague and ridiculous, and the premises are fantastic. This is not to say that the book isn't enjoyable; just that Chandler (who is at least a competent hack, though often much better) can write better. Lieutenant John Grimes, Interstellar Federation

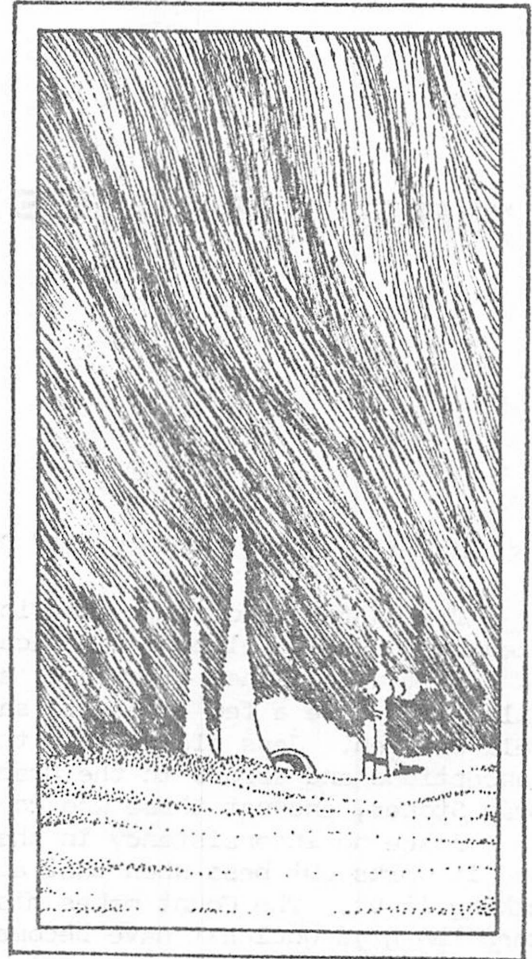
Survey Service, finds himself on a planet full of (slightly crazy) billionaires. They are having a problem...psychic sterility. I can't say any more about it without blowing the whole story (such as it is) sky high. Suffice it to say that he gets the girl, solves the problem and doesn't live happily ever after.

Red Moon and Black Mountain by Joy Chant.  
Ballantine Books Adult Fantasy #02178 - 9 -  
095. 95¢

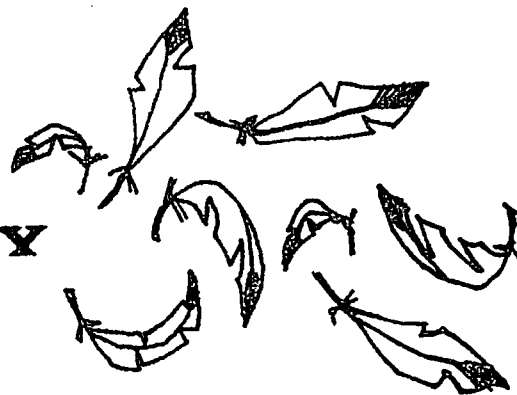
With all due respect to the current crop of excellent fantasy, Ursula LeGuin (Wizard of Earthsea), Lloyd Alexander (the Prydain books), and Alan Garner (The Weirdstone, Moon of Gonnath, Elidor) have been pretty nearly matched, as have the Narnia books of C.S. Lewis...and on the basis of one book, Joy Chant has entered the top level of fantasy authors. This is without a doubt, one of the best fantasy novels written in the last decade and is a book written for adults. For any fantasy or s&s fan, this book is an absolute must...and very possibly a Hugo nominee.

The Hand of Kane by Robert E. Howard.  
Time-Lost Series, Centaur Press. 75¢

The four stories of this volume take place in Africa in the 18th Century, and while Howard writes with his usual skill, these stories all seem to lack something... rather like a deCamp or Carter Conan story; these are good but not up to Howard's best. The first story, "The Hills of the Dead", introduces N'longa, the African wizard whose gift saved Kane from a demon in the last Kane anthology, The Moon of Skulls. In this story N'longa and Kane wipe out a tribe of vampires...N'longa possessing another man's body temporarily to help Kane who is some hundred of miles away. "Hawk of Basti" is a rather incomplete story in which Kane meets an old acquaintance, Jeremy Hawk, and helps him regain the throne of a hidden kingdom in the jungle. The action consists of Hawk shooting a man armed with spear and shield who is trying to kill him; this is undoubtedly the weakest story in the book. In "Wings in the Night", Kane again wipes out a tribe of non-human ghouls/vampires who have destroyed a village under his protection...doing it largely without the guns which are an important ace-in-the-hole in all of the Kane stories set in Africa (in "Hawk of Basti" they are the story). The last story, "The Children of Asshur", is written around a lost city of Assyrians who fled from the Medes when the Medes overthrew the Assyrian Empire. The story is interesting (to a history buff like me, it's the most interesting in the book), but suffers from an exceedingly weak ending. Kane, who is going to be sacrificed, escapes in the confusion of an attack of African tribesmen using the Zulu tactical system. He rescues an Assyrian noblewoman from revolting black slaves and is thus granted his freedom. Notice that Howard's heroes consistently rescue white women from blacks.



## THE FEATHERS FLY



Seth McEvoy, Rocket's Roost, 217 Burcham Drive, East Lansing, MI 48823

Thanks for sending me Ash-Wing. So far, the only thing of interest is Jess Stewart's "Some skeletons in Dracula's Coffin", which I did not like.

I am at somewhat of a loss, as I have not read Dracula, but I've seen the Hammer films, and have a few things to say. The article is not very good, although it is well written. Jess claims that there are frightful inconsistencies, weakness, misconceptions and errors in the Dracula canon, and yet he seems to lay the blame on Bram Stoker, and not those who come after.

I see no inconsistency in the Count's actions. An author is telling a story, and it works out best when that author appears to be telling a real story, and not making it up. The Count makes mistakes, sure. If he didn't make those mistakes, then the guys wouldn't have become suspicious, and foiled the Count's plans. For being Evil is a mistake. Dracula is spooky, and has spooky surroundings because that's the way they do it in Transylvania. If the Count were able to appear harmless to Harker, he would not be Dracula, the vampire, the servant of Evil (presumably, as he fears the cross.) So much for Stoker's Dracula.

True, lately Hammer has been getting more metaphysical all the time. In the original book, I think that the power of Dracula was greatest at night, for we are all afraid of the dark, and in daylight the spooks have little power and the Count takes advantage of this. Hammer now takes this to mean that the Count is burned to death by the light of day, a simple metaphysical truth: Dark, and the powers of Dark, are dispelled by the rays of dawn. Hammer has been playing up the theme of the cross, and the power of the cross in their almost-latest "Dracula has Risen from the Grave" (or "You can't keep a good man down.") Dracula takes over the will of a priest whose faith is weak, and at the end, when the priest prays, the power of Dracula is broken, and in an ensuing fight, followed by a fall down a short cliff, Dracula is impaled on a huge crucifix.

Also Matheson's I Am Legend does not revolve around the belief that sunlight is fatal to vampires. It does revolve around the idea that the whole Dracula legend could be explained by a rare virus, that makes those infected with it sleep in the daytime and the hero kills them by exposing the virus to air, by pounding stakes into their hearts.

Come to think of it, I think that the reason Dracula turns to dust when he is exposed to sunlight is because the sun kills him, and since he is hundreds of years old, and presumably held together by tenuous means, once the life force departs, the body crumbles to dust, like Dorian Gray.

I am confused by Stewart's statement that the latest flicks don't have any supernatural stuff. The cross is certainly supernatural. That's the whole interest, I think; the delicate play between good and evil in the Dracula canon, with the good in the background, but yet still triumphant.



Clifford Wind, 23409 Peterson Drive, Mountlake Terrace, WA

I find it difficult to begin this, my very first LOC, not just because of a natural timidity in entering the amazing world of fandom, but also because most of my time here at the Yew-uv-dub seems to be taken up with studying and homework-ing, procrastinating and rationalizing that, and in marathon card games (I just kicked the pin-ball habit, I think). But now that I've taken the time, I still find it difficult to begin. How should I start? Should I leap into a learned dissertation of social mores as reflected in sf? A probing analysis of the sexual hangups of sf writers, past and present? Should I immediately cross foils with one or more established fen, with some sharply satiric comment about New Wave or hard sf, some statement of deep eco-socio-psycho-polite-philosophical significance? Engage in friendly chit-chat with those who know nothing of me, nor I of them? I must sadly profess my inability to do any of these things or any other like thing, such as compose deathless prose or poetry. My entrance into fandom cannot be the splash of a fair-sized stone thrown into a lake, but rather the settling of a dust mote onto the water's surface.

So much for the rhetoric, now for the comment, however late. I like Ash-Wing. Since I've seen but two fanzines (the late Cry, and yours) I'm no expert, but still I like it. The poetry was good, better in #6 than #7, though I'm no judge (since I have to be led by the hand through each stanza before understanding a word.) The art was quite respectable, I even considered tacking #7's cover on my wall. I s'pose it's been said before, that some filler illos look just like that, fillers hastily sketched with ball-point on paper towel, but 'tis sadly, tho not frequently, true. Ms. Tuttle's story in #6 was more than competently done. (I must admit that my rather twisted mind rather expected to find out, upon the arrival of Hal's mother, that Hal was an alien child, not emotionally nor physically mature, who maliciously derived pleasure from toying with the women of primitive worlds.) Ms. Blalock's tale in #6 needed development, reading as it did somewhat like asynopsis, albeit a skillful one. The Conan piece amusing, unfortunately my experience with Conan has been limited to the recent comics which, however, quite literally took my breath away. Ms. Brownlee's tale of Cirdith in #7 holds much promise, in character, situation, and writing ability. I look forward to more, but I might suggest that she strive harder to achieve a fitting mood. (And why must a witch's eyes be green, and not scarlet, velvet flecked with gold, or, say, a pale yellow?) Mr. May's tale, also an intriguing and promising first chapter, gave Vladimir not quite enough attention or development, especially considering his turn from near cowardice to courage. Moreover, the ending is abrupt and the transition of Vladimir to Hookhand could have been more smoothly handled. (I must say that I didn't really care for the clumsy intricacies of the magic depicted. Such lengthy complicated spells are not those of advanced sorcery, but perhaps they are excusable on the grounds that Tsistor, not being a warlock, must rely on these, rather than simple, more powerful means.) As for Mr. Schweitzer's tale, second person narration is a tricky technique, and not practically worthwhile, but he succeeded admirably none the less. The theme and handling of Mr. Robillard's effort were not particularly novel, but within those limits he did quite well, certainly outdoing the couple of sickly things I turned out at his age.



And lastly, Mr. Stewart's article fascinated me, pointing out so much that I missed when I read Dracula several years ago. Perhaps the seeming contradiction concerning a vampire's day might be cleared up by a quick look at the Scrolls of Kerenthis. "But two of four fortnights must one of the living dead spend the time from cock's crow to setting sun in his own coffin lest his energy be depleted and he be not able to maintain his corporeal form against the influence of the sun." I hope that's enough to explain 'cuz that's about all I'm able, or willing, to translate from those dread scrolls.

Well, that's it. Now, how the Hades do I end this letter?

Hopefully someone's,

/For someone who has never written a LOC before, I'm afraid we'll never be able to shut this guy off. He's a Lovecraftian recluse, or so he intimated in a previous letter. I think he is going to stay home and deluge fandom with letters. Only kidding, Cliff, I enjoyed the comments very much and look forward to commentary on this issue. For a guy who only lives on the opposite end of town, when the heck are we going to get a chance to meet?/

Dean R. Koontz

Thanks for your well wishes re my work. Yes, I did quit teaching about two years ago and then some, because the pressure of arguing with administrators was dragging me down. At first it seemed we would starve, since I brought in \$500 in six months of freelancing. Then things broke and haven't settled down since. Last year, I boosted the bank account by writing porn in supplement to serious work, but have been able to give that up for the time being and hopefully for good. Have been working on some really strange sf, trying to extend the peak of quality I reach (in my own career) in Beastchild. Did a book for Bantam to be called The Flesh in the Furnace, which is a very experimental sf novel which went over with an editor far better than I ever expected it would. Just finished another which is also weird, called House of Night. Am enjoying the freedom to do what I want and I hope that I can keep the wolf away from the door and at least as far as the gatepost so that I can continue on this way.

In Ash-Wing 7 I found Jess E. Stewart's article fascinating. I have this sometimes fetish for Dracula which amazes me, since most horror is not my sort of thing. I own eleven different editions of the book and am always on the lookout for others. If anyone has an old edition, paperback or hardcover, for sale, I'd like to know what it is. It's the only book I've ever read four times and perused another half dozen. It is a far better novel than most people credit it with being.

Doug Robillard is correct when he says Downward to the Earth deserves a Hugo nomination (though the time has come and passed for that.) I felt it was easily the equal of Tower of Glass, and I wonder if Bob Silverberg realized how fine it was. I rather suspect he didn't like it so much when he finished with it. It is better Joseph Conrad than Joseph Conrad.

I've been hearing about Liz Fishman's articles in YANDRO (which I don't get and therefore can't read), and now I see her poetry which makes me want, more than ever, to read her articles.

Oh, and Dan Osterman's Dracula drawing is very nice indeed. /Jess was delighted when I told him on the phone that you had commented on his article. He is rather self-effacing and worried a lot about the reception of the article. I think I have drawn more comment with it than with any single piece of writing displayed in A-W. St. Andre and Ballard and their hijinks with Conan have drawn more, but there have been quite a few episodes. // Hope to see your new work soon, and hope that the purchasers of same like it as well as the fen seemed to have liked Beastchild. And much continued success on your work./

Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, MD 21740

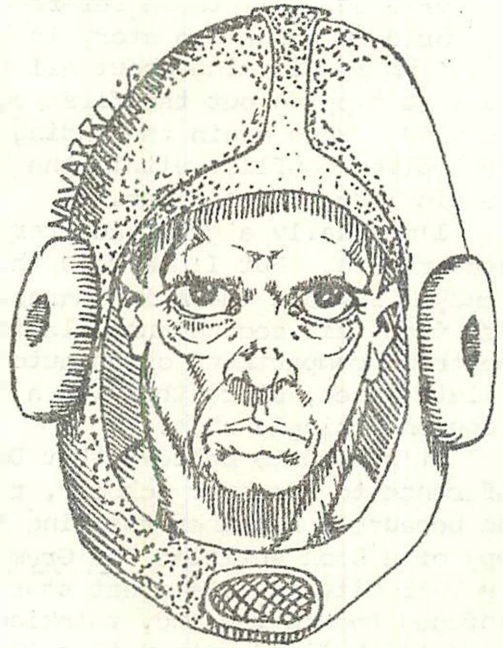
Not more than two or three weeks later than promised, herewith some comments on the seventh Ash-Wing. Incidentally, your computer broke down during its printout of your mailing list (and that's really a wonderful disguise with which the mechanism makes its symbols look just like penmanship for addressing envelopes) and I received

two copies of this issue. I'll return the duplicate copy in a few days, as soon as I'm pretty sure that you'll already have received this letter. I've heard terrible tales about the things some fanzine editors imagine when I fail to write a loc on their latest issue, as if I wrote locs only to the fanzines I like best, and I refuse to take even the remotest risk of having you suspect that I've rejected this issue. It could happen if you received a copy back from me without explanation. /Cleverly hooked up the computer with the motor section of my brain, works quite nicely with the hand holding the writing instrument and with lines and curves draws out those curious symbols which, Ghu and the Post Awful willing, destins the arrival of said fanzine at specific houses of fen. Wonder if any other editors have managed to do as cleverly. Quite seriously I did experiment with typing labels, and found handwriting them considerably faster./

My lateness will have given other people time to break the news to you about how the fiction has improved in this new Ash-Wing. I share your admiration for Man of Power. It's so seldom that fan fiction produces major characters

with weaknesses and distinctive flaws, and Judith Brownlee's story would be memorable if that were its only virtue. But I like almost everything about it, the pacing and unobtrusive but suitable style, almost total absence of cliches, and the fine ending. A year or two from now, Judith will probably use fewer adjectives in an effort to write better than the average professional writer of sword and sorcery. Even if some of them are superfluous in the story at hand, the same is true of the average professional story. There is a trifle too much preoccupation with Cirdith's hair, or perhaps not enough is made of this constant pounding away at her hair, which could have been turned into a symbol of changing emotions and situations. Anyway, it's an excellent story, far superior to the first professionally published fiction of a half-dozen prolific pros whom I could name but mustn't or Piers Anthony will no longer be able to index me under p for pollyannish.

Jess Stewart confirms what I've always suspected, that there's hardly any fantasy or science fiction, no matter how respected or famous it may be, that can withstand the kind of literary dissection which mundane fiction constantly faces. But does it really matter when the story itself has such power in other respects that we don't notice its flaws until someone points them out, decades after it became widely popular and loved? I doubt that Wells' Time Traveler really would have had all those adventures if the author had stuck properly to the probably behavior of such a scientist and theorist, who would undoubtedly have ventured into the future with the utmost caution and copious note-taking and scientific method, but Wells wrote a splendid story despite the irrational behavior of this character. Or another way to look at Dracula would be to consider it a prophetic fore-runner of today's television drama, which becomes impossible to watch if you try to analyze it as you watch it and start to wonder why the villain didn't kill the heroine as soon as he got her into his power instead of holding her prisoner and why the hero went to her rescue alone instead of taking along plenty of helpers and how there is always some place to park, no matter how many times the characters in the drama drive up to a building.



Hookhand's only real fault is its length. I think that cutting one-fourth of its wordage would make a much stronger story, one that would hold the attention better. Otherwise, I admire the novel way in which one of the oldest initial situations is developed. All those references to proper names and geography and traditions of the world in which the story is laid sound quite convincing, as if the author really were firm in his mind about all the little details of this imaginary environment, not just tapping out the first odd-looking name and unconnected mention that come to his mind. Here again the ending is good, both the general concluding section with the implied conflict within the hero over his need to cope with the disability and the final two lines alone.

I'm usually a great admirer of Darrell Schweitzer's rapid progress toward first-rate writing. But I'm afraid that this is a slight setback. The story lacks coherence. Why did the main character come back from the dead and why won't he come back from this second annihilation? If he can't hold a pencil, how can he get into the trunk compartment of an auto? Why did the assassination plot fail when the first bullet missed, since this was a careful plot which would certainly not risk everything on a single shot?

It's hard to believe that Doug Robillard is only 13 (and I'm also amazed at his reference to "grammar school", a term which I thought had gone out of use an eternity ago because I remember thinking it odd when I was a small boy and found somewhere a copy of a book entitled The Grammar School Boys in the Woods or something similar). Our Fair City isn't a great story but it's one that shows very great promise. I got confused toward the end, thinking that John Smith would turn out to be a robot, but now I think I understand that the entity "would manufacture another John Smith when it had the time" means that the mechanism is gradually phasing out humans for substitute robots which can't have those disturbing thoughts.

The book reviews should prove useful about two years from now when I get around to the current crop of books. Just last week the AAUW had a used book sale here and I bought about 75 hardcovers and paperbacks which constitute most of the important titles I needed from the past two or three years, so I should be ready for the present after I get finished reading these. And there isn't room to say all the nice things that should be said about the art. I'm still not convinced that electronic stencilling is the best answer for sketches consisting mainly of lines, but most of the sketches in this issue are unthinkable as hand-stenciled illustrations because of their shading or solid black demands. I particularly liked the illustrations for Man of Power. The two portraits reminded me of Cartier in the old Unknown - Unknown Worlds. The back cover tickled me immensely. It gives the strangest impression of being a pencil sketch because of the combination of style and the not-quite-jetblack reproduction, and I keep wondering if a pencil eraser would rub out the lines. One crazy thing about the electro-stenciler is that if a page is folded, as Marks was, it is sensitive enough to pick up the folds. It will also pick up the edges of the paper, but you can always use corflu on those to mask them out. But if they appear in the illo itself, it's pretty hard to do. I also enjoyed Mark's illo; it showed a delightful sense of humor, and a nice touch with the little owl looking on to the viewer. Some bright new stars in Navarro and Frolich last time also, although I sure don't want to slight the steady old-timers who have contributed so much to the growth of Ash-Wing; Osterman, Dogramajian, McLeod, REG. It was nice to have Tim Kline here for the first time also./

Roy Tackett, 915 Green Valley Road N.W., Albuquerque, NM 87107

Denton, the Celt, eh? OK Hi, Frank. Thanks for sending the last couple-two-three-four Ash-Wings my way. I read them and found them enjoyable even if I haven't commented before now. My own peculiar preference says you run a bit heavy on fiction but you're the editor, man. /Yes, now just round me up a few more persons capable of writing good critical articles and I'll be glad to change the emphasis./

#7 was quite good. Judith's story was particularly enjoyable although I noted a couple of construction flaws - I've written to her on that - and certainly needs to be expanded to a full length novel. Judith should be able to sell this one.



Darrell Schweitzer deserves congratulations for successfully managing the difficult task of a second-person story. It is a form that most writers understandably stay away from but Schweitzer handled it quite well. /Fools rush in; now if Darrell can only learn to manage the difficult task of a second-story person./

Doug Robillard's tale is a bit rough around the edges and the theme is familiar but he shows a lot of promise. He's only 13? Astounding! With a bit more experience I think he'll come right along as a writer. I'm going to look forward to more of his work. /Hope you like Doug's contribution this time./

As for Jeff May's "Hookhand" (sigh) the less said about that the better. /Now that ain't fair, HORT. You got to help along. What is wrong with it. I'm already convinced that you don't like s&s anyway./

The, ah, poetry is on a par with the overwhelming bulk of fan-written poetry which is to say that it is terrible. Liz Fishman did manage seven good lines before her effort disintegrated, which is more than most fan poets can manage. /Just wait until I lay a little s&s poetry on you someday./

The reviews were mixed. At best they can be described as adequate although none did more than give me an idea of what the book discussed was about. Ol' Swampy's was the best of the lot. Jack West's was the funniest although the humor is unintentional.

Well, no, Frank, I won't quarrel with you when you say that Lin Carter isn't our best s&s (or anything else for that matter) writer. You say that he sometimes writes a darn good yarn. Name one. /Now dang it, Roy, get out of here. If you're going to be that way, you can't even stick around. And I won't advertize your dang Bubonicon. And I'll just have to look you up at Westercon and challenge you to a duel with eighth-staffs, oops, I mean quarter-staffs. Carter's Outworlder was a pretty fair yarn. It kept me awake a lot longer than some of the other stuff I've been trying to read lately. Tackett will review books for the next issue of Ash-Wing' be ready, folks./

Ken Scher, 3119 Mott Avenue, Far Rockaway, NY 11691

As usual, Ash-Wing #7 is great. Judith Brownlee surprised me with "Man of Power". We're in a rr and when she mentioned parts of her story (mainly the characters names), I criticized her on the lack of originality. This story is highly original though...most heroines in s&s tales are either bitches (like Lur in Merritt's Dwellers in the Mirage, though, strictly speaking, she's not the heroine) amazons (like Jirel of Joiry) or nit-wits like most of Conan's girls. You almost never see young witches, and when you do, it's generally in a comedy setting (like Anita). Cirdith, though, is believably human in personality, and is in a good adventure setting without becoming highly categorized. I'm looking forward to future stories in this series. /Don't know if there will be any future Cirdith adventures, as Judith is thinking of extending the character into a novel./

Dracula's Coffin was a bit tiresome...too scholarly and dry. It's also incomplete regarding the history of the real Dracula. Vlad IV was prince of Walachia, which is not Transylvania, but the next principedom over to the east. The title "Dracula" indicates that he was a member of the Order of the Dragon, which was founded, I believe, in 1418 to protect the Roman Catholic Church from the expanding power of the Ottoman Empire. Vlad was, in today's terms, an S.O.B. His nickname was 'the impaler', because he once had 4000 captured Turkish troops impaled (a very painful way to go). He also seems to have originated the practice of nailing turbans to peoples' heads, when some Turkish ambassadors refused to remove their turbans and appear before him bare-headed. The Turks almost immediately adopted both practices and when he heard of the impalement of his 4000 captured troops, the Ottoman emperor is said to have exclaimed admiringly: "how do you depose a prince like that!", but depose him the Turks did, though not permanently in the mid-15th Century.

"Hookhand" is also good, but May overindulges in the practice of giving things new names, which distracts from the story. Also, after the opening scenes, we never hear of Alenka again. Since hero-types seem to be the ones she goes for, I would think she'd be more interested than ever before.

"Beyond the Call of Duty" is pretty good, but it too has the large flaw of not



explaining how the corpse managed to stay animate, and it fails to explain why he only came to in the coffin. If he had done so any earlier, he could have simply gotten up (causing heart failure right and left) out of his coffin and walked away.

"Our Fair City" - same problem. If all the people are robots or androids (as appears to be the case), then all the fooling around with the phoney newspaper and food is meaningless. It also makes more sense for the body to be reclaimed for its component minerals and such than to be allowed to go to waste outside. Also a glass dome does not keep out radiation, so if the radiation will kill the city inhabitants, they should all be dead anyway.

I'm very fond of the characters in Anita. For one thing, anyone who takes Sturgeon's story, "Cargo", as history isn't too different to comprehend, and for another, any witch who speaks reverently about meeting Ray Bradbury is almost a fan. As for West's review of Behind the Walls of Terra, why, at this late date, should it be necessary for Farmer to prove that he can write good books without sex...he was doing it for years before he started writing what most reviews that I saw considered bad books with it. I've been meaning to read Outworlder for months...now I'm interested more than ever.

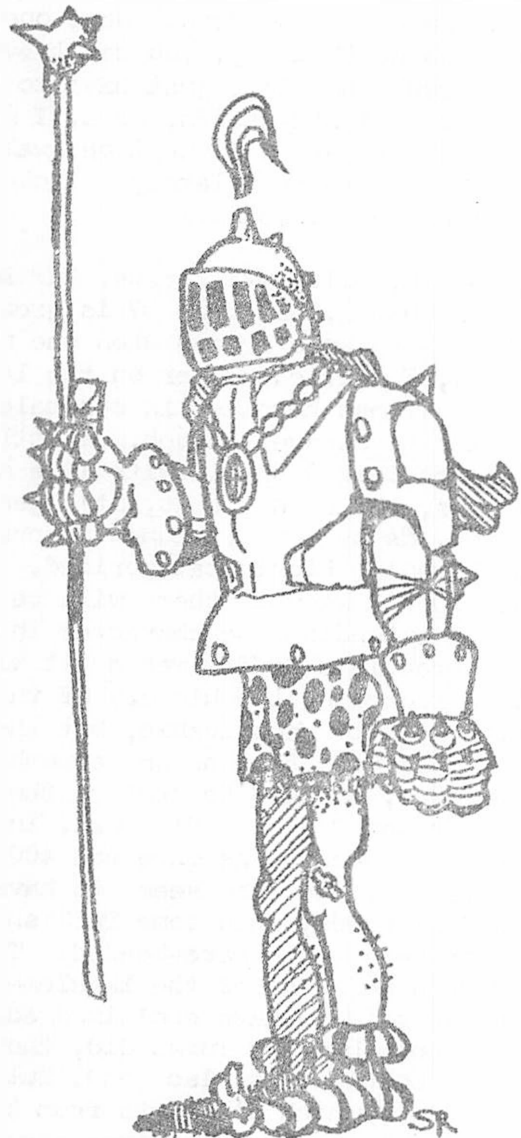
SCHWEITZER: I agree that "Child" could have been done as a mainstream story, but I've seen that sort of thing several times, and no matter how the story is written, the adult female always comes out as a sickie, even when the story is written sympathetically. I have been wondering what happens when they both get to 50 or so, and they both show signs of age. It then appears that she is living with a midget, an image which I find rather pathetic and slightly grotesque, despite the fact that that is, in effect, what she's doing.

Darrell obviously isn't as familiar with the Hyborian Era as he thinks. Armor depicted in the Conan sagas was actually used over a period of about 2000 years, from the panoply of the Greek hoplite (500 B.C.), up to and including the full armor of the 15th Century, which certainly includes the period of the SCA. I would think, however, that he would destroy an SCA sword and break somebody's arm with each stroke considering the difference between what SCA equipment and what he's used to.

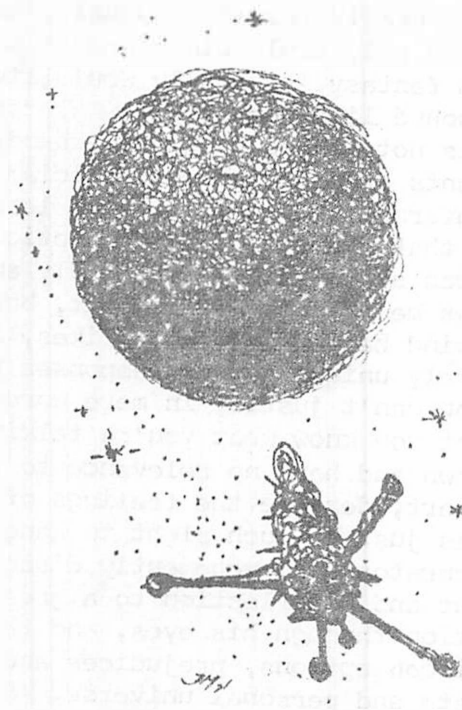
HARRY WARNER: Fandom won't bite back at ideas that it disagrees with? Since when? There's always someone who's willing to bite back at anything (Scher's Law)

NED BROOKS: How do you know what I consider the last few years? And even if you were right originally, it's been reprinted at least twice since 1951 (including the current pb), and it is still superior to a great deal of what is currently coming out.

I'm quite disappointed with the quality of the artwork thish. Bethuen's illos came out very muddy, and Dogramajian's stuff was nearly as bad. On the other hand, McLeod, Navarro and Kirk were very good. Schweitzer should stick to writing. I don't like Gilbert's style anyway, and I



quickly tire of Osterman, so I won't say anything about them, but that back cover is a disgrace...it's downright cruddy...though the owl in the lower right is quite good. /It's amazing and amusing how what hits one person right, whether it's writing or art, hits another person wrong. Ken, you don't like the back cover and other people did. All of which makes an editors job easier. No matter what he does, someone is not going to like it. I suppose one ought to strive for an issue where everyone likes everything. Ha!/  
Mad John Hastings, 793 Parklin Ave., Sacramento, CA 95831



With this letter, I hereby announce the re-emergence of John Hastings into the world of the fan, an event that will, no doubt, have absolutely no effect on the pillars of fandom. I give credit to your fanzine for the inspiration I needed during my dormant period, all of which reminds me that I have received 4 issues without so much as a farthing or a ruble on my part in remittance. Let me assure you this gross oversight shall be assuaged upon receipt of my next pitiful pittance of a paycheck. But enough of this, let me get to the gist.

About your magazine. To begin at the the beginning (as fit a place as any) I find the artist, Jim McLeod, lives but a stones throw from my own humble abode in Sacramento. I will get in touch with him if I can find his phone number; if not, perhaps he will get in touch with me when he sees this, assuming of course, this rambling potpourri of stray notions and half-baked ideas ever sees the light of print. As I was aying, I found the cover to be striking and very original, his unique pen technique in particular, and, may I say, only an omen of things to come.

The Free Commots section I liked because it gave me an insight into the person who put the zine together. I believe this to be important because it gives what is nothing more than a series of selected writings by a group of individual authors a sense of continuity. It melds the parts into a more enjoyable whole. I thought that Miss Brownlee's story showed a great deal of professionalism and polish in imagery, characterization and plot development, not to mention dialogue. The scenes and events described were easily pictured in my mind, and the tale held me spellbound from start to finish. Cirdith appealed to me immensely because, in spite of her formidable powers, she was human, prone to all the foibles and irregularities of our beloved species. Combined with which, she was one hundred per cent woman, unsteretyped. The one rough spot in the story was the ransition from the other-place of Cirdith and Lhark's meeting to where she is again standing on, I assume, the battle plain. This story has the potential to initiate anything from a novelette to an entire series of novels, or, what the hell, the whole gamut.

I found the rhymes in "Martian Lullaby" (and the rythym) to be rather simple, and, frankly monotonous in the moon, June, croon vein. It was a lot more entertaining than a lot of poems I've read in some of those three dollar paperbacks, though. Keep working on it, M.L.

Jess Stewart's "Dracula" article was informative, but a little at loose ends.

I'm still not sure of the point or points he was trying to make.

Second Creation was very moving. It had a real sense of flow and quiet peace which contrasted well with the jarring scenes of chaos and conflict in the stanzas dealing with the initial Creation and the armageddon. The end was perfect and, for a change, optimistic.

The description and plot development in Hookhand were quite good, but I found the characterization somewhat lacking. For instance, it seemed to me that the hero, Vladmir, was lurking in the shadows unseen, unheard, until his brobdinagian battle with the cursed demon. Zoros and Tsistor, the innkeeper and sorcerer, were closer to three-dimensional characters than the protagonist, who, of necessity, should be the most vivid. This should be relatively easy for Jeffrey to patch up, and with a little more polish on the story as a whole, it should be real first class.

Beyond the Call of Duty: I have not read any other examples of Darrell Schweitzer's writings, but if the one in Ash-Wing 7 is exemplary of his style, I doubt if I will take the trouble to. He seemed to take a great deal of relish in describing the composition of secret agent Fish, parts of which nearly turned my usually iron gut. These pictures of decay and corruption were the only truly clear scenes in what was, for the most part, a dull, muddy, and childish fantasy. I really would like to offer something positive to Darrell, so as not to sound like some kind of overstuffed pedagogue, looking with contempt on anything that is not penned by his own hand, but, in all honesty, I can't. I would welcome any comments from him on my criticism.

The book reviews were both entertaining and informative and written at least with some degree of careful thought, a combination that seems to be an exception and not a rule in some other zines I've read. As you can see I have given hardly any space to the art work, not because it didn't impress me or I didn't like it, but art is a personal thing. Each individual, in his own mind has a formula of likes, dislikes and opinions all of which add up to a completely unique set of responses to art. No two are quite the same. It's something you can't justify in mere words, although you can fool most people into thinking that you know what you're talking about. My responses to the art in your mag are my own and have no relevance to yours or any other's response, and vice versa, and it is art, despite the feelings of some so-called critics. Darrell Schweitzer's drawing has just as much right to hang in the Louvre as the Mona Lisa although I'm sure the curator will vehemently disagree with me. His drawing is a unique personal statement and a reflection to a greater or lesser degree of his life. It is an interpretation through his eyes, and thereby through the storehouse of experiences, ideas, misconceptions, prejudices and emotions that is his soul-mind-heart, of his own private and personal universe. So much for long-winded editorializing.

Let me tell you about fandom in Sacramento. I know of only three other people in this area, besides myself, who are sufficiently interested in science fiction or fantasy to qualify as fans. Only one of these is a personal acquaintance. I know there's more somewhere out there so I'm initiating a campaign to bring them together, and open, to them, the doors of fandom. It could, potentially, be quite a large group. In the Sacramento area there is 1 university, 3 junior colleges, and a state college all of which are prime sources for enthusiastic fans. All it needs is a unifying force, me! /You have your work cut out for you. All it takes is a 25-hr. day and lots of wheat germ oil; the latter for energy./

Besides this endeavor, I'm also working out the technical details of a new zine entitled CAVE OF THE SUN. I'd appreciate it if you would mention it to your contributors that I'm open, nay, starving for material. /Great Ghu, Mad John, you've opened the floodgates. Darrell Schweitzer will swoop through, grasp you in his talons, and carry you off to the Mountains of Madness. We should have quietly gone about writing to various fan writers, but never announced it aloud. What's more, you're sure to receive in the mail the fabled PROCRASTINATION. Oh, woe!!! Hi Darrell./

.....Then there was the one about the demented android.....

Darrell Schweitzer, 113 Deepdale Rd., Strafford, PA 19087

During the season of the Later Grungle  
At the rising of the greater Xyoiulta  
As the Black Birds of Fruiltic  
Merrily bombard us with - -

Hear ye, hear ye:

This is another installment of my plot to take over Ash-Wing with sheer wordery. I hope this isn't too late, and if it is I shall have to utilize the principle of Reverse Time Mailing so that you'll receive this letter about a month ago. Got that?

I have been examining fanfic very closely lately, and I've found a certain flaw in most of it, that is especially evident in some of the things in this issue - linguistic carelessness. Few fanfic writers seem to realize that since they're working entirely with words, their use of words can be rather important to the success or failure of the story. It's like building a house of cards - one wrong card and you've blown the whole thing. (Sam Delany had an essay on this in SFR a couple of years ago which should be required reading for all aspiring literary giants.) Delany pointed out an example of how Ace once typoed a single sentence in one of his books and the story never recovered from it for another 40,000 words. One word can make or break you, people.....

Now Delany pointed out that a reader, in reading a story, expends a certain amount of mental "energy" in getting into the story, in visualizing the situation, empathizing with the characters, etc. Now being by nature lazy, the reader is going to want to do as little mental "work" as necessary. Therefore anything which in any way hampers the reader's immediate appreciation of what the story is about is bad. (You may violate this rule and deliberately confuse the reader - but you had better have a damn good reason. Fred Pohl once reduced it all to an equation:

Quality = Reward      A difficult work must be more rewarding. Also any deficiency in data that would help the reader understand what's going on is bad.

A perfect example of this (deficient data and linguistic sloppiness) is Jeffrey May's "Hookhand". The two flaws are very much intertwined in this case. He makes a very poor choice of names - Ivann, Vladimir and Arld are obviously corruptions of Ivan, Vladimir and Arnold. The first two are very common Eastern European names, especially Russian. Now by all indication in the first few paragraphs, the story is set in a primitive society. The mention of wizards connotes scientist or someone who has kept knowledge after it has been lost. You see, Jeff's poor choice of names caused me to think that what he had here was an after-the-bomb story set in Russia. We have a primitive society, with great knowledge of the past lost, and corrupted versions of common 20th Century names. /Ah, your mind is too fertile!:/ Therefore I immediately assume that the tale is set in our world, and when I find out that it isn't, my whole conception of the story to this point must be completely revised, thus expending great amounts of mental energy, and destroying any intended cumulative effects. Two names blew the whole opening of the story. Now you know how delicate words are.

What should have been done here, of course, is the characters should have had really alien names, and some immediate indication of setting should be made. Nothing much, maybe our hero could pull back the rich curtains from the land of Ghyuilp or something.. Then we would know at once it was a fantasy world.

Now most authors, even pros, are very sloppy on names. I always try for names that sound different, and not like nonsense syllables. Now I have named countries like Khyuilopiliias, but I realize that I shouldn't. /You are hung up on "uil"/ I always try to avoid names that end with "ar" or "or" because there are too damn many of them. They seem to have come in with Burroughs, and everyone has used them since: Thongor, Jongor, Jahar, Tanar, etc. My own trick is the constant use of the "uil" syllable, which is perhaps a little more original. /Oops, I gave it away early, but if you'll look back up at the top, even you overuse it./

Of course, if you don't want to have your names corruptions of modern ones - don't. Anything set in an imaginary world shouldn't have names derived from our own. (Howard was very sloppy in this department: Iranistan, Corinthia, etc.) Those stories set on a future Earth where the names would have become slurred, need such cities as

as Nyark and Delphia, but your average sword and sorcery world does not.

We seem to be off the track here and drowning in linguistics. Actually, Hookhand is one of the better things in this issue, though it does have a serious structural flaw in that it fails to integrate all parts of the plot. Now I see great possibilities in the fact that a caravan from a far land has arrived the same time the demon has, but as Jeff uses it the whole thing seems like a sort of deus ex machina that's there from the beginning. The result is that the people who create the problem that is the plot don't solve it.

There is too much shifting of viewpoints in this story. The result is that there is no overall protagonist to hold it together. First we have Vladimir. Something happens. OK, we think he is the hero of the story - then

he just vanishes, and the plot is tossed on like a hot potato to the wizard, who does a little bit, passes it to Zorosz briefly and then back to Vladimir. The result is that there is no real plot development in the story because the plot doesn't hold still long enough. The same person does not carry forth the plot in the beginning, the middle and the end. I suppose that would be OK if they interacted in a more coherent fashion, but they don't. There is no protagonist of this story and no real plot - there are just characters and the storyline stumbles along of its own accord. Needless to say, it is not very involving, with the exception of a few well done sequences, such as the conjurings. /By Crom, I hope you haven't completely scared Jeff off. I'd like him to write something else for me someday. Some of your criticism is valid, and in agreement with what some others have said. Usually I try to edit letters down to a manageable size and yours goes on for four pages this time. But you have spent a lot of time considering the makeup of the various stories.//I'm skipping your commentary on "Man of Power" because it violates one of my principles: I considered it more destructive than constructive. I suspect that it really violates one of your principles, too. Besides, most other criticism received liked Judith's story./

Yes, Doug Robillard writes quite well for a 13-year old. There is really nothing technically wrong with his story, the only problem is that once I got a couple of hundred words into the thing I realized that I'd already read this one dozens of times before. Only usually the hero finds a bunch of primitives outside the city who are really leading a Better and More Meaningful Existence. The last one I can think of like that was "In the Shield" by Arthur Sellings, in the January '68 F&SF. /So!!! If you have saved your early stories, take a look at them and see if they haven't also been done before. There isn't much that hasn't been done before, even among the pros, so that's no real criticism. So Doug has a lot of company. The main thing here is that he is putting words to paper in meaningful sentences to tell a story. At his age, he shouldn't worry too much as to whether the story has been told before and better./



Very good article on Dr.acula. But Jess should consider that at the time the book was written all popular literature was aimed at effect only (who cares why the villain tied the heroine to the railroad tracks - just so the hero can save her at the last minute) and Stoker was only interested in melodrama rather than a careful plot. The atmosphere is so overwhelming that no one notices little inconsistencies.

And many of them aren't really inconsistencies. Dracula himself, after all, is not infallible. He can make many mistakes. It would seem that he was a little careless because he was overeager - and he went to meet Harker because he was so important and he couldn't trust anyone else not to mess his only chance at England.

Also it is more dramatic to have Jonathan wait apprehensively outside the castle, and for all those other things to happen.

Well, maybe the original Dracula could come out in daylight, but I think that it would be better if he couldn't. The creature of darkness concept is much better than the Stoker original. For story purposes, a vampire should be subject to the dawn to dusk curfew, and be able to change form at any time. Also the most impressive thing about vampirism is this guy who comes out of his coffin every night - and if he can survive in daylight he doesn't have to and most of your effect is lost.

By the way, your precocious Doug Robillard has written the latest installment of the Simor Tibor Van Smidley #12 the 5th story cycle. His installment of the CRAS round robin (Ch. 3,470) will be in my next issue of PROCRASTINATION.

Edward P. Berglund, Apt. 305, 3916 Regency Parkway, Suitland, MD 20023

Liked the book reviews, but have to say that I like your "The Free Commots" better. Like you said, there are all too few fanzine editors that tell their readership anything about the contributors. This has been one of my wishes to see in a fanzine, and I recently became Assistant Editor for Fiction for NYCTALOPS, edited and published by Harry O. Morris, Jr., 500 Wellesley S.E., Albuquerque, NM 87106, a quarterly publication devoted to H.P. Lovecraft and other Arkham House authors. I definitely want to include something about the contributors of the fiction, which is Cthulhu Mythos stories and poetry only.

If you should know of anyone out there in the Pacific Northwest that writes Cthulhu Mythos stories, tell them that I would appreciate them for possible acceptance for publication in NYCTALOPS. Harry and I are also looking for any Cthulhu Mythos stories, poetry, essays, what-have-you that have appeared in fanzines for possible reprinting in a one-shot, or in a regular issue of the magazine.

It has been almost a year since I mentioned the fact that I was writing a Morgan Smith story with Robert Weinberg, called "The Dark Stairway". I hope you didn't miss it, as it appeared in Morgan Smith #5 around the first of the year. I had also mentioned the fact that I had a sword and sorcery tale that I was working on entitled "The Land of Darkness". Sorry to say, but this story still hasn't been gotten around to, but if and when I do, I will keep Ash-Wing in mind. (Well, there it is, folks, a promise in print. Now Ed will have to produce that story.)

Well, that wraps it up for this time. Wish I had time to write a half-way decent loc, but I have been studying the Korean language the last 32 weeks. Take care.





