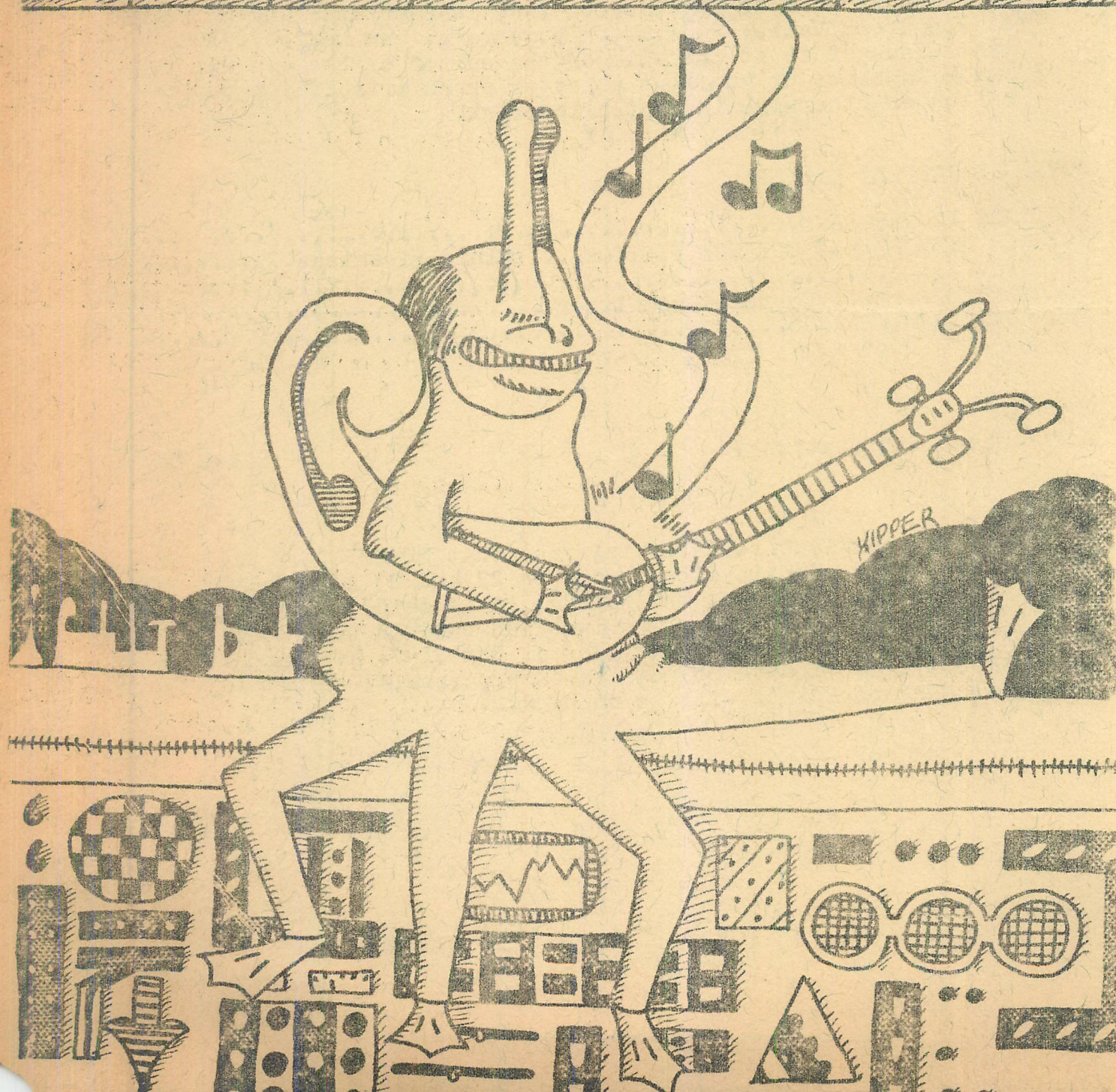


DYNATRON



In a recent letter DAVE PIPER confessed that a great light had finally dawned on him. He had, he said, always thought of DYNATRON as a personalzine but suddenly realized that it isn't--that DYNATRON is a science fiction fanzine. Indeed. It always has been. What I would like for DYNATRON to be is a SCIENCE fiction fanzine. D. Bisenieks' article in this issue is something to build on. Admitted that the science in most SF these days is hard to find and fans who will--or can--write about it are seemingly equally scarce. But if you feel in the mood to write about the science--or lack of science--in various science fiction stories, send it along. I will happily print it. Quite frankly, all of these reams of crap about the literary aspects of science fiction bore me to tears.

Yes, this is a science fiction fanzine entitled DYNATRON and this is the 62nd issue. DYNATRON is published at odd intervals by Roy Tackett (who is sometimes odd himself) at 915 Green Valley Road NW, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87107, USA. You get it at the whim of the editor or because we trade fanzines or you sent a letter or an article for publication or otherwise indicated interest.

COVER BY JEFFREY KIPPER

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A Marinated Publication

dated May 1975

I am more or less reliably informed that BUBONICON 7 will be held at the Ramada Inn in Albuquerque on 22 and 23 August 1975. Membership is \$4.00. Rates at the Ramada, it is said, will be \$13 for a single and \$15 for a double. The luncheon/banquet will cost \$4. For full details write to Mike Kring, PSC #1 Box 3147, Kirtland AFB East, New Mexico 87115. I have no details on programming as yet but I guess the usual gang of idiots will be on hand.

WRITINGS IN THE SAND

I have become a convert to a new philosophy of life. Yes. This new concept was discovered by the Mahaswami Jesus Mung Harris of Pocataligo, South Carolina. It hit him like a quart of white lightning. As a matter of fact, that's where he got his inspiration: out of a quart of white lightning. The idea is that Om (as Kimball Kinnison used to say) QX. Obviously. Just as obviously you are not QX. If you were--well, why are you reading this? There must be something wrong with you. But Om QX.

Yes.

This philosophy is known as Transcendental Analysis. Or was that Transactional Meditation? Transpositional Decimals? Transcontinental Bus? And leave the driving to us? A Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah!?

Come now, this is serious stuff. Remember the basic basic (are we back with Dianetics?) is that Om QX. But not you.

X

Let us get down to some serious fannish business here. As you may know, and then again, perhaps you may not--one is never sure in these matters; let it be duly noted, however, that if you do not know, you should and I am surely going to inform you if you pay close attention... or even if you dont: the situation with regards to the fan Hugos is becoming intolerable. And that, of course, is not to be stood for in fandom which is noted for its tolerance. (What is fandom's tolerance? Oh, about 0.0003.) Which is why I am sitting down. And besides it is difficult to type standing up. I have this back problem, you see, which makes it difficult for me to bend.

And surely you have seen that the situation with regards to the fan Hugos is becoming intolerable. What I mean is this: let us consider the nominees and winners over the past few years. Did the Hugos go to any of the people we would have picked? The RIGHT people? (And, generally, in fandom the RIGHT people list to the left which is, when you think about it, something you really don't want to think about, particularly if you are a habitué of the American Opinion Bookstore; this sort of thinking could leave you mindless which, if you are a habitué of the American Opinion Bookstore, is a redundant statement.) The nominees for best fan writer this past year, for example, turned out to be a couple of Mudd's women. If this sort of thing continues then all fandom will be mud. And if we are no different from the muds then what is the purpose of fandom? What does it all mean? The awards for best fanzine go to zines which are perfect examples of creeping, nay, galloping professionalism. The situation is intolerable. And I have always been tolerant. Or at least I was for about three months back in 48. Sam Tolerant, a planter from Pocataligo, South Carolina.

In order to correct this intolerable situation and insure that we tolerant true science fiction/fantasy literary-type fans who are fans of literary-type science fiction/fantasy (not to be confused with literate science fiction/fantasy or any other kind) are going to have to take ~~two~~ ~~action~~ action, yes, action to insure that the fan awards go to the right fans.

Now, of course, we all know that fandom--our fandom--operates primarily by mail, and with the situation of the U.S. Postal Service becoming intolerable, just as is the situation with the fan Hugos, I decided that there was no time for any of that. So I put the proposition to the latest meeting of the Albuquerque Science Fiction Society. First off, as founder and Secret Master of the Albuquerque Science Fiction Society (and thus, if Buck Coulson can be believed (and if one can't believe Buck Coulson, who can one believe?) the Secret Master of all of fandom) I appointed an AD HOC COMMITTEE to appoint an AD HOC COMMITTEE to consider the situation with regards to the fan Hugos which is, of course, becoming intolerable.

"Gentlefen" I said, "we must form an AD HOC COMMITTEE."

"Hic. Haec. Hoc." said Speer. He is always coming out with that lawyer talk. Dick Patten heard the "Hic" and the "Hoc" and thought we were talking about bock beer. He ordered two bottles and agreed to serve. Pat McCraw immediately hid the bottle opener.

I explained the situation to the committee. "It is," I said, "becoming intolerable. The peers are being left out."

Mike Kring thought we should first decide exactly what a fan is.

"A fan," said Vardeman, "is someone who can attend a four day room party without collapsing."

"Peerless," Harry Morris put in.

"No, No, Harry," I said, "we are trying to determine who are the fannish peers."

Vardebob mentioned a brunette he met at a Westercon who had a fannish pair. This led to some digression. "Order, Order," called Speer. "Two more bocks," Patten called.

"Now, gentlefen," I said, "what is a fanzine?" Kring went for a cup of tea. "It is," said Speer, "the repository of all the world's knowledge." Or maybe it was Bloch who said that. (He wasn't at the meeting.) I tend to forget things in my old age. Fanzines, we agreed, must be kept pure. There should be no creeping professionalism. Vardeman declared that after the third night of the room party some pros were barely able to creep. We agreed that pro's should be left out (and in many of today's fanzines, it is.) The awards should not go to anybody who is a pro. Or has material by a pro in hiser fanzine. Or buys a pro a drink. Or takes a pro.

The AD HOC COMMITTEE decided that what was really needed to correct the intolerable situation was a fannish award to be awarded to fans by their fannish peers. What would be suitably fannish? Remember the swimming pool full of lime Jello? Right. The award should be a plate of lime Jello. How, then, will these fannish awards be called? After Vardeman's favorite science fiction movie, of course: Green Slime.

The AD HOC COMMITTEE then appointed another AD HOC COMMITTEE to fairly, fannishly, and unbiasedly pick this years recipients of the Green Slime Awards. The AD HOC SELECTION COMMITTEE met in secret, secretly nominated secret nominees and secretly voted in secret all while blindfolded and announced their decision. Which I don't have room for on this page.

Pay attention now, we're getting to the important part. The 1975 Green Slime awards are as follows:

Best apazine: Jack Speer's SYNAPSE.
Best damn fantasy/weird fmz you ever saw: Harry Morris's NYCTALOPS.
Best combined fanzine: Vardeman and Patten's ZYMUWORM.
Best clubzine: Mike Kring's CHAKOBSKA.
Best greenzine: Roytac's DYNATRON.

None of these publications are available at your AMERICAN OPINION BOOKSTORE.

I trust that this has tolerably well taken care of an intolerable situation.

The awards will be informally handed out at the next Bubonicon.

Vardebob is currently doing research on the most fannish pair for his next book.

AND THEN I READ: Blame this on Donn Brazier who, in a recent issue of his fanzine TITLE (a focal point fanzine) listed his current reading. So you can blame Donn for the following boring listing of the books I read in January and February of this year.

FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND by Brian Aldiss. Well, for two reasons. First because most of us older fen are hooked on Mary Shelley's tale and second because I was intrigued by that ghod-awful turgid essay in Dave Gorman's fmz; I wanted to see if I could figure out what all that unintelligible verbiage pertained to. The author of that essay, whose name, fortunately, I forget, should have read MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN...Tracing The Myth by Christopher Small which is an excellent investigation of the theme.

MASH GOES TO NEW ORLEANS and MASH GOES TO PARIS by Hooker and Butterworth are a couple of light entertainments written, I suppose, mostly to cash in on the popularity of the TV series. Be it noted that these follow Hooker's earlier books on MASH and are only distantly related to the small screen series. That's a point in favor of the books.

ANIMALS WITH HUMAN FACES by Beryl Rowland. Animal symbolism.

THE POTATO PEELERS by George Zuckerman

NO SURRENDER by Hiroo Onada. Lt Onada fought the Pacific War for 30 years. A fascinating study. Recommended.

FDR'S LAST YEAR by Jim Bishop

THE MIDDLE EAST - A SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY by S. H. Longrigg.

THE HORIZON BOOK OF LOST WORLDS.

THE LAST DOGFIGHT by Martin Caidin. The Japanese commander in this WWII story is excellently portrayed. The rest isn't much.

WEREWOLVES AND OTHER MONSTERS by T. G. Aylesworth. Rather shallow.

THE ROMANOV SUCCESSION by Brian Garfield

DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP by Willa Cather. New Mexico in the days just after the American conquest. Based on fact. Good story.

IN SEARCH OF ANCIENT GODS by von Danniken. Von D's latest garbage. Profusely illustrated with photos that "prove his thesis." They don't.

THE WHEELS OF IF by L. Sprague de Camp

THE FIRST HORSEMEN by F. Trippett. Mostly about the Scythians who were not the first horsemen by a thousand years.

ICE AND IRON by Wilson Tucker

THE AMERICAN PAST by Roger Butterfield.

AMERICAN MANNERS AND MORALS - Heritage

PRINCE ELMO'S FIRE by Ernest Lockridge (Hi, Buck)

ALAS, BABYLON by Pat Frank. The Bantam Pathfinder edition noted for having as many typos as the average fanzine.

THE RAMAPO MOUNTAIN PEOPLE by David Cohen. A study of the "Jackson Whites".

HIROSHIMA, NAGASAKI, ALAMAGORDO, BIKINI.....

Chrystal has been going through the phonograph records transcribing the older ones to tape. The old records have been played over and over and taping them seems to clear up a good deal of the surface noise.

"Do you want to keep this?" she asked, holding up a cracked 78.

"What is it?"

"Old Man Atom."

And the floodgates of memory open.

"Old Man Atom" was recorded by the Sons of the Pioneers around 1949. The music wasn't much and the lyrics were done in a talking-blues style. The chorus consisted of the four words that head this item. On the face of it (or perhaps that should be on the back since "Old Man Atom" was the reverse side of a conventional country religious song that informed us that "What this country needs more than anything else is a good old-fashioned talk with the Lord") the record should have reached a speedy oblivion but it became a best seller, the object of considerable controversy and was unofficially banned from radio. It was an anti-bomb song.

Picture the times. The Russians had just, or were on the point of, setting off their first atomic bomb. They were also making noises about banning the bomb. The House Committee on Un-American Activities was stomping across the land hunting for the dirty spies who sold our secrets to the Communists. (The young Congressman from California, Richard M. Nixon, was a member of that committee.) The Cold War was raging; the Berlin airlift had just ended. Vast numbers of Americans were convinced there was a Red under every bed.

And there was the Stockholm Peace Petition which called for banning atomic weapons. This petition was being circulated around the country in an effort to get millions of signatures demanding the outlawing of the A-bomb. The HCUA said it was Communist inspired. Anyone who signed it was, at least, a fellow-traveller.

Your unhumble editor was a hard-charging young Marine stationed at San Francisco at the time and was something of a radical and a constant source of shock to his fellow Leathernecks. While the rest of the outfit was drinking beer and telling whoary old war stories to the whores in the Tenderloin, Tackett was drinking dago red and arguing politics and science fiction with the beatniks in North Beach. Tackett had signed the Stockholm Peace Petition. We're not sure about you, Tackett. Good, as long as you're not sure of me, that gives me an edge....

And then came the Sons of the Pioneers with "Old Man Atom." It was played on the air. It was taken off the air. It was played clandestinely at parties. Record stores wouldn't carry it. You could get a copy by paying a premium. Go in and ask for "What This Country Needs." What are you, some kind of a radical? Because I want a religious song? Gad, what a tempest.

Of course we transcribed it to tape. Complete with the thump of the stylus going over the crack. "Old Man Atom." One of the pieces of my youth.

SCIENCE HISTORY AND SCIENCE FICTION

by

DAINIS BISENIEKS

Science fiction of course does not predict the future. Not much of it even pretends to show us probabilities, and fantasy is the best word for the writings of Farmer, Lafferty, Zelazny--to name only a few. Their heroes do battle against a world of elemental powers. But others do set many of their stories in worlds of history. We may justly expect motive, logic and consistency not only in the events of the story, but in all its explicit and implicit background. If, to cite a certain wiseman, a writer imagines automobiles and foresees parking problems, income tax--and expense accounts--then he is thinking historically. No such pat formula can express the reasoning that gave Heinlein the prophet Nehemiah Scudder. Over thirty years have passed since he appeared in the Future History, and I look around and have the uneasy feeling that Scudder is alive today. I don't know if he comes from India or from Korea, but he is there. I will credit Heinlein and Asimov and Anderson and a number of others with historical thinking.

But since a story is not a lecture, what does fiction inform the reader with? Its role seems to be giving form to and confirming myths, and a myth is never accurate enough. By myth I don't mean a falsehood, but a pattern fitted to the world, a declaration of the shape of men's powers and the powers they work with or against. Some myths are pernicious: the myth of anomie, so powerful in the novels of Hemingway, or its corollary, the myth of the powers of gun and fist. They deny the powers of will and understanding. Against them I would set the great myths of acceptance and integration, like Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, so rich in history. Of course the chronicles of the Second and Third Ages, and the events alluded to in the story, are not yet history. No Gibbon has told of the decline and fall of the kingdom of Gondor or the causes of the Kin-strife. Think of how much more Gibbon would have to know--and of the myriad small but important details which unsophisticated societies never record or which are lost with time, to the frustration of all Gibbons. But of course such a story can stimulate the desire for real history.

I believe that modern fiction ("mainstream") has entirely failed to illuminate the modern period and the relationships of material culture, organizational forms of society, and people's beliefs about them which influence their lives. In the modern novel, as far as I can tell, these beliefs are the principal reality. It is unintellectual and anti-scientific. After I deal with that genre I would like to describe some reading which I have found interesting, exciting, and, I hope, enlightening. A great deal of it offers possibilities for science fiction which I have not seen much exploited. But I have my doubts about what can be put into fiction without spoiling it. Some science fiction already suffers from too much exposition interrupting and slowing down the story. The dilemma may be inescapable--some of the background must

he made explicit, but the story must not suffer. I recall what pains Fletcher Pratt took in Preble's Boys to explain how Americans of 1812 differed from us. The people of 2112 will be no less different, as foreigners already are different; but you'd never guess it from reading the ordinary adventure story of today.

You may wonder how I'm going to write about modern novels when I haven't read all that many of them. But there is something to be said for reading criticism. It has guided me to some good books and informed me about bad ones in equally convincing terms. If a critic describes Philip Roth's My Life as a Man as "solipsistic" he has told me enough. The word speaks volumes to me; I do not see how it could be applied completely without justice. I have no use for books which could be justly titled So-and-so's Complaint or Whatsisname's Excuse. As a science fiction fan and amateur of science, I am interested in relationships, in causes and effects, in ways to make something work. Show me a work with largeness of spirit or of action, and I will look at it.

Meanwhile, solipsism will not do. Society is, from one aspect, a system in which information flows and is here and there distorted or extinguished. There are effects of positive or negative feedback allowing its members to come to harm or to fail in taking effective action. An example: a man in apparent trouble is less likely to be helped if there are more people around. The feeling that nothing need be done is reinforced by the sight of others taking no action. Or there is the "tragedy of the commons", seen for example in the deep-sea fisheries, where more and more effort is expended in competing for a diminishing resource. Take a man who is a victim of many such effects and is a stranger and afraid, etc.: a little man in the grip of vast impersonal forces. If he will deny his will and intelligence, I don't want to read his story. The modern man who has no historical sense interests me not at all. Where in fiction can we find real students or, for that matter, science fiction fans? Jerks and jerk-offs cease to amuse after a while. I'd rather read about people who move people: as leaders, entrepreneurs, teachers, lovers (eros and agape)...and, yes, enemies. A society of two or more is built on trust, and one must work to keep it in being. Failures can be interesting, but the story of a loser must not fudge on the reasons for his failure.

I do, then, read history of various sorts, where reasons are fully dealt with. Some of it is analytical, like the works of Clinton Rossiter, Richard Hofstadter, and Carl L. Becker on American political institutions and on the craft of history itself. In some the narrative framework dominates--Fletcher Pratt on Napoleon's wars or the U. S. Navy; Arthur Bryant on the Napoleonic wars again; C. V. Wedgwood on the Great Rebellion. An interesting thing: all these writers are superb stylists. I find in style evidence of how a mind works--how, in Robert Frost's words, the mind carries itself toward its goal. All these have a keen intelligence and a sense of irony. (A counter-example: the man who can write "He had other fish to fry than to mourn at the bier of Lincoln" has neither. That was Claude Bowers in The Tragic Era.) Another sigh: they cannot resist making pungent remarks about the qualities of mind of historical personages. Fletcher Pratt above all was an intelligent man who valued intelligence. Strange that his fiction was never as good as his histories.

One who has seen the scope of history in works like these will not be satisfied with a novelist who is simplistic or tendentious. I think science fiction writers are tempted to focus on single elements. I have seen a novel in ANALOG in which the key to an alien culture was at the end formulated in a few paragraphs. And of course shorter works almost always end with one discovery, neatly expressed in a few sentences. For a fault in a machine or system of machines there may now and then be a simple cure, but for people and societies? It's a continuing struggle: some neglected factor always causes trouble. People will make a mess of things; you solve one problem and you've got another.

Murphy's law, of course--but like all such "laws" it is a gross oversimplification. I will not use it to speak of human affairs at all, and as for machines...yes, science fiction has often paid tribute to Murphy and Finagle. In many stories, again, the characters get into trouble when a machine breaks down, and their getting out of trouble is the story. In yet other stories, machines simply work perfectly, just as in chase stories on television the good guys can always find a parking space. But between the "trouble" stories and the "no trouble" stories is a middle ground I would like to see filled.

Yes, of course I've heard it said that the ideal machine should have no working parts. And that it should be noiseless--hah! They tried silent vacuum cleandrs and typewriters but people didn't want them. To the ordinary human mind there is something uncanny and very disturbing about a device which gives no sign that it is working. And that a machine should not even look like a machine--that, for me, is in the realm of fantasy. We've got a long, long way to go before we get rid of machines that act pretty much like those we have now. And not only act, but get invented and made in response to social forces, and interact with society in complex ways. Some credit should be given to this complexity, too.

Marxist criticism of literature is tendentious and unreadable, but we can learn at least one thing from its principles. We can see that a literary work can reveal the author's assumptions, often unexamined, about society. His characters and setting are not drawn from the whole of society. If the characters have freedom of action, they owe much of it to workers, past and present, whose forgotten labors behind the scenes made it possible. In science fiction, too, there are forgotten men, whose work somehow never makes a story...and there are forgotten machines tended by them. I read about enough users of machines, but few whose character is shaped by intimacy with them. A man might write Westerns who had never come closer than ten feet to either end of a horse--but the horses in his stories wouldn't be real horses, nor his horsemen real horsemen. A knowing reader would sense the lack of intimacy. Similarly in science fiction.

Among my casual reading are such magazines as AVIATION WEEK and FLYING, and in the span of 25 years I must have read hundreds of books about flying in war and peace. They have shown me that the makers of airframes and engines have ever sought after better materials that could hold out in the extreme conditions imposed on them. Improvements have come little by little, each change making others necessary. A superior alloy for exhaust valves might allow a more powerful engine, but then another part, say the crankshaft, could bear no more strain.

It's somewhat the way in which the makers of cannon and the makers of battleship armor competed against each other. An aircraft engine then is a system in which every part is made to give the most it can. Every part is under attack from some combination of extremes of heat (alternating with cold), corrosion, friction, and stress. The man who would make it work for him must know its quirks, its weak points, its limitations. He must keep it maintained, as the law in his case requires. He must consider what is beneath the surface: he must be able to distinguish technology from magic.

There's a problem that SF writers have tried to tackle: what does it do to people to have "magical" servants? what, for example, will hand computers do when everyone has them? I can see the good of them: they can free people from the chores of arithmetic, as other machines have freed them from other chores. The housewife no longer has to spin her own thread and weave her own cloth...except that now some are taking up weaving and even spinning as hobbies. I can see the schoolboy of 2075 amazing his fellows by multiplying 17 by 13 in his head. And what kind of understanding will school children have then?

The computer comes close to being the perfect machine, and I expect we'll have more such machines. But for doing work, we shall have to put materials under strain as far into the future as I can see. And as long as materials are so used, engineers will try to get the most out of a given bulk of stuff. For a few things, solidity will be good enough, or even the best thing. A typewriter must not be too light. A wheel must take the extra load of a jolt. (By the way, I just can't see wheels being wholly superseded.) There will be more and more things, with moving parts or not, that will work and keep on working, though I fear they will inspire foolish neglect and overconfidence. Every time an airliner crash (or other mishap, like radioactive spill) is investigated, a long trail of neglect comes to light. The men who must understand systems have too many under them who don't bother. There was the German charter jet which had kerosene put in the water tanks; the cargo plane with nitric acid packed in sawdust; the DC-10 with its fatal cargo door. The last, by the way, was an interesting case of the fear of disgrace working within a system. The makers did not want the change commanded in a way that would imply that had done a bad job. Could such fears be engineered out of a society? After the dead have been buried, such things make for fascinating detective stories, better than the bulk of science fiction. They are the reality of our time and of the foreseeable future: systems that are never quite foolproof and which kill and injure more and more people when they fail. (The wreck of the Titanic was of course a classic example.) In them are people with high skills and great responsibilities. They can be undone by overconfidence or betrayed by a design fault, or done in by some nudnick loading cargo.

I know there is a school of fiction about disasters and near-disasters. A skyscraper fire and trouble aboard a jumbo jet are even now in the bookstores. But they are not science fiction, only technology fiction; they play on people's fears and are essentially thrillers. Of a much higher order of achievement are Arthur C. Clarke's alliterative prizewinners. When in SF I meet the people who work with the machines of tomorrow, I want to know how their work has shaped their character. I find them in the work of Clarke, and Ed Clement,

and Jack Vance, and Samuel R. Delany--to name those who soonest come to mind. I was wondering whether to add Heinlein: so many of his heroes are largely alike. But I will not discuss any of these authors in detail.

So much then for the users of machines: I just don't learn enough of their character of the debts they owe to other workers. Then there are inventors and improvers, another staple of SF. In real life they too owe a great debt to the past--and of course to the present, that is, the work of their contemporaries. The era of the solitary and more than a little addled scientist in his secluded laboratory is, thank God, past. But how often has SF shown the scientist trying to catch up on the literature or sending copies of his research papers to others? Yes, I know, it doesn't have story value. But that along with a lot of other drudgery is the reality of scientific work. Fiction just doesn't have any way of representing long stretches of boredom in the lives of its characters. The next chapter just starts a year later. (I recall, too, what criticism was made of La Vida by Oscar Lewis, an account of the lives of poor Puerto Ricans. It failed to represent the boredom in their lives.) But surely there are ways of representing character.

The history of tools and instruments makes interesting reading. Some years ago I read virtually all of the five volume History of Technology (to 1900) sponsored by I.C.I. and published by the Oxford University Press. I regularly look through the quarterly Technology and Culture, published at the University of Chicago. I have become aware that many discoveries have had to wait on the development of instruments adequate to record and measure the phenomena in question, or in some cases to produce them. And the development could not take place until there was an adequate technology. There are electrical phenomena, first described in the latter half of the 19th Century, that could not be manifested until vacuum pumps became good enough. Pulsars could not be detected until, among other things, receiving and recording apparatus could catch the extremely rapid changes in their signals. To be sure, some inventions and discoveries were delayed simply because nobody had the idea, even though they were technically feasible. (The hot-air balloon could have been built at any time.) But that raises the question why nobody had the idea, taking us to history again, with its complexities that fiction cannot render. And let me just mention the problem of money for R&D and "pure" science. How much time have geniuses wasted in scrounging around for the means to do what they can do best?

The good scientist knows how much he owes to others: the knowledge shapes his character. I shall have to read some of C. P. Snow's novels sometime; maybe they give some of what I ask for in SF. In all fiction, the most interesting characters are those who have sense and determination (in tragedy they are undone in spite of their best powers). In science fiction I want to see characters different from 20th Century man, shaped by the culture, including the scientific and technical culture, of their world.

DAINES BISENIEKS

XXXXX

YE OLDE LETTER SECTION

Wherein you get a chance to have your say but, as usual, I have the last word {{like this}}.

JOHN CARL
3750 GREEN LANE
BUTTE, MONTANA
59701

Re page 16: I don't know about flower power but the counterculture is still there, healthy as ever, but everybody is tired of reading about it so nothing new is being written about it. Concern over the environment -- haven't you heard? Plans to develop energy other than oil -- more numerous and healthy than ever before. As a matter of fac, a \$15,000,000 a year research project is being carried out right hear in Butte on MHD, and projects are still underway for wind, solar, geothermal, and tidal energy. It is conjectured that these projects will be completed about the time the next critical energy shortage will hit, about 1980-90.

Well, you asked.

Darrell Schweitzer and Nick Shears wrote decent poems, but the others are shit, as was Wolfenbarger's WEIRD TALES article. Wolfenbarger's personal musings are much, much more interesting.

Irritating is the only word that can be applied to your cheap-shot on power companies. Since you seem to have made your statement without benefit of knowing any facts of the matter, I will do so as well. First you are assuming that because your company has been sued, it is guilty. Hey hey hey.

The reason I call it a cheap-shot is because it is just that. These mostly unsubstantiated attacks on many of our more indispensable institutions, such as the P.O. and Power companies, cannot be anything but that. Hell, yes, they could be improved. But do you know how much money that would take? First class mail would go up 400%, and so would power. The mistakes were made in the past, and it's no use crying over spilled milk, even if it's still in the process of being spilled. We are now paying dues for the deficiencies of the original organizers of the institutions, and there is no way that can be changed without gross social reorganization--and this "liberal" world simply would not stand for that.

{{Hey hey hey, indeed. Heh heh heh. Ah, John, if I take cheap shots it is because that is all I can afford--my money going to support our indispensable institutions. I did not assume that the gas company was guilty simply because it has been sued. It made a de facto admission of guilt when it went to the state to ask for a rate increase so that it would have money to pay the judgement when it was levied against them. That's what the company's representatives said, man.//As for the mail, the attacks on the postal service are hardly unsubstantiated. Service has declined steadily ever since the Post Office became the Postal Service with instructions to operate on a "business-like" basis. A recent letter to a friend in Tucson took five days to reach him. 5 days between Albuquerque and Tucson--the stagecoach was faster than that. I have said this before: under the old Post office mail between Albuquerque and Los Angeles took three days on the average. The average now is seven days. We are not paying for the mistakes of the original organizers of our "institutions"; we are paying for the rapacity of the greedy bastards who have, for the past 25 years, taken everything out and put nothing back.}}

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Profoundest apologies for the double appearance of my poem in the current issue of ye DYNATRON. It wasn't a very good poem anyway. I doubt it deserved to be printed twice. ((My fault, Darrell, for sitting on it for a couple of years. Sorry.))

I am rather amused by Harry Warner's claim that I have a secret and subconscious love for the works of Doc Smith. Just ain't so. It is not that Smith fails to come up to my standards of great literature --he does but that's beside the point--but that he fails to come up to my standards of competent juvenile pulp fiction. I will confess that I haven't read any Doc Smith since I was about 15. I was then reading some adult science fiction, Heinlein, Bradbury, & the usual (The first adult level book I read was Dracula, at the age of 12--I was not precocious) and a little bit of Edgar Rice Burroughs. I had already outgrown comic books, after reading them briefly during my 12th & 13th years.

With this amount of amazing literary sophistication I came upon Doc Smith. I recall that when I bought The Skylark of Space the clerk at the bookstore, who must have been in his 20s said to me, "How can you read something so infantile?" Undaunted I read it. It wasn't that bad, but I wasn't overwhelmingly impressed. Still, I ended up reading all the Skylark books. They were adequate. The Lensman books I found less than adequate and I gave up after Galactic Patrol. The reasons were simply that Smith had failed to create even decent cardboard characters, he could not plot, could not create any meaningful conflict, and tended to be very predictable. His wonders paled on me through sheer shallowness. (At this time I thought Burroughs' Pellucidar series was a marvelous creation.)

Many people have been comparing Smith to James Fenimore Cooper and I think its fair. Cooper became a classic because he came first, not because he was any good. His work is also illiterate and infantile. Yet people held him up as a great American classic. (I think the argument was "you don't apply toe same standards to "romantic fiction." Sound familiar?) As American literature grew even the English teacher types realized how shallow Cooper was. He's another who will not stand up to ERB but Burroughs came a hundred years to late to be Great Literature. Hopefully as SF grows Smith will be regarded the same as Cooper. There are so many other writers who do the same thing better, and we don't need him.

((I got baak further than most of Dynatron's readers not only in age but also in years of contact with the field. I could read and write before I was 5 (a situation which led to a long argument between my parent's and the school principal who finally agreed to place me in the first grade at the tender age of 5) and since the old man read stf/fsy I was introduced to it about the same time I started school. A lot of ERB and other "scientific romances". I wonder just what makes "Great Literature"? Is it some critic's sayso? Or what people read? Literary critics have mostly panned ERB but his books are read world-wide and are now being read by a third or fourth generation of readers with as much enthusiasm as when they first appeared--maybe more. Burroughs will be around long after many "great" writers are forgotten. And does that make ERB a great writer? You betchum, Red Ryder.))

ERIC MAYER
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Andrew Darlington's article on Kafka was interesting. THE METAMORPHOSIS made a tremendous impression on me as soon as I read it. Perhaps partly for the wrong reasons. No doubt my science fiction background made it easy for me to relate to the story--to feel comfortable with the basic premise. So comfortable, in fact, that I probably overlooked much of the symbolic content. Nevertheless the general idea is pretty clear and powerfully presented.

THE CASTLE on the other hand sort of crept up on me. I had a rough time getting through the book. I found Kafka's style to be disturbing, hard to read, extremely tedious in places. Likewise the plot was tedious, slow moving and ultimately pointless. It was only after I had finished the novel that I began to appreciate it. The damn thing tuck in my mind. Various nightmarish scenes remained with me. The book was difficult, disturbing and quite unforgettable.

The same sort of thing happened with CLARISSA. I loathed that novel when I read it. It was sheer torture. But it stuck to me. A science fiction novel that had somewhat the same effect was TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE. Much as I despised a great deal of that garrulous tome I have to admit I'll remember Lazarus Long permanently. I'm not sure if this is a measure of the book's value or not. Maybe it's simply a result of the length. Maybe you tend to remember unpleasant experiences.

Jackie Franke's letter was certainly a highlight of the issue. I have to say I agree with her, even though I don't have anything much to add. It was so well put. I'm fairly sensitive to literary style and a great deal of older science fiction I find unreadable for lack of style. I'm easily defeated by flat, dead sentences. I find myself putting down a book so written after a very few pages.

Now a lot of "modern" sf doesn't suffer from lack of style. It's well written. I find myself zipping merrily along through new anthologies, gobbling up one story after another. But I get about two thirds of the way through whatever collection I happen to be reading and I suddenly have a sort of empty feeling. I find I can hardly remember anything I've read. It's all been on the surface. The stories are really pretty hollow.

Isn't it possible for someone to write something in which style and substance are balanced? Well, of course it is. I guess I mean, isn't it possible for someone to write a science fiction novel that way?

Ah, well. A good many science fiction stylists are would-be ATLANTIC MONTHLY stylists who couldn't cut it in that particular league. I only wish that science fiction editors would wise up to that fact. Science fiction has some great, unique qualities--a fact which is obscured when second rate literature is passed off as science fiction. It upsets me a bit because it's embarrassing, it makes our whole genre look rather foolish.

←I have said for years that the reason there is so much second-rate science fiction is because there are so many second-rate writers in the field. Why do we tolerate them?→

No fanzine is genuine without a letter from
HARRY WARNER, JR
423 SUMMIT AVE.
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The latest Dynatron reached port after a 20 day journey, according to the postmark and my date of arrival jotting. Even if the postal service is lousy in other ways, you must admit the headless horseman stamp you used this time is a lovely one. Still, even that gentleman operating pony express service might have found my mailbox more rapidly. <<It took 7 days for #61 to reach Brazier in St Looney, 9 days to reach Sam Long in Florida and 12 days to reach Juffus midway across town.>>

I've wondered for a long time about the lack of fanzine material on Franz Kafka. Andrew Darlington is a brave man for trying to get into three pages biography, story summaries, and symbolism data, but he seems to have miscalculated in some ways. If the reader knows nothing of Kafka, he will still wonder after finishing the article if the writer wrote in Czech or in German. He won't have the slightest idea of what is meant by a cryptic sentence like "Yet it is not nightmarish or symbolic in the way that The Castle is, although certain passages, such as the inclusion of the Delamarches, hint at its existence." He'll wonder why the writer included a non-English title for only one story (and I don't think Das Schloser is good German or good any other language known to me) or why translator information is included on only one story. What really is needed is a lengthier fanzine study of Kafka from the angles that can't be found in the numerous books which deal with his life and work: comparisons of his stories to fantasy and future fiction by English-language authors, and speculations on how much influence Kafka may have had on some of them.

I shouldn't have stopped buying WEIRD TALES before that 25th anniversary issue appeared. I wonder what would happen if some enterprising publisher or other tested the market by reprinting a few complete prozines? It's probably impractical, because it would be so hard to track down all the authors represented for negotiations over reprint fees. Still, I'd love to see just once more before I die a few unyellowed, unfrayed prozines in the pulp or large size on a newsstand. <<Yeah, me, too, Harry, but, alas, those days are long gone. The sort of stories which appeared in the old pulpzines are, I fear, much too complicated and sophisticated for today's generation of tv watchers.>>

Jackie Franke's blast at quasi-science fiction pleases me, too. I enjoy reading some of the fiction that isn't really science fiction although marketed as such, but only for the same reasons that I enjoy reading detective stories or Sinclair Lewis: because it's reality and I'm interested in reality. But I'm interested in the things which could occur in the future whose nature can't be deduced by the condition of the world today and the only place to get some acquaintance with such things is through genuine science fiction stories.

I liked Harry Morris' cover, although I'm not sure if I am supposed to grasp some kind of meaning for the whole. I sense some kind of logic behind the juxtapositions, like the two creatures apparently descending a ramp while a sloped control panel follows the same line in another frame, and the mysterious face-like section which supplements a real human face at the bottom. Maybe Harry has been reading Kafka, too.

DENNY LIEN
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Four more issues and your zine goes on
social security and gets a small but reg-
ular pittance of ego-boo every month from
the govt.

One of the greatest advantages
of getting an early show of support for Britain in '79 is the way it
will discourage any local gung-ho types (if there are any left) from
bidding Minneapolis. I don't think there are more than a couple left
though. {{So. I read in some fanzine or other where Albuquerque is
talking seriously of bidding a Westercon. I am not sure who these
mysterious bidders are--and I really don't want to know.}}

Denny Lien's letters; try to get him to do more for you.

I like

Darlington's
piece on Kafka is not bad for what it is--a quick 3 page intro/skim for
an audience presumed to be unacquainted with him--but I don't know how
many in Dynatron's audience are in fact this unacquainted. So, why?
{{Why not?}}

So why shouldn't the PARIS REVIEW be published in New York
City, when the ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA is published in Chicago? More
to the point, it ill behooves sf fans to quibble about such: we put up
with SATURN being published in Mass.; with SATELLITE being published on
the surface of a planet; with BEYOND being published Right Here and
ORBIT in one spot and FUTURE in the present and NEW WORLDS on the same
old one. Only GALAXY and UNIVERSE and PLANET are beyond reproach in
this respect.

Actually Scortia is not stealing Elder's anthology idea:
both STRANGE BEDFELLOWS and EROS IN ORBIT came out in 73 in hardback.
I agree that neither is very good, though. Were's all of those great
old erotic stories about BEMs from Betelgeuse raiding the earth to kid-
nap earth women and then advancing a lustful tentacle to rip to shreds
the scanty etc. etc. while the hero, slapped by a tractor beam against
the bulkhead, looks on helplessly gritting his teeth and THEN when all
seems hopeless etc. etc. like Bergey used to illustrate? I want my
sense of wonder back.....

Beth Slick's clipping re a warm October in
Moscow combined with your musings on decreasing overall world tempera-
ture lead me to the conclusion that the Ice Age is a Commie Plot. {{The
dreaded Illuminati strike again?....Speaking of dreaded here is:}}

THE DREADED WAHF: GIL GAIER who commented on the keen ToC; BRUCE D.
ARTHURS who has a new address: 920 N. 82nd St., H-201, Scottsdale,
Arizona 85257; BEN INDICK; ALEXIS GILLILAND, CHESTER CUTHBERT, NEAL
WILGUS, MIKE GLICKSOHN, JACK SPEER, SHERYL BIRKHEAD, and probably a lot
of other people whose letters are buried in the pile. It, the pile,
may soon reach critical mass.

XXXXX

44Starting a new department. SF, as we all know, has now become accepted in academic circles--a far cry from when we hid it in our notebooks--and one would presume that a number of fen have taken SF courses or taught SF courses or somesuch. I think the readers of Dynatron would be interested in your experiences with academic SF so all you have to do is jot them down and send them along to me. They'll be published here. Last issue Mike Shoemaker wrote of his experiences at Catholic University. Darrell Schweitzer tells about Villanova: >>

Mike Shoemaker's experiences with the world of Academe do not match mine at all. I am now a graduate English student at Villanova University, which is Catholic, run by conservative Augustinians who live on campus in a monastery. This could be bad news except that the priests don't have much to do with the English department. There aren't enough of them. The clergy has a manpower shortage these days. Virtually everyone in every department except Theology is a layman. Anyway we have had a good science fiction course for several years. I helped one professor start it. He wanted to do it, but he was a Joyce expert and knew little about SF. Word got to me that he wanted advice on his reading list. I advised him to drop some of the trashier things from his tentative list, such as Big Jack Barron (which is good juvenile pulp fiction, but this course was for adults) and one of the Lensman books. I sat in on several of the lectures and they went over well. The next year we got someone more qualified to run a permanent course (the first one was one-semester thing, done for variety). This was Margaret Esmonde, well known to the Fantasy Association. I've never attended one of her classes but I know she knows what she's doing. For one thing Villanova's library has the best collection of science fiction criticism I have ever seen. For another, Dr Esmonde had enough sense to put all this on reserve so it won't get stolen. We even get SFWA BULLETIN, EXTRAPOLATION, RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY and SF STUDIES at the library.

Maybe Villanova is more liberal than Catholic U. I had always thought Catholic U was designed for training priests. I wouldn't expect them to have much range in their literature department. But for the most part I think good science fiction courses depend merely on the competence of the individual teacher. He doesn't even have to know SF in the beginning. If he is any good he will research SF and make himself knowledgeable.

DARRELL SCHWEITZER

44Sigh. The faster I go the behinder I get. Darrell has two references about which I am completely in the dark. "The Fantasy Association" and "SF STUDIES." Enlightenment is requested. RT>>

XXXXX

MORE SAND SCRIBBLINGS

Sand scribblings in front and sand scribblings in back. It makes Dynatron a sandy sandwich.

A group of goodly fen have apparently decided that Britain really doesn't have enough problems so there is an attempt afoot to inflict the presence of Roy Tackett on the Britifen next spring. My grateful thanks to Ed Cox, Mike Glycer, Peter Roberts, Bab Vardeman, Harry Warner and Ulf Westblom. And a special bow in the direction of Sir R. M. Sneary, KtSF.

Which is another way of saying what you should already know: that I am a TAFF candidate this time around. And the other candidate is Bill Bowers, fanpubber extraordinaire.

Quite seriously, fen old and new, I do want your contributions for SF/ACADEME. We have been having a lot of discussion on the subject of science fiction in the schools and I'm sure that some personal experiences would be of interest to us all.

And if you have other items you think might be of interest to Dynatron's discerning readership... send it along.

As you know one of my interests is ancient history. The Bronze Age--ah, that was a time. Chrystal presented me with a copy of Roy Krenkel's CITIES & SCENES FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD on our anniversary (our 24th) and I really must get a copy of deCamp's GREAT CITIES OF THE ANCIENT WORLD to which this is a companion volume.

The Krenkel book is a handsome thing but in a way is rather disappointing. Most of the work is pen and ink or pencil sketches and a lot of it is rough work--what Krenkel himself calls "doodles". It is difficult not to draw comparisons with the paintings by H.M. Herget in the NGS volume EVERYDAY LIFE IN ANCIENT TIMES. Krenkel comes in second. Still for anyone interested in life two or three thousand years ago the Krenkel book is recommended.

Among the books in the pile to be read is The Romance of Atlantis by Taylor Caldwell. I'm not really sure I want to read this story which was written by Miss Caldwell when she was 12 years old. At the most I will probably give it a quick skim....skim skim skim....OK, Miss Caldwell says it rained for 40 days and 40 nights and Atlantis disappeared in the Biblical flood. All rightey.

I suppose that anyone who has given any thought to Atlantis has his own favorite theories. Jeff May mentioned a reference a couple of issues ago with which I was unfamiliar. Maybe he'll expand on it. Most modern scholars of Atlantis tend to reduce Plato's time frame by a factor of 10 and identify the lost continent/city/kingdom with the island of Thera (Santorin) in the Aegean. Thera, an extinct volcano, is thought to have exploded about 1400 B.C. Poul Anderson's The Dancer From Atlantis is a fine story based on this theory.

But I don't think so. The legend is emphatic that Atlantis vanished beneath the sea...not in an explosion and a volcanic eruption more violent than Krakatoa would not easily be forgotten. I think it is a mistake to reduce Plato's time reference by a factor of 10, too.

Atlantis, I postulate, was located on an area--now the bottom of the sea (either the Atlantic or the Mediterranean)--adjacent to North Africa/Western Europe during the last glaciation. The sea level at that time was 300 or more feet lower than it is today. Atlantis did not sink--it was inundated by the rising sea as the glaciers melted. Granted this is pretty far back in time for a civilization but more and more evidence is being uncovered that men of the mesolithic were far more civilized than we give them credit for. It is definitely established now, for example, that the Cro-Magnons of western Europe kept track of things with a notational system that may not have been true writing but it wasn't far from it. Late stone-age civilizations are known in both western Europe and America so that idea isn't a novelty. The pre-Indo-European inhabitants of western Europe were, apparently, well versed in astronomy and engineering--much more so than the Indo-European barbarians who supplanted them.

It isn't too difficult to imagine a stone-age civilization of a relatively high level located in what was then the lowlands off the western or southern coast of Europe with contacts on the continent proper. And when the ice melted it disappeared beneath the waves leaving only a legend.

a theory as any other.

....It is as good

The item in the latest issue (#61) which brought the most comment was Jackie Franke's letter. She put into words, clear and easily understandable, what a lot of fans have been trying to say about the SF field. Again, Bravo, Jackie.

Just received from Gordon Garb, B108 Corbett, Fort Collins, Colorado 80521, is SUPERAMALGAMATION PRESENTS #2 which contains the transcript of Poul Anderson's speech at MILEHICON 6. Entitled "The Informed Imagination" this item also has a lot of good information. Poul makes good sense. Read it.

All fen, it seems, get strange things in the mail although I must admit that not too much finds its way into my mail box. Now and then, though, there comes an item that causes a raised eyebrow...such as a brochure from Anniversary Tours, Inc. of NYC inviting me to tour "socialist countries" on "Workers Special tours". I'm afraid not. Admitted I would much like to visit "exotic Central Asia" and the like but I have no real interest in visiting "socialist countries". One is a matter of geography and the other a matter of politics. Unfortunately these days the two are intertwined. It is really too bad that politics and politicians insist on messing up the world.

I'm trying to picture myself as part of a workers special tour. I don't think my imagination is good enough to do it. The image that comes through is both shuddery and laughable. Horrible Old Roy Tackett would not fit in with the proletariat.

Hoping you are the same.....

ROYTAC

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