



GODLESS #8, Fall 1974, is published by SP5 Bruce D. Arthurs, 57th Trans Co, Fort Lee, VA 23801, USA, and is available for letters of comment, contributions, trades, 75¢ each or 3/\$2.00 (NEW PRICE! take note), or whim of the editor. Published irregularly but about three or four times a year. Mimeo work courtesy of Ned Brooks. This is a Tucker Fund fanzine.

!!!IMPORTANT NOTICE!!!

After 23 Janurary 1975, send all correspondence, trades, etc., to:

Bruce D. Arthurs
2401 W. Southern, B-136
Tempe, Arizona 85282
USA

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"Remember...even deified cats bark angrily"

Australia in '75

Kansas City in '76

Montreal in '77

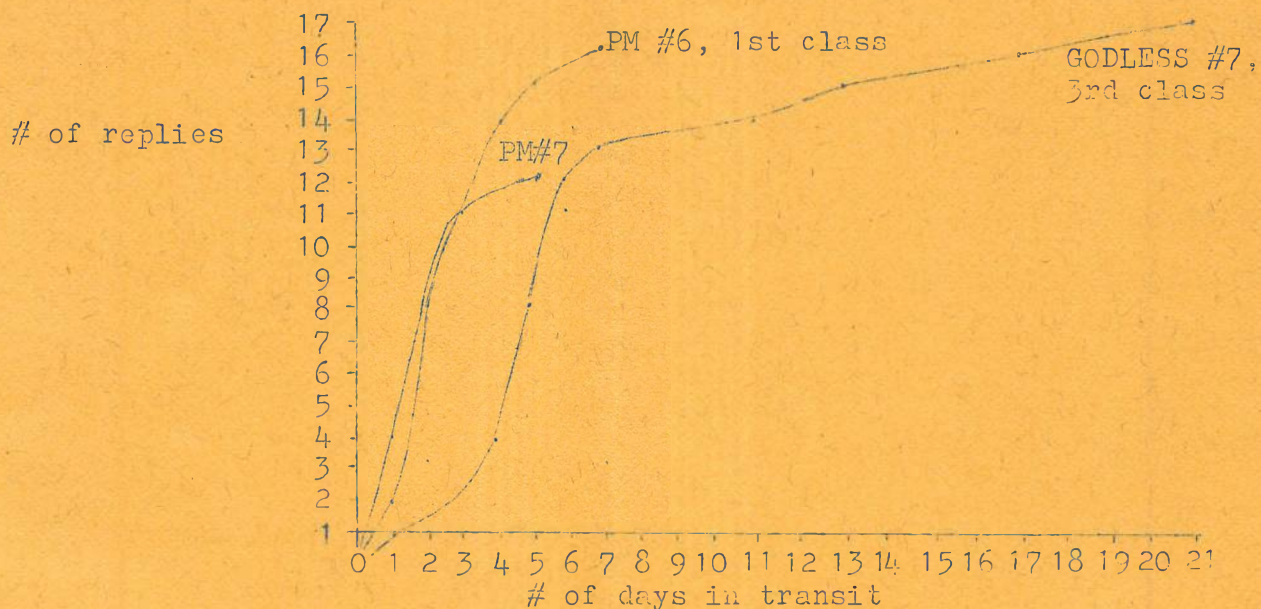
San Francisco in '78

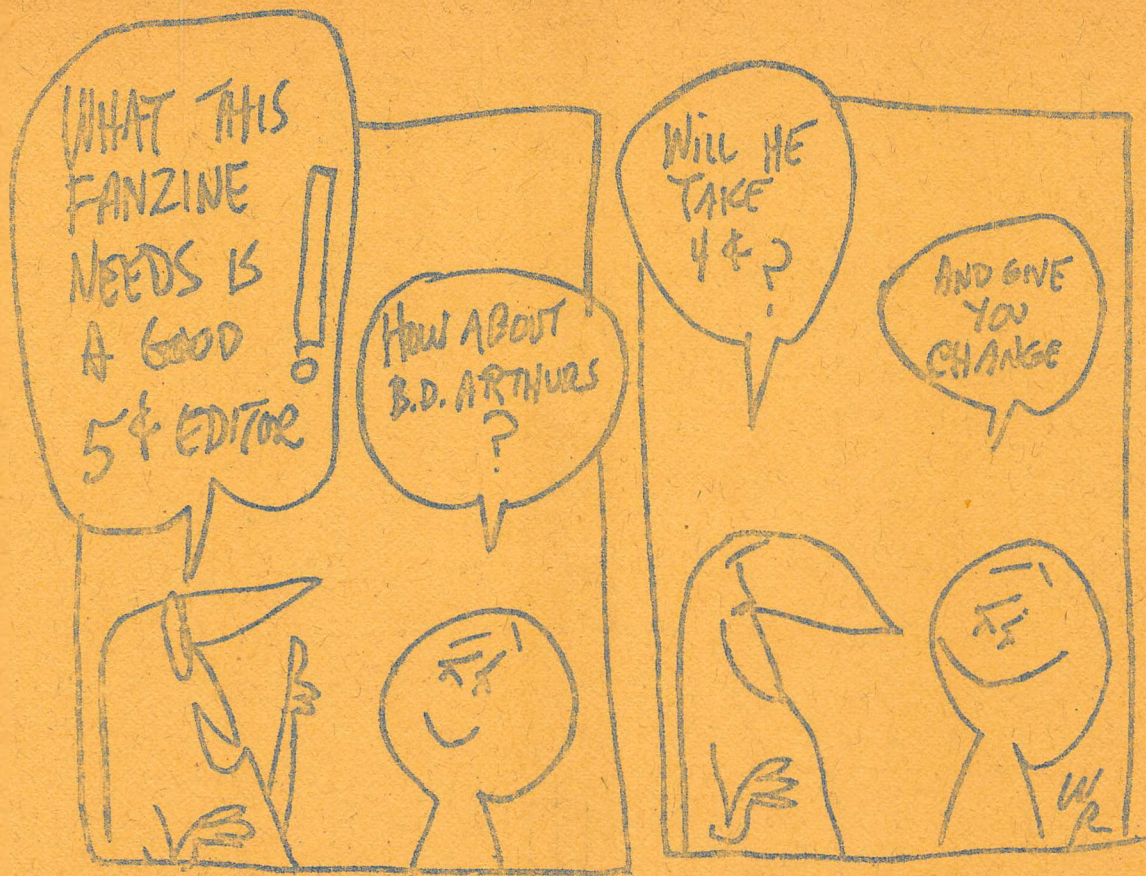
London in '79

Gafia by '80

THE KING IN PLURAL

THE MAILING SURVEY In the last issue of GODLESS, and in POWERMAD #6 and 7, I asked people receiving those issues to not when they received each zine, and to send that information back to me. I got back 17 replies for GODLESS, which was mailed 3rd class, and 16 and 12 respectively for the two issues of POWERMAD, which were mailed 1st class. I'd have liked a little more data, but I think that the replies I did receive are enough for a little informal conclusion-making of the difference between speed of delivery for 1st and 3rd class mail. Charts below:





A few conclusions that might be drawn from the results: 1) With first class mail, a large majority of those sent out will be delivered within two or three days, tho' there will be a small percentage that take longer. 2) With third class mail, the majority will be delivered within a week. The percentage that does take longer than average, though, is larger than that percentage for first class mail (about 30% as compared to approximately 15% for 1st class). 3) Because third class does take two or three times as long to be delivered, it's in the hands of the Postal Service two or three times as long, which explains why 3rd class gets damaged or lost more often than 1st class; the postal workers aren't necessarily any more careless with 3rd class, it's that they have more time in which to let their natural carelessness work upon the task.

Final Conclusion: If you keep your fanzine small enough to mail 1st class (6 sheets of 20-lb paper, without envelope), it will be delivered faster, and the chances of its being damaged or lost in transit are about half those of third class mail.

CHANGES, PRESENT AND FUTURE

You may have noticed a few new things about my address. The one effective right now is that it's now "SP5 Bruce D. Arthurs", not "SP4". I was promoted in August and am now a Specialist Fifth Class. In the Army, a Fifth Class outranks a Fourth Class; it sounds dumb to me too, but the Army always seems to do everything backwards.

The other new thing is that come January 1975, my address will change. I get out of the Army on January 23rd and head back for Arizona. Damned if I know what I'll be doing yet. I suspect, though, that what with all the hassle involved in getting back into civilian life that my fanac will

go downhill a good deal, and probably not exist at all for the first few months. I am going to try to get out another issue of GODLESS and one of POWERMAD before getting out of the Army, tho'. Both should be out sometime around December or early January.

ARTWORK One of the faults that reviewers have found in previous issues of GODLESS is that it didn't have a sufficient variety of artwork. Well, this issue, I think, will answer those complaints: out of the blue and in just a few weeks, I received in the mail art from such people as Bill Kunkel, Al Sirois, and Dave Barnett. And none of them were even on my mailing list before! I am immensely gratified.

Oddly enough, because of the large amounts of art I received, one of my Old Dependables, Bruce Townley, doesn't have any artwork in this issue. He'll be back with next issue's cover, tho'.

One thing I don't need in the way of artwork right now, is covers and headings for the various departemtns. I've got covers for up to GODLESS #11 already, by Townley, Parks, and Sirois (plus another Sirois which I may also use as a cover), and I've got so many headings for "Mindspeak", "The King in Plural", etc., that I've lost count.

One thing I'll be doing beginning next issue is electrostenciling the covers as well as interior art. I just picked up Dave Barnett's cover from the printers' this morning, where they tried to overcharge me by \$5 from the originally-agreed-upon price. I had to ask them for the phone number of the Better Business Bureau before they went back to the lower price. I'm really discouraged with dealing with professional printers for the covers, especially when the results aren't that much better for the cost involved than a \$3 electrostencil would give.

GENZINE YES, PORNZINE NO! If you've already looked thru the rest of this issue, you may have noted that "Snow White and the Seven Pimps", the porno story I was threatening to publish, isn't there. Between Roger Elwood's offer of an interview, Jeff May's counterattack, Bartucci's story, and other events, I was at no loss for material for this issue, and even have plenty for next issue, and some may even be carried over to #10, which will be the first "After-Army" issue.

Definitely slotted for next issue or the one after:

- "The Genuine Drafted-on-Stencil DISCON 2", my Worldcon report, which still isn't finished at this writing, but should run between 15 and 20 pages.

- Another in Richard Bartucci's series of sf parodies, this one on Larry Niven. You didn't know that "The Phosphor-Bronze Cockroach" was the first of a series, did you? Well, now you do.

- "How To Lick the Space Monsters and Save the World", an anonymous reprint from THE OVERSEAS WEEKLY, dealing with just how the government might defend against an invasion from space.

- A mass-review of the numerous books which Chilton has been sending me for review the last few months. I'd also welcome a few more book-reviews from you people out there. I actually like book reviews, for some godawful reason, tho' I'm the first one to admit they're a pain to write.

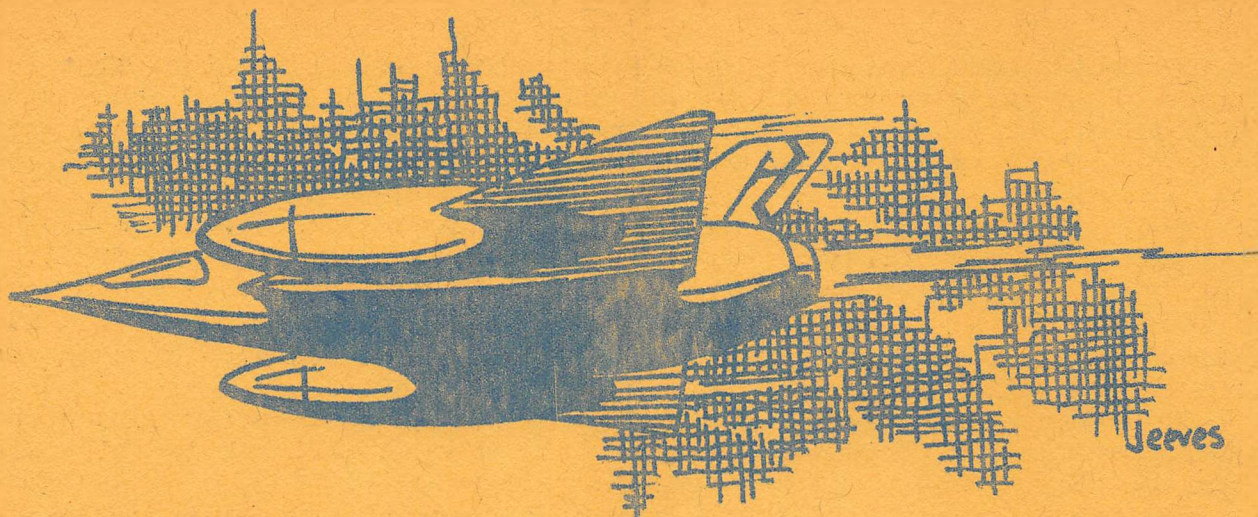
- The usual interesting, opinionated, laugh-getting and laughable bunch of letters from all over. A couple of things in this issue will raise a good deal of comment, I believe.

- Another "The King in Plural", where I may make a few predictions about the future of LOCUS and side-effects of such.

- And a few surprises....

((CONTINUED ON PAGE 16))

ROGER ELWOOD



FOREWORD: Originally, this article was supposed to be a straight question-and-answer interview with Roger Elwood. Try as I might, though, I found that there were too many things that needed to be commented upon or explained, and I eventually abandoned the question-and-answer route for an essay-type article. I am, however, grateful to Mr. Elwood for granting the interview, and the results of that interview form the foundation for this article.

A great deal of this article consists of my subjective opinions and thoughts. Where possible, I've tried to back up my opinions with the facts as I know them. In my research for this article, I questioned a number of other people, fan and pro, for their own opinions of Elwood. I found that there was no discernible consensus of opinion: I came across people who agreed with most of my own views, and I came across others whose opinions were directly contrary; I could not, and cannot, say "A majority of people hold such-and-such opinions of Roger Elwood's work." The views expressed herein are my own. Some of my views and opinions are quite critical of Elwood, but I hope that I have also been honest and fair in my presentation of those views.

I am also hoping for a good deal of response to this article. I have raised a good number of ques-

BY BRUCE D. ARTHURS

— a personal reaction —

ions without definite answers, because of lack of data or information. Hopefully, there will be persons reading this who do have such data or information. Also, any corrections of factual errors that I may have included. In the preliminary drafts of this article, there was at least one major error included, which was thankfully corrected before the final draft was written. Richard Geis has expressed interest in reprinting this article in THE ALIEN CRITIC, and if such occurs, I will attempt to correct any errors or misinformation found herein.

BACKGROUND: Since mid-1971, Roger Elwood has become one of the major influences, possibly the major influence, on the science fiction field. He has accomplished this by accumulating more contracts and commitments for editing sf books than any single individual has done before. In approximately three years, he has accumulated commitments and material for over 80 original anthologies, of which about half have been published with the rest scheduled for release over the next two or three years. He has contracted with the Canadian-based firm of Harlequin Books for a series of 48 original science fiction novels per year. He is also sf editor for Pyramid Books, Chilton, and others. He is personally responsible for choosing in the area of forty-to-fifty per cent of the science fiction now being published.

There is little in Elwood's past career to show the potential for the magnitude of his present accomplishments. He was born in January 1943 in Atlantic City, New Jersey. After graduating from high school, he began supporting himself by full-time writing and editing. None of Elwood's own writing was science fiction until recently. (He is working on an sf novel and has sold several short stories to other editors.) He has written for women's magazines, mystery magazines, movie and television magazines, and others. Elwood himself admits that at least as far as fiction writing is concerned, his own abilities lie mainly with the mainstream markets, and he has recently sold a mainstream novel, Magdalene, to Popular Library.

If he did not write science fiction, though, he did read it. Elwood's father has been reading sf since the Gernsback era. (In fact, Elwood's father has begun reading some of the slushpile for Elwood since his recent retirement, as well as taking over the clerical and bookkeeping tasks.) Elwood began reading sf at age 10 or 12; such books as Clarke's Childhood's End and Pangborn's A Mirror for Observers. In his own words, "I simply devoured all the science fiction books I could read. I've liked sf for a good many years; it's just that I haven't been vocal about it."

His editing work pre-1971 lay mostly with various magazines: one issue of a mystery magazine, magazines centered around various tv shows such as BONANZA, and even wrestling magazines. In addition, he was responsible, in collaboration with Vic Ghidalia, Sam Moskowitz, and others, for some fourteen reprint anthologies of sf, occult, and horror stories. None of these anthologies made any particular stir in the sf field or brought Elwood's name into prominence.

It was the announcement in 1971 that he had arranged contracts for some 50 (now gone to 80) original anthologies that his name became a household word among science-fictionists and people began asking "Who is Roger Elwood?"

THE QUESTIONS: The matter of Roger Elwood boils down to two major questions:

- 1) Is he a good editor?
- 2) What effect, if any, has he had on the science fiction field?

In response to the first question, Elwood's natural reply is that he does consider himself to be a good editor; the stories he buys are ones that he enjoys, and he believes that his tastes are similar to those of many sf readers. In support of this, Elwood will show you xeroxed copies of reviews from PUBLISHER'S WEEKLY, LIBRARY JOURNAL, KIRKUS, various newspapers, and other publications. "Fine science fiction," "thought-provoking," "highly entertaining" are typical quotes.

But there have been other reviews, particularly in fanzines, that haven't been so praising of Elwood's anthologies. "...simple-minded plots," "none worth reading twice - or once, if you don't have a lot of time," "lack purpose and direction," "mixed quality," and "disappointing" are samples.

The question rises, which reviews are the best guide to how good a book is? The "mainstream" reviews or the fan reviews? One of the reviews that Elwood is proudest of is by a lady who said "I've never read much science fiction before, but I really enjoyed this book and intend to read it again." The fact that Elwood's anthology was able to enthuse this woman and make her want to read sf again is something that he can and should be proud of. But I wonder whether this woman, who admittedly had read almost no sf before, was a competent judge of the quality of the stories?

Remember that story or book you used to think was the greatest piece of writing in the world? Remember how you used to enthuse over it and recommend it to everybody? Remember how you finally got around to rereading it a while ago and were so embarrassed for having actually enjoyed that piece of crap that you went to bed and didn't get out for three days? I do. I can think of a number of stories I used to feel that way about. I won't mention any names, though. Don't like to be laughed at.

One of the common problems with sf reviews by mainstream reviewers is that the reviewers don't know what sf is all about. As a buying guide, I've always found fan reviews much the better bargain, and I tend to agree more with their judgements.

Which is not saying that all fan reviews are good. A poorly done fan review (and I've seen too many) can be one of the most revolting things in existence. But a good fan review...ahh, here we can experience the judgement and expertise of someone who's read sf for most of his/her literate life, has seen the good and the bad and knows how to differentiate between the two, and can communicate that judgement to the reader. These are the best reviews.

My own feeling is that the charge of "mixed quality" is the complaint that can be charged most characteristically against Elwood. In my own reading of Elwood's anthologies, I've found that you cannot expect anywhere near a consistent level of quality within them. There is an occasional good story, well-written and worth the reading time. The majority of the stories are average or mediocre. And there are those stories for which the politest possible term is "unforgivable." It is not that this latter category runs contrary to my tastes, it's that they are badly, horribly, written, with the most cliched plots and situations, the most unbelievable and stilted characterization, and blatant internal inconsistencies.

An example: In The New Mind, one of the stories has a main character whose arms are withered, so that even buttoning his own shirt is almost impossible. Near the end of the story, as he is running from an attack by the authorities, he picks up a girl in his arms and....

Now, this wasn't a complete contradiction. The author threw in some spinach about how the mental training the character was undergoing also helped develop his body. BUT...the character's arms were still withered and represented as being extraordinarily weak (he could put his own pants on, but not much more). I don't believe a word of it. Even if the author had spent more time on the story and made the bodily improvement believ-

able, the story would still be a poor one because of the cliched plot (Secret Society of Psis Teleport Themselves to Another Planet to Escape Persecution By Normal Humans).

This rather staggering disparity in quality, not just between individual stories in an anthology but between different anthologies (Future City would be among the Top Ten of anthologies I've read; The New Mind is one of the worst books of any type that I've read, and I had to force myself to finish), is something I've seen from no other editor in the field. Many people dislike Damon Knight's Orbit series of original anthologies, but this is largely a matter of personal preference in the types and style of stories these people prefer. Knight has a set of consistent standards that he can apply towards the selection of his stories. Therefore, his anthologies are of a fairly consistent quality (or disquality).

Elwood, on the other hand, doesn't seem to have a well-defined idea of what his standards should be. I asked Elwood if he felt that his books had a recognizable editorial personality, if someone could read one of his anthologies without looking at the credits and say, "This book was edited by Roger Elwood." His reply:

"I hope not, because I feel that the stories I buy should appeal to the widest range of readers. I don't want to become known for my 'tastes', as such, if they're narrow; I'd like to become known for a broad range of tastes. So if I have a broad range of tastes, I should not enter into it very much at all, because you'll find something there to please everybody. Not necessarily all in the same book, but over a period of a hundred books. I'm sure that I've published stories that appealed to the traditionalist, the 'New Wave' experimental people, and so on."

I am irresistibly reminded of something I once said about myself: "I have a wide range of tastes. Or as some might say, no taste at all."

A logical error in Elwood's statement above is that if an anthology includes something to please everybody, it's just about a sure bet that there is also going to be something to displease everybody. As I mentioned before, Damon Knight is pretty consistent in the types and styles of the stories he edits, and this gives the potential reader a measure of assurance as to whether or not he'll like the book as a whole; many people don't like the Orbit books, others do. The same thing applies to Terry Carr, who is also fairly dependable in the types and styles of the stories he buys for Universe and his other anthologies. Because the stories Carr edits are not only well-written but stylistically match up very well with my own tastes in science fiction, I consider him the best editor presently working and try never to miss any of his books.

Sure, there are some damned good stories in Elwood's anthologies. But they're scattered, shotgun style, and it's impossible to predict where the next one will be. You can't depend on finding a good story in any given Elwood book. If you read all eighty of Elwood's anthologies, you'd come up with a nice batch of the best material. But who has the time, money, or inclination to read 80 anthologies, particularly when you know that the majority of the material you'll have to wade thru will be average at best? I don't have the time. I don't have the money. And I certainly don't have the inclination when there are other editors like Terry Carr around that I can depend upon to bring out anthologies I know I'll like.

I asked Elwood, "What makes a science-fiction story seem well-written to you, seem acceptable for publication?" His reply:

- 1) The story has to fit whatever theme he's building an anthology around.
- 2) It has to have good grammar.

3) It has to be legibly typed.

That was the complete reply. (Though later questions made it evident that a story would also have to fit a required word limit and could not be offensive to Elwood's personal beliefs, of which more will be said later.) Some things can be taken for granted - characterization, theme, plot, etc. - but Elwood didn't even mention these in passing. Does he favor strong characterization? Well-developed backgrounds? Simple vs. more complex plots? I can't help feeling that the "broad range of tastes" Elwood has tried to include in his books are so broad that they include plain unvarnished poor writing.

Other reasons for the unevenness of Elwood's anthologies may lay in the methods he uses to put them together. As mentioned before, he has completed some 80 original anthologies in approximately three years. Simple mathematics shows that the average time spent on each anthology was about two weeks! Not just picking stories for publication, but arranging contracts, negotiating with agents, arranging promotion, getting the package prepared for the publisher, etc.

I'm not saying it's impossible to put together a good anthology with only two weeks work, but it's certainly more difficult than with one that more time is spent upon. At least one writer, Joe Haldeman, has spent over three months worth of working time compiling a projected anthology of sf stories proposing alternatives to war. He has stated that he could have used that time to write a novel and brought in more family-supporting money than his anthology will. But rather than rush his work and jury-rig his anthology together with insufficient preparation, Haldeman has spent more time on his anthology than he can really afford, trying to insure it is the best he can possibly compile.

One thing which many people I asked for opinions of Elwood did agree upon is that Elwood has overloaded himself with work, that he has too many commitments and contracts to be fully able to handle all of them. The area where this has most clearly shown up has been with the handling of manuscripts and correspondence. Extremely long response times, failure to respond to inquiries, and confusion over Elwood's contract terms have been common complaints. In at least one instance I know of, a writer was asked to submit a story by Elwood. The writer sent a letter to Elwood, asking him if he had any taboos that should be avoided in a story. After waiting several weeks and receiving no reply, the writer sent in a manuscript. It was rejected...because of Elwood's taboos. As a result, the writer has stated that he will no longer submit any of his work to Elwood.

At the recent Worldcon in Washington, DC, an entire section of the SFWA meeting was devoted to similar complaints about Elwood's business handling. As a result, Elwood has hired a permanent secretary to handle correspondence, established regional agents to handle further complaints that may arise, hired another agent to handle contracts and complimentary copies, has his father (a retired accountant) handling the financial bookkeeping, and has taken steps to reduce the reporting time on manuscripts. Hopefully, these steps will reduce the responsibilities that Elwood has handled before now, and will give him more opportunity to look at the quality of the stories he buys.

Another of Elwood's methods that has raised some criticism is his practice of assigning stories. An example of this type is seen in THE ALIEN CRITIC #6, wherein Ted White reported that Elwood had told him, "I'm doing a book on cities of the future, Ted, and what I'd like is about 3,000 words on the theme of prostitution. Now I'll pay \$120.00 for it, and I need it within two weeks."

In this instance, Elwood set: 1) the theme - prostitution in a city of the future, 2) the required length - 3,000 words, and 3) a time limit

for completion - two weeks. Plus it can't go against Elwood's own beliefs and taboos, a limitation imposed on every story Elwood assigns.

My question is, does setting these types of conditions create undue restrictions on the imagination and creativity of the writers involved? I myself have written non-professionally on specific themes. I have written to deadlines, and will usually set them for myself to avoid my usual endless procrastination. And I have written to specific lengths, though with great reluctance and difficulty. But under all of these conditions? I would not want to, because I would feel stifled, not at ease to write what I felt to be best.

My greatest objection would be to the length requirement. Suppose Ted White had written the story to his own satisfaction and it turned out to be only 1,500 words long? To fit Elwood's requirement, it would have to be padded to double its length. Or suppose the story had come out 5,000 words long? It would have to be blue-penciled mercilessly, possibly removing the effectiveness of the story.

It used to be almost mandatory in the sf field for novels to be only 60,000 words long, give or take a few thousand. This was because most novels were originally published in the magazines, where 60,000 words was about the most that could be serialized comfortably over three or four issues. Since then, thankfully, with the growth of the original paperback and hardcover markets, this limitation is no longer as prominent and we are now able to see numerous published works of well over 100,000 words. Can you imagine Dune if Frank Herbert had had to cut it down to 60,000 words? Or Brunner's Stand on Zanzibar?

And I believe that these word limits have reduced the effectiveness of many of the stories Elwood has bought. In Future City, which Elwood considers the best anthology he's yet put together, there are stories from 22 different authors, with an average length of about 10 pages each. Upon reading the book, my feeling was that many of the stories deserved a greater length to work in, and that the book (which is quite good, much above average for the Elwood anthologies I've read) could have been even better by reducing the number of stories and letting the remaining ones be done at greater length. I think it's more than just coincidence that the story in Future City I found most engrossing, Tom Scortchi's "The Weariest River," was also one of the longest. The greater length gives more room to develop characterization, present background, and let the events of the plot take place.

In the case of the Ted White story mentioned above, Elwood rejected the piece. But I wonder: Might the story have turned out acceptable to Elwood if he had eased some of the conditions he set upon it?

The creative freedom of the writer is what's involved here and I believe that setting too many limitations and conditions will stifle the creativity that is necessary to the field.

Probably the most controversial limitation Elwood applies is that of his Christian beliefs. Elwood is a devout, fundamental, conservative Christian who takes his religion seriously and has written a number of "inspirational" books. He says, "Religion means a great deal to me. Christianity means a great deal to me. To get even more specific, Christ means a great deal to me. And if I were a less loyal person, I would buy anything, regardless of what it is, simply because it's a good story, but I think there has to be some allegiance at some point in a person's life to something. That happens to be religion in my case."

Before I go further, one fact must be made clear: I have strong feelings about Christianity. I am fervently anti-Christian. My own fanzine is named GODLESS, the letter column in my personalzine POWERHEAD is titled "The Damnation Choir", and the mimeograph I have back home is called the Malacoda Press (from Dante's Inferno). I find fervent Christianity, par-

ticularly the Jesus Freak movement, revolting and even frightening. History is filled with too many examples of persecution, enslavement, and murder by True Believers to leave me with any other reaction. (No, I don't deny that religions other than Christianity have been responsible for many cruel and evil actions. I don't like other religions, either. But as the major religion of North America, Christianity is the religion that has the most potential for persecuting me.)

Elwood will not publish any story that goes contrary to his Christian beliefs, that has an atheistic or agnostic viewpoint (bye bye, "Death-bird"), that features an unsympathetic portrait of Christ (so long, Behold the Man).

I asked Elwood whether the beliefs that cause him to reject stories he considers un-Christian might not also influence him to buy pro-Christian stories: "Yes, of course, as long as they were good stories. I would not buy a pro-Christian story that I felt was a poor story, because I don't think that the fact that it's pro-Christianity or pro-anything is an excuse for poor literary standards."

In reply, I queried whether Elwood's beliefs might not make him take a more lenient look at the literary standards of a pro-Christian story: "Let's face it, prejudices can play a part in any editor's opinion. There are some editors I know, without stating specifics, who have bought rather poor stories simply because they were anti-Establishment stories. Let's put it this way: I wouldn't consciously do it....I would be less inclined to turn down a story critical of a person who is a Buddhist or a Mohammedan. I would allow there for personal criticism because I myself am critical. You can be legitimately critical or you can be sarcastically critical; I wouldn't take a sarcastically critical story of any religion."

For a legitimately critical one concerning Christianity.

The anti-Christian viewpoint is a valid one, just as legitimate for usage in a story as a pro-Christian one or one that ignores the matter in favor of other subjects. (If I were editing, I would probably be more inclined to accept anti-Christian stories than pro-Christian stories. So much for my own prejudices.) Because he is responsible for so much of the sf being published, Elwood is in effect acting as a censor for somewhere near half of the sf being published.

I asked for an example of a story he would have turned down for its irrereligious tone: "Well, there is one story which Terry Carr wrote and I believe Bob Hoskins published in Infinity - I'm not knocking Terry; he's doing a novel for me so it'd be hypocritical to knock him - it was called 'Changing of the Gods' and it poked fun at religion in general, and it was to me offensively sexual in tone, and I would have turned it down, yes."

Sex is another bugaboo of Elwood's, resulting from his religious beliefs. As the Bible condemns homosexuality, so does Elwood. Sex outside of marriage, ditto.

There have been stories about homosexuality published by Elwood, and stories with unmarried sexual partners. But, and Elwood is careful to point this out, these instances serve to discourage the practices involved and present them as degrading or corrupting to individuals.

Elwood's own mainstream novel, Magdalene, mentioned above, can serve as a good example of this. I did not see the manuscript, but it was discussed quite a bit, and I believe it could be termed a "Christian-inspirational sex novel." The book is about a prostitute and features many heavy sex scenes, such as the "smorgasbord," where the main character, armed with a can of whipped cream, fellates a line of men. What makes the novel different from an ordinary sex novel is that the heroine is degraded by the act of selling her body, rather than enjoying it as an ordinary sex novel would undoubtedly do, and that a moral lesson is taught when a minister saves her from her profession by converting her

to Christianity.

Now at first glance this sort of thing looks bad. Even at second glance it looks bad. It smacks of moral censorship and religious bigotry. But Elwood is quick to assure that it is not censorship or bigotry, because he does not have total control of the markets, and if he rejects a story because of his taboos, or if a writer feels his creativity stifled by Elwood's conditions, then the writer can submit his work to those other markets.

But I'm still not satisfied by Elwood's argument. Remember, Elwood is presently responsible for 40-50% of the sf being published, and he has stated that about 95% of the stories he buys are ones he has assigned to specific writers. So, about half of the stories being published are done under conditions and limitations similar to those I've described. That's a pretty powerful set of percentages. Any writer who doesn't submit to Elwood is ignoring half of the markets available. He is ignoring half of his potential income.

If it were just Christianity that was concerned, I wouldn't worry about Elwood's effect on the market so much. But his Christian beliefs also influence other issues. If a writer wrote a story sympathetic to homosexuality, it could not be sold to Elwood. And...Elwood's stand on homosexuality leads to another issue: During our conversations, he mentioned that he disapproved of the Women's Liberation Movement because "there is a definite percentage of Lesbians involved in the movement." How much this opinion influences Elwood's work is hard to tell, but at least one story I've read, "The Rescued Girls of Refugee" by Anne McAffrey (?) in Ten Tomorrows, came across as offensively sexist, even to a self-admitted male chauvinist like myself. Nor can I think offhand of any stories Elwood has bought which have had well-developed female characters. (Tho' I must admit that I have not been able to read even half of the 40+ anthologies by Elwood published so far.)

If Elwood were a minor editor in the field, no one would worry about his personal beliefs. It is the fact that he controls so much of the field that causes concern. There have been other editors in the field who have been criticized for narrow views. John Campbell was often criticized for his "right-wing" views, and Michael Moorcock was also criticized for the highly experimental contents of NEW WORLDS when he was editing it. But while both these men had a great deal of influence on the sf field, in no way did they exert this influence by controlling a huge portion of the markets; theirs was an "honest" influence, caused by their being able to assemble a package of writing that impressed other writers and brought in more work written to their standards.

I made an observation to Elwood that if a poor story appears in an anthology, the editor gets blamed, while if a poor novel is published the writer gets the blame. Elwood replied that that was true, but in both cases it was really the writer's fault for writing the story poorly.

But it's the editor's responsibility to see that poor writing doesn't get published in the first place! An editor who isn't able to recognize when a story is poorly characterized or cliched, or what changes can be made to improve it, is a poor editor. The best type of editor is one who can show his writers where their stories slip, tell them how their mistakes can be corrected, and inspire them to greater efforts. It was because John Campbell was that type of editor that the "Golden Age" of sf came into existence.

I don't feel that Elwood is that type of editor. In the course of our conversations, he made what might have made a Freudian slip. The statement is taken out of context, and the subject under discussion at that moment was not science fiction, but it is still a statement that I feel says a lot about Elwood's attitudes. Elwood stated, "I don't really

dislike anything very much."

Elwood does not possess a particularly forceful or inspiring personality. He came across to me as a non-violent, honest, sincere, very conservative person - rather a credit to his Christian beliefs, in fact. If there are some things which he dislikes, there is nothing for which he evidences a hate. He bore no resemblance to the many stories I've heard about how mean and cruel and vicious editors are. He is a "nice guy."

While being a "nice guy" has its advantages, I think that for an editor it also has disadvantages. I gained the impression from talking with Elwood and observing his behavior with other people that he is too unwilling to criticize other people's work. I think that, on an unconscious level, he may be accepting work that he knows could be better written. I think that if he was more snarly, if he took a closer look at the stories he receives and pointed out the flaws he found to the writers, if he insisted on more rewrites, that the quality of the work he publishes would take a giant leap upwards. He seemed too willing to accept the first version submitted of the stories he assigns. Trying to judge other people's psyches is a tricky and dangerous business, but the impressions I've described are the ones I perceived about Elwood.

Elwood's effect on the science fiction field as a whole is something that probably cannot be determined conclusively. But questions have been raised about possible effects of his work and methods.

One that I raised in an earlier GODLESS might, I think, give another reason why I feel Elwood's anthologies tend to be below average in quality. Most of the markets Elwood has broken into have been new markets, that had published sf infrequently or never before Elwood's arrival. In just a few years, he has nearly doubled the size of the science fiction field. My question is: Has the amount of science fiction being written increased proportionately to the amount of science fiction being published?

To illustrate: Suppose that in 1970 there were markets for 100 stories (a ridiculous figure, but easy to calculate with), and that there 1,000 stories submitted that same year. Roughly the best 10% of those stories (allowing a few percentage points for editorial preferences and bad taste) would have been published. Now, in 1974, there are markets for 200 stories. But has the number of stories being written also doubled to 2,000, so that the top 10% are still being published?

I don't think it has. There is more sf being written, I'm sure; many new writers have appeared on the scene and older writers, because of the expanded markets, are able to write more or even go full-time. But I don't think it has increased as fast as the markets have. Is it now necessary to buy the top 12% of sf being written? The top 15%? What? (Because I don't know what the figures for stories submitted/stories accepted are for various years, I don't know what the true figures would be. I sure wish I could find out, though.) The stories included in those extra percentage points would tend to be more poorly written than the other 10%, meaning that the overall quality of the field is lowered.

Has such a drop in quality taken place? No doubt there are many who would disagree with me, but I feel such a change has taken place. There no longer seems to be the excitement, the feeling of new potential that infected the sf field five or six years ago. Other people have expressed similar opinions. Whether this change, if it exists, can be placed at Elwood's door (and no matter how much of the sf field he's responsible for, I wouldn't give him total blame; but a strong influence...maybe) is, again, an undeterminable answer.

The question of "glut" arises: Has Elwood's massive entry into the original anthology market caused a glut in the markets for that type of book? Yes, I think it has. On a personal level, it's no longer possible for me to even try to read all the original anthologies being published

now. On a higher level, it may be that there are too many o/a's being published for the available markets, particularly in hardcover. The majority, I believe, of hardcover anthologies are sold to libraries. And it may be that there are now too many original anthologies being published for the libraries to support all of them; the libraries will only be able to budget for some of them, causing drops in the total sales of each, possibly to the extent where it will no longer be good business to publish the books. Result: a "bust" in the original anthology market.

Elwood's opinion is that a "bust" in the o/a market will not occur. On the other hand, he does admit that "market conditions favor novels" and that novels tend to sell better than anthologies of short stories. And it is a fact that Elwood has drastically reduced his work on anthologies and is concentrating most of his efforts on novels, particularly the 48 per year for Harlequin Books. There are still between 30 and 40 Elwood anthologies unpublished, but these are scheduled over the next two or three years, not actually "new" work.

Speaking of Harlequin Books, one of the worries about Elwood's contract with that company is their practice of "nurse-book" distribution methods: Harlequin supplies its line of nurse novels with their own book racks, and they place these racks in places where racks are usually not found in great number; drugstores, five-and-dime stores, etc., and their sales are supposed to be extraordinarily high. Some people have expressed worry that the same methods might be used with Harlequin's sf line, and might be detrimental to the sales of other publisher's books.

Preliminary reports after Elwood first was hired by Harlequin said that they would not be using the "nurse-book" methods to distribute the sf line. In the course of the interview, though, Elwood admitted that this was no longer quite so certain. He said that Harlequin was planning to try a variety of methods, presently confidential but "quite exciting", and that the "nurse-book" methods might be a part of these plans.

In Elwood's office, I came across a dummy cover for one of the Harlequin Books (quite attractive, I might add; Harlequin will be using art by well known sf artists such as Freas and Schoenherr for their sf line, instead of the monotonous and poorly-done covers on their nurse books). At the top of the cover were the words "A Roger Elwood Selection" and a circle beside the words with the number 50 therein. Such leads me to suspect that each book will have a number of its own, like Harlequin's nurse books (and also DAW Books), and that the "nurse-book" methods of distribution will be used.

Oddly enough, though, I don't object to those methods. In fact, I'm in favor of them. One of my other worries about the growth in science fiction is that display space on the book racks hasn't, I feel, grown apace with the number of books being published. There's a store near here that had a fairly nice selection of sf; nearly a rack full. But since I first arrived in this area, the quality of that rack has gone way downhill. Why? Because now, nearly half the available space on that rack is taken up by Perry Rhodan and Doc Savage books. So there's no longer as much space available for all the rest of the sf being published.

Now if Harlequin had come into the market with regular distribution methods, it would have made the situation even worse. With a new book coming from them each week, it would have resulted in even less opportunity for each book published to get a fair showing (including Harlequin itself). While the separate racks idea might be detrimental, I think the chances for detriment would be even better with regular methods.

For over nine pages now, I've been expressing my doubts and worries about Roger Elwood. It's about time that I began telling about some of the things I found encouraging about Elwood, and make me hope that his work in the future will impress me more.

First, he's gotten better deals for the writers whose work he has

bought. His word rates are as high as ANALOG's, 3-5¢ a word. He's increased his pro rata royalty rates to 70-80 in favor of the author (for any royalty payments over the original price, the writer gets 70%). I believe this is higher than most other markets offer at this time. He has stated that he would like, and is trying, to get publishers to use the SFWA Model Contract. And he has taken steps to cut down on his paper-work load, so that he'll no longer have the problems with handling manuscripts and correspondence that have caused complaints.

Because he's expanded the markets, he has been able to give a large number of new writers their first sale. While I haven't been particularly impressed by any of these new writers yet, and I think that some of them will look back years from now and be dreadfully embarrassed by their first stories, it proves that Elwood is open to new talent and we may find a new Big Name Pro in his anthologies yet.

He has been willing to try new methods and ideas. The Many Worlds of... series he has been doing for Chilton uses an idea I think is marvelous: each collection of stories by a certain author (so far, Poul Anderson and Andre Norton) contains not only fiction by the authors, but commentary and criticism on their works by well-known critics like Sandra Meisel and Patrick McGuire, and pieces by the authors themselves discussing their own writing. The Continuum series is another experiment, though the reviews I've seen haven't been particularly enthusiastic of the results.

He's helped arrange contracts not just for himself but for other authors. Elwood is responsible for the series of books that Barry Malzberg will be editing for Harlequin, and he was also instrumental in launching Harlan Ellison's Discovery series of first novels for Pyramid.

I think that by moving his emphasis to novels instead of anthologies, Elwood will increase the quality of the work printed under his direction. Even though he may be editing just as much wordage as before, he won't have to judge as many stories. Instead of dealing with ten or twenty writers for one book, there'll be one writer, one book; this will save him a large amount of work and time, and I think he'll be able to judge better because of less pressure. Also, the novels will tend to be judged individually, by themselves, and there won't be the glaring disparity in quality that appears in many of his anthologies. Like I said, if a poor novel is published, the writer is blamed, not the editor.

Elwood's plans for the future are many. Some of them, he admits they are only dreams right now; something he would like to do at some time. He has stated, however, that he'll be spending more and more time on his own writing in the future. Another possible plan is the introduction of a tabloid-sized science-fiction magazine printed on newsprint, so that it could be sold at newsstands and in NATIONAL-OBSERVER-sized racks at supermarkets, as well as at regular magazine stands. And one of his dreams is to be able to get into movie production and film such works as Pangborn's A Mirror for Observers.

Elwood is very sincere about his work and beliefs. He doesn't want people to think of him as a religious bigot or to dislike his anthologies because of that. He wants to publish books that people will enjoy and appreciate, and he's willing to listen to criticisms of his work and methods, and if he's convinced, he'll take action to try and correct any deficiencies. He is aware that many people consider his strict beliefs to be a danger to the quality of sf being published. And I think because he is aware of this, that he is nowhere as strict in applying those beliefs as he could be.

It is when a person controls too much of a market that danger sets in. Right now, I believe that Elwood does control too much of the market. His influence may extend even beyond the markets he is directly responsible for, and act as a censoring influence over the entire sf field.

Writers may start saying to themselves, "Hey, since Roger Elwood buys so much of the sf published it's a good possibility that I'll be selling stories to him; I'd better not write anything that would violate his taboos." I don't think any writer may do that on a conscious level, but I think there may be a tendency for Elwood's influence to have that effect.

But it may be a moot question. From all indications, the rest of the sf field is growing quickly now; publishers are expanding their lines, new ones being started, older books are being reissued in droves, etc. (It would be an interesting question as to whether Elwood merely preceded this general growth, or inspired it.) With the rest of the field growing, Elwood is becoming less of an influence on the entire market. Instead of 40% of the market, in a year or two he may only be responsible for 25% or so. Right now the publishing scene seems so chaotic that it's hard to say with any degree of certainty what the future holds.

What I hope doesn't happen is that all this expansion eventually results in a field-wide "lust." The sf magazines underwent a similar growth and lust in the 50's and they've never fully recovered. If a lust does occur, Elwood will probably go down with all the rest.

Final conclusions: Right now, I don't think that Roger Elwood is a very good editor, and his reassurances about his effects (or lack of) on the sf field don't particularly reassure me. But he is sincere about his work and his intentions are good. I think that with changes in his working methods; he could become a better editor, one whose work I might enjoy. I hope that his work improves, and I hope that there are no detrimental side-effects to Elwood's work in the sf field.

- Bruce D. Arthurs

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(The King in Plural, continued from page 4...)

NIXON'S REVENGE Another change about this issue is that the price has raised again. These damned things now cost 75¢ each, or 3 for \$2.00. Last issue I raised the price to 50¢ each, because I figured the cost for the previous issue to be 37¢ apiece, more than I had been charging to subscribers. (Guess how many subscribers I have? Wrong. That's what you get for using the fingers of both hands to count on.) Well, I did some figuring for the costs of this issue, and came up with 58¢ each. DAMN!

The fanzine hasn't gotten that much larger; the prices have. Stencils alone have risen from \$5.00 a quire to \$6.45 in less than a year. Plus the postage hike. Plus rising paper costs. Plus, plus, plus!

Anyway, this increasingly expensive hobby has been making me think about various ways to save size and money. The next issue will be similar in size and appearance to this one, but after that nothing is for sure. A few possibilities: once I get out of the Army and back home, I'll be using my elite typewriter instead of this pica one, and I'll be looking for a micro elite, so I can get more words to a page. And I don't think I'll be as lavish with white space as I have been. If I'm able to hold the page count down to 24 pages, that saves 6¢ apiece for postage alone, which is the single most expensive item in producing this.

GODLESS, the Expensive Fanzine with the Cheap Editor.

THE PERILS OF ON-STENCIL WRITING... ...are infinite. Besides all of the stuff I mentioned as coming in the next few issues, I also have on hand an article by Don D'Amassa titled "A Requiem for Lancer." And besides all the "new" artists I listed.
(CONTINUED ON PAGE 19)

FIGHTING WORDS FOR ASTROLOGY

I make a hobby of astrology - serious astrology, that is - and as such a one I am alternately amused and appalled at many of the anti-astrology arguments which I see advanced to "disprove" it. Gary Grady's article in GODLESS 7 is typical. I don't know what Gary has against astrology, but it has led him to write from a purely emotional and prejudiced viewpoint.

Gary's prejudice is apparent in his very first paragraph, solely from his choice of phrase: "...convert the adherents of that money-making pseudoscience to the pursuit of sanity...." There are charlatans in astrology, and there are astrologers out to make all the money they can from their knowledge, but most adherents of astrology are involved solely because they find it an entertaining and rewarding study. Pseudoscience, to me is a scareword dreamed up mainly by writers of high-school textbooks and debunkers of astrology. I haven't seen it used anywhere else yet. And that phrase about the pursuit of sanity - Gary, even if you don't believe in astrology's veracity, what right do you have to call its believers insane? ~~YAY! / YAY! /~~

We will not go into your 2+1 and hotel problems. They are interesting, and they build up your wordage handsomely, but they don't have a thing to do with your subject.

Astrology's advocates do not claim that it is "...a holdover from the Wisdom of the Ancients." They do claim that astrology was first practised among the Chaldeans and Sumerians and that it spread to other lands and developed in sophistication as time went on.

It is true that there are people who are quick to jump on anything which they can hold up as "proof" of astrology. For the most part they are the popularizers of astrology, the writers who cough out endless potboilers on whatever is popular. It is also true that serious writers on astrology like to use any striking fact or anecdote in their books. Why not, as



BY JEFF MAY

long as the anecdotes are true? Giving examples and telling stories with human characters instead of dry facts is an excellent method of grasping your audience's attention. If your story is to the point it is even a potential teaching tool. I think what Gary meant are the people who seize on something like the demonstratable fact that oysters open and close their shells to feed with the passage of the moon overhead, which oysters somehow respond to, and use it for proof that every part of astrology is true. Astrologers find such people as annoying as Gary does.

The date of birth is significant because the positions of the planets on that date are significant in astrology. Even more significant -- in fact, a sine qua non for really precise astrology -- is the exact time of birth, to the minute if possible. The reason for that is that the time of birth (and also the place of birth) is needed to compute the sign and degree which are rising over the eastern horizon at birth. This is the ascendant, relating to a person's personality and outward nature, and it is the most personal feature of the chart. It changes a degree every 4 minutes and a whole sign every two hours, and it is the main reason why even so-called "identical twins" often differ greatly in personality. It is not uncommon for twins to be born 15 minutes to 2 hours apart, more than enough time to change their ascendants significantly. The exact time of birth is also needed to compute exactly the positions of the swifter planets. Needed for serious astrology are the date, exact time, and place of birth, and if Gary had studied his subject instead of using his prejudices he would know this.

Gary, isn't it rather dogmatic of you to state that astrologers are given to "dogmatic insistence on the truth"? You state that "astrologers support their claims with arguments" and that "scientists support theirs with evidence." You offer no examples, no proof. I can state positively that serious astrologers use the tools of the scientific method in their researches: they formulate hypotheses, devise experiments, analyze the results with statistics, and publish their findings. They may not get the coverage that the scientific community accords its researchers, but they do all this. I have seen such reports on experiments.

You state that there is no evidence that astrology works, but after reading the first parts of your attack I doubt that you have ever even tried to look. Have you ever had a natal horoscope done? A full natal horoscope is not vague. Even my own amateur efforts are not vague. As for a horoscope working with a wrong birthdate, well, maybe. I have never had anyone give me a wrong birthdate to use, so I don't know. I do know that twice I have caught errors of as little as an hour in the time of birth, because the whole horoscope did not fit into a coherent pattern. Possibly this was sheer intuition on my part, but I rechecked, and the error was there, both times.

Finally you imply that astrology doesn't work because of the differences in several well-known people with the sun in Virgo. Gary, a horoscope interprets the sign and degree of the Sun and Moon and the 8 other planets, their positions relative to the Ascendant, the sign and degree of the Ascendant itself, and the significant combinations which they form, if any. A person's Sun-sign (what most people call "your sign") is only 1 of 12 major positions, it isn't the most personal feature of the horoscope, and it can be vastly changed by the combinations it forms with the other positions. Perhaps to you these positions conflict with each other, but it looks more to me as if they combine with each other. I have observed that there is general agreement over the meaning of the positions of planets in signs, combinations between the positions of a chart, and such fundamentals as the signs and planets. I would like to see two or more astrologers interpret the same chart. I don't think there would be as much difference as you'd like to think.

Gary Grady is attempting to debunk a subject he knows less than nothing

about. I don't expect my remarks to convert him or anything like that, but I hope he will try and take an unbiased look at astrology some time. I know it is possible to change your mind on astrology because at one time I felt about it the same way he does. I hope that anyone else who sees this article and Gary's will take the time to wonder whether astrology is a serious subject after all.

- Jeff May

((EDITOR'S NOTE - After receiving the manuscript for Jeff's article, I sent a return reply noting that while I thought it was a good article and I'd be printing it, it didn't provide much evidence to prove to me that astrology does work. A week or two later, I got Jeff's reply, quoted in part:

"About 3 weeks ago I ran across a book entitled The Case for Astrology, a Penguin book that is a reprint of the original. It is well written & rather good. I'm reading it now, or trying to in my few idle hours. When I'm finished I will try and do up a review for you, if you'd be interested. Along the way I'll try & comment on the evidence for astrology. Another possibility is this: I have delineated 2 horoscopes fully - commented on the person's character as indicated from the natal chart. The people involved have both said they are willing for me to use their delineations in an article about how close I came. Both have indicated they would be willing to try and write some comments on how close I came, and their reaction. Since a delineation runs 7 or 8 typed pages, single-spaced, this would be a long presentation, but I would be willing to consider working it up if you'd be interested."

Well, I would be interested in a review of the Penguin book, but as for the delineations, I'm not sure if I'd want to spend so much time and space on such. My own interest in astrology is very casual, but on the other hand, I think that such a study would be quite interesting and informative. So I've decided to let my readers make the choice: do YOU think you'd like to read an article on the subject and of the length Jeff May has described? If the answers should be in the affirmative, the earliest it could appear would be in GODLESS #10, since most of the next issue is already filled.))

(The King in Plural, continued from page 16...)

as being in this issue, there's also art by Terry Jeeves in this issue, and I have some stuff by Alexis Gilliland scheduled for the next. Also in the art file is a folio by Glen Brock, which came to me via George Boehm (as did the Gary Reynolds drawing on the next page), and is damned good. Sorry to have skipped over all these before.

A FEW FINAL WORDS. I have been spending so much time on this issue for about the last month, especially on the Elwood article, that my correspondence and letterhacking has gone to hell. Zero, in fact. I haven't even written my parents for nearly two weeks. I've had stuff sitting in the post dry cleaners for nearly a week because as soon as I get off work, I've come in here to work on the zine. All I've got left to do is type up the contents page and put numbers on all the pages, and it'll be ready to run off at Ned Brooks' this weekend. Then finally I can relax...until I remember about the collating and addressing and....

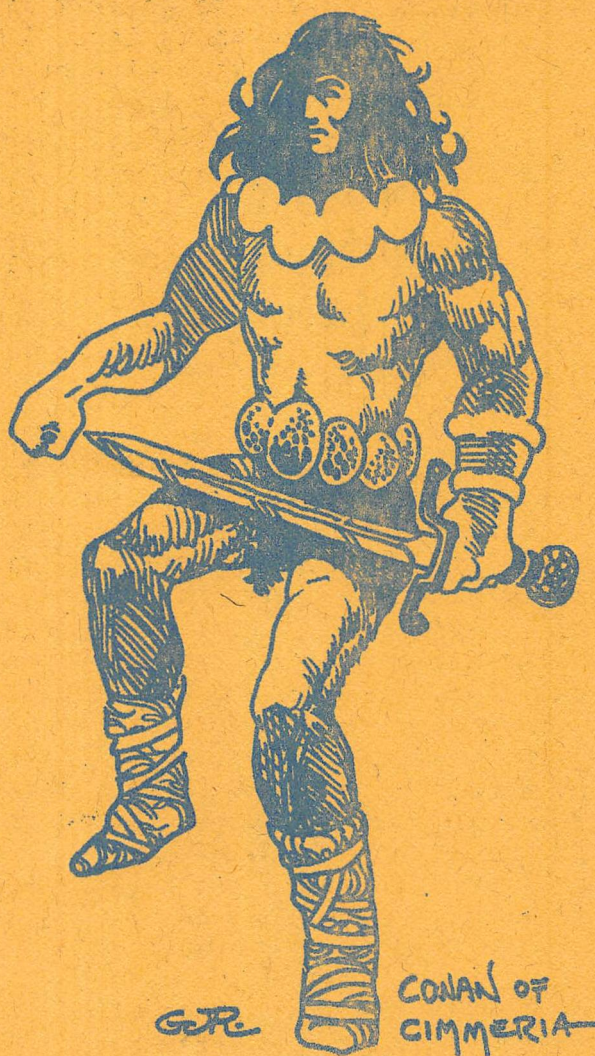
-- Bruce D. Arthurs, 10 Oct 74

((EDITOR'S NOTE - Due to the arrival of the John Robinson review below, and the fact that I've been reading a number of S&S books lately, this issue's "Review!" will be a special Sword-Swingers one.))

The Coming of Cormac by Caer Ged, Carlyle Communications (Bee-line Books), 1974, 184 pages, \$1.95.

That title is correct, it's Cormac not Conan, though there is a book titled The Coming of Conan. Caer Ged is secretly, and in real life, Lee Wyatt, who also writes porn as Lee Wyatt or I wouldn't have told you. Wyatt/Ged is knowledgeable in the field of tits and lizards. Just read the book and you'll readily know that it was written by an insider.

So what happens here? Well, Cormac rides all over the map to rescue the fair Avalona from oversexed and perverted villians including Onard, King of Waldrop, Sheheit, the witch-priestess of Krath, a knight who carries a shield with a red circle and horse's head symbol and who claims that Avalona is his long-lost Aleta; and of course, you can scarcely expect Cormac to sate his appetite merely thru the good services of Avalona, there's a wench here, a wench there, a few lusty



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Amazons, etc. They manage to experiment with all sorts of sex, natural but mostly unnatural, or at least uncomfortable.

You'll marvel to the prowess of the hunchback, exhale in shocked amazement at the power of the ointment that keeps Cormac from coming, not believe your eyes when the stone-monster displays his foot-long tool, and never be quite certain as to what is coming next at any point in the book, right down to the conclusion.

Start your own Put'n'Take porn library, share the stuff with your friends. These are \$2 apiece, folks, so you'd better have at least a half-dozen friends to cut costs, cut costs.

-John Robinson

Flashing Swords #1, edited by Lin Carter, Dell Books, 267 pages, 95¢

I haven't yet read the second volume in this series yet, but it's pretty good. Carter has gotten stories from the eight members of the Swordsmen and Sorcerer's Guild of America (SAGA)

and four (by Fritz Leiber, Jack Vance, Poul Anderson, and Carter) appear in this volume. Of the stories, I found two to be excellent, one suffered from being too short, and the other...well, read on.

"The Sadness of the Executioner" by Fritz Leiber is the too-short story. Leiber suffers from periodic writing slumps and he seems to have been in one for the last few years, writing mostly short incidents and sketches rather than actual stories. This is a damned shame, because Leiber is one of my favorite, maybe the favorite, writers. And it's even more distressing because his Fafhrd & the Gray Mouser stories have always been my outstanding choice for best S&S. Yet, the story is entertaining, tho' only concerning a 20 second span of time when the Death of Nehwon attempted to end the careers of Fafhrd & the Mouser. But damn, I'd like to see longer, more involved stories from Leiber again!

Jack Vance's "Morreion" is set in his Dying Earth, but can be read independently. There's not too much I can say about this marvelously rich and imaginative story, except try to mention some of the ideas and conceptions presented: the IOUN stones, archvults, a trip to the literal end of the universe in a flying castle, an escape to rival the Count of Monte Cristo, jealousy, treachery, and betrayal. Not Vance's best work, perhaps, but a work still well worth reading.

"The Merman's Children" by Poul Anderson is probably the best story in the volume. For some reason, I've never particularly liked Anderson's science fiction; there's a sort of dryness about it, something that fails to grab my attention and absorb me. Yet his fantasies, such as The Broken Sword, I've always enjoyed highly, and this was no exception. It has the best characterization in the book, and the story of the half-human children of a Merman and a human girl, based on the medieval ballad of Agnete, is an engrossing one. When the mer-people are forced to flee from their underwater town by an exorcism, the half-humans who are unaffected must decide whether to return to dry land or attempt to survive in a hostile sea. Their decision, and the consequences of it, make for an excellent story.

Finally, and unfortunately, we come to Lin Carter's "The Higher Heresies of Oolimar" by Lin Carter. It's been said that an editor should never buy his own work, because he's a prejudiced judge of his own writing. I wish Carter had followed that bit of advice with this story. I have seen some enjoyable writing from Carter, but his work is mostly drek. And "The Higher Heresies of Oolimar" makes even his other work look good. It has all of Carter's faults and none of his assets: a tired plot, a standard hackneyed S&S hero distinguishable only by his funny hats (in this case, he happens to be immortal and carries a bronze staff instead of a sword), an unfunny magician sidekick for comedy relief, the tongue-jamming and unattractive names Carter always seems to come up with ("...the month called Eglathdrunion," for example. How much better if that had been something more simple like "Eglath" or "Drunion". I don't think such a discomforting name as Carter has come up with would be used by anybody.), and all the other cliches you can think of. There's nothing new in the story, and nothing that you can't find better done elsewhere.

Still and all, it's not a bad book for your money. Ignore the Carter story and read the others and it's still worth 95¢. I'd like to see further volumes in the series, though not necessarily restricted to the SAGA members. Since the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series is now defunct, these books might provide a good place to publish new talent in the S&S field; after all, how many times have you heard the complaint that there's not enough markets for fantasies or occult-horror stories? If Carter could pull that off, I'd even be willing to forgive him using that story of his own.

- Bruce D. Arthurs

As the Curtain Falls by Robert Chilson, Daw Books, 174 pages, 95¢

I remember reading in LOCUS that this book was supposed to be a semi-serious satire of various clichés of the sword-and-sorcery, Lovecraftian, and other types of weird tales and fantasies. If it is, it's not an obvious satire, because it's damned enjoyable on its own. I think I can see a few things in the book based on other people's writings: "The Thing on the Threshold", a play that is performed in the city-mountain of Vandamar, seems to have elements of Chamber's The King in Yellow, Lovecraft, and possibly John Norman in it. Vandamar itself may be based on the city carved from a solid jade mountain that appears in Phil Farmer's World of Tiers series. But as I said, you don't need to know any of these references to enjoy ATCF.

Set in the incredibly far future, Earth has become an almost desert planet, with mankind surviving only on the lands that were once the ocean bottoms. Trebor of Amballa, a self-serving son of an assassinated politician who is manuevering to become the ruler of Amballa, becomes involved in a situation that causes him to quest across the Downlands of Earth, eventually resulting in exile to the barren, freezing Uplands in search of the mysterious Kingsworld Legacy.

Chilson does a very good job of describing the many cultures of the Downlands, most decadent and slowly failing as the Earth dies. He convinces the reader of the distantness of his story in time by casually inserting bits of information that the reader scans, then double-takes a few pages later with "What did he say?" For instance, in the sequence dealing with the Hackmatack Forest, he mentions the lobsters who are scuttling thru the trees; it is so far in the future that lobsters have evolved to the drying conditions and become arboreal. Also, humans now have two hearts and, living on the former sea bottoms, a very high salt level in their bodies; in fact, the protagonist avoids drinking from one stream because it is too fresh and would be dangerous to drink. And one final example; the reason the Earth has dried up is because civilization has risen and fallen so many times that space-travel has been developed hundreds, thousands of times, and each space-faring age has resulted in a small percentage of the Earth's water being shot into space!

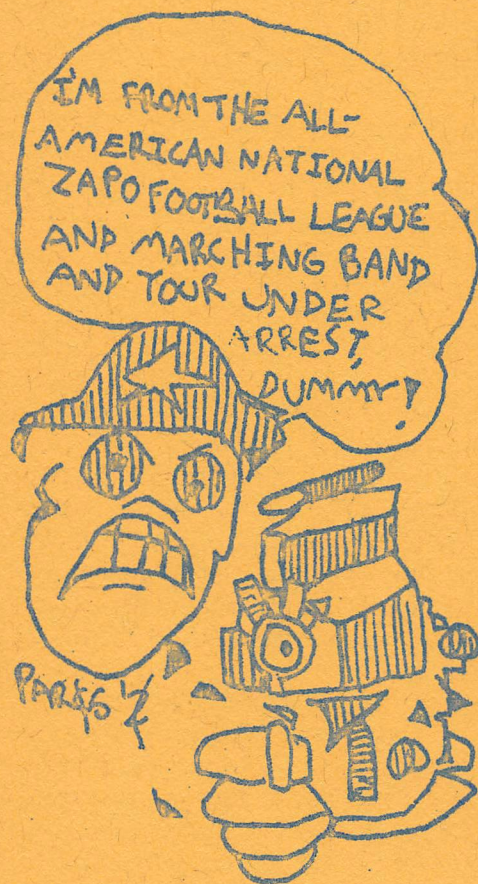
Unlike Lin Carter, Chilson has a talent for devising names: Vandamar, the Yondrovers, the Appetation and Zymanior, the three-mile tall rock called Agony, Aerobes, the Trepidation Marshes, and others, all quite suitable and pronounceable. On the other hand (and this may be another indication of the "satire" mentioned above), Chilson does have a lot of his characters with regular names spelled backwards; Trebor = Robert, Sirrom = Morris, Leinad = Daniel, etc. And there are some in-jokes of the sf genre included; one character says to another "That Yngvi is a louse....", and on the Uplands, Trebor and his companions come across the ruins of Trantor. There are even fanhish references: one of the cities mentioned is named Corflu, and one of the chapters is titled "A Way of Life". Is Chilson perhaps a pseudonym for some fan?

Characterization is well-developed. Trebor's self-serving and selfishness is brought out by his actions, not by the reader being told; his attachment to a valuable sword, even when it becomes a hindrance rather than an asset, is an example.

I found As the Curtain Falls to be one of the most entertaining and engrossing books I've come across this year. Despite a few nitpicks like those backward names, I was truly impressed by it and I am looking forward to future works by Chilson. In fact, I think highly enough of this that I've put this book onto my list of possible Hugo nominees. (The plot is fairly standard, I admit, but it's developed so well I consider it eligible, which may say a lot about what the rest of the sf field is like nowadays.

- Bruce D. Arthurs

THE PHOSPHOR-BRONZE COCKROACH



BY
RICHARD
BARTUCCI

It was with just the faintest of smiles that I stepped into the crowded main room of the First International Bank of Arrhenius. Like every moneybox on the frontier, this one had live tellers rather than autodispensers. It'd be a piece of cake.

Waddling up to the window, I elbowed aside an elderly matron in a conservative iridescent salmon-pink bikini to plunk my forearms on the sill.

"Yes?" said the fellow behind the window, unctious in his voice. "Can I be of service to you?"

"Koo hangh ukh!" I replied.

"Beg pardon?"

I jerked my gas glottis from the back of my mouth and said, "I'd appreciate your sticking your hands up and handing over the contents of your till." I pointed a 17mm recoilless pistol at his pancreas and smiled.

"Uh, should I put my hands up first, or give you the money, Mr. Cyle?"

Flares went off betwixt my eyeballs. He knew my name! How could he have known my name? Unless it was a trap!

"Tell me quick," I demanded. "How do you know my name?"

"Oh, very simple," he replied. "It's a trap."

Throttling my alarm to a simple yelp of surprise, I darted a glance about the bank. True enough, the room was full of guards, all wearing gas masks and all striding towards me with murder in their eyes.

I'd been suckered - and, unless I thought fast and acted faster, I'd be counting off the calendar against a nine-hundred-and-ninety-nine year sentence before I could sneeze.

"C'mon, boy!" I thought to myself. "You can get out of this; they don't

call you 'Three-in-One' Cyle for nothing!" Bucked up by this subliminal pep-talk, I checked out my arsenal. It wouldn't do to use anything lethal - that was against my code.

But then, so was getting trimmed down to a substitute second base by return fire.

Noticing that they were protected from my favorite weapon - a compendium of knockout, retch, sneeze, itch and tear gases - I spurred my wits to remember which pocket in my seven-piece suit I'd filled with blackout bombs. Darting my hand into one at random, I pulled out what looked like a handful of rabbit pellets. Shrugging, I broadcast them throughout the room with one sweep of my arm. They burst on contact, filling the bank with a thin vapor.

While the guards advanced, unaffected by the gas, I noticed frantic action on the part of the customers, tellers and vice-presidents, all of whom were undefended and fair game for my pollutants. To a man, they were dragging their nether garments to their ankles, the effects of my pellets becoming visible as they squatted. Apparently, I'd chucked a load of diarrhea bombs at them.

While the guards slipped and slid in the former contents of the patron's colons, I made my way to a side door and walked out into the crowded bustle of Arrhenius' main drag.

Uttering profuse "Excuse me's" and "Beg pardon's," I ducked into a nearby branch of Sears, Roebuck, Macy and Gimbel's Department Stores. Grabbing an item from a display table, I quickly queued up at the end of a long line leading to the Express Checkout counter. From there I could see the entire City Police Department milling about just outside the huge plate-plastic windows. I'd lost them for a while, but I knew that I'd better find a nice, quiet place to change identities; with all the gear I carry on a job, I tend to look like a 350-lb sumo wrestler with the bloat.

By the time I'd reached the cash register and paid for my purchase, the police were long gone, widening their search radius with every minute. Carrying the bagged, tagged and multiply-stapled box of something-or-other, I emerged from the store and walked a quick block or so to a cheap coinomatic hotel. An Arrhenian 20-pengo piece bought me 24 hours' access to a phone booth with delusions of grandeur, and I locked the door and sat down on the bed with a sigh.

Only then did I notice that I hadn't chucked the box on the way. Tearing off shopper's guides and receipt slips, I opened the bag to read the label. No wonder the salesgirl had looked at me so oddly; it was a Uniroyal "Inflate-a-Date" - but was one of their "Child Holester" series, a Shirley Temple Mk I. I wondered briefly at what she would have done if I'd picked up the Freddie Bartholemew model instead.

I chucked the unopened box onto the bed and stood to strip off my gear. First went my bulging double-breasted topcoat, with it's concealed pouches full of explosives, weapons, gas filters and narcotics syrettes. It was followed by an armor-plated overtunic with beryl-steel reinforcements and a force-screen-generating bombproof vest. I sat down and relaxed with only the firepower of a squadron of medium assault rippers remaining, and began to cogitate.

Paramount upon my mind at the moment was the thought: Who snitched? I'd only hit that particular bank six times in the past month - certainly not long enough for the law on this backwoods planet to make my modus operandi, much less learn my name.

Yet, there it was; that teller had known that I was Johnny "Three-in-One" Cyle, perhaps the most successful thief in the entire known cosmos.

It couldn't have been betrayal; I'd worked alone since, at the age of eight, I watched my two younger brothers get nabbed in a well-planned but

unlucky candy store heist. This could only be the result of an intensely-conducted analysis of my working methods over the course of a forty-three-year career in crime, and only one organization in the entire Federation of Incorporated Planets was capable of performing such an analysis.

The Especial Corps:

The sweat poured down my brows as the full realization of my particular pickle swept over me. The Especial Corps! They were the outfit that had wiped out the entire pirate planet of Boskone II. They'd been responsible for the conversion of the Neothugs of Kali IV to Seventh-Day Adventism. They'd even turned politics into an honest career.

I shuddered. Johnny Cyle had survived the flyswatting efforts of every law-enforcement agency from Novy Lithuania to Scoley's Hole; he'd been a successful cockroach in the cabinetry of civilization where only a phosphor-bronze cockroach could scuttle with any luck.

But now his luck had run out.

Unless....

Moving quickly, I piled my discarded working clothes into one corner of the room and pulled the inflating trigger on my pneumatic Little Miss Broadway. Golden curls and rosy cheeks, both fore and aft, began to billow into life size and a concealed recorder in her belly began to falsetto out a rendition of "Animal Crackers in My Soup." I stripped back the bedclothes and lifted the little gasbag into a supine position on the bunk. My topcoat and vest were then heaped atop her and the covers were tucked in.

Considering the tableau from the viewpoint of the peek-a-boo bug over the door, I was satisfied that it looked pretty much like a lecherous fiend doing his worst to an innocent young balloon. For that added touch, I dropped a slug into the bed's vibrator unit and dialed it to an hour of "Earthquake." The rumble and rattle almost drowned out the recorder, but I could still hear it, faintly piping away at "On the Good Ship Lollypop," as I left the room.

Three days later, I emerged from Doc Morrison's Surgery and Tattoo Parlor a completely new man. Amputation of my legs above the knee and the re-grafting of my feet to the stumps shortened my six-foot-seven height considerably. A black, bushy beard covered my face and I was carrying a sketchpad and a box of pastels.

Hoping that anyone inquisitive would take me for an overenthusiastic member of the local Jose Ferrer Fan Club, I made my way to the city spaceport and purchased a ticket for Parkinson's Planet, the vast and famous Retirement World.

I had no sooner ensconced myself in the cabin aboard the liner Patty Mae Torkelquist when a low voice crooned from my door annunciator in a tone bespeaking of nights in a Moorish harem.

"Excuse me, Mr. Moulin-Rouge," said the voice. "May I come in? I'm the stewardess and assistant ship's B-girl for this voyage."

Visions of sugarplums dancing in my head, I thumbed back the electro-latch and watched the door slide eagerly back to expose a slim, statuesque creature dressed in a severe G-string, her rank badges jutting out on her pasties.

"Come in!" I said, stepping back to admit her. "What can I do for you? More importantly, what can you do for me?"

She giggled and I watched as her pasties jiggled up and down in perfect synchrony. "Why, Mr. Moulin-Rouge! Aren't you the fast worker!"

I smiled up at her. "It's in the blood, I assure you. Don't let my stature set you off; there are compensations in other quarters for lack of height."

"I'm sure." She glanced at the bed and made a languid yawn. My glands fairly throbbed with excitement. "Shouldn't we relax and have a little

chat?" She poured herself onto the mattress.

Drooling like a puppy watching a steak dangle from a string, I parked myself beside her and began the story of my life - as Arnold Moulin-Rouge, of course.

Halfway thru my explanation of my philosophy of physical love, I noticed that I was looking down the barrel of a heavy-duty Welft garbler.

"Uh, pardon me, my dear," I said. "I don't believe that this conversation is as cordial as I'd like it to be. If you don't mind..." I started to get up.

"I wouldn't, Oyle."

I looked at the petite finger pressing the hair-trigger of the garbler and sat down again.

"So you know my name?" I said.

"Uh-huh," she nodded. "And your reputation."

I eyed the pistol fearfully. A sudden muscle spasm and my entire nervous system would be short-circuited like a wet flashlight. "You're with the Especial Corps."

"Naturally." She pointed the muzzle of the weapon at my legs for a moment, then back at my chest. "That bit of surgery was clever, Mr. Oyle. Our computers anticipated that you'd try it."

"And they also anticipated that I'd head for Parkinson's Planet."

"Yes," she said, her head - and pasties - bobbing. "Only on a Retirement World could you find the technology to restore your legs to their normal length."

Bitterness galling in my throat I glared at her. "Okay. Go ahead and shoot me, you she-devil. You won't be able to take Johnny Oyle any other way!" I staggered to my feet, losing height as I slipped to the floor.

"Nonsense!" she exclaimed. "We don't intend to shoot you!"

"Oh?" I inquired. "What happens? Do I wind up in maximum security for the next two millenia?"

She made a rude noise. "That would be silly of us, wouldn't it? We can't afford to waste talent like yours."

"Waste it?"

"Certainly. When somebody's got the savvy to handle crookedness - when he has a real aptitude for it - we try to recruit him for work that's more important than merely keeping the fuzz on their toes."

I was puzzled for a moment. "Where could crookedness be important?"

"Oh, you dummy!" She looked cross. "Think for a moment!"

My eyes glazed over as the realization hit me. "you mean..."

"Sure." She smiled and lowered the gun. "How would you like to be President of the Federation?"

- Richard Bartucci

((EDITOR'S NOTE - I received Bartucci's manuscript in the early summer of 1974 and loved it. Then the well-known events of 9 August 74 occurred, which somewhat reduced the effectiveness of Richard's punchline for "The Phosphor-Bronze Cockroach." I was so enraged that I immediately fired off a postcard to Washington, DC (marked PLEASE FORWARD), which said:

Dear Tricky,

You son of a bitch. You didn't really give a damn about "the state of the nation", did you? You just wanted to spoil Bartucci's punchline, didn't you? Well, if you ever run for public office again, don't expect me to vote for you!

Someone must have been taking me seriously, because soon after, the events of 8 Sept 74 occurred, and the punchline was once more effective. Thanks, Tricky.))



Don D'Amassa
19 Ansell Dr., East Providence, RI 02914

GODLESS arrived yesterday, so right after putting Tom Collins on a train for Boston, I sat down to read it. We seem to have remarkably similar tastes, judging by your Hugo nominations. I picked Trullion also, which surprised me because while I almost always enjoy Vance, I've never considered him to be capable of Hugo quality fiction. Live and learn. Hussade is so realistic, I expect teams to be organized for Aussiecon. ((But where would we find the virgins?)) I also picked "Deathbird" - nothing else even close. Your second choice for novella - "White Otters of Childhood" - is my first. No short story appealed to me enough to cop that award. F. M. Busby doesn't qualify for the Campbell award; he had a short story published in the 1950's. I'd probably give the Grand Master to either Edison or Peter Beagle.

Norm Hochberg has the best comment on Mike Shoemaker's article. No one area of criticism should be independent of the others. When a piece is analyzed, content, structure, and idea should all be examined, but technique and historical perspective are also important.

D. Gary Grady repeats the usual charge that "New Wavers" insist that their stuff is superior to traditional sf. Now we all know about the excesses of Charles Platt and some of the NEW WORLDS people, but the vast majority of people who prefer the newer trends in SF are much more reasonable. After all, John J. Pierce and Warren Johnson and Donald Vollheim and Fred Pohl and Forrest Ackerman have all been vituperative, and they don't exactly qualify as "New Wavers". Judge not lest....

Mike Shoemaker is wrong, incidentally, that "New Wave" was coined by Chris Priest. The term has been in common use among various fields for many years. Gertrude Stein and the expatriate circle were termed "New Wave" in the 1940's.

Ben P. Indick
428 Sagamore Avenue, Teaneck, NJ 07666

Awards are a big yawn to me; however, I'll admit not everyone feels this way - especially if they are in the running for some. As for the Grand Master of Fantasy, your three choices are each splendid; however, because Leiber is still alive and active, I would say to give it to HIM now! Let him enjoy the pleasure of it, and surely he is no less a master than anyone else. Next year, we must be unsentimental and give it to JRRT, following it up the next year with Peake. When has anyone been able to say they did not enjoy one of Leiber's stories? Written with charm, verve, and an incredible fund of originality, they prove his modest genius.

I just saw Lester's Three Musketeers last night, a sort of Dumas as seen through the Marx Bros. It was amazing how well he brought off slapstick in a costume drama frame, and that it did work. However, in truth,

as one who read and loved the book a couple score years ago, and also read and loved the somewhat sexed-up Tiffany Thayer version, I think I would have preferred all that glamour and glitter and stardom applied to a purer version, a genuinely romantic costume drama. For one thing, I'd have liked more characterization and less sword-thunking. Old Richileau and Milady were scarcely touched, altho they may be stronger in Part II. I am a great admirer of Faye Dunaway, and that one final glimpse, in a bonnet, superbly camera-lit, pays for the whole shooting-match; but Milady is one of my favorite villians (in deference to Women's Lib, I have dropped the usual -ess on the word) and I'd like to see her get more solid meat to chew on.

Mike Glicksohn

141 High Park Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M6P 2S3, CANADA

It's been a very long day of concentrated fanaticism and I've been drinking for quite some time ((you mean there's a difference?)) but it looks to me as if the illo for Dave Locke's article is the hand-stencilled version you've coloured in to get the solid colour on the skunk. What's your print run, you crazy fool?

The article isn't as hilarious as much of Dave's stuff but in its own quiet way it establishes him as a logical choice for your Hugo nomination. It reads as if Dave didn't really have much more than a general topic in mind and just sat down to type out as much as he could on the subject of pets. It's good writing, and funny in spots, but lacks the inspiration of Dave's numerous really superb pieces of fan writing.

I'm in full agreement with D. Gary Grady's thoughts on astrology, but I respect those who honestly believe that astrology has a valid basis. For example, at Disclave Kelly Freas talked most sincerely and passionately about both his firm belief in astrology and his total lack of respect for what passes for astrology in the mind of the general public. Knowing how most people think of science fiction and recalling the numerous arguments I've had trying to convince non-believers that there is more to sf than Godzilla Vomits Up Tokyo, I'm willing to accept at least the sincerity of Kelly's belief. I don't share it, but I won't put him down for what he obviously has given a lot of very careful thought to.

I'm sad to learn that I'm a soporific to Doug Leingang. Mostly I'm sad that he's gaffed and won't be able to explain just how I accomplish the effect since I've been having trouble sleeping lately and could put the power to good use. I'll have to wait until he gets published so he can return the favor, I suppose.

Are you sure the Katzes are still putting out FIAWOL? I haven't seen a copy in months, but every two or three months I'm cut off the Katzes' mailing list, and that might be the situation here. Jackie Franke tells me the Tucker Fund is going well, which doesn't surprise me at all. Tucker is one of the most respected and beloved fans of all and I wouldn't be surprised to see more than twice the minimum amount collected. The snake skin in the auction is elevated to something of a rarity, by the way, with the unfortunate death of my snake. Let's get those bids in, folks.... ((Sorry, folks; that part of the auction is already completed and I presume the snake skin is already on its way to the lucky bidder. ## It's nice to know that I'm not the only one who gets cut off the Katzes' mailing lists almost as soon as I've gotten onto it. I wish Arnie would tell fandom just what is required to stay on it, because I really enjoy his writing. Staying on his mailing



list is the only thing harder than getting onto it in the first place.))

Bruce Townley
2323 Sibley St., Alexandria, VA 22311

You know, at one time I didn't think of Mike Glicksohn at all. This was of course before I was a sci fi fan and I was in the womb or something. And then I heard about Mike from various sources and about how he was a neat guy and he wrote these neat letters to fanzines and like that and then I saw some of these letters myself and I said to m'self "Why not?" And then he said how a ditto cover for a fanzine (drawn by myself) was inept and didn't really say why and then I thought I was pretty sure why not. And then I see here (right here!) that he's learning how I draw! That is he thought I was inept saw a bit more and then he learns that he don't like it! Well, that's certainly better than Bill Kunkel who's said out loud that I don't know how to draw and Linda Bushyager who apparently thinks it to herself. And so Mike is presumably a neater guy than those other two cause at least he had ability to see that his personal taste is gettin in the way of more or less coherent criticism. How's that for pompous cheek? ((Not much actually. Now if Mike agreed with you that he's a neater guy, that would be pompous cheek!))

Speaking of neat this cover you have here is really not unneat. Didn't know good old Brad had it in him (haw hawhaw). Uh, let's see, it's rocket-ships except for those three fingers down in the corner there pointing. A reference to the Watergate perhaps? The Washington Monument? Dug Leingang? Actually unlike any of Brad's smaller drawings, a pleasant surprise. Don't take any promises indeed. What?

To get all the easy shit out of the way PAGE FOUR IS PRINTED UPSIDE DOWN. ((I know, I know. And that's the last mention of that I'm going to let slip into this lettercolumn, even if almost everyone else pointed it out to me, too.))

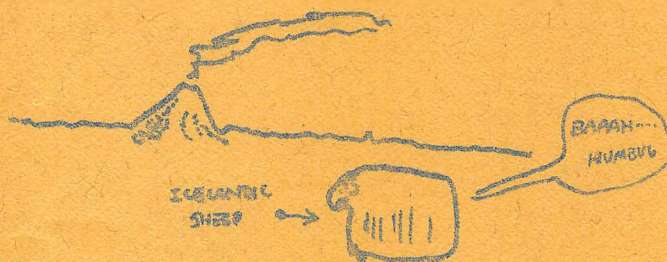
JO3 D. Gary Grady
243-90-2706, PAO, USS Dewey (DLG-14), FPO New York 09501

When I read A Funny Thing Happened...I nearly killed myself laughing. For some reason the cat named Balls struck me as really hysterical -- the name, I mean. It's so appropriate to a cat.

I never bother to do anything but skim lists of Hugo nominees. I get very guilty thinking about the ones I haven't read. It isn't that I don't read a lot; it's just that most of what I read is

not sf. I read more magazines (NEWSWEEK, NATIONAL REVIEW, SATURDAY REVIEW, SMITHSONIAN, AVIATION WEEK AND SPACE TECHNOLOGY, NATIONAL LAMPOON, PUNCH, you name it) than anything else. Second comes non-fiction books, and fiction is a distant third. On the other hand, most of the fiction I read is sf because the other stuff almost invariably bores me to tears. I mean, mainstream emphasizes things that I can come into better contact with in the real world: characters, real world situations, things like that. SF is not so limited.

I agree with Paul Walker that recent sf (that I have read) has suffered an idea shortage. Few things I have read recently have given me a real



Sense of Wonder. The Gods Themselves, the middle part anyway, is an exception. I have to say that while Time Enough For Love was impressive, it didn't seem to go anywhere in the idea department. An American-style breakfast house in the far future just didn't strike me as original or real, for example. Thought Rendezvous With Rama was great for generating thought, however. On the surface it says very little, but looking at the subtleties is fascinating.

Jackie Franke
Box 51-A, RR 2, Beecher, IL 60401

Good issue (though I'm less than happy with the repro on the Locke illo. *sigh* Told you to send it back if your mimeo couldn't handle it. Aincha pleased I'm not supersensitive about how my illos are treated? YOU BRUTE!). You're getting so smooth and polished in your editorial portions that I scarcely recognize you any longer.

You know, I've never stopped to figure out what each issue of DILEMMA costs; just wince at the total, close my eyes and go on from there. Quick figuring shows that #5 cost 39¢ for 1st class-mailed copies; 29¢ for 3rd class - not counting ink (no way to estimate what that ran!). No, wait! I goofed on paper costs - it's 28¢ for 1st class, 18¢ 3rd class (*Phew!* That's much better!!!) - for a 20p fanzine mailed without envelope. No wonder I can't afford largerzines or more frequent issues. Cost-per-issue is higher as a rule, since I'm basing these figures on a 100 issue run - usually it's more like 60 (but then I usually run smaller issues too - so it probably evens out - and more. A 12pp issue would cost about 20¢ - heck, that aint much!).

One thing was perfectly clear in your statistics drawn from that admittedly small example - SF fen read one heck of a wide variety of books in the field! Burroughs, Clarke, Ellison, Lewis, Morton, Peake, Smith, van Vogt - that's one heck of a mixed bag there! The wonder is that you found any agreement on remembered stories. The variation in personalities in fandom would seem to favor virtually no overlap. Even some is a marvel to behold....

Mike Glicksohn develops more appealing characteristics all the time. Being a fan is a proud and lonely thing - so they say - but being a fan with a poor memory for titles and authors is a shameful and lonely thing. So nice to have company, Mike.

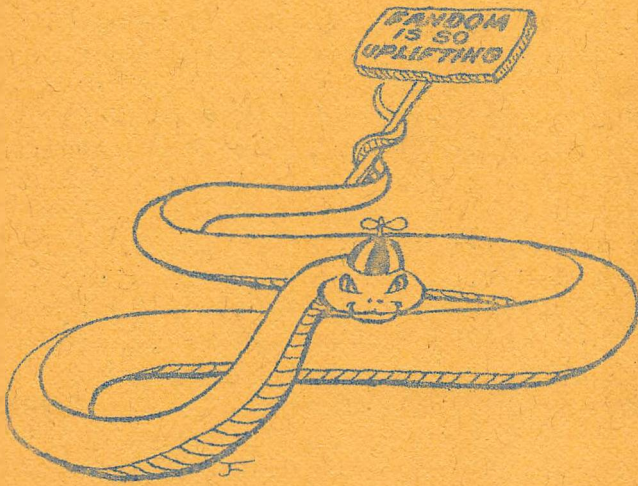
Again, I agree with Glicksohn re Bruce Townley. His work is cropping up all over the place - but I just can't develop a liking for it. *sigh* It's fun belonging to a minority. And apparently not caring for Townley illoes is definitely a minority view! Well, I wish him well, but I'll still close my eyes.

I can see the next topic-of-discussion shaping up: "Elitist" vs. "Slob." (I'm a Slob - Simply Like Out-of-the-ordinary Books.) My definition of out-of-the-ordinary being whatever appeals to me at the moment. I don't recall books for what Darryl refers to as "the right way" - hone to ghod I never do!

Don Ayres
2020 W. Manor Parkway, Peoria, IL 61604

Actually, the biases you mention ((about Brazier's memory-quiz results)) might not fade away as you increase your n-size for a number of rather complicated reasons. The biggest factor is that the survey asked for an instantaneous, non-thought response. This means that recency of reading will be very important, though the extent of that importance is perhaps incal-

culable, thus the recently-read Spacehounds of IPC was on my list. What constitutes recent, for that matter, when I've little time to spend on sf, as has been the case in the last few years? Another problem is that the words used to communicate the idea have a triggering value in themselves. Poe and Lovecraft are more likely to come to mind if "horror" is mentioned than Bradbury, Sturgeon, LeFanu, or Ayres; the first two because it is not a part of their most familiar output, the others because of general unavailability of their work (Dover has some LeFanu out and Warner just published "Carmilla/The Haunted Baronet", #76-539, \$1.25), though for slightly different reasons. I think you can see the point. The response may not be all that atypical.



As an addendum to Dave Locke's article on pets in general and on tarantulas as bodyguards in particular, I might add that a nice little king snake coiled around your wallet as it sits in your pocket would tend to discourage pickpockets. I know the snakes will fit, since one I was handling just crawled right in. Of course, reviving the waitress every time you try to pay your bill would become rather bothersome after a while.

My immediate response to Schweitzer's remark on Donn's methods being "unliterary" is "So what?" As Zychowicz points out, you can't isolate every-

thing; you have to be ready for a work to appreciate it. As a child, I found the first half hour of King Kong boring; now I find it humorous. It's the same film. I dare say the literary types are doing the same thing, only they don't even realize it. For you to remember anything about a work of art AT ALL means that the author has communicated with you; that overrides any and all "merits" of the story; I don't care if it's the worst piece of shit ever produced, if the artist communicates then he's done his job. If he makes you react, he's done his job. I've read Poul Anderson's The Enemy Stars twice now and probably will again; the novel bores the hell out of me, but there's something compelling in it that makes me return. If eminence by association is what makes a story memorable (which may be the case more often than we would like to admit), then so be it, whether the story is "good" or "bad", the author communicated, he elicits a response, he generates a thought.

Now, tell me that is unimportant!

A parallel situation exists with dreams; when I can remember them, I like to try to identify the stimulus that elicits them. It makes things more interesting.

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

The book reviews are notable for reinforcing my amazement at the number of fans who like Agatha Christie's mysteries. I like them, too, but they strike me as the kind of books most fans wouldn't like, since the main character is usually elderly and the construction follows the old



style mystery technique. John Dickson Carr's mysteries seem better suited for the tastes of fans, since they're filled with more colorful episodes and often you don't know if there's a supernatural element until the very end. But nobody ever says anything nice about Carr books in fanzines. ((Sure they do...if they're by Terry Carr.))

D. Gary Grady's ideas about astrology coincide with mine quite well. I can't believe that whatever influence heavenly bodies may exercise on human behavior is powerful enough to make much difference, against competition from genetic, environmental, and Mr. Heisenberg's uncertainty influences. It's something like the sea. You can predict how the moon and the sun will create tides, and you can calculate whatever gravitational pull the other planets in

the solar system exert on big bodies of water, but you can't predict the time of arrival, velocity, and height of each wave that will wash up to shore at any given spot via heavenly body calculations. Statistics seem to prove that a full moon brings an increase in odd behavior among a big city's inhabitants, but you can't go further and foretell precisely who will go streaking or beat up his wife in a city the next time the moon is full.

Dave Locke's article is wonderful. I've been petless for a long time, mainly because there's too much traffic in this block to let a cat or dog run loose and living alone, I'd have a very lonely pet during my long absences from a penned-up animal. If I survive until retirement, I'll want a dog. I've always preferred cats to dogs, but by the time I'm retired, I'll probably need the companionship of the dog more than the exotic fascination of the cat. By some strange coincidence, this is the first time I remember mentioning chipmunks in a loc and today I got the information together for a newspaper column on chipmunks. They have suddenly begun to multiply in Hagerstown, after having been very rare in the past in the city itself. Squirrels are all over town in overwhelming quantities, but you had to go out into the woods to find chipmunks in the past. I went to the library to hunt facts about chipmunks, and engaged in one of those pointless bits of aimless conduct, looking for a chipmunk entry in the card index, knowing all the while that a hick town library like Hagerstown's wouldn't have a book on chipmunks and I should be looking for the Dewey decimal number for wildlife books. So what did I find but one entire book on chipmunks? It seems authoritative and is filled with marvelous pictures (I didn't bring it home, so I can't cite title and author's name) but the writer claims that chipmunks cannot be tamed and has heard only rumors of chipmunks that would accept food from human hands. So maybe Dave's chipmunk was unique in natural history. ((Either that, or Dave Locke is unique in natural history, which seems more probable. Actually, though, I've spent quite a lot of time at my parent's forest lot in Northern Arizona, where chipmunks abound, and they can be tamed somewhat. I've never gotten one to eat out of my hand, but there were several who got tame enough to eat food left by your foot, if you didn't make any sudden moves. If I'd had a little more patience and time, I could probably have gotten them to the point where they'd have eaten out of my hand. ##

Actually, instead of a dog, Harry, you should take the plunge one of these

days and get married; I've heard that if you train them right, women make wonderful pets and will do all sorts of things for you.))

Tony Cvetko
29415 Parkwood Drive, Wickliffe, OH 44092

Astrology is a bunch of crap and I enjoyed Gary's article very much, although I can't really think of much to say about it. I've never believed in astrology and I never will, yet it's incredible how many people assume I'm interested in it when I mention I'm majoring in astronomy (these are mundanes, of course, not fen). It's also incredible the number of people who don't know the difference between astrology and astronomy. Sometimes it can get exasperating when I have to explain the difference between the two and then the people still don't get it right. "Oh, so you're majoring in astronomy? How nice. Tell me, what does my forecast hold in store for me today?"

Dave Locke's article was one of his better ones, to put it mildly! As for pets, we've got a medium-sized poodle by the name of Schatzie. Laziest dog I've ever seen. She's well-trained, can do a few tricks, doesn't need a leash, stands by the front door when she wants to go outside and do what has to be done, hates dog food, loves spaghetti, etc and etc. She really gets excited when my grandfather visits, and I mean excited. One time he came over and she started to dash madly around the kitchen and try to jump into his arms. She got a running start and leapt into the air...and missed. Hit a cupboard door on the fly and wasn't even phased. I would probably have knocked myself out cold if I had hit it as hard as she did. Stupid dog. She doesn't know how to bite and if a burglar broke into the house she would probably bark and then run under the couch to hide. ((Too bad Schatzie isn't human; she sounds like she'd make Harry Warner a great wife.))

Dave Szurek
4417 Second, Apt. B-2, Detroit, MI 48201

Enjoyed reading Grady's thing on astrology, even though it didn't really say anything new. I for one have always found astrology an interesting topic, but that says not whether I take it very seriously. There have been a few hardly academic observations that have made me wonder; I've rarely been able to get along with people born under Capricorn although they and I have tended to gravitate toward one another often enough. Have always gotten along exceptionally well with Virgos, especially of the female gender - probably been involved with more Virgo women than those of any other sign (although the woman I've finally decided to settle down with - at least as far as I can see right now - is a Leo). The Capricorn and Virgo aspects, aside from occurring with such frequency, also match the stuff books say about my sun-sign, Cancer. And the Leo is not "contradictory", but I've also held a proportionately large number of friends born under Aries, which is about as "contradictory" as you come. Don't believe I match everything they say about Cancer either. Some of it applies, but a lot of it doesn't. What, though, about things like "face-reading", "bump-reading", "personal number" and the like? Now, those pseudo-sciences are definitely absurd. I even feel that "scientific" stuff like body language is taken far too seriously by those who subscribe.

My cat, Kenny, acts like a dog in some ways. She really digs on playing catch. Long ago, she began retrieving everything that I'd throw. Hell, I didn't want most of it back, or else I wouldn't have thrown it. But here she'd come with x-object dangling from her mouth, drop it in front of me and look up pathetically for me to throw it again. If I didn't com-

ply, she'd drop it into my slipper and wait there until I decided to come out and play. She has none of the grace and agility usually attributed to felines. Bumps into things like a total klutz - falls down while trying to climb. One time she leapt from the kitchen table onto the stove, but lost her bearing and slid into the garbage. In other ways, though, a cat stereotype - stubborn as hell - nosy to distraction - finicky for sure. Strange young beast.

Dave Rowe

8 Park Drive, Wickford, Essex SS12 9DH, GREAT BRITAIN

On Reviewing: I'm one of those bods who only gets to read (about) a book a month. But that doesn't bother me in the slightest, 'cause all I have to do to keep up with all those I don't read is to look up the fan-reviews, which tend to tell me everything down to the colour of the villain's side-kick's socks and nothing about the quality of writing, which would decide if I'm going to enjoy the book or not. Trying to review a book without giving the plot away is difficult, but that's the basic difference between a review and a precis.

Dave Locke (one of my favorite fanwriters) raises a very good point in his loc. Never praise a manuscript in your own zine (especially before the fans have read it). Rob Holdstock published a fanzine, MACROCOSM, about 2½ years ago, which had the mill-stone of being a fan-fic-zine. Oddly enough it was a damn good zine (nearly pro-standard fiction), but was further held down by Rob's intros which over-praised every piece, and thus spoilt the reader's enjoyment, when it didn't live up to expectations. ((It's been said that in the process of publishing a fanzine, every faned will eventually go thru the complete book of possible mistakes. (Tho', judging from the things I've heard about EMERGUMEN, Glicksohn apparently made his under a pseudonym.) What you mention, Dave, (and that damned page 4) were last issue's mistakes. Have you spotted this issue's yet? If you think those are something, wait until next issue!))

I'm going to be at odds with Mike Shoemaker. He quotes RENAISSANCE as saying, "The actual term 'New Wave' seems to have been originated in Britain by Chris Priest." In fact the term was first used over here in regard to fanzines. In the early or mid sixties all British fnz's were faanish (with triple A's) and along came Pete Weston with ZENITH (later to be called SPECULATION) and Charles Platt with BEYOND, and one reviewer was given to say "there is a New Wave of Sercon-zines." The term was later adopted by Mike Moorcock's NEW WORLD crowd, with regard to their fiction. I've tried to find some published piece to verify that, but am at a loss to do so. But no doubt Pete Weston would testify to its validity, especially as he loves telling that to every little neo he meets at a con. ((Well, as a matter of fact, I found in my old copy of Arnie Katz's QUIP #5, February 1967, an article dealing with just that, titled "New Wave" by...ahem...Pete Weston.))

Michael T. Shoemaker

2123 N. Early St., Alexandria, VA 22302

I found Stories Rememored to be interesting. I didn't intend for the Eric Frank Russell stories to be included; I was merely responding to the question of sf's funniest man, and ranked Russell second to Kuttner, listing those four stories as examples of Russell's best humor. By the way, The Space Willies is an expanded version of "Plus X." I can't imagine how you came to list a story named "A Logic Called Joe" by Kuttner. In the first place, I never made mention of any such story in my loc, nor anything even approximating such a thing. Second, I've never heard

of any story by that title by any author. Third, there is a story entitled "A Logic Named Joe" (ASF March 1946), but it was written by Murray Leinster and I made no mention of it in my loc. ((Sorry, Mike; my mistake. What you did mention in your loc was "the 'Gallegher' and 'Joe' stories by Kuttner", and somehow I came under the impression you were referring to "A Logic Named Joe." After the last issue was printed up, though, and I was looking thru a completed copy, I clapped hand to forehead and exclaimed, "Arthurs, you idiot! 'A Logic Called Joe' wasn't by Kuttner, it was by Poul Anderson!" Then your latest loc arrived, and I began entertaining serious thoughts of entering a monastery until my mind became intelligent enough to survive in normal society.))

By interpretative criticism I mean that which enhances one's understanding of the ideas and presentation of ideas within a work. For example, I would refer one to the series "Twentieth Century Interpretations", or Thomas Moser's afterward to the Signet edition of An Outcast of the Islands by Conrad, or to Conrad the Novelist by Albert J. Guerard. I have already given a few examples within fanzines that are quite accessible. The only one who really seemed to comprehend what my article was about was Paul Walker. Paul recognized that it wasn't just about how little good criticism was available.



Leigh Edmonds
PO Box 74, Balaclava, Victoria 3183, AUSTRALIA

I have evolved, over the last year, a habit of collecting names and addresses so I was checking over your loccer's list and was a bit surprised to see myself listed. Mainly I was surprised because with my short memory I'd forgotten that I'd locced GODLESS.

Anyhow I went back through the issue to find the letter and when I came across it I could not help but agree with myself wholeheartedly - which is my normal reaction to myself. But it was your comment at the end about elitism that I liked the most and if I didn't believe what I wrote I would probably have thought you'd cut the head off my argument, which you haven't. It was really very good and you get a red star.

Now if I only had GODLESS #6, I could find out what Shoemaker said about elitism and see whether I was being got at or not. Personally I see nothing wrong with elitism. Elitism is people making subjective judgments and sticking to them because they believe they know more about that particular subject than the people who criticise them.

WAHF: my brother Gary Arthurs, Frank Balazs, Dave Barnett, Dick Bartucci, George Beahn, Ruth Berman, Sheryl Birkhead, Ray Bowie Jr., Bill Breiding, Eli Cohen, Brett Cox, Gil Gaier, Dick Geis, Jim Kennedy, Bill Kunkel, Eric Lindsay, Jeff May, Shayne McCormack, Dave Ortman, Brad Parks, Denis Quane, John Robinson, Ron Salomon, Darrell Schweitzer, Craig Strete and the rest of the RED PLANET EARTH tribe, Susan Wood, and (at last!) Joe Woodard.

