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DYNATRON

Number 64 November 1975

DYNATRON, as I am quite sure most of you know by now and if you don't...what you don't know whn't hurt you...and that is a lie- is a fanzine dedicated to the proposition that the man who invented the martini was a genius. Among other things. Some of the other things are Science Fiction, Fantasy, Faandom, and associated subjects. This, lest anyone question, is an amateur publication. Even so. Even so enough to fit the standards of Linda Whatsername.

DYNATRON is edited and published four times per year, or thereabouts, by Roy Tackett at 915 Green Valley Road NW, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87107, USofA. DYNATRON is available to you...yes, you...for a mere 35¢ per copy or three for one Yankee dollar. OR in trade for your fanzine.

DYNATRON is, as always, a Marinated Publication. ⁂

Marinated Press ⁂
A subsidiary of the Puritan Chemical Company.

Less than three months (I hope) since the last issue but I did want to get out one more this year and before the efficient, business-like U.S. Postal Service raises the rates again.

Strange things, yes, strange things happen around the Albuquerque SF Society. Dick Patten, who just made his first sale to an Aussie magazine, also ~~[illegible]~~ repairs typewriters. Jack Speer showed up one evening lugging his typer under his arm and declaring that it was sick. Dick agreed to fix it. Now Dick had been sampling the Bucolic Punch for some time and was a wee bit confused. He proceeded to repair Jack's manual typewriter. Except, of course, Jack's machine was an electric. Juffus now has the only manually operated electric typewriter in faandom.

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The menangerie around 915 continues to expand. A new kitten has joined Chani and Raisin in the cat department. Diana was at work one evening when a young man walked up, put the kitten on the desk, said "I'm travelling and can't take care of this" and walked out. Diana says the atmosphere around the motel picked up. "Yes, sir, we do have your reservation and with your room tonight you get a free cat." "Congratulations, sir, you are the 50th person to check in tonight and you win a free cat." Unfortunately nobody wanted the cat. So the new kitten, appropriately named "Holiday" seems to have joined us here.

And in the dog department there is Sunset, a red Doberman, who is in as Trojan's replacement. Someday I may run three or four pages of Terrifying Trojan Tales. Sunset is a female who shouldn't get quite as large as the Troj was and who is learning manners. "Teach your puppy to be friendly with people," the trainer says. "I don't want my puppy to be friendly," I says.

⁂

Writing in the first issue of NOCRTS, a new fanzine from Minneapolis, C. P. Holst declares that all fandom is divided, roughly, into two parts. These two divisions, Holst says, are "fanzine fandom" and "con fandom." He goes on to outline what he sees as the differences between the two groups.

Fanzine fans, he says, like to do creative writing, communicate more comfortably at a distance and are physically isolated. They tend to enter fandom as teenagers while still at home and in high-school are are FIAWOL types.

Con fans, on the other hand, prefer face-to-face communication, enter fandom in their 20s, have probably finished college, are more socially integrated and tend to be FIJAGH types.

Holst admits that no one fits the labels perfectly and that there is much overlap between his two categories but maintains that the two groups are distinct and there is little understanding between them.

This particular division of fandom is not new, of course. It was probably first argued at NYCON 1 and has been going on intermittently ever since. Over the years the distinction blurred as conventions proliferated, more fans found the wherewithall to attend and so-called "con fans" became more attentive to fanzines.

The classic case could be the Elves', Gnomes' and Little Men's Science Fiction, Chowder and Marching Society in its earliest incarnation. The Little Men started out as a discussion group centered around the University of California at Berkeley with little interest in either conventions or fanzines. In the late 1940s a few members attended one of the early West Coast conferences and came back to the Bay Area wildly enthusiastic about cons. A few fanzines were introduced at the meetings and the club promptly produced RHODOMAGNETIC DIGEST, one of the better efforts in the long history of fanzines.

So fanzine fans? Con fans? I don't really think so.

If fandom can be divided into two categories at the present time - and I agree that it can - it splits between those who are literate and those who are semi-literate.

The first group comes to fandom mostly, I suppose, by what might be called the conventional way. The read science fiction books and magazines and somewhere along the line discover a club or a convention or a fanzine. Their interests lie in the sciences or in literature. They are keen on ideas and new developments and have active imaginations. At conventions you will find them paying close attention to the program and at quiet room parties where the discussion gets heavy and involved. There are no age distinctions and the sight of a teenager involved in a lively conversation with an aged graybeard is no rarity.

The second group springs from the comic books and the "media". Their interests lie primarily in pop culture: records, television, films, etc. At conventions you will find them thronging the all-night movies and owowing at the funny animals in the art show. Generally they are in their 20s or early 30s and tend to exclude those outside their age group.

There are superficial similarities in dress and adornment and both groups will be loaded with college students and graduates. The literate group will have majored in the sciences, engineering, literature and other demanding subjects. The semi-literates will have majored in such mickey mouse subjects as university studies, dramatics, television,

and the like.

The first group, definitely in the minority these days, might (although not necessarily) be labeled "fanzine fans" because they do indulge in vast amounts of written communication, not only in fanzines but in lengthy personal letters. The second group might be called "con fans" because they prefer face-to-face communication primarily, one assumes, because writing is beyond their ability.

X

All of which leads to the subject of conventions. You will recall my mention last issue of "Science Fiction Services" and their plansfor SF EXPO 76. I expressed my reservations about their intentions. In reply to a letter "Science Fiction Services" assured me that they were on the level and more information would be forthcoming.

Jackie Franke, whose interest in these things is greater than mine, reported in DILEMMA 9, that she rang up "Science Fiction Services" and asked for details. She was informed that the group is, by and large, a bunch of professional promoters who intend to put on a "Trade-Show-cum-Three-Ring-Circus" in New York next year with vast numbers of professional writers (paid for their services), business displays, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. They hope to bring in at least 10,000 attendees at, roughly, $20 per head. Uh-huh. That, old chums, is big business.

And maybe that's the answer to the worldcon problem as well as the problems of overflowing regionals. Let's let the promoters take over the circus aspects of the conventions and get the cons themselves back to what they were intended to be.

Science fiction conventions were originally designed as meetings where people who were interested in the field could get together to discuss the various aspects of stf and socialize with those of similar interests. Over the years, as the size of the con has grown, the idea that it has to be an entertainment has also grown, that we've got to have shows and belly dancers and people in funny hats telling funny stories, and movies for the mobs, ans something for every fringe group that wanders in proclaiming "ve are vaans, ouch."

Here, then, is a golden opportunity for the worldcon committee to get the worldcon back under control. There is no way that a fannish committee is going to be able to compete with the professional promoters so let them have the circus. The worldcon committee can say, we are having a SF convention. We are going to discuss science fiction. We are going to discuss fantasy. We are not going to have any shows. We are not going to have all night movies. If you want to be entertained, go to the expo. We are not going to entertain you. We are not going to sell jewelry and arts-and-crafts.

And if attendance drops off and the mobs go elsewhere...who, really, will miss them?

X

Quotations from the ancient Chinese book of accumulating random thought:

If I could live ten thousand years, I would still be stupid.
Men are not offended by a little extra courtesy.
A house cat should talk small when addressing a tiger.
In Thistle Wadi there are diamonds as big as pomegranates but I didn't want any because I had just eaten.
A gentle lion is more dangerous than a bold hare.
I think that people should travel all the time because then they can avoid each other with greater ease.

CLIFFORD R. WIND, late of Seattle, is currently residing in Box 196, Dalwallinu, W.A. 6609, Australia, where he is attempting to teach the Australians to speak English or something equally ridiculous. He is, he says, pining for fanzines. Send him some.

And Peter Dillingham, who declares that he is the poetry editor of CTHULHU CALLS, says that magazine is running a science fiction poetry contest. First prize is $50, second prize is $25 and poems will be published in the April 1976 issue of CTHULHU CALLS. Deadline is 1 January 1976 which may even be after you read this. "Poets are cautioned that material submitted must be suitable for junior high school as well as adult audiences."

Wunnerful. Now's your chance to unload all that crap on CTHULHU CALLS instead of sending it to me. Send it to Peter Dillingham, 2272 South Bannock, Denver, Colorado 80223.

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

There seems to be no end of them.

Which is something to be thankful for.

THE MOTE IN GOD'S EYE by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle has been issued in paperback by Pocket Books (#80107, $1.95). If you didn't get the hardcover be sure to pick up the paperback. Good yarn.

THE PORTALS by Edward Andrew Mann (Simon & Schuster, 1974, $6.95, 252pp)

It is always a pleasant surprise to stumble across a story such as this one. In these sophisticated days of modern technology and high-leve hi-jinks a "novel of suspense" usually turns out to be a spy story or a tale of a convoluted plot to take over the nation, the world, or, perhaps, Highmore, South Dakota.

THE PORTALS, however, is fantasy in the classic manner complete with an ancient book of forbidden knowledge, demons, astral projection, psionics, Egyptian mysteries, references to the Neconomicon, and all the rest.

The Baron de Chantille bought this ancient book written in no known language from an Arab in an out-of-the way corner of Syria and later died horribly. (What have I been telling you for years about those Syrians?) Cary Ralston, a Los Angeles lawyer dog, acquires the book from the Baron's estate and all sorts of people go mad or die horribly before its secrets are unlocked.

Sort of a fun book and would have been more so if Mann was a better writer.

CARRIE by Stephen King (Doubleday, 1974).

Stephen King's official bookjacket portrait reminds me of a young Bob Silverberg (and hello to you, Agberg. Welcome to the elder generation). This is his first novel and, while flawed, it is worth reading. Carrie is an ugly duckling type schoolgirl in a small Maine town who discovers she is telekinetic and, in an orgy of revenge, wastes the town. King shows a lot of promise and the name should be remembered. I think he's going to be quite good with a bit more experience. He had to stretch things a bit in a couple of place to make his point and the "epilog" could have been eliminated. The business about Carrie not starting her menstrual cycle until she is 17 is essential to the story, yes, but rather far fetched. And the epilog wherein a hillbilly baby is shown nursing from a bottle suspended by nothing in midair...an unnecessary touch. Still an enjoyable novel. Recommended.

I suppose my favorite story in the vein of CARRIE is Frank Robinson's THE POWER. Fast, taut and a hell of a kicker. If you had The Power, wouldn't you be tempted to play God?

X

TOMORROW MIGHT BE DIFFERENT by Mack Reynolds (Ace, $1.25)

I've usually figured Reynolds to be one of the better writers in the field. He's got a good idea in this one: the USSR finally having a surplus of consumer goods dumps them on the world market. The effect is two-fold, it raises hell with the capitalist economy and provides credits for the hordes of Soviet tourists. The solution is to introduce the Soviets to a religion of virtue and moderation. OK. Fine. Good idea. But Reynolds' writing in this book is so amateurish as to make one wonder if he really wrote it or simply signed his name to it. Terrible.

X

SPACE: 1999 Breakaway by E. C. Tubb (Pocket Books, $1.50)
SPACE: 1999 Moon Odyssey by John Rankine (Pocket Books, $1.50)
THE EXPENDABLES Deathworms of Kratos by Richard Avery (Fawcett $1.25)
THE EXPENDABLES The Rings of Tantalus by Richard Avefy (Fawcett $1.25)

The first two are novelizations of the new television series and are almost as miserable as the show itself.

The second two are a new series in the "Dirty Dozen" tradition: convicts sent out to do a mission too dangerous for anyone else. Space opera in the worst of the pulp tradition. Would you believe a Cuban named Fidel Batista?

Ah, I tell you, chums, there's nothing like originality.

Not in these books.

X

THE BEST OF JOHN COLLIER (Pocket Books, $1.95)

Well, look...if you are not familiar with the work of John Collier you are are bloody neo and not fit company. The way to remedy that is to become familiar with the work of John Collier who is a better writer than most in this...or any other...field.

X

And now...a little fanfare, maestro...
ILLUMINATUS! The Eye in the Pyramid by Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson (Dell #4688, $1.50, 304 pp.)

"It's a dreadfully long monster of a book...The authors are utterly incompetent - no sense of style or structure at all. It starts out as a detective story, switches to science-fiction, then goes off into the supernatural, and is full of the most detailed information of dozens of ghastly boring subjects. And the time sequence is all out of order in a very pretentious imitation of Faulkner and Joyce. Worse yet, it has the most raunchy sex scenes, thrown in just to make it sell, I'm sure, and the authors - whom I've never heard of - have the supreme bad taste to introduce real political figures into this mishmash and pretend to be exposing a real conspiracy."

No, that's not my review. That is the review Shea and Wilson give themselves at one point in this wild, wooly and wacky novel. And their review is accurate. This is the damndest book I've read this year and it is a delight. Characters wander around, are introduced, get lost along the line and are seemingly never heard from again. The narrator, who starts off the book, appears at odd times as various characters. Time, scenes, characters switch from page to page, from paragraph to paragraph or from line to line in the middle of a conver-

sation. At one point one of the characters comments that he feels like a character in a story written by a couple of acid heads and a Martian.

The reviewer quoted above says he has no intention of reading the book but will merely skim it. Don't make that mistake. The Eye in the Pyramid is not a book one can skim. I did that the first time through and ended up on the last page muttering to myself and feeling that I had missed something. If you don't pay close attention it is easy to miss everything in this one. My first impression was that Shea and Wilson had done a sloppy job (or had dropped the pages on the way to the publisher) but closer reading convinced me that Robert and Robert have pulled off one hell of a job of writing; meticulous, careful writing that has produced a real head-spinner. (One is also convinced they thoroughly enjoyed themselves in writing this one; did they, for example, produce that whole convoluted theory--and all of those pages--on the significance of the numbers 17 and 23 just so they could quote one paragraph from Heinlein's The Puppet Masters? Lovecraftians will find a veritable feast of references.)

Briefly: Saul Goodman, an aging New York homicide detective is called in on a case involving the bombing of the offices of a sort of left wing magazine called CONFRONTATION. The editor of the magazine, joe Malik, is missing, presumed killed, which is why homicide is interested. Goodman and Barney Muldoon, head of the bomb squad, assume the bombing to be the work of some right-wing nut group until they find Malik's strong box and discover he was investigating the Illuminati. Uh-huh.

At which point the rocket blasts off for a wild mental ride involving more situations and characters than one can keep track of without a program--and you have to furnish your own program. Characters? A few might include George Dorn who is in jail in Mad Dog, Texas put there by Sheriff Jim Cartwright and then rescued by Mavis and turned over to Hagbard Celine who has a yellow submarine and visits Atlantis in the company of a dolphin named Howard. Did I mention Simon Moon, the latest in a long line of anarchists? Smiling Jim Treponena, head of the Knights of Christianity United in Faith...I'll wiat for you...Banana Nose Maldanado. Padre Pederastia. Harry Coin. Mao Tsu-Hsi. The island of Fernando Poo. Lee Harvey Oswald (did you ever wonder why he was smiling?). John Dillinger. Clark Kent and the Supermen. Agent 00005. There really isn't room to list everything. And, of course, the Illuminati. Ah,yes.

You do know about the Illuminati, don't you? They're behind everything. Ask about them at your American Opinion Bookstore. They are the bogey-men of the John Birch Society. As near as anyone can figure out the latest incarnation of the Illuminati--and their convoluted history--was invented by the leaders of the Birch Society because, well, you've got to have somebody to blame everything on and what better than a vast conspiratorial secret society.

According to history the Illuminati (The Ancient Illuminated Seers of Bavaria) was founded by Adam Weishaput, an ex-Jesuit, on 1 May (aignificant date?) 1776 at Ingolstadt. They proved rather troublesome to the Bavarian government which suppressed the organization in 1885.

According to "history" the aim of the Illuminati was, and is, the destruction of established institutions such as church, private property, and the national state, the establishment of a world dictatorship and the transformation of humanity. To this end they early gained control of the Masonic lodges and international financial institutions.

(Note that on 8 October of this year Francisco Franco declared that the current troubles in Spain were due to a left-wing Masonic plot. He did.) Consider some of the things the Illuminati are said to have done:

They were responsible for the French Revolution and Napoleon.

Both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were Illuminati agents as was Aaron Burr.

They formed a secret alliance with the Prussian General Staff to work for German domination of the world.

They formed a group working out of Oxford to work for English domination of the world.

They started World War I to make the Russian Revolution possible and this group of international bankers have financed communism from the beginning.

They recruited Hitler in 1923, financed the Nazis and started World War II.

They are in complete control of the American government.

Even though their aim is world order they are responsible for all the disorder around: the anti-war movement, race riots, the drug culture, rock and roll (these latter two are part of the movement to transform humanity), and other attempts to overthrow the American government.

Legend traces the Illuminati back to the Old Man of the Mountains, Hassan i Sabbah, who founded the Assassins in the 11th Century and kept his gang hopped up on hashish. The idea was brought west by the Knights Templar who tried to combine Moslem and Christian thought. They were kicked out of the Church for that (and a penchant for hashish and homosexuality).

Actually, the legend goes back to Babylon or Akkad or Sumer where the organization was founded at the dawn of civilization to keep the lower classes low. (Christian fundamentalists who believe in the Illuminati say it all began in the Garden of Eden. The first Illuminatus was Cain who was the offspring of Eve and the serpent (which accounts, no doubt, for the low esteem in which both women and snakes are held.). Thus what we have is an ages long war between men and half-men for domination of the Earth.)

Still other sources say that behind it all are the Fifth Men who are sitting on their mountain somewhere in Asia laughing their heads off at the antics of the apes. (Robert and Robert seem to have missed the Fifth Men although they've touched on all the rest and a number I haven't mentioned. Maybe not, they scatter a lot of clues about in the book that would seem to point to the Fifth Men.)

Shea and Wilson take the Illuminati all the way back to Atlantis.

The Eye in the Pyramid is, according to the publisher, Part I of a trilogy. The other two volumes, titled The Golden Apple and Leviathan are said to be forthcoming. Highly recommended. It is a trip.

Hail Eris.

Ϋ

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QUOTATIONS FROM THE ANCIENT CHINESE JOURNAL OF ACCUMULATING RANDOM THOUGHT:

I would have had a better time if people had not talked so much and listened to me.

Sometimes I am quite eager when I awake in the morning until I realize it is just another day.

HA! Didn't I tell you? When are you going to learn to listen? The October 4, 1975 issue of SCIENCE NOTES reported that Paleoclimatologist Cesare Emiliani and a team of seven co-workers from the University of Miami have analyzed core samples from the Gulf of Mexico and concluded that the last ice sheet underwent a sudden surge southward in the 10th Millenium B.P., where it quickly melted. The released water resulted in extensive inland flooding and a raise in sea level. "The time estimate for the peak of this flooding, 9600 B.C., coincides almost exactly with Plato's date for the inundation of Atlantis." Doesn't that bear out what I postulated in the May issue of DYNATRON?

NEW MEXICO NONSENSE:

For those of you who keep track of such things I must report that 28 September to 4 October was, by proclamation of the mayor of Speer and Vardeman's town, "Scientology Week" in Albuquerque.

The mayor of Vardeman and Speer's town is named Harry Kinney. Which is strange because he is bald.

The next item should point out to the semi-literate devotees of pop culture among the readership--if there are any, which I doubt--(If I keep writing things like that Mike Glyer is liable to descend on me...) the value of a scientific education.

In Los Alamos, Paul VanderMaat was given a ticket for doing 33 in a 25 MPH zone. He pled "Not guilty" arguing that an imminent thunderstorm had ionized the air thereby rendering inaccurate the police radar. The judge, Raymond E. Hunter, agreed and dismissed the case.

Both Hunter and VanderMaat are theoretical physicists at the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory.

I want to go back to Donn Braziers letter in the last issue. Donn suggested (humorously?) that the day might come when there would be within the government a Fanzine Registry Bureau to which faneds would have to apply for a publication number and to which they would have to supply copies of their zines and their mailing lists.

I agreed that this might well come to be and asked Donn if he would register his zine, TITLE, with such a bureau. He said he probably would and that he didn't think he had published anything which the government would find objectionable.

Hmmmm. On the surface, old chums, why should any of us care whether the government finds objectionable anything we print? We have the First Amendment, do we not?, which supposedly guarantees us the right to publish anything we want to. And besides, I have always considered that science fiction fandom and fan publishing were such minor activities that they were beneath the attention of the powers that be.

I am no longer so sure.

I am sure, though, that some of the mail I have received from fans overseas has been read by eyes other than mine before it reached my mailbox. The resealing of some of the envelopes was pretty sloppy. And we know for certain that the phone was tapped last year - that was pretty sloppy, too.

But, no, I wouldn't register Dynatron. How about your zine?

THE McCRAW TAPES

KMYR is an FM radio station in Albuquerque which features something they call "contemporary music." Monday through Friday KMYR has a five minute feature called "The Public Affair", taped interviews with an assortment of people on a variety of subjects. Each subject usually runs the full five days for a total air time of 25 minutes.

Pat McCraw is a sometime member of the Albuquerque SF Society, a teacher who, during the school year, contaminates the minds of junior high school students with science fiction and a part time reporter. She is also the greatest swordswoman in all ~~Friends~~ Albuquerque.

In August, just prior to Bubonicon 7, Pat sold KMYR on featuring science fiction on "The Public Affair." She took her battery-operated, Japanese made, casette tape recorder to various places around town, interviewed a number of local stf buffs, visiting delegates to Bubonicon and men and/or women in the street. If the time she spent with me can be used as an indicator Pat must have collected five or six hours worth of material which was later cut, chopped, rearranged, edited, musical background added, and ended up as five five-minute segments on "The Public Affair."

The transcription which follows is taken from my recording (on my Japanese made casette tape recorder) of the program as it was broadcast. Voices identified, besides Pat McCraw, include Jack Speer, Bob Vardeman, Ed Bryant, Jeff Slaten, Suzy McKee Charnas, and y'r obd't s'v't. Other voices are listed simply as "Man" or "Woman" although it should be pointed out that they are not the same "Man" or "Woman".

One further disclaimer. What appeared on the air bore little relationship to the original interviews. RT

I

McCraw: Monoliths. Apes. Spinning space stations. Green Cheese. Martians. King Kong. Harlan Ellison. Jules Verne. What is science fiction?

Man: I think primarily an attempt at rationalizing scientific data into the future.

Woman: Junk. Some of that stuff is really almost offensive. Really don't like it at all.

Man: Something that is related to science which is fiction.

Woman: Science fiction is something that has some base of reality - that could really happen.

Man: Little gremlins and bug-eyed monster type things.

Man: A prediction of what the future might be.

Bryant: Science fiction is bad - universally so. If it's good it's called literature. That science fiction that is not good retains the label "science fiction."

Charnas: There is this legend around that the business of science fiction is a prediction of the future.

McCraw: The answers as to what is science fiction are as many and varied as the people who read and write it. Included on the list of readers are lawyers, doctors, physicists and one writer who is a top government official. So far his real name is one of the best kept secrets of the C.I.A.

Vardeman: One of the current authors who seems to be able to win any award he wants at random because he's such a fine writer is James Tiptree, Jr. No one really knows what position James Tiptree holds. It's generally assumed that he is in the government, possibly in one of the intelligence departments, but no one knows. There's no way of telling what the reaction would be if it came out that he was, for instance, in the C.I.A. and wrote science fiction.

McCraw: Werner von Braun, the man who masterminded the USA space program, read science fiction and then went out and did it. Today there are two types of science fiction. There are stories about man's condition in the future and there are stories that are technology oriented. Science fiction can be about the past or about the future or even about the present now in an alternate world. Bob Vardeman, a science fiction writer, thinks that even westerns can be set in a science fiction background.

Vardeman: This, I think, is the key to science fiction. The "what if" is the springboard for most of the stories. What if time travel existed? What if man could live forever? What if pollution become so bad that we won't be able to go outside without gas masks? What if we have an atomic war? Or, on the other hand, what if we don't have an an atomic war? Where will we go? Science fiction is what I point at and say "That's science fiction."

McCraw: Since the 1920s, Jack Speer has been involved in reading science fiction.

Speer: Science fiction is a part of fantasy fiction. Fantasy fiction is any fiction that is not mundane fiction. Mundane fiction is fiction which takes place in a known setting. We know that the separate events are possible and it takes place in the present or the known past. Anything outside those boundaries is fantasy fiction.

McCraw: The founder of the Albuquerque Science Fiction Society, Roy Tackett, delights in what he reads.

Tackett: About 90% of the stories that are being peddled as science fiction today are not science fiction. They are pure fantasy.

McCraw: Suzy McKee Charnas, a science fiction writer, has been nominated for the John W. Campbell Award for the best first novel.

Charnas: But I think at that time it realy was the kind of exuberent adolescent literature that was all about feelings that we were going to master the world with technology.

McCraw: Since the appearance of the first story in 1928 that launced man into the depths of interstellar space, science fiction has been gaining in popularity. It started out as gadgetry but now it's growing up. It studies man's condition in the future.

Bryant: Really a high proportion of science fiction is generally a lot easier reading than the backs of cereal boxes. What I would like to believe at least is that a high proportion of science fiction deals with alternatives.

McCraw: Still bad science fiction is being written.

Vardeman: Sturgeon's Law states that 90% of everything is crap and eight-nine year olds really love to see monsters, like to see Tokyo destroyed by Godzilla and Mothra. In my mind, yes, it is science fiction. No, it's not good science fiction.

Charnas: The reason there has been so much garbage written in science fiction, I think, is because up until recently it was written by men for men and this meant that it was kind of an adolescent ghetto which did not have to take account of about half the population of the world, or more than half, or of matters which these people chose not to attain to which includes human relations of all kinds. This has changed recently, thank goodness, and people are writing science fiction for adults now.

McCraw: Tomorrow, a look at writers of science fiction and their predictions.

II

McCraw: The year: 1870. The man: Jules Verne. He saw a world of submarines, atomic power, television and periscopes. Was he a man of vision, a dreamer or a good guesser. The year: 1945, two months before the detonation of the atom bomb. The man: Cleve Cartmill. He accurately described the atom bomb, its detonation and some of the after effects. The F.B.I. was slightly upset. If they had been reading science fiction they would have known that it had been predicted years earlier. Was Caftmill a prophet or a good guesser? Science fiction writers for years have been guessing at what the future will be like. From the past some pretty startling guesses have come true. There have been studies of these predictions. Jack Speer is a reader from the 1920s:

Speer: Its just striking how many wrong predictions there are. About the only prediction that the writers had a fairly good percentage on was when in the course of a story they would refer to the fact that there was no war going on that America was involved in.

McCraw: Of course most of the readers of science fiction realize that writers are not necessarily prophets. Roy Tackett, founder of the Albuquerque Science Fiction Society, formulated an interesting theory:

Tackett: You take a million monkeys and put them at a million typewriters and it's said they'll write Shakespeare's plays. It's the same with science fiction writers as prophets. You take 5000 science fiction writers making 5000 predictions - one of them is going to hit. Let's take the automobile as an example, a good science fiction writer could take the invention of the automobile and predict super highways and traffic jams. I don't think he would have predicted drive-in theaters or necking in the back seat.

McCraw: Out of all these thousands of predictions, some have come true.

Tackett: Edward Bellamy in Looking Backward predicted Muzak, for heaven's sake, and we have that in streetcars and busses even. But in a general line radar and atomic power were predicted in science fiction years before they came about. Science fiction in those days was written by scientists who kept up with things and they knew what was coming.

McCraw: Science fiction writer Bob Vardeman:

Vardeman: Hugo Gernsback was one of the most prolific of the prophetcers, so to speak. He accurately predicted radar, vending machines, world wide televised opera and sports casts - things like this - back in 1911. Perhaps one of his predictions that hasn't yet come true, but is forseeable, is 3-D color television.

Speer: When they start predicting social conditions, when they start predicting many other fields, they are wrong 999 times for every time that they are right.

Tackett: Kipling foresaw a great future in air travel only he foresaw it with the dirigible instead of the airplane. He classified the airplane as a rich man's toy. Well, of course, it turned out to be the other way around.

There's a book, not a very good book, called Looking Forward from the Year 1900 and it has all kinds of predictions of what things are going to be like in the 20th Century and very few of those came true.

...One thing that nobody foresaw, for example, was solid state electronics. There was a story by, I believe, Murray Leinster* concerning a radio broadcast from the moon to Earth in which, building on the vacuum tube concept, the transmitter was about the size of the Empire State Building in order to have enough power to get back to Earth.

*Actually, it was Manly Wade Wellman.

Speer: When the atomic bomb came out readers of science fiction generally greeted it with dismay. There had been a few writers who would write stories like The Weapon Too Dreadful To Use who predicted that when the ultimate weapon came out it would result in peace. But I think most of us were so hardened to catastrophes, because that's what many stories were written about, that we believed that the atomic bomb was going to be used in war and would result in the end of modern civilization. So far we've been proved wrong on that and this has been a surprise to us because when a poll was taken shortly after the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, I believe most readers of science fiction predicted that it would be used, that it would be generally accessible to other nations, and would be used within 10 years at the most.

McCraw: Big name science fiction writers themselves realize their fallibility. One writer, Harry Harrison, tells about a special engine drive in his book Star Smashers of the Galaxy Rangers. His rocket is powered by green cheese. No one takes him seriously but there is always the possibility that it just could.

III

McCraw: What does the future hold for us? If science fiction writers have their way we will be living in an age of tachyon engines, matter-anti-matter space drives, time travel, intergalactic travel, genetic engineering and matter transmission. In the past science fiction writers do not have a good track record in predicting. Things probably haven't changed that much. A highly popular television program, STAR TREK,

was full of predictions of what the future will be like. There were phaser guns, space warps and dozens of aliens, some friendly, some distinctly unfriendly. Science fiction enthusiasts look at predictions for the future.

Tackett: At present there seems to be two schools of thought. One, with which I do not necessarily agree although I'm afraid it might come true if we're not careful, says that all the curves point down and we are headed for disaster - and not too far away.

McCraw: Complete destruction?

Tackett: Complete destruction. We are going to eliminate man on Earth, either through atomic warfare or through stupidity.

The other school says, no, not if we're careful, not if we use our technology wisely. We are predicting a continued expansion, we are predicting man in space...

Vardeman: Really the current modern day predictions seem to be coming out of the research laboratories rather than the science fictioneer's mind. Freeman Dyson has come up with one of the most collasal ideas I have ever heard. He is looking at the possibility of completely enclosing a sun to get every single erg of energy from that son. It's called a Dyson Sphere.

Speer: Really serious predicting now is being done not so much by science fiction writers as by the writers who call themselves "futurists."

McCraw: The list of predictions of what the future of Earth will be like grows longer each day.

Vardeman: I believe science fiction predictions that deal more with society and human beings are probably of more interest at the moment. Ecology stories in science fiction are old hat. Things like this were being done, and done well, back in the mid-fifties. They'd been mentioned in the early forties. Other possibilities right now are persona transplants: the taking of one person's mind, his essence, his soul, if you want to call it that, and transplanting it into another person's body. Genetic manipulation, genetic choosing of certain traits is a possibility now with the development of the laser beam.

Tackett: There are such things as matter transmitters, which I find is a fascinating concept, where you put something in a transmitter here -- if you have a package to send to New York City, for example, you put it into a transmitter in Albuquerque, it is converted into energy, transmitted to New York City and reconverted back into matter. And the fascinating thing about it is that you can make a tape recording of it so that if it gets lost you just play it back...This is interesting - you can carry it on through with people - you can imagine what would happen if you make a tape recording and play it back and have a whole bunch of the same individual running around all over the place. This could lead to all kinds of complications - and has in various stories.

McCraw: But predicting gadgetry is not all of what science fiction is doing today. Suzy McKee Charnas, a writer, has found that SF has passed out of the gadgetry stage.

Charnas: Again, I think if you want predictions of the future by and large you go back to LIFE magazine and start reading the articles about what people think is going to happen in science in the next 50 to 100

years. I think when you start reading science fiction as it's now being written it isn't going to tell you much about the real future. It's telling you a lot about what people today hope and fear about the future.

McCraw: Out of all the predictions and stories the one thing the writers could not see was the direction of the U.S. space program. No one thought the U.S. would reach the moon and then quit. The reason the manned space program is at a standstill:

Tackett: Because there were too many complaints about all that money being wasted on throwing rockets to the moon - it could have been used, they said, to feed the poor people. Nobody thought that money was being put into circulation - we didn't shoot the money to the moon - we put it into circulation by giving people jobs and things like that. But all these people say, "Look, give the money out here to us. We need it. And besides, we vote. Spaceships don't vote."

McCraw: Now the writers say that a space effort will come from Europe or from a combined world program.

IV

McCraw: Impossible! Never! Highly unlikely! In view of present knowledge it cannot happen! These are the words scientists usually use to describe the dreams of science fiction writers. Scientists, on the whole, are generally skeptical. Most scientists tend to look down at science fiction writers. Of course there are some scientists who listen. Like Carl Sagan, world renowned astronomer who talks about the Mars Viking probe that is geared to detect forms of life that are based on carbon. But what happens if life is silicon-based like a rock? Well, Sagan says, the Mars probe is equipped with a television camera just in case life there is silicon.

Most scientists won't even go that far. They prefer to believe that silicon life is impossible in light of present day knowledge.

Science fiction writers for years have been talking about anti-matter. Now scientists recognize its existence. The major problem is how to control matter and anti-matter so it could be used in an engine.

Kefabor: I think our best bet on that would be to find somewhere in the universe - we're way ahead in time now - but to find somewhere in the universe where, in fact, we have a lot of anti-matter present, where anti-matter is the standard form and matter is the one that is not found there and to somehow attract or capture it magnetically.

McCraw: Is it possible to make a matter-antimatter space engine?

Peterson: Well, with present technology, I'd say it would be very difficult. Most of the anti-matter we know about is created in a beam of particles from one of these large cyclotrons. There you get a few subatomic particles out of a large machine weighing hundreds of tons and you'd never get something like that small enough in size so that you could put it in a spacecraft or something to make an engine.

McCraw: About man achieving interstellar space travel that lasts only a year instead of thousands of years, Dr Peterson, an astronomer at U.N.M. gave this a thumbs down signal.

Peterson: According to present laws of physics it doesn't seem too possible.

McCraw: What do you think?

Peterson: Oh, I don't know. I don't see any real definite evidence for it now but it is possible that if you pursue things like the theories of the universe until the univers begins to collapse back on itself you might find situations where travel vaster than the speed of light could be possible.

McCraw: With present knowledge it is impractical for man to go to the distant stars. But if he wanted to go

Peterson: Well, then you'd have to get off into science fiction type things like if you travel faster than the speed of light or comparable to the speed of light, you have a dialation of time where the fast moving individual doesn't age as rapidly as someone who is left back at home.

McCraw: Science fiction writers are always looking for shortcuts through space so their characters won't spend a hundred thousand years in a rocket. Physicists and astronomers, too, are looking for a place where space is curved and they may have found it.

Peterson: There is a very slight warp in space around the sun.

McCraw: Dr Lois Kofabor is a physicist at the University of New Mexico.

Kofabor: For the scientist a space war is a property of the space itself, a curvature of the space itself and it's not a machine or something that you could put inside a ship. So if you talk to utilizing a space warp it would not have to do with the way you would build a ship but have to do with getting the ship to that place in space where the curvature occurs and then you are simply traveling in a curved space.

McCraw: Time fascinates both writers and scientists. Writers talk about going back in time and astronomers talk about looking back in time with huge telescopes.

Woman: When we look out with our huge telescopes toward the edge of the univers - for example we mentioned the Andromeda Galaxy - true, we don't have much detail when we make that view but when we look there we are seeing light that left two million years ago. So, essentially, we've looked back. What we are seeing is what existed there two million years ago. So in that sense we can look back in time and as we go farther and farther out toward the edge of our univers, as our telescope sees farther and farther away, we see the strange objects, such as quasars and radio galaxies, things that were very much in the present many, many years ago. You know there's only the present; the past is forever gone and the future is not yet here.

McCraw: Maybe someone will invent a camera that can look back at man's past here on Earth. Science fiction writers have already done it. Now it's up to the scientists.

Kofabor: A lot of the major discoveries came out of one old guy sitting over there doing something that seemed totally unrelated to anyone else.

V

Man: May you live ong and prosper. It's kind of a formal greeting for Vulcans on the television show, STAR TREK.

McCraw: What sets a science fiction fan apart from all other fans?

Slaten: Antennae.

Man: There are opera buffs who are as mad about opera as science fiction fans are about science fiction.

Man: Fandom lets your imagination loose, lets it roam wherever it may. Fans really aren't different than mundane people. We're not, you know. We're human beings like everyone else only we carry our differences on the outside.

Man: What is a fan? How can I list the ways?

Man: Make a distinction between fans and science fiction readers. Science fiction readers are people who simply like to read science fiction and it's something they can take or leave, but science fiction fans tend to take science fiction as a way of life. God knows why. I never took abnormal psychology.

McCraw: Science fiction readers number in the hundreds of thousands. Of these there are a few thousands who are science fiction fans. Fandom is a subculture composed of people who talk their own language. Fandom is a collection of people who like to come together and talk about science fiction. Fans are also habitual convention goers.

Slaten: Fans tend to talk about fandom which is the whole incrowd of odd people who get together to talk about each other and their fanzines which are magazines they put out to talk about one another and the things that they do in the context of themselves and usually they're pretty weird in that they got into it from reading science fiction in the first place although many of them don't unless you determine that fanzines in and of themselves are science fiction and, for that matter, I think that fans are pretty much science fiction.

Man: People who discuss science fiction at conventions are not fans. They are neo-fans or nonfans.

McCraw: Even Science fiction writers come to conventions to meet their fans.

Bryant: I"m here just as most writers come to conventions. There is an ambivalent love-hate with science fiction readers and fans. Like most writers I tend to believe that after I write a piece of fiction and it's sold and published it seems to disappear into some sort of vacuum. There's hardly any feedback, critical or otherwise, and conventions are one place that writers come, I'll have to admit it, to try and find feedback from the people that read their materials.

McCraw: Within science fiction fandom there are several subgroups. One of the most popular groups are the "Trekkies" or the Star Trek fans.

Beetem: A Trekkie is the perjorative term for somebody who is a Star Trek fan. I prefer using this myself, however, because of the fact that I consider perjorative some of the terms that people like to use such as "Stek fan".

McCraw: I notice you're dressed up in a Star Trek uniform. Is there any specific reason for this?

Man: Well, we've got the costume competition tonight and I"m a fan of Spock. I prefer just to consider myself a fan of Star Trek. I've gone into it a little more deeply than other people have simply because they have developed a regular history for the show and for the characters which they haven't done on a lot of other shows.

Woman: The advantage of being a Star Trek fan is that you know you're a weirdo whereas if you think you're just a typical person you delude yourself.

Woman: They are, first and foremost, a very dedicated, very loyal group of people to a program that has been off the air for a number of years.

McCraw: One thing science fiction fans avoid are flying saucers. Rarely do they talk about them.

Vardeman: Yes, flying saucers do give science fiction people a bad name because there are so many fringe fans, nuts, and just flat out charlatans that claim they've ridden in flying saucers. This is essentially something that was discussed and discarded back in the forties and these people are living in the past. In fac they're also living in kind of a fantasy world of their very own that no one else will ever share. I don't know anyone that claims they've ever ridden in a flying saucer. I don't know anyone that even claims to have seen one. They have seen something and they won't even go so far as to say it was a flying saucer.

McCraw: The most common question asked at conventions is, of course, where do the SF writers get their ideas? Ed Bryant is a science fiction writer from Denver.

Bryant: Well, as with most science fiction writers, I spend fifteen dollars a month subscribing to a newsletter which comes out of Detroit, Michigan. The truth is, for science fiction writers, like any other form of writer, ideas come from all around us. I may very well get an idea for a story from this interview with KMYR.

McCraw: Fandom is a total experience. It is a chance to be immersed in science fiction. At conventions there are panels, discussions, movies, huckster tables and lots of people.

This has been a glimpse into the world of science fiction.

Slaten: Well, I just wanted to say "Hello" to some friends of mine on Vega Five. OoOoOoOo.

McCraw: This is Pat McCraw on The Public Affair.

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"The McCraw tapes" appeared originally as a segment of The Public Affair on The Radio Station, KMYR in Albuquerque.

My thanks to Pat McCraw and to Zane Blaney, news director of KMYR, for their permission to run this in DYNATRON.

RT

VANCE TO THE FRONT

by

DAINIS BISENIEKS

Why is the year 2000 such a bore? My love-hate affair with ANALOG has been in the down phase lately. There was Brenda Pearce, whose characters "snapped" instead of "saying". There were all those stories about space projects and the politicking needed to put them over. Joe Green's new novel is but the latest in a long series. Let's face it, senators, tycoons, and scientist-politicians just Haven't Got It. If they were what I wanted, I'd be reading Alan Drury instead.

Don't we read science fiction because we want to be taken someplace else? Characters alone don't always make a story (and the abovementioned don't make it, period) - it needs a landscape, too. Dune, Mission of Gravity, The City and the Stars, The Left Hand of Darkness: these have the right blend for me. So do many of the works of Jack Vance.

Few of them will be classed among the "significant" works of SF. Some are outright fluff. I could almost say formula, but I should not use the word of a craftsmanship that has turned out so many interestingly different worlds. Yes, I am a sucker for exoticism, and no one serves it up better than Vance.

It's all in the eye of the beholder, you say? So it is. I remember quite well the paredies of Gernsbackian SF, taking us through a citizen's day in late 20th century America with all its wonders. Thrillers (James Bond et al.) serve up plenty of exoticism, with settings in the Near, Middle, and Far East where, as is well known, ordinary people lead ordinary lives; New York and London are exotic to them. (By the way, where has the Near East disappeared to? Nobody speaks of it any more.) Why do I shun them, finding the exoticism false--in spirit if not detail?

Maybe because it asks to be believed. If it says that glamor may be found in Bangkok and Timbuktu but not in Peoria or Walla Walla, it lies. It is meretricious, flashy stuff (and so is some SF). But I know perfectly well I can't buy a ticket to Trullion or Marune or any other world of the Alastor cluster. So I'm perfectly happy in believing all that vance tells about them.

I wanted to review a couple of the recent novels. Showboat World (Pyramid, $1.25 - with a totally irrelevant cover design) can most truly be called fluff, a picaresque tale where nothing more is at stake than the fortunes of a couple of cozening showmen, of their hirelings and, as it turns out, of a petty kingdom. Suffering and perplexity are carefully banished from the tale (as they are not from The Dragon Masters or The Last Castle)--that is, those who suffer and die do so in a few bloodless words and are not regretted by the reader.

The setting is the same Big Planet known from an earlier novel, which I read far too long ago. By the way, I have my doubts about Vance's metal-poor worlds. They may lack concentrated ores, sources of energy and the knowledge to extract metals, but they will have aluminum and magnesium (what do you think rock is made of?) and enough copper, zinc, iron, iodine, etc., to meet the body's nutrition needs. Now there is a science almost totally neglected by SF!

A region of the planet is famous for its colorful showboats, with names like the Melodious Hour, Miraldra's Enchantment, the Fireglass Prism, and the Two Varminies, and their no less individual proprietors. One of them, Apollon Zamp...oh well, he engages in some underhanded nastiness with a rival, has his ups and downs and, having made an alliance with a colleague, ends the adventure profitably.

It's the way Vance writes that interests me. He invents the most charming names for people, places, and things. I liked (from another book) the Five Demon Princes: Attel Malagate (the Woe), Howard Alan Treesong, Viole Falushe, Kokor Hekkus, and Lens Larque. (A tribute to Doc Smith in the last? Other names here and there contain jokes.) This nameing is by itself a talent: interesting how some of the names, like the Two Varminies, suggest undescribed secrets of a culture.

Vance pays very careful attention to staging (a fit term here). The books are full of descriptions of landscapes, buildings, costumes, sounds and odors. Above all there are the customs and taboos of his locales. If these are hokum, they are good hokum. Ti Trullion: Alastor 2262 I liked the pages devoted to the game of hussade as well as anything in the book. The latter part of The Palace of Love was maybe too rich in description...there, too, Kirth Gersen dithered quite badly: not at all typical for a Vance hero.

His heroes have energy and determination: needful, of course, in adventure fiction--but there's a style to this. Vance's prose helps. Ever notice how often he omits and? "He bent, seized the seedling, pulled it from the soil, broke it, cast it aside." (Star King, last page.) Not all are from the same mold. Some are rogues who look out for Number One; others fight enemies whose removal will be a boon to the world at large. But there is a likeness in style. They are almost unfailingly polite, especially when saying no, or trying to diddle the opposition, or asserting their power over any enemy.

This is typical: Zamp has captured a robberbaron and his retinue and is putting them to work turning a capstan.

"'Must we toil like animals?' shouted Baron Banoury, at last overwrought. 'Have you no gallantry. These ladies know nothing of such exercise!'

"'It is simple enough,' said Zamp. 'One thrusts at the bar with all his weight until the bar moves; then he or she steps forward to repeat the act. In almost no time you will learn the skills.'"

The hero of Marune: Alastor 933 (Ballantine, $1.50, with a good illustrative cover), a victime of induced amnesia, finds he is one of the ruling caste in one of Alastor's societies and returns to try to discover the usurpers and regain his memories. In a word, he succeeds. I find that I really have no more to say on that. What I said Vance describes well. The book does not mark any change in the writer; it will not change the reader. Yet I would rate it higher than the other. It has genuine characterization. The hero (like others in Vance's books) knows perplexity. He succeeds, as I said, but he is no longer the same. He has known other worlds, other societies with other customs than his own. The traditional ways are no longer enough.

So-- "...what shall we do?"
"I don't know."
"I don't know either."

I like that. It could become a cliche or convention--but here it is more convincing than any "happy ending." Others of Vance's books ended similarly: The Dragon Masters, for one. Or The Dying Earth, in which the perplexity was mingled with great wonder at the vision of civilizations rising and falling through countless millenia.

What next? Vance is a good entertainer. But can we class him among the writers who have developed, not merely improved? I think he could give us a work of the length, scope, and impact of Dune--his three-parters have not been on that level and have no cumulative impact.

Give us a big winner--eh?

DAINIS BISENIEKS

XXXXX

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