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HORIB 10 is published by Pat and Dick Lupoff, Merry Hill Road, Pough-
keepsie, New York 12603 for the 123rd FAPA mailing, May,
1968. Cover of the last issue was by Jack Gaughan, after Sydney
Adamson. Horib is not available to the general public, although a
few extra copies are run off for close friends and contributors.
Horib is not available for general trades.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Starting on page 11 of this Horib is the long promised "Xero Fun & Games Book." bhob Stewart and I worked up the two items ("The Fannish Worry Book" and "The Circle of Sophistication," in the spring of 1963, intending to add similar material and issue the Book either as part of or a supplement to a forthcoming issue of Xero.

Somehow or other the material did not get used at the time, so I put it aside planning to publish it whenever I could get bhob (or somebody else) to stencil it in a suitably attractive form.

Segue to 1968. Fannish fan Arnie Katz visits Merry Hell, and the now yellowing manuscript of the Book gets dug out to show him. Together Arnie and I read the few pages. First manuscript page has a handwritten note: "add something about Jacques d'Amboise and Michael Barbero." I know who Jacques d'Amboise is, but who is Michael Barbero? Arnie and I read the rest of the entries. Some are still funny, some merely mystifying, some seemingly pointless, some now poignant. The manuscript is ageing.

So here is "The Xero Fun & Games Book," sans fancy layout, unmodified and unedited, exactly as it was written five years ago.

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R. HOLMES & CO.

II
The Adventure of
the Dorrington
Ruby Seal

by John
Kendrick
Bangs

"Lord Dorrington, as you may have heard," said Raffles Holmes, leaning back in my easy-chair and gazing reflectively up at the ceiling, "was chiefly famous in England as a sporting peer. His vast estates, in five counties, were always open to any sportsman of renown, or otherwise, as long as he was a true sportsman. So open, indeed, was the house that he kept that, whether he was there or not, little week-end parties of members of the sporting fraternity used to be got up at a moment's notice to run down to Dorrington Castle, Devonshire; to Dorrington Lodge on the Isle of Wight; to Dorrington Hall, near Dublin, or to any other country place for over Sunday.

"Sometimes there'd be a lot of turf people; sometimes a dozen or more devotees of the prize-ring; not infrequently a gathering of the best-known cricketers of the time, among whom, of course, my grandfather, A. J. Raffles, was conspicuous. For the most part, the cricketers never partook of Dorrington's hospitality save when his lordship was present, for your cricket-player is a bit more punctilious in such matters than your turfmen or ring-side habitues. It so happened one year, however, that his lordship was absent from England for the better part of eight months, and, when the time came for the annual cricket gathering at his Devonshire place, he cabled his London representative to see to it that everything was carried on just as if he were present, and that every one should be invited for the usual week's play and pleasure at Dorrington Castle. His instructions were carried out to the letter, and, save for the fact that the genial host was absent, the house-party went through to perfection. My grandfather, as usual, was the life of the occasion, and all went merry as a marriage-bell. Seven months later, Lord Dorrington returned, and, a week after that, the loss of the Dorrington jewels from the Devonshire strong-boxes was a matter of common knowledge. When, or by whom, they had been taken was an absolute mystery. As far as anybody could find out, they might have been taken the night before his return, or the night after his departure. The only fact in sight was that they were gone -- Lady Dorrington's diamonds, a half-dozen valuable jewelled rings belonging to his lordship, and, most irremediable of losses, the famous ruby seal which George IV. had given to Dorrington's grandfather, Sir Arthur Deering, as a token of his personal esteem during the period of the Regency. This was a flawless ruby, valued at some six or seven thousand pounds sterling, in which had been cut

the Deering arms surrounded by a garter upon which were engraved the words, 'Deering Ton,' which the family, upon Sir Arthur's elevation to the peerage in 1836, took as its title, or Dorrington. His lordship was almost prostrated by the loss. The diamonds and the rings, although valued at thirty thousand pounds, he could easily replace, but the personal associations of the seal were such that nothing, no amount of money, could duplicate the lost ruby.

"So that his first act," I broke in, breathlessly, "was to send for -- "

"Sherlock Holmes, my father," said Raffles Holmes. "Yes, Mr. Jenkins, the first thing Lord Dorrington did was to telegraph to London for Sherlock Holmes, requesting him to come immediately to Dorrington Castle and assume charge of the case. Needless to say, Mr. Holmes dropped everything else and came. He inspected the gardens, measured the road from the railway station to the castle, questioned all the servants; was particularly insistent upon knowing where the parlor-maid was on the 13th of January; secured accurate information as to the personal habits of his lordship's dachshund Nicholas; subjected the chef to a cross-examination that covered every point in his life, from his remote ancestry to his receipt for baking apples; gathered up three suit-cases of sweepings from his lordship's private apartment, and two boxes containing three each of every variety of cigars that Lord Dorrington had laid down in his own cellar. As you are aware, Sherlock Holmes, in his prime, was a great master of detail. He then departed for London, taking with him an impression in wax of the missing seal, which Lord Dorrington happened to have preserved in his escritoire.

"On his return to London, Holmes inspected the seal carefully under a magnifying-glass, and was instantly impressed with the fact that it was not unfamiliar to him. He had seen it somewhere before, but where? That was now the question uppermost in his mind. Prior to this, he had never had any communication with Lord Dorrington, so that, if it was in his correspondence that the seal had formerly come to him, most assuredly the person who had used it had come by it dishonestly. Fortunately, at that time, it was a habit of my father's never to destroy papers of any sort. Every letter that he ever received was classified and filed, envelope and all. The thing to do, then, was manifestly to run over the files and find the letter, if indeed it was in or on a let-

ter that the seal had first come to his attention. It was a herculean job, but that never feazed Sherlock Holmes, and he went at it tooth and nail. Finally his effort was rewarded. Under 'Applications for Autograph' he found a daintily scented little missive from a young girl living at Goring-Streatley on the Thames, the daughter, she said, of a retired missionary -- the Reverend James Tattersby -- asking him if he would not kindly write his autograph upon the enclosed slip for her collection. It was the regular stock application that truly distinguished men receive in every mail. The only thing to distinguish it from other applications was the beauty of the seal on the fly of the envelope, which attracted his passing notice and was then filed away with other letters of similar import.

"'Ho! ho!' quoth Holmes, as he compared the two impressions and discovered that they were identical. 'An innocent little maiden who collects autographs, and a retired missionary in possession of the Dorrington seal, eh? Well, that is interesting. I think I shall run down to Goring-Streatley over Sunday and meet Miss Marjorie Tattersby and her reverend father. I'd like to see to what style of people I have intrusted my autograph.'

"To decide was to act with Sherlock Holmes, and the following Saturday, hiring a canoe at Windsor, he made his way up the river until he came to the pretty little hamlet, snuggling in the Thames Valley, if such it may be called, where the young lady and her good father were dwelling. Fortune favored him in that his prey was still there -- both much respected by the whole community; the father a fine looking, really splendid specimen of a man whose presence alone carried a conviction of integrity and lofty mind; the daughter -- well, to see her was to love her, and the moment the eyes of Sherlock Holmes fell upon her face that great heart of his, that had ever been adamant to beauty, a very Gibraltar against the wiles of the other sex, went down in the chaos of a first and overwhelming passion. So hard hit was he by Miss Tattersby's beauty that his chief thought now was to avert rather than to direct suspicion towards her. After all, she might have come into possession of the jewel honestly, though how the daughter of a retired missionary, considering its intrinsic value, could manage such a thing, was pretty hard to understand, and he fled back to London to think it over. Arrived there, he

found an invitation to visit Dorrington Castle again incog. Lord Dorrington was to have a mixed week-end party over the following Sunday, and this, he thought, would give Holmes an opportunity to observe the characteristics of Dorrington's visitors and possibly gain therefrom some clue as to the light-fingered person from whose depredations his lordship had suffered. The idea commended itself to Holmes, and in the disguise of a young American clergyman, whom Dorrington had met in the States, the following Friday found him at Dorrington Castle.

"Well, to make a long story short," said Raffles Holmes, the young clergyman was introduced to many of the leading sportsmen of the hour, and, for the most part, they passed muster, but one of them did not, and that was the well-known cricketer A. J. Raffles, for the moment Raffles entered the room, jovially greeting everybody about him, and was presented to Lord Dorrington's new guest, Sherlock Holmes recognized in him no less a person than the Reverend James Tattersby, retired missionary of Goring-Streatley-on-Thames, and the father of the woman who had filled his soul with love and yearning of the truest sort. The problem was solved. Raffles was, to all intents and purposes, caught with the goods on. Holmes could have exposed him then and there had he chosen to do so, but every time it came to the point the lovely face of Marjorie Tattersby came between him and his purpose. How could he inflict the pain and shame which the exposure of her father's misconduct would certainly entail upon that fair woman, whose beauty and fresh innocence had taken so strong a hold upon his heart? No -- that was out of the question. The thing to do, clearly, was to visit Miss Tattersby during her father's absence, and, if possible, ascertain from her just how she had come into possession of the seal, before taking further steps in the matter. This he did. Making sure, to begin with, that Raffles was to remain at Dorrington Hall for the coming ten days, Holmes had himself telegraphed for and returned to London. There he wrote himself a letter of introduction to the Reverend James Tattersby, on the paper of the Anglo-American Missionary Society, a sheet of which he had secured in the public writing-room of that institution, armed with which he returned to the beautiful little spot on the Thames where the Tattersbys abode. He spent the night at the inn, and, in conversation with the landlord and boatmen, learned much that was interesting concerning the Reverend James. Among other things, he discovered that this gentleman

and his daughter had been respected residents of the place for three years; that Tattersby was rarely seen in the daytime about the place; that he was unusually fond of canoeing at night, which, he said, gave him the quiet and solitude necessary for that reflection which is so essential to the spiritual being of a minister of grace; that he frequently indulged in long absences, during which time it was supposed that he was engaged in the work of his calling. He appeared to be a man of some, but not of lavish, means. The most notable and suggestive thing, however, that Holmes ascertained in his conversation with the boatmen was that, at the time of the famous Cliveden robbery, when several thousand pounds' worth of plate had been taken from the great hall, that later fell into the possession of a well-known American hotel-keeper, Tattersby, who happened to be on the river late that night, was, according to his own statement, the unconscious witness of the escape of the thieves on board a mysterious steam-launch, which the police were never able afterwards to locate. They had nearly upset his canoe with the wash of their rapidly moving craft as they sped past him after having stowed their loot safely on board. Tattersby had supposed them to be employees of the estate, and never gave the matter another thought until three days later, when the news of the robbery was published to the world. He had immediately communicated the news of what he had seen to the police, and had done all that lay in his power to aid them in locating the robbers, but all to no purpose. From that day to this the mystery of the Cliveden plot had never been solved.

"The following day Holmes called at the Tattersby cottage, and was fortunate enough to find Miss Tattersby at home. His previous impression as to her marvellous beauty was more than confirmed, and each moment that he talked to her she revealed new graces of manner that completed the capture of his hitherto unsusceptible heart. Miss Tattersby regretted her father's absence. He had gone, she said, to attend a secret missionary conference at Pentwillycod in Wales, and was not expected back for a week, all of which quite suited Sherlock Holmes. Convinced that, after years of waiting, his affinity had at last crossed his path, he was in no hurry for the return of that parent, who would put an instant quietus upon this affair of the heart. Manifestly the thing for him to do was to win the daughter's hand, and then intercept the father, acquaint him with his aspirations, and compel acquiescence by the force of his knowledge of Raffles's misdeed. Hence, instead of

taking his departure immediately, he remained at the Goring-Streatley Inn, taking care each day to encounter Miss Tattersby on one pretext or another, hoping that their acquaintance would ripen into friendship, and then into something warmer. Nor was the hope a vain one, for when the fair Marjorie learned that it was the visitor's intention to remain in the neighborhood until her father's return, she herself bade him to make use of the old gentleman's library, to regard himself always as a welcome daytime guest. She even suggested pleasant walks through the neighboring country, little canoe trips up and down the Thames, which they might take together, of all of which Holmes promptly availed himself, with the result that, at the end of six days, both realized that they were designed for each other, and a passionate declaration followed which opened new vistas of happiness for both. Hence it was that, when the Reverend James Tattersby arrived at Goring-Streatley the following Monday night, he was astounded to find sitting together in the moonlight, in the charming little English garden at the rear of his dwelling, two persons, one of whom was his daughter Marjorie and the other a young American curate to whom he had already been introduced as A. J. Raffles.

"We have met before, I think," said Raffles, coldly, as his eye fell upon Holmes.

"I -- er -- do not recall the fact," replied Holmes, meeting the steely stare of the home-comer with one of his own flinty glances.

"H'm!" ejaculated Raffles, nonplussed at the other's failure to recognize him. Then he shivered slightly. "Suppose we go indoors, it is a trifle chilly out here in the night air."

"The whole thing, the greeting, the meeting, Holmes's demeanor and all, was so admirably handled that Marjorie Tattersby never guessed the truth, never even suspected the intense dramatic quality of the scene she had just gazed upon.

"Yes, let us go in-doors," she acquiesced. "Mr. Dutton has something to say to you, papa."

"So I presumed," said Raffles, dryly. "And something that were better said to me alone, I fancy, eh?" he added.

"Quite so," said Holmes, calmly. And in-doors they went. Marjorie immediately retired

to the drawing-room, and Holmes and Raffles went at once to Tattersby's study.

"'Well?' said Raffles, impatiently, when they were seated. 'I suppose you have come to get the Dorrington seal, Mr. Holmes.'

"'Ah -- you know me, then, Mr. Raffles?' said Holmes, with a pleasant smile.

"'Perfectly,' said Raffles. 'I knew you at Dorrington Hall the moment I set eyes on you, and, if I hadn't, I should have known later, for the night after your departure Lord Dorrington took me into his confidence and revealed your identity to me.'

"'I am glad,' said Holmes. 'It saves me a great deal of unnecessary explanation. If you admit that you have the seal -- "

"'But I don't,' said Raffles. 'I mentioned it a moment ago, because Dorrington told me that was what you were after. I haven't got it, Mr. Holmes.'

"'I know that,' observed Holmes, quietly. 'It is in the possession of Miss Tattersby, your daughter, Mr. Raffles.'

"'She showed it to you, eh?' demanded Raffles, paling.

"'No. She sealed a note to me with it, however,' Holmes replied.

"'A note to you?' cried Raffles.

"'Yes. One asking for my autograph. I have it in my possession,' said Holmes.

"'And how do you know that she is the person from whom that note really came?' Raffles asked.

"'Because I have seen the autograph which was sent in response to that request in your daughter's collection, Mr. Raffles.' said Holmes.

"'So that you conclude -- ?' Raffles put in, hoarsely.

"'I do not conclude; I begin by surmising, sir, that the missing seal of Lord Dorrington was stolen by one of two persons -- yourself or Miss Tattersby,' said Holmes, calmly.

"'Sir!' roared Raffles, springing to his feet menacingly.

"'Sit down, please,' said Holmes. 'You did not let me finish. I was going to add, Dr. Tattersby, that a week's acquaintance with that lovely woman, a full knowledge of her peculiarly exalted character and guileless nature, makes the alternative of guilt that affects her integrity clearly preposterous, which, by a very simple process of elimination, fastens the guilt, beyond all peradventure, on your shoulders. At any rate, the presence of the seal in this house will involve you in difficult explanations. Why is it here? How did it come here? Why are you known as the Reverend James Tattersby, the missionary, at Goring-Streatley, and as Mr. A. J. Raffles, the cricketer and man of the world, at Dorrington Hall, to say nothing of the Cliveden plate -- '

"'Damnation!' roared the Reverend James Tattersby again, springing to his feet and glancing instinctively at the long low bookshelves behind him.

"'To say nothing,' continued Holmes, calmly lighting a cigarette, 'of the Cliveden plate now lying concealed behind those dusty theological tomes of yours which you never allow to be touched by any other hand than your own.'

"'How did you know?' cried Raffles, hoarsely.

"'I didn't,' laughed Holmes. 'You have only this moment informed me of the fact!'

"There was a long pause, during which Raffles paced the floor like a caged tiger.

"'I'm a dangerous man to trifle with, Mr. Holmes,' he said, finally. 'I can shoot you down in cold blood in a second.'

"'Very likely,' said Holmes. 'But you won't. It would add to the difficulties in which the Reverend James Tattersby is already deeply immersed. Your troubles are sufficient, as matters stand, without your having to explain to the world why you have killed a defenceless guest in your own study in cold blood.'

"'Well -- what do you propose to do?' demanded Raffles, after another pause.

"'Marry your daughter, Mr. Raffles, or Tattersby, whatever your permanent name is -- I guess

it's Tattersby in this case,' said Holmes. 'I love her and she loves me. Perhaps I should apologize for having wooed and won her without due notice to you, but you doubtless will forgive that. It's a little formality you sometimes overlook yourself when you happen to want something that belongs to somebody else.'

"What Raffles would have answered no one else knows. He had no chance to reply, for at that moment Marjorie herself put her radiantly lovely little head in at the door with a 'May I come in?' and a moment later she was gathered in Holmes's arms, and the happy lovers received the Reverend James Tattersby's blessing. They were married a week later, and, as far as the world is concerned, the mystery of the Dorrington seal and that of the Cliveden plate was never solved.

"It is compounding a felony, Raffles,' said Holmes, after the wedding, 'but for a wife like that, hanged if I wouldn't compound the ten commandments!'

"I hope," I ventured to put in at that point, "that the marriage ceremony was not performed by the Reverend James Tattersby."

"Not on your life!" retorted Raffles Holmes. "My father was too fond of my mother to permit of any flaw in his title. A year later I was born, and -- well, here I am -- son of one, grandson of the other, with hereditary traits from both strongly developed and ready for business. I want a literary partner -- a man who will write me up as Bunny did Raffles, and Watson did Holmes, so that I may get a percentage on that part of the swag. I offer you the job, Jenkins. Those royalty statements show me that you are the man, and your books prove to me that you need a few fresh ideas. Come, what do you say? Will you do it?"

"My boy," said I enthusiastically, "don't say another word. Will I? Well, just try me!"

And so it was that Raffles Holmes and I struck a bargain and became partners.

=====

That completes The Adventure of the Dorrington Ruby Seal, and Horib reprints of R. HOLMES & CO. My copy of the book (a 1906 paperback) will not take much more holding-open, so it is shelved, with regrets. -- R.A.L.

THE XERO FUN AND GAMES BOOK: T H E F A N N I S H W O R R Y B O O K

BASIC: Why did "Science Fiction +" fail?

BASIC: Who is David Gordon?

BAROQUE: Who is Mark Philips?

BAROQUE: Will "Science Fiction Times" ever get back on schedule?

BASIC: What is the Blake Pharmaceutical Company?

THE GREAT CLASSICAL BASIC WORRY: Who sawed Courtney's Boat?

AN EXTREMELY BAROQUE WORRY: Who is Charles Avison?

BASIC: Why doesn't Richard Bergeron talk to fans?

There are two kinds of worry in fandom. Basic worry and baroque worry. Basic worry is when you worry about something fundamental, like Will Fanac ever get back on schedule? Baroque worry is when you worry about something no other fan worries about, like Will Ray Palmer ever get back into the field?, or How are things on Sereneb?

Here is a list of some Basic fannish worries:

The site of next year's Westercon

The outcome of the latest fannish lawsuit

How to get that hilarious but just-a-little-too-long interlineation
in

Here is a list of Baroque fannish worries:

The outcome of the latest ISFCC directors' election

The final disposition of the WSFS Incorporated banner

Is Hal Shapiro happy?

Why Steve Stiles' artwork looks like Andy Reiss now instead
of Dan Adkins

There are some worries that are so microcosmos-shaking that they are no longer basic or baroque. In fact, they are no longer even fannish worries at all, but instead they have become fannish non-worries:

Claude Degler

The Fan Achievement Awards

Worry about the purpose of fandom is basic.

So is worry about why you are in fandom.

Worry about whether you will meet your future wife at a convention is baroque. Worry about whether she will like comic books is twice as baroque.

Worry about the method of duping your next fanzine is basic.

Whether to publish it at all is baroque.

For New York fans, worry about what those people are doing at LASFS is basic. Worry about what those people are doing right across the river at ESFA is baroque. For Los Angeles fans, worry about what those people are doing at the Fanoclasts is basic. Worry about what those people are doing right up the highway at GGFS is baroque.

If you don't know how to worry,

read PROBE,

sleep on the floor of the N3F suite at the Discon,

melt down a pan of hecto jelly,

start reviewing fanzines.

Then think about

space race,

the FAPA waiting list,

Ed Wood,

Karen Anderson's next costume,

THE ORIGINAL SCIENCE FICTION STORIES,

Where did it all go?

Worry about recognizing pro's at cons is basic. So is worrying about being a pimply faced neo...even after all this time.

How bad GALAXY is getting is one of the classic baroque worries.

Worry about where Ambrose Bierce went is baroque. Even more baroque than worry about where Al Ashley went.

A full time worry: What's going to happen to Terry Carr?

Worry about whether Sam Moskowitz carries a gun is baroque.

Worry about your or Dick Eney's or anybody's Daugherty-like project is basic. Worry about Larry Crilley is basic.

IS GEORGE WILLOCK SORRY?

Worry about Ken Beale is basic.

Worry about Ted Pauls' forthcoming editorial on the tobacco mosaic virus is basic. Worry about why he publishes at all is baroque.

WHERE TO WORRY:

Worry in the huckster room is basic; worry in the fanart show room is baroque; the subway is a basic place to worry unless you're Larry McCombs; then it's baroque.

Worry about Coventry is baroque anywhere. Worry about Hyperboria is baroquer.

Masquerade balls are a basic place to worry in, but Norfolk, Nebraska and VAPA are baroque places to worry in.

IN CASE . . .

. . . you have time to worry about other fans than yourself, here is a list of basic worry fans:

Dick Eney
Harry Warner
Jim Warren
Lynn Hickman
Mike McInerney
Danny Curran
John Coleman Burroughs

Baroque worry fans:

Joyce Hurley
Norman Browne
Lee Hoffman
Chuck Wells
Bob Peatrowsky
Brian Varley
M. Harvey Gernsback

Worrying about other fans named Bob Stewart is a classic baroque worry. Here is a list of people who if they don't worry now had better start right away:

Mike Wigodsky
Ruth Kyle
Peggy Rae McKnight

If you know who the ten people in this list are, it's time you started to worry:

1. Henry Daniell
2. Henry Andrew Ackermann
3. William Atheling, Sr.
4. Hubert Hoey
5. Ivan Tors
6. Don O. Cantin
7. Irving Klaw
8. Sidney Porcelain
9. Charles Foster Kane
10. David Crossen

GREAT WORRIES THROUGH THE AGES:

1. The influence of Stranger in a Strange Land on fannish marriages
2. Is Sylvia Dees getting enough to eat?
3. Having an inferiority complex because you live on the East Coast
4. That you bought the wrong kind of stylus
5. The Cult
6. Does anyone love Peter J. Vorzimer?
7. Ray Nelson's next wife
8. Kaymar Trader
9. The Exclusion Act
10. The Great Staple War

If you are attending your first convention, YOU can worry about:

1. Will anybody talk to you?
2. Will you see all of the program?
3. Will somebody invite you to a room party?
4. What if they ask for ID at the bar...
- 4a. ...in front of Forry Ackerman?
5. Will anybody mention you in his con report?

GAFIA worries:

When you are gafiating, you can worry about...

...whether anyone remembers at all.

If you come back...

...will you get review copies?

Worry about the food at worldcon banquets is basic.

Worrying about things going by faster than you can keep up with them is basic.

Worry that the FAPA membership will stagnate and you'll never get in is basic.

Worry about FAFIA is baroque.

.To Harlan Ellison, Isaac Asimov is sophisticated
. To Isaac Asimov, Hal Clement is sophisticated
. To Hal Clement, John Campbell is sophisticated
. To John Campbell, Norman Dean is sophisticated
. To Norman Dean, Donald Keyhoe is sophisticated
. To Donald Keyhoe, Raymond Palmer is sophisticated
. To Raymond Palmer, Richard Shaver is sophisticated
. To Richard Shaver, Paul W. Fairman is sophisticated
. To Paul W. Fairman, Norman Lobsenz is sophisticated
. To Norman Lobsenz, Cele Goldsmith is sophisticated
. To Cele Goldsmith, Dan Adkins is sophisticated
. To Dan Adkins, Kelly Freas is sophisticated
. To Kelly Freas, Ed Emshwiller is sophisticated
. To Ed Emshwiller, Bob Silverberg is sophisticated
. To Bob Silverberg, Barbara Silverberg is sophisticated
. To Barbara Silverberg, Pat Lupoff is sophisticated
. To Pat Lupoff, Ruth Kyle is sophisticated
. To Ruth Kyle, Noreen Shaw is sophisticated
. To Noreen Shaw, Dave Kyle is sophisticated
. To Dave Kyle, Larry Shaw is sophisticated
. To Larry Shaw, Richard Kyle is sophisticated
. To Richard Kyle, Richard Bergeron is sophisticated
. To Richard Bergeron, Walter Breen is sophisticated
. To Walter Breen, Marion Zimmer Bradley is sophisticated
. To Marion Zimmer Bradley, Redd Boggs is sophisticated
. To Redd Boggs, Dick Lupoff is sophisticated
. To Dick Lupoff, James Blish is sophisticated
. To James Blish, Avram Davidson is sophisticated
. To Avram Davidson, Andy Main is sophisticated
. To Andy Main, Lee Thorin is sophisticated
. To Lee Thorin, George Heap is sophisticated
. To George Heap, George Scithers is sophisticated
. To George Scithers, Roy Krenkel is sophisticated
. To Roy Krenkel, Larry Ivie is sophisticated
. To Larry Ivie, Frank Frazetta is sophisticated
. To Frank Frazetta, Bob Shea is sophisticated
. To Bob Shea, John F. Kennedy is sophisticated
. To John F. Kennedy, Ian Fleming is sophisticated
. To Ian Fleming, Alfred Hitchcock is sophisticated
. To Alfred Hitchcock, Robert Bloch is sophisticated
. To Robert Bloch, Bob Tucker is sophisticated
. To Bob Tucker, Rog Ebert is sophisticated
. To Rog Ebert, bhob Stewart is sophisticated
. To bhob Stewart, Harlan Ellison is sophisticated.....

1 9 6 8 p e r s p e c t i v e

Back in the early 60s -- which will always be, for me, "the Xero years" -- there was a little-publicized and informal SF club in New York. It was so informal that it didn't even have a name, no less officers, dues, rules, publications, or the other trappings that go with most clubs.

The basic membership was Larry Shaw, Bob Shea and me. We met Thursdays at lunchtime in a little Italian restaurant on 30th Street, where attendance was occasionally augmented by such guests as Russ Willsey, Will J. Jenkins, James Blish or Pat Lupoff. "Meetings" consisted of a couple of drinks, a good meal, and a cup of coffee...spaced out with miscellaneous talk of SF, fandom, politics and the like. I remember one occasion on which we adjourned in the middle of our pasta to walk over to Fifth Avenue and watch the Mercury astronauts ride by in a welcome parade. (Alan Sheppard -- or was it John Glenn? -- had just made the first US orbital flight.)

We used to discuss the whole writing/editing/publishing milieu frequently; Larry was then doing hotrod magazines, Bob was working on Cavalier for Fawcett Publications, and I was doing technical pubs for Remington Rand while moonlighting for Canaveral Press. One day in particular, I recall, Larry and I worked out a certain theory about writing and marketing.

We had both been somewhat appalled at the time by the poor quality of some things we'd seen in print, and came to the formulation that anything written with even the barest modicum of literacy (and even some things without) could be sold and published...

...provided that the author knew the markets, knew who was hungry for what kind of material, and provided the right editor with the right kind of copy at the right time. E.g., you don't try to sell Christmas features in December because this year's holiday edition is already closed out and next year's is too far off. Sell Christmas in September, maybe, and Easter in December.

It was a nice facile theory, and certainly one difficult to disprove. If a given piece of writing wouldn't sell, it just wasn't going to the right market. If you couldn't find any market for the piece, maybe you were doing the wrong kind of writing. Talent had nothing (what nothing? no nothing. what nothing? nearly nothing.) to do with it.

Flash forward to late 1967, a cold Saturday night. Four people -- Jack and Phoebe Gaughan, Pat and I -- spend a pleasant few hours over dinner and drinks in two local establishments, a restaurant and a gin mill. Afterwards Jack and I put out a one-shot about it. Somebody (Phoebe? Pat?) reads the one-shot, says "You know, slightly expanded this could be a marketable short story."

I sneer.

The next afternoon I change my mind. Instead of watching the Cleveland Browns crush the Giants on channel 2 I spend a couple of hours with mistress typewriter, emerge with a rewrite of Simulacra called "At the

Esquire." I read what I've just written. I'm somewhat pleased with my prose but the idea, I think, is rather trite. Been used several times in SF short stories and at least once in a novel. Dunno what to do with the thing but just for the hell of it I send it to Fred Pohl.

Predictably it comes back with a rejection slip, but surprisingly Fred doesn't say it's unoriginal, he says he doesn't understand it. I send the story to my agent. Time passes. Months pass. I lose interest in "At the Esquire," all but forget that it exists.

Then a letter comes from my agent. He's sold "At the Esquire" to Nugget magazine, a sort of middle-class pseudo-Playboy. The story is slated for their July issue.

The 30th Street luncheon, drinking and science fiction club is long defunct. Will Jenkins and Russ Willsey are dead. Bob Shea went with Cavalier when it was sold to a California publisher, then moved up to a job on Playboy and lives in Chicago. Jim Blish moved to Washington (although I hear he's coming back). Pat and I got dragged off to this remote northland. Larry alone holds the bastion of Mannahat Isle.

But like a skeleton hand rising from the dust of the past and stretching to this year of grace one thousand nine hundred sixty eight, the ghost of 30th Street makes itself felt.

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QUOTATION:

The leading bodies in co-operatives must establish the dominant position of the poor peasants and the new lower middle peasants in these bodies, with the old lower middle peasants and the upper middle peasants -- whether old or new -- as the supplementary force. Only thus can unity between the poor and middle peasants be attained, the co-operatives be consolidated, production be expanded and the socialist transformation of the entire countryside be correctly accomplished in accordance with the Party's policy. Otherwise, unity between the middle and poor peasants cannot be attained, the co-operatives cannot be consolidated, production cannot be expanded, and the socialist transformation of the entire countryside cannot be achieved.

--Introductory note to "How Control of the Wutang Co-operative Shifted from the Middle to the Poor Peasants" (1955), The Socialist Upsurge in China's Countryside, Chinese ed., Vol.II.

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QUOTATION:

We should be modest and prudent, guard against arrogance and rashness, and serve the Chinese people heart and soul....

--"China's Two Possible Destinies" (1945)

f u r t h e r l i t ' r y n o t e s

The recurrent Burroughs boom, which has been in a mild downturn for the past year or so (except for the execrable Tarzan TV series), will apparently be going into a new ascent later this year, with the issuance of still another flock of paperbacks from Ace and Ballantine Books.

As a by-product of the renewed ERB activity, Ace plans to issue a paperback edition of my 1965 hardcover book "Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure." In addition to the fame-and-glory aspect of having some 100,000 copies of the book broadcast across the country (egoboo enow, would you say?), this development represents money of the nicest sort: that for which I will not have to work.

In fact, Ace's initial intention to do a straight reissue of the Canaveral edition was passed on to me informally by a spy I have planted in the offices at 1120 Sixth Avenue. I suggested instead a true second edition. Not a complete rewrite by any means -- but I would like to go through the Canaveral version and correct some outright errors that were not caught in time, last time. Then there's some new data, in particular regarding Kipling, that I want to insert. Also some new developments in the areas of Burroughs editions, issuance of previously unpublished material ("I Am a Barbarian"), ERB imitators, and adaptations to TV and motion picture screens. Finally, there might be one or two points on which I wish to say a little more -- or a little different -- than I did in the first edition.

All of which indicates that I'll be doing some work for my money -- although hardly a whole book's worth. Looking on the dark side for a moment, I won't be getting a whole book's worth of money either. As is typical with hardcover publishers, Canaveral has a little fishhook in their contract that says that if there's ever a paperback edition, they grab a large hunk of the author's pb royalties. In the case of MoA, this seemed a pretty remote contingency back in ought-sixty-four when the contract was signed. But here we are four years later, and it's hap'ning.

Still, I ain't complaining. Canaveral had the rather surprising faith to back the first edition, first with an advance (I'd never written anything over 10,000 words long before), then with the more substantial cost of production. Turned out to be a successful book for them and for me, and now that we both stand to make a little gravy, I won't grudge them their share.

However, if anybody out there in Fapaland has been watching my literary career since "One Million Centuries" appeared last year (snorts, groans, raucous outbursts of "Hell No!" "Come off it you phoney!" and other less printable epithets), bear in mind that MoA is an older book than OMC by two years in terms of publication dates. And, because of different lead times and production schedules, the actual writing is three years older. (Still true, basically, despite revisions.)

So (keen logic tells us) both the maturity of style (phoo!) and the development of thinking (ahahaha!) in MoA is three years behind that in OMC. [Just as that in OMC is a year behind where I am now.]

MAILING COMMENTS (122)

THE FANTASY AMATEUR 122 (Fishulls): Well, I'm glad that that flap over the presidency got settled so quickly, and I concur fully with the way it worked out. I retain my notion that elections should be considered valid no matter how few participants there are (I'm referring to voters). Anybody who doesn't bother to vote forfeits his right to complain after it's over. An interesting thought: since that last FAPA election seemed to be a pointless exercise, Pat and I very nearly didn't bother to tabulate and report on the results. Especially since we hadn't consented to be tellers -- it was thrust upon us quite without notice. What would have happened if there had been no report of election returns?

EGOOBOO POLL: See above for my comments, should there prove to be few who bother to vote.

DAMBALLA V5N1W16 (Hansen): You are obviously seriously and sincerely concerned about lack of interest in FAPA elections, but I wonder if it isn't misplaced concern. FAPA is essentially a sort of co-op, with the officers performing admittedly essential but essentially merely routine, administrative duties. E.g., assembling and mailing the bundles, riding herd on the waiting list, etc. As long as some good Fapan is willing to serve as a kind of public service, who needs more?

HORIZONS 113 (Warner): We did skip pages 87 and 88 in our continuous pagination...but we inserted pages 92a and 92b to re-balance the issue pagination with the running pagination. Oh, these complications! Thank you for the interest shown in John Kendrick Bangs; you have already, of course, noted the reprint in the current issue. I'll try to select suitable items and get them into future Horibs.

TRILL 6 (Wells): This is not the first xeroxed fanzine. For the first distribution of Apa F I xeroxed a one-page fanzine titled OPO 1. OPO was an acronym for One Page Only, which was my plan for each issue of the fanzine. True to Lupoff form, the second issue, dated July 17 1964 (this was a weekly, and didn't miss an issue for the 69 weeks that Apa F existed) ran 8 pages. By the sixth issue OPO was being done on mimeo. Thereafter issues ranged between 1 and 12 pages in length; the high point was a 44-page Pacificon II report, serialized in issues 11 through 17. The final OPO, #69, was included in the final Apa F distribution, October 29 1965.

GRANDFATHER STORIES (DeVore): Ah, yes, that Macy's champagne was indeed superb, but you haven't sampled the true pinnacle of the vintner's art until you have tried Shop-Rite Champagne.

IN MEMORIAM: RON ELLIK: I cannot think of anything to say that would not be offensively maudlin and purple. Offensive to Ron if he were here to read it.

VUKAT 6 (Patten): I was somewhat distressed to read John Trimble's paragraph about my earlier comments on deadwood prompting the Trimble's thoughts of resigning. As I've mentioned before, I'm not trying to get anybody to quit -- rather, to increase their activity rate.

EN GARDE 2 (Schultz): I think I preferred the former title, Rigger-Digger. Wonder if there's any way, any chance, one might get to see some of the earliest Avengers shows -- pre-Rigg, that is, when the feminine lead was taken by Honor Blackman. Speaking of whom, what ever became of Honor Blackman after that shot she had in one of the early James Bond flicks?

SERENADE 6 (Bergeron): "I haven't the faintest idea who produced those fearsome, bloated, indigestible issues but it must have been some long dead superfan and not me." Ah, yes! After many months -- in fact, now that I think back on it, several years -- of coaxing, pleading, and bullying, Arnie Katz actually got me to sit down and write a long, dull article about Xero a while ago...for his current genzine, Quip. To do the article I had to drag out a file of Xero and go through it, issue by issue. You express my sentiment exactly. /// Yes, the Nycon Hugos were plastic. I prefer the metal ones for appearance. /// The Tousand Vampires, now extinct, were indeed an unusually noisome variety of sanguiphageous creatures. They derive their perhaps puzzling name from the region in which they were discovered. Fortunately, it too is now extenct.

THE RAMBLING FAP 41 (Calkins): As with the Trimbles, I din't mean to thwop you upside the conscience and make you quite...but it is happy-making to read a Rambling Fap again. To my knowledge, you are the first person to note the two R's on the cover of issue # 8. Our OE noticed the 3 R's on the cover of issue # 9.

A PROPOS DE RIEN 122 (Caughran): More Bangs-Holmes material, yeah!

SALUD (E Busby): I'd like to see that grey and orange calico.

DYNATRON 35 (Tackett): Yours is the nth review of Dangerous Visions that I've come across, both in the fan press and in the SF magazines (haven't seen any reviews in the general press). Every review I've read has panned the book, either directly or with faint praise, yet each review says (in essence), Yuh gotta git out and read this thing! Is this the Now Generation phenomenon you refer to? I did pick up a copy of Dangerous Visions, turned to the first page of Harlan's intro, and read as far as "This is not a book you have in your hands. It's a revolution!" I put it back on the shelf and left the store. But maybe I'll pick up a copy used or in paperback and read it.

SERCON'S BANE 35 (FMBusby): You have said the proper thing about Ron. Yes, he was a man on a mild permanent winning streak, but managed it in such a way as never to arouse a whit of envy -- only a mixture of admiration and pleasure-to-see-a-good-fellow-get-on-well. /// A book dealer has located J.K.Bangs's "Alice in Blunderland" for me, and I expect it in the mail any day now. /// The picture conjured by your idea of the automatic timer and cutoff device for SaM, Forry, and Harlan is too beautiful and funny for words.

THE BALLARD CHRONICLES 5 (Jacobs): Another stupid, meaningless accidental death, another good man gone. Lee and I had a running gag the past few worldcons. We would spot each other across the lobby, expell gasps of joyous recognition, then rush to greet each other. "Bob Leman!" "Sam Moskowitz!" we would exchange. Or "John Trimble!" "Buck Coulson!" Bystanders were often flabbergasted.

MOONSHINE 34 (Sneary/Moffatts/Woolston): Yes, I'd heard of Sherlock Homes -- one of the standard Sherlockian guidebooks -- possibly "221B" edited by Vincent Starrett -- gives the details. If you really wish, I'll look it up...and put the info in a future Horib. When you say "your pastiche," I assume you mean mine only in the sense that I published it. It really is by Bangs, who was a real man -- I own about 40 books by him. I'm not trying to fob off something I wrote myself (although I'd be proud to claim the Bangs piece). ///I recently ordered "The Annotated Sherlock Holmes" and am eagerly awaiting its arrival. From Boucher's front-page NYTimes book review, it should be a real delight, despite certain flaws.

HUGO BALLOTS: Er, I hope I say this right, and don't appear too pushy, conceited, etc. Well now, several people have been kind enough to tell me, either in fanzines or in letters or in personal conversations that they thought ONE MILLION CENTURIES was "Hugo material," or "the best SF novel I read in 1967,"...or other, similar sentiments. So, uh, what I'm asking is if anybody reading this really feels that way, please nominate/vote for the book. I'm not asking anybody to do this out of personal friendship, FAPA solidarity, etc. Just, if you really think the book deserving, don't not-nominate it. Whew!

CELEPHAIS (Evans): I think an relevant question on this business of Jack Gaughan's two Hugos is, "Are 'fan' and 'pro' mutually exclusive categories?" And I think the answer is clearly, No, they are not. /// In "The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes," Ellery Queen says this: "John Kendrick Bangs wrote a series of parodies which were syndicated in American newspapers in 1903 under the title 'Shylock Homes: His Posthumous Memoirs.' Your editors have tracked down eight of this series -- but certain curious evidence exists indicating there may have been more. At the time of this writing, however, all efforts to smoke out the 'missing memoirs' have failed." That's the extent of my knowledge.

NEW CAT SAND #3 (Demmon): Much enjoyed, and if my anti-deadwood rantings were at all responsible for this fine zine, I am p*r*o*u*d on myself. Gladjer liked "Simulacra." I hope you like the expanded version when it comes out in that slick-paper genzine one of these months.

QUOTATION:

People who are liberals look upon the principles of Marxism as abstract dogma. They approve of Marxism, but are not prepared to practise it or to practise it in full; they are not prepared to replace their liberalism by Marxism. These people have their Marxism, but they have their liberalism as well -- they talk Marxism but practise liberalism; they apply Marxism to others but liberalism to themselves. They keep both kinds of goods in stock and find a use for each. This is how the minds of certain people work.

-- "Combat Liberalism"
September 7, 1937

B O N N I E & C L Y D E M E E T B U F F A L O

b y

A r n i e K a t z

I don't consider myself a movie-goer, but after having heard so much favorable commentary on "Bonnie and Clyde" I decided to make an exception. My roommate Bruce and I went down to the Glen Art, one of Buffalo's two art movie houses, and the only theater in Buffalo showing the movie.

The movie was excellent, to say the least. In fact, the only bad thing about the movie was the audience. As we watched our fellow attendees enter from our vantage point in the center section near the back of the theater, which resembled nothing so much as the inside of a large box car, I knew it was going to be a bad scene. I saw the women of Buffalo, running to fat and dressed as always in grotesquely bad taste, coming down the aisle led by their paunchy husbands, who would have been more at home in the bowling alley knocking down pins and beer.

"Where is the candy counter?" a woman pleaded, her voice betraying her extreme state of mental anguish. What, after all, is a moom pitcher without you got some pop corn an' bon bons? Her question started a tide of urgent whisperings as the startling revelation that the Glen Art does not have a candy counter passed from shocked mouth to disbelieving ear. Just minutes prior to the start of the movie, the juvenile delinquents shuffled down the aisle in their black leather pants and knee-length black leather jackets. There is something almost pathetic about a Buffalo j.d.; they have a phoney bravado coupled with an obvious yearning to live up to the press notices of their heartier down-state brethren. That they wouldn't last ten minutes with a real gang only adds to their charm. They are, in short, the Mets of teenage crime. The penetration of "Bonnie and Clyde" into the mass media must be even more thorough than I had thought to bring the vulgarians into an art movie house. The teeny-boppers took up their position a row ahead of us, in the leftmost section.

For those few who have not as yet seen the movie, the opening simulates a slide show. After every whirr-click of machinery, either a credit or a snapshot appeared on the screen. One gradually becomes aware of a crooner singing tinnily in the background. After about the sixth slide, discontented rumbles erupted throughout the audience. "Is dis da whole movie?" I heard a Buffaloaccented male voice say. This notion gained quick currency, and the tumultuous sigh obscured the movie's opening dialogue.

Directly in front of us sat a young foursome on a double-date. I was particularly struck by one of the girls. She was young, with the blonde hair so common in Buffalo worn long and simply, but neatly, fixed. Her face was absolutely beautiful, lacking the prominent nose that is also so prominent in Buffalo. But her face was more than merely beautiful, it was innocent. She looked a little like Lesleigh Couch, but without that hint of rogueishness. Indescribably Pure. This is as close as I can come. I rather envied her date, slouching like a human grasshopper in the seat next to her, for possessing this angelic creature.

There are undeniably humorous moments in "Bonnie and Clyde"; many of them, in fact. About halfway through the movie, the blonde's date went berserk with laughter. I have laughed long and hard myself upon occasions. I have heard Dave Van Arnham cackle insanely at some mild jest. I have even been in a near-empty movie theater with Les Gerber. But never in my entire life have I seen someone lose control so irrevocably. He bellowed his mirth to the heavens in shrieks and hyena wails. He thrashed around in his seat like a maniac as his friends tried to hold him down physically. There were tears in the sweet girl's eyes as she watched her date carry on. She shrank into her seat, as far from him as she could get, with what I thought was a hint of bitter knowledge in her previously serene face. Her date drowned out the dialogue for anyone less than twenty seats away in any direction.

While the sound was lost, I gave the rest of the theater a quick glance. The delinquent group had one more late-coming member than there were available seats. I watched as they dismantled one of the theater seats, and one of the little hoots seated himself on the liberated seat-cushion in the middle of the aisle.

It was especially embarrassing to note that, as the movie progressed, more and more of the subtleties of the movie eluded the majority of the viewers. They laughed at the wrong places. All the wrong places. Perhaps when one receives all his artistic nourishment from Doris Day sex comedies, a sixth sense develops enabling one to wring every scrap of humor out of every cinematic situation, no matter how unfunny.

As my roommate and I left the theater in silence, hushed by the devastating violence of the death scene, I heard them still back in the theater, still laughing.

A MIXED BAG OF BOOKS

- CHOCKY by John Wyndham, Ballantine, 1968, 221 pp, 75¢.

Of the many literary traditions that have been adapted for treatment as science fiction, two of the least used are the soap opera and the English rural. In the former category Judith Merrill's "Shadow on the Hearth" and Zenna Henderson's "The People" series come immediately to mind. If it can be squeezed into the parameters of the category, I suppose Daniel Keyes' "Flowers for Algernon" would have to be accorded honors as the supreme science fiction soap opera.

English rural is a less clearly defined tradition, and just about unknown in science fiction (although one thinks of Agatha Christie in that Other Field) until L. P. Davies arrived on the scene. In "E-r" the setting is a rustic village inhabited by the Vicar, the Doctor, the Young Man Up from London, the Attractive Young Girl, the Sharp Old Lady, and the Curmudgeon. A Stranger arrives on the scene. A crime is discovered. Thereafter nothing happens except the characters' visiting one another and chatting until the crime is solved.

This lengthy lead-in by way of announcing to anyone as yet unaware, that John Wyndham -- of all people! -- has written what I believe to be the world's first English rural science fiction soap opera. To combine the soaper and the E-r is not as easy as you might think. The heart of soap opera is of course tragic emotion, great pathetic blivots of it, while in English rural novels everyone must act properly restrained and stiff-upper-lippish.

Still, Wyndham has done it with a fair degree of success. He has moved his setting to a rural-like suburb of London but otherwise taken a soap opera rather than an E-r cast. Dull English father (he's an accountant), Worried Wife with a large and meddlesome and repellant family. Wife seems unable to conceive a child despite medical examinations proving All Normal (all things medical, and especially gynecological, are Very Big in S-O).

So they adopt a child (no data on his background, thereby introducing the red-herring of all sorts of Unspecified Possibilities)...then Wife does conceive, etc.

Now what this story is all about (you wondered if I'd ever get to that? I wondered the same about Wyndham) is the time-honored First Contact theme. It's telepathic rather than physical, and only Certain Special People can receive the alien telepathic radiations. In fact, the sole contact point is Matthew, the adoptive child. Matthew knows that somebody is there (although he doesn't know who or what) but nobody believes him. ("David darling, you don't think our Matthew could be -- " she hesitated and turned away, then in a hushed whisper "mad!")

("Of course not, Mary, he's just a perfectly normal, healthy boy with a vigorous imagination." I leaned back, lit a cigarette nervously. "Still," said I, "I think I'll have old Doctor Frisbee have a look at Matthew, and if he can't handle it I'll ask him for a referral to Sir William Drybones-Manderly on Harley Street.")

It takes Daddy 142 count-'em pages to realize and admit that "There's some

sort of objective reality to Chocky." But that isn't enough for him, he continues dragging poor old Matthew to doctors while poor suffering Mary weeps and asks "What does it all mean?" at irregular but brief intervals.

Finally the alien contacts Daddy through Matthew and tells him, in essence, You've blown the whole thing, I'll find somebody else to work through next time! A wise decision! Chocky, what took you so long?

THE PULP JUNGLE by Frank Gruber, Sherbourne, 1967, 189 pages, \$3.95

Memoirs of the famous detective and western writer promised a great deal of fascinating insight and information into the pulp era, and the book is studded with familiar names like F. Orlin Tremaine, Leo Margulies, Aaron Wyn, Erle Stanley Gardner, Lester Dent, Norvell Page, Arthur J. Burks, Donald E. Keyhoe, Dashiell Hammett, Joe Archibald, Ernest Haycox, Cornell Woolrich, and on and on. (An index would have been much appreciated.)

But Gruber delivers little on his promises. There is no apparent reticence about reminiscing, in fact parts of the book are nothing more than a rhapsody to the author's courage, talent, perseverance and innate good fellowship. But when it comes to giving real insights into himself, his works and his working methods, Gruber is notably weak. He does offer an eleven-point formula for pulp writing, but for once the prose is so sparse that neither explication nor examples are provided, and the "formula" is pretty useless.

Gruber does cite one intriguing incident involving a famous science fiction writer, but he coyly disguises his victim. (Ed Hamilton? Don Wollheim?) And the best part of the book -- I could have read several more chapters of it -- details Gruber's acquaintanceship with Frederick Faust (aka Max Brand, George Challis, etc.) Gruber asked Faust how he had become the world's most prolific writer -- a million and a half words a year! Faust said "I write 14 pages a day." "Fourteen pages! I can write more than that in a day -- how come I don't write a million and a half words a year?" "Fourteen pages a day every day. That's the critical point."

Well, it's a frustratingly unsatisfying book, but I guess I have to recommend it to anyone interested in the topic of the pulps and the people who made them what they were.

THE NAKED BLADE by Frederick Faust, Lancer, 1967, 272 pp., 75¢.

This one dates originally from 1934, in various magazine, hardcover, and paperbound editions. The current version, my own introduction to the story, reveals an all-stops-out pulp adventure, full of action, doused in incredible amounts of color and melodrama, populated by shallow but dramatically drawn characters. It happens to be couched as a pirate story, but one could blue-pencil it into science fiction or western in half an hour. Highly enjoyable light reading, and it makes me wish Faust had written more SF than he did -- his only SF novel, "The Smoking Land," is far from his best book but still worth reading if you can get it. (It's never had a book edition, only two magazine appearances.) Meanwhile, get "The Naked Blade" and enjoy, enjoy.

- THE EGYPTIANS by Isaac Asimov, Houghton Mifflin, 1967, 256 pp, \$4.

While my back was turned Isaac started writing histories and, in typical Isaacian fashion has already run up a row of four of the things (the others treat Greece, Republican Rome, and Imperial Rome). Also, the jacket design and blurb-writing on the present volume manages rather effectively to conceal the fact that the book is intended for juvenile readers. Not tiny-tot, but maybe bright ten-year-olds or average 12-year-olds.

I am far from an expert Egyptologist myself, but from Asimov's book I infer that virtually all modern histories of Egypt are based on surviving fragments of a king-list and history of the "thirty dynasties" written by the medieval Egyptian priest Manetho. Perhaps because of the sparsity of contemporary documents, the Asimov leans heavily on dynastic successions, military expansions and contractions, conquests and invasions. The reader receives a fair picture of the military-political history of this ancient nation, and a picture of some of the greatest of rulers and generals. One is struck by the number and ease of the conquests by which a series of foreign nations came to rule Egypt, and of the Chinese-like ability of Egypt to endure patiently until her conquerers either withdrew or were absorbed.

The overall impression given by the book is that of an almost Foundation-like superhistory, functioning over hundreds of generations, scores of centuries of time.

The weakness of the book lies in its failure to provide a three-dimensional feel for the life of Egypt and the Egyptians...for the everyday life, in different eras, of Egyptians of different classes and professions. We are given hints but no satisfaction concerning the nature of the Egyptian economy, art, literature, religion, family structure, social organization and so on. Of course the book is a history, and with 6000 years of history to get into one book (of over 250 pages) there is a question of how much "color" the author has room to include. Still, I would have settled willingly for a little less of who-succeeded-whom and which-army-won-which-battle, if I could have had this "color" in its place.

One point which Isaac fails to make clear, which I would like to have had explained, was the racial/ethnic background of the "original" Egyptians. The modern Egyptians are of course not the same people at all, but rather Arabs, that is, Semites, whose presence in Egypt is a relatively recent phenomenon. Who, then, were the original Egyptians -- who have now been absorbed into other peoples including the Arabs? Were they black Africans? (We always picture the Egyptians as caucasians, but...?) Enlightenment, anyone?

Finally, Asimov gives a capsule coverage of XXth Century events in Egypt: the post-Ottoman royal restoration, Fuad and Farouk, the British protectorate and German invasion in World War II, Nasser, the Dulles-Aswan-Soviet sequence, and the continuing friction with Israel. To treat the complex and momentous events of these times with the brevity and simplicity that they are subjected to here, I think does more harm than good. Since Asimov was unwilling to devote, say, an additional chapter of 20 pages, he might better have omitted the discussion and/or referred his readers to some good works on recent and current events.

THE WITCHES OF KARRER by James H. Schmitz, Ace Books, 1968, 286 pp., 75¢

This is the second volume in Terry Carr's "Special" series for Ace; the first was a Simak reprint and the Schmitz is a reprint also, from a Chilton hardcover in 1966. A friend mentioned that he thought the book was reconstructed from an earlier magazine series, but in honesty I'm not that familiar with the recent SF mags to be sure.

I have to say that I was somewhat astounded and vastly entertained by "The Witches of Karres." It's an all-stops-out, wild, slam-bang space adventure in the grand tradition -- an amalgam of Planet Stories and Doc Smith with a touch of Tolkienesque pastoralism (on the planet Karres itself), and a group of characters provided with a variety of wild talents: these are, of course, the witches of Karres themselves. Consider their witchcraft psi or magic as you prefer.

As background, take a humankind that has spread throughout the galaxy via (implicit) FTL spaceships capable of being run by a single person, mounted with instantaneous radio and space guns. Aliens have been encountered but they are few and play no major part in the story.

Let's see, add in a kind of psi-powered super-FTL drive, and an ether-like substance called klatha that is the basic tool of all psi-work, and a kind of being called vatches that are, roughly speaking, gods; blend in a touch of time-travel and you have this fantastic amalgam.

I think if Schmitz ever slowed down this book long enough for the reader to subject it to any serious analysis, it would collapse into so many fragments that it could never be reconstructed. But Schmitz keeps things moving at a furious pace and with a congenial style so that the reader with even the most grudging fondness for wooly adventure has to love it.

THE BUTTERFLY KID by Chester Anderson, Pyramid, 1967, 190 pp., 60¢.

I think the only mistake Anderson made was to set his romp in an indeterminate fairly-near-future time. It could have been set in the present with no harm and only minor inconvenience to the author.

That minor cavil (and it is minor) out of the way, let me say that this is another wild romp, totally different from the Schmitz in theme but similar in abandon (and success). Basically the book is a recitation of Greenwich Village bohemianism (highly romanticised, of course), with a heavy emphasis on the present rock music and drug scenes. A new drug kick is making the rounds and our hero and his pals decide to investigate the source of the new "reality pills." They discover that they are being furnished as the forerunner of an invasion from outer space, by a race of six-foot tall blue lobsters.

Because the only people aware of the invasion are hippies, they figure there would be no point in telling the fuzz, FBI, etc. No one would believe them. They have to fight the aliens themselves. Which they proceed to do. I must say that the aliens are the most totally inept invaders yet devised -- that's the only way they can be beaten. The whole book is done on an elementary burlesque level, but great fun -- especially if you have any fondness for the millieu portrayed.

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