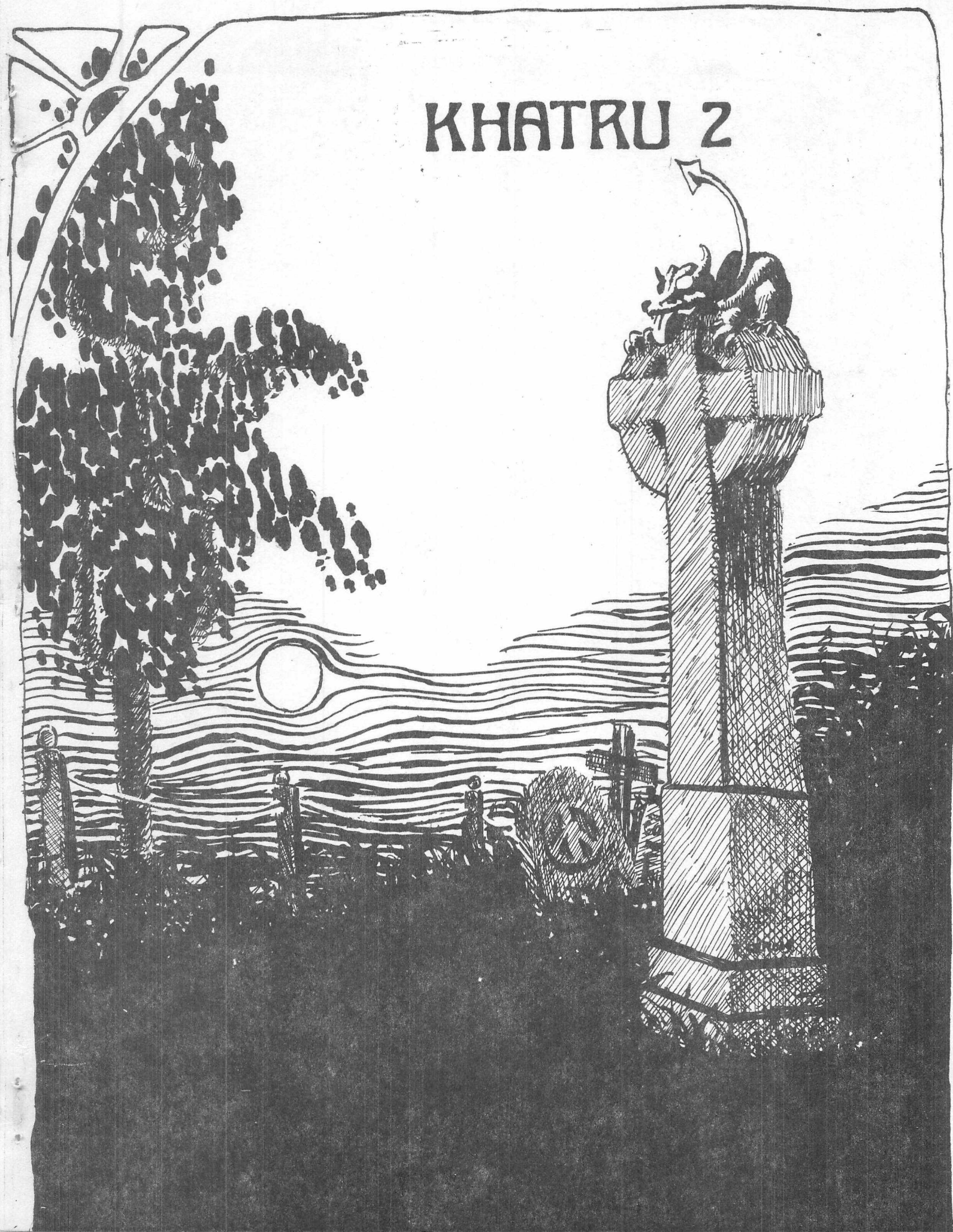


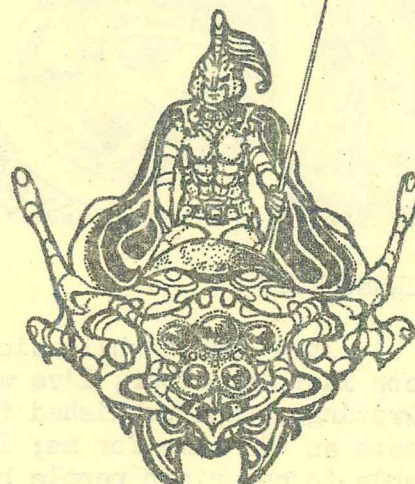
KHATRU 2



KHATRU 2

MAY 1975

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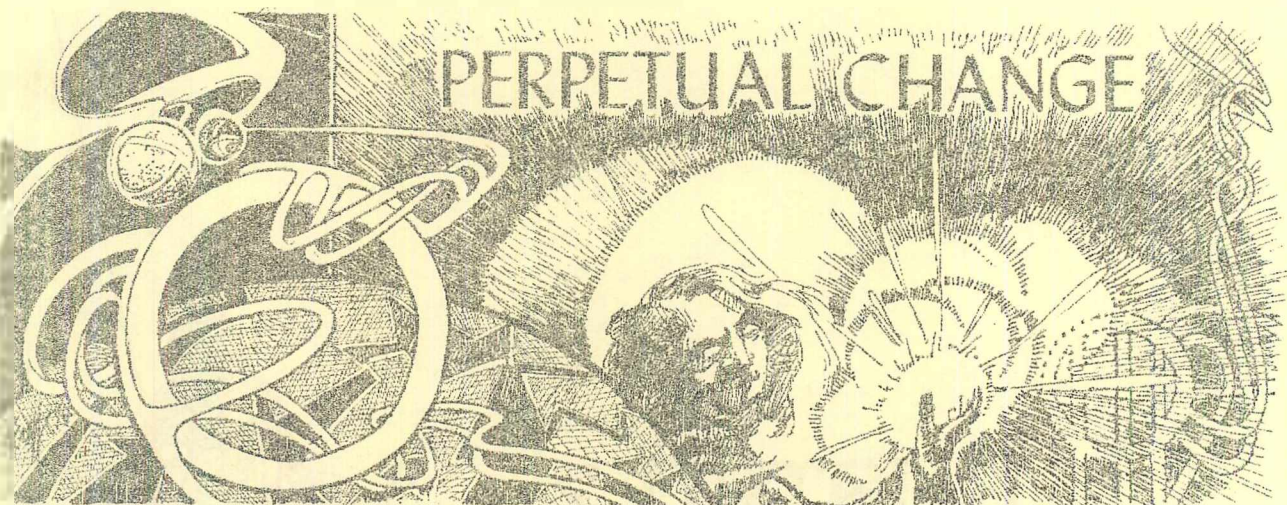


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INSECURITY

It's been a while since I've done any real writing. In fact, since Discon last September, I've written maybe twenty pages of all variety of fan writing. (And published four fanzines full of other people's prose.) It's been an odd time for me; I've felt like I've had nothing to say. I've been able to entertain people by talking about nothing for years, though, and I don't know why that should bother me now.

So, I'll just tackle the problem head on, and write. Let me know if I'm boring you.

WE ARE PRESENTED AS FOOLS

As a general rule, and despite everything, the Nebula Awards and anthologies have been fairly creditable and representative of the field. (Not the best, not the best, but representative of the best.) For seven years mixed bags of story titles were inscribed on Lucite trophies, and different Science Fiction Writers of America trotted out and gave nice little speeches about the worth of sf in their introductions to the various NEBULA AWARD STORIES volumes. (Except James Blish, who was ducking invisible projectiles and railing against unseen antagonists--at least so far as the general reading public was concerned.)

All things must pass, however, and with the eighth volume Isaac Asimov, one of the most visible members of our little community, stepped forward and spoke some obvious nonsense. Where his predecessors had tempered their praise of the field with criticisms, remarking on the failures of sf as well, Asimov reports that everything is great. Even if I didn't know better, if I were an outsider coming in cold, I would be distrustful of such an overabundance of optimism.

Perhaps the heart of the essay, "So Why Aren't We Rich?", is this statement: "...science fiction readers are more intelligent, thoughtful, and articulate, on the average, than the general population..." Which might puff the egos of the twelve-year-old sf freaks who read it (it would have done wonders for me at twelve) but probably won't go over nearly as well with anyone else.

Early on, Asimov states that there is good sf (produced by SFWA) and bad sf (produced by those unfamiliar with the field), and that "when we talk about

science fiction, we talk about good science fiction." The problem is not that what he says is untrue; it is that what he says is so shallow and simplistic (impressive, no, when talking about such an intelligent audience?). That statement ignores a major item Asimov never comes to grip with:

A great number of these intelligent science fiction readers who come in for so much praise like bad science fiction. Not the awkward stuff produced by the "outsiders," but the juvenile, non-thinking stuff that pours out from the typewriters of "our" writers.

Now, Asimov is right, these are intelligent people. I'm not talking about fandom now--not the "fans," the "readers." I worked in a bookstore for three years; I talked to them a lot, and I knew what they bought. They could talk enthusiastically (and intelligently) about all sorts of weird things, mundane and speculative. And they liked crap. Lin Carter outsold Heinlein. They preferred Ace Doubles to Ace Specials, novels to short stories, space-ships to people.

This is not to say that they like nothing good, of course. A lot of what they like is respectable stuff, stories nobody has to be ashamed of reading. But it is only the basic ideas that appeal to them--the idea of interstellar flight, the idea of robots, the idea of exotic worlds. The more detailed the idea the better, but only so long as the details apply to the original thought.

This is the much-touted "Sense of Wonder," and it isn't enough. What the really good science fiction does, what Le Guin and Silverberg and their peers do, is examine the ideas, try to understand them, push them around until they break, relate them to people, expand them, relate them to others. Not tie them up in neat bundles. Good science fiction raises more questions than it supplies answers. That means that on the most basic level, it is less satisfying than plotty adventure stories.

The ramifications of the ideas bore the average sf reader. Only the ideas themselves, flashing across the cosmos, mean anything. Consequently, books that leave bad tastes in my mouth because there is no thought at all put into them entertain other people.

I suppose books which satisfy both camps should be examined very carefully.

The weirdest part of this essay is that Asimov's prime example of "intelligent, thoughtful, and articulate" sf fans is...Trekies. And towards the end of the introduction, he says:

What is worse yet is that one science fiction story does not necessarily help another. In other forms of fiction, a writer may establish his background; a particular police station, the Mississippi backwoods, the Chicago of the 1930s; and use that same background in a hundred stories.

This can be done to an extent in science fiction as well, but the readers quickly tire of such a thing--and rightly. They are paying for novelty in background as well as in plot. We find, therefore, that science fiction writers are compelled to invent different societies and backgrounds in almost every story.

Everyone who needs that discrepancy explained to him raise his hand. Okay, moving on...

There is more. There is the comment that science fiction will never be

popular because only intelligent people can read it. And how unsuccessful Star Trek fandom is because such a small percentage of the show's twenty million viewers become Trekkies. (I will grant this was said tongue in cheek; it's still dumb.) And...

Enough.

Seriously, I think this essay shows the dangers of unprovoked defense even more graphically than the one by Blish three years earlier. As answers to questions, the individual sections might prove palatable. As an introduction to a book of good stories, it is an embarrassing disaster.

I hope no-one laughed at it too loudly.

So why aren't we rich?

Too much junk, is why. There are a lot of people around who would enjoy Compton and Delany and Russ. The problem is getting them to realize this. If they were to walk into the drugstore and pick up a science fiction book at random, and were to get the latest Poul Anderson or Clifford Simak (to pick a couple of solid, decent, non-hack names), odds are they would not be inspired to come back for more. If they got Cap Kennedy you know they wouldn't be back.

Yes, there is good sf and bad sf. I don't think that Asimov and I agree on the quantities of each, however. I don't think Asimov really accepts Star-geon's Law, that 90% of sf belongs on the "bad" side. (I'm sure he wouldn't go along with me that his THE GODS THEMSELVES belongs there.)

No, it isn't that there aren't enough readers to support good sf--there's just no easy way of finding them. (I bet "So Why Aren't We Rich?" didn't get us a single one.)

I expect letters.

SILVERBERGIAN CLARIFICATION

There is no item on the history of the Hugo Awards in this issue as I once thought there might be; maybe next year. (I've got five stencils typed.) Until then, here's one tidbit that might clear up some confusion for you as it did for me, a brief postal exchange:

SMITH: Can you bounce me back a quick reply for KHATRU 2? Who won the Hugo for Most Promising New Writer in 1956, Robert Silverberg or Robert Randall? I've got a blank spot on my stencil.

SILVERBERG: Silverberg won the Hugo in '56--the "Robert Randall" thing was an error in the 1949 worldcon program book, unfortunately perpetrated by a couple of later cons and now (I hope) laid to rest.

MY LETTER OF COMMENT IN DAVE GORMAN'S SF WAVES 2, WINTER 1971

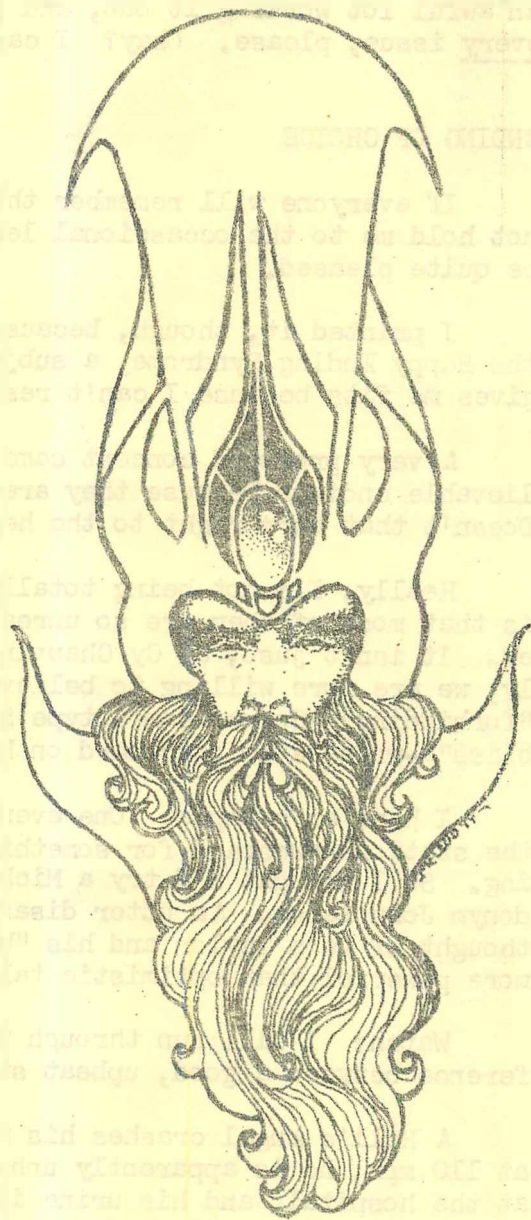
The most stimulating comment in SFW 1 was a Leon Taylor throwoff: "Why do black, pessimistic stories always seem more 'powerful' than optimistic tales?" Why indeed? I've been thinking about that for a week-and-a-half now, and while I haven't come up with much I thought you might be interested in what's running through my mind:

There are powerful upbeat stories, and they come in several varieties. One is the Genuinely Happy Ending story, in which the hero achieves a real triumph over real adversity without any meddling or muddling on the author's part. ("Requiem" by Robert A. Heinlein is one. Ayn Rand's ATLAS SHRUGGED might be another, depending upon your philosophy.) A second variety is High Fantasy (THE LORD OF THE RINGS and Lloyd Alexander's Prydain series). The conclusions to these works are very moving, and can not be considered downbeat. Neither are they humanly happy, however. They involve transcendence above the human level.

Literary tradition is important here. A story with important subject matter will be more powerful than a piece of fluff will. If we take the classical division, the author has his choice of comedy or tragedy. Almost invariably, important subject matter is treated only in tragedy. (Exception: satire. No holds are barred in Aristophanes' LYSISTRATA or Swift's GULLIVER'S TRAVELS or "A Modest Proposal," among many others.)

We can go into "What is upbeat?" and "What is downbeat?" Dean Koontz can argue--quite successfully--that "The Twelfth Bed" is upbeat; Gabe retains some of his good spirits despite his tragic situation, and the last lines cast a distinctly positive light on things. But do we really grasp these positive aspects, without purposefully looking for them? No, not really; we are too horrified by the fact--not just that a young man is hopelessly trapped in a mechanized geriatric ward--but that there is (in Dean's extrapolation) such an inhuman place at all. It struck me as ever-so-slightly overstated, but the pure tragedy overwhelmed everything else.

"Repent, Harlequin!" Said the Ticktockman" by Harlan Ellison is about one man--one average man--running around disrupting a totally regimented society. This is upbeat, but how many people have ever looked at it this way? Again, we ignore the Harlequin, who is good, and concentrate on the Ticktockman, who is bad. He is our focus. (After all, the story is told mostly



from his point of view.) The Harlequin has achieved a major triumph by the end of the story, but if I had asked you to name an upbeat Ellison story would you have thought of this?

I know none of this answers Leon's question, but I think I've learned an awful lot working it out, and I'd like to thank Leon for that. Just...not every issue, please. Okay? I can't stand the brain fatigue.

ENDING OF CHOICE

If everyone will remember that the above letter was written in 1970, and not hold me to the occasional less-than-intelligent remarks therein, I will be quite pleased.

I printed it, though, because it consists of my first real thoughts on the Happy Ending Syndrome, a subject that pops up every now and then and gives me fits because I can't resolve it. Maybe I'm just dense.

A very profound concept came to me recently: I can't believe in unbelievable endings because they aren't believable. Isn't that marvelous? Doesn't that burn right to the heart of your soul? Heavy...

Really, I'm not being totally facetious. The trouble with Happy Endings is that most of them are so unrealistic that they can't possibly move a reader. It isn't just, as Cy Chauvin contented in SF WAVES 2, that "unconsciously, we are more willing to believe a dark, forbidden (S(that was probably "forbidding"--Gorman can't type)S) tale of gathering gloom than one of utter bliss"--writers go overboard on Happy Endings.

I have an example. One evening, waiting for a delayed train, I searched the station newsstand for something to read, and could find nothing appealing. So I thought I'd try a Michael Crichton--DRUG OF CHOICE under the pseudonym John Lange. An utter disaster. But when I finished it I immediately thought of Leon Taylor and his "Why do black, pessimistic stories always seem more powerful than optimistic tales?"

Watch: I will run through the plot in detail, so you will see the difference between a good, upbeat story and a Happy Ending. Watch:

A Hell's Angel crashes his motorcycle. Although he was last seen riding at 110 mph, he is apparently unhurt. But he's in a coma. He's catheterized at the hospital, and his urine is a bright, fluorescent blue. Then it's discovered that he's only asleep, and he's awakened by a doctor. His urine is now yellow (the normal color, if you've never looked) and he remembers nothing about the crash or anything surrounding it. A similar thing happens to an actress, Sharon Wilder, and the mystery is on.

Dr. Clark (Our Hero) is invited by Sharon to a party, at which he feels he passed out, but he wakes up in the morning in Sharon's bed, after an apparently exciting night which he can't remember. He feels great, though.

In an absurdly melodramatic bit of dialogue, we learn that Sharon's psychiatrist is involved, and that he intends to somehow use Clark. We see the beginnings of this usage as Clark is offered a fifty-grand drug research job with a rather unusual company--Advance, Inc. And when he dates the psychiatrist's secretary she feeds him a pill and out he goes.

In the second part of the book Clark and Sharon go to the new resort of San Cristobal and have an absolutely marvelous time. That is, until Clark is

"allowed" to wake up and he realizes that it's all a sham, that the guests are drugged upon arrival (the blue urine drug) and elaborately led to believe they are having a marvelous time, when really all they're doing is sitting in their rooms eating swill. The island is run by Advance, which has assembled "proof" that Clark accepted their job offer, and they coerce him into helping them, primarily by treating the minor ailments of the unconscious guests. While treating Sharon (who because she is not told cannot tell that the "hotel doctor" is Clark) she tells the hotel doctor that Clark was brought to the island as part of a plan; she doesn't know what the plan is, but she's worried for Clark.

After vacation Clark tries to turn fugitive but Advance catches him and gives him yet another drug. End Part II. (And so far, the book has at least been mildly diverting.)

The final section shows the tremendous control Advance exercises over Clark. He is drugged into helping their research (various kinds of mind control), and when he comes out from under and makes good his escape, he finds that he had been committed to a mental institution during one of the periods he has no memory of. Now he's known as an escapee and even his friends are trying to turn him in.

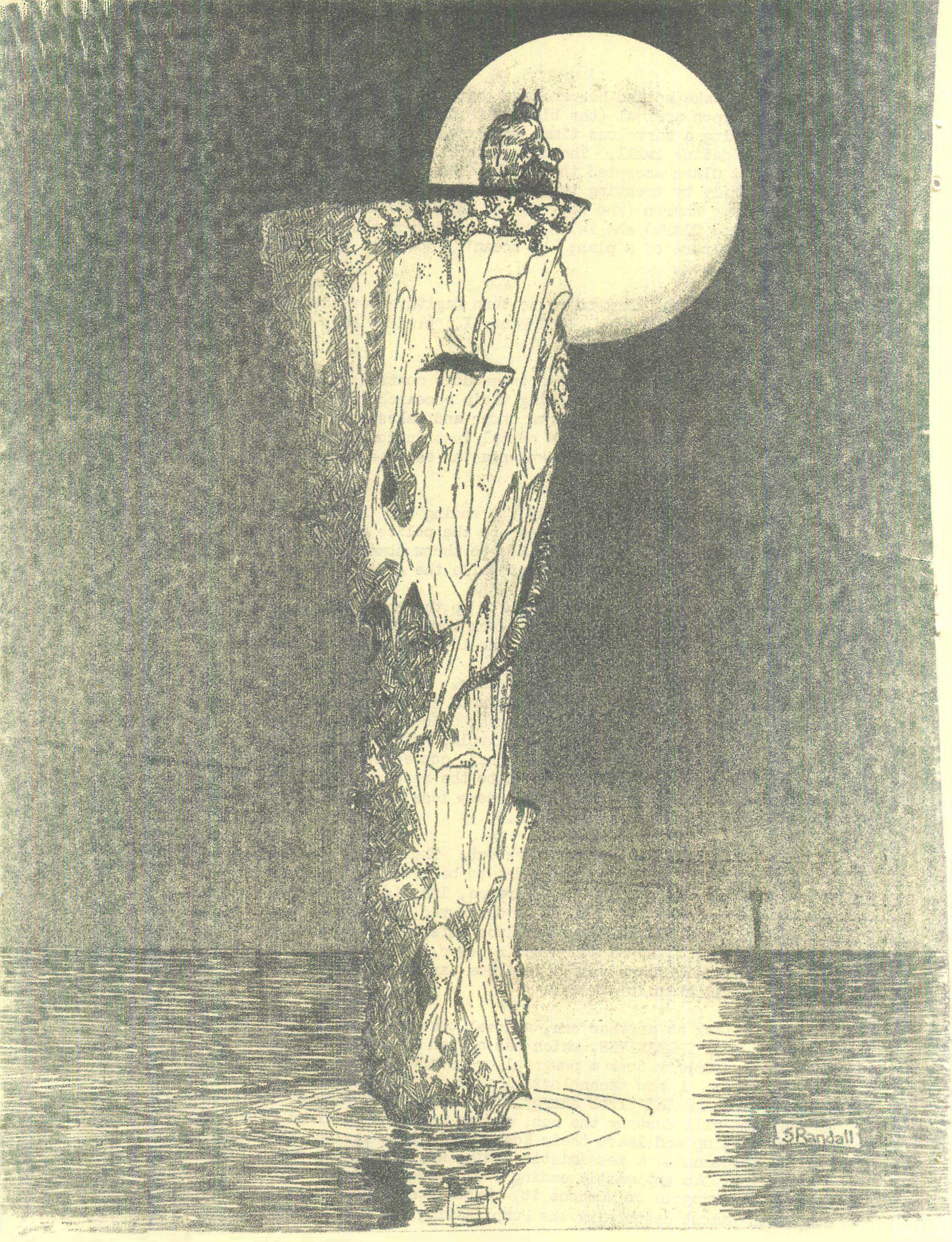
Okay, what now? What should the ending be? Should he be killed or captured by the police? Should he escape the police and the corporation, and start over somewhere? Should he try to throw some sort of kink in the corporation's plans first, or just get while the getting is good?

Crichton decides to have him blow up the corporation, and kill the chief honcho. (At least he didn't have Clark completely vindicated by the end--he was turning himself in, but we have no idea what will become of it.)

I was terribly disappointed in this. Wowee, zammo, this whole big organization that is shown to be capable of so much is casually destroyed by one man in a few paragraphs. Blood's assurance that other companies will arise in his place means little, dramatically. (Remember, we are speaking both of the story in its ideal, conceptionalized state, and of the manner in which the author gives it to the reader. I will concede that Crichton did try to make the ending seem less a miracle than he could have, but he didn't try near hard enough.)

So, let's see what we can work out: The ending can only be as believable as the writer prepares the reader to believe in. In this case we have a writer telling his readers that Advance, Inc. is so advanced as to be practically infallible--and then to be destroyed with a sneeze. The point can't be that people who consider themselves infallible are easy prey--we aren't told they're good, we're shown their power. The conflict in the story should have been How can Clark escape, not How can Clark destroy? If he wanted a believable, identifiable novel.

Let's look at another one, a novel that has always irked me--Isaac Asimov's THE GODS THEMSELVES, which has as bad an ending as I can remember encountering. Asimov took a powerful, relevant problem and Happy-Ended it into oblivion. A new technological advance, the Electron Pump, has provided Earth with unlimited free energy. One scientist, though, realizes that use of the Pump will destroy the sun, and he tries to convince people that they must give it up and leave their Eden. This is a serious theme and deserves serious treatment. A pessimistic ending would have the world fail to heed the warning. An optimistic ending would have the world agree to give up the energy and struggle on without it. Another serious ending could be martyrdom, with Lamont destroying the Pump, saving the world despite itself, a hero



5 Randall

ERRATUM

Some things just aren't about to work out. Last issue's back cover was one. With a little more luck I might have found a better printer, one more willing to spend the extra time and effort needed to reproduce the subtleties of the drawing, but such is life. What I've done here is run the drawing through a mimeograph. (Ghod, no, not mine! Jack Chalker's.) It still doesn't look like the original, but by putting the two versions together (should you be so inclined) you might get an idea of just what it was that Randy drew. The main problem with the offset version is that (in most copies) you can't tell that the vertical line in the lower right-hand section is another island; this at least is remedied in the Gestetner version. You still can't really tell, though, that there is someone sitting on top of that one, too...

reviled.

But Asimov waxed serendipitous, and had his people discover a way to keep both the Pump and the sun, safely--something they weren't even trying to do, just stumbled across it. The old God-out-of-the-Machine trick. A fairy tale, and not even a good fairy tale.

How can that satisfy readers? It did, obviously (and worse, it satisfied other writers, since it won the Nebula), but what kind of reality do these people live in? Do things like this really happen to others, so that they have no trouble swallowing such feats of prestidigitation? Or are they so miserable that any gleam of light must be seized and caressed?

(As a sidelight, this shows you you don't have to listen to those who tell you a certain story "could only" have ended a certain way. The story moves with the writer, and any writer who claims a story went in a different direction from the way he wanted it to had better look deeper into himself. Some synapse somewhere was expressing itself.)

--What a mess! I came up with something to write about; now all I have to do is remember how to write. Well, carrying on--

Okay, back again to the original question: "Why do black, pessimistic stories always seem more powerful than optimistic ones?"

I think it is easier to convince people that things are going downhill than it is to convince them of the opposite. The "powerful" part must come from the writer's documentation--"convince" is not used lightly above. Perhaps it is somehow easier to document disaster. But so many upbeat endings seem to be mere nothings, vastly unreak. The writer doesn't take the effort to make them real.

One of the standard highschool comments about the novel is that the protagonist leaves it a different person than he entered it. The Roger Clark who turns himself in at the end of DRUG OF CHOICE is no different from the Roger Clark who stared at the Angel's blue urine in the first chapter. He's a little bitterer, since he was used so badly by Advance, but he is such a shallow character all the way through there's no room for change in him. I started to sympathize with him toward the end, when he was being so easily used the worst (the only well-documented section), but his magic trick at the end destroyed that.

It was too easy. Happy Endings are generally too easy. The writer takes too much for granted--he is giving you what he assumes you expect. A genuinely happy ending should include lengthy documentation of what the hero is up against, and fully realize his setbacks as well as his steps forward. And fully realize those steps forward, not just announce their occurrence.

Even supermen can be empathized with if the documentation is all there--in Ian Fleming's MOONRAKER, for example, James Bond performs much the same feat that Clark does here. But Bond had to struggle every step of the way, and Clark had only to struggle so far before he was handed his victory on a silver platter.

Bond won. Clark didn't win; Advance lost.

Of course, these are pretty lightweight books anyway, and no amount of pessimism at the end could change that. But they are relevant to the discussion. If Crichton had conceived of a relatively downbeat ending from the beginning, would he have taken more care in getting there?

INTRODUCTION

A fair amount of the material for this issue arrived in the same day's mail, mail I didn't see until 9:30 PM that night. I looked at the following article by Jeff Clark and shuffled it to the bottom of the manuscript pile. It looked far too deep to handle after a long day. I went upstairs and put the headphones on and listened to Yes, and started reading all the new material. "Michael Bishop: Allegiances and Betrayals" and "Tuning the Bells They Ring" were the day's other two arrivals, and I spent some time trying to determine if it would be prudent to run two reviews of A FUNERAL FOR THE EYES OF FIRE. Then I tackled Jeff's work. To my vast and pleasant surprise, the article was very easy to get into, probably the most accessible of all Jeff's writing. I was agreeing with him down the line, extremely happy with the manuscript, laughing with joy and singing along with Jon Anderson: "I get up, I get down..." I liked the piece. Jeff says: "By the way, the title is supposed to be a veiled pun...," "veiled," perhaps, because there's no reason why you should notice it especially unless you're looking for it."

--Jeff Smith

The Labors of Stableford

This is something I've wanted to do for quite some time, ever since a few of us squabbled fitfully with the subject at last year's Discon. When I returned to Brian Stableford's article in the August 1974 AMAZING--"SF: The Nature of the Medium"--just last night, I discovered that circuits in my mind, further educated and developed in the past half year, have managed to equip me with a revamped intellectual arsenal ready to rip. I only ask that you be familiar with his thesis-article because I'm not going to summarize the whole of it, though I'll be as fair as possible to the points which I do set out here.

All you need to know from the outset is that I'm utterly and constitutionally opposed to Stableford's position on SF as non-literature, and even to his conception of media and the communication of culture. My position is an article of faith, certainly. But more than that, it's no mere dogma: it can be supported by evidence at least of the quality he brings to bear on his side.

Thus, and to wit:

THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES RELINQUISHED---MAYBE. In setting forth his McLuhan-

Jeff Clark

esque thesis, Stableford tells us that each newly developed medium contains another previous one, and in so doing it loses some of its informational capacity but may gain in "social usage." Fine. He develops this fairly rigorously in the descent from speech through writing through print through literature to SF. But when he arrives at SF, in order to tct up its features so that it illustrates the required gain/loss equation, he falters in a curious way. He tells us first that any media evolving from literature--which itself contains print and organizes print's data into more complex patterns using the speed of assimilation gained from that medium--can a) have a special method for processing data, or b) have a method for handling special data; furthermore, b) may involve a) in its functioning. SF is precisely b), and it fulfills this function thusly: an "extrapolative method" specially handles only those aspects of the entire temporally-located "social context" (lying in the "mainstream's" province) which are found to be dynamic and changing--SF extends these into the future, into time instead of space as the mainstream does. This is the special and smaller context of SF, therefore. And it is effective in transmitting this context for precisely the same quality which literature at large takes advantage of--the speed of assimilation offered by print.

Essentially, what Stableford is offering us is the gussied-up notion that SF is the only fiction (medium, if you will) that makes a point of dealing with change. But that's not what I'm objecting to right now. What I'm objecting to is that in making this neat evolution for the sake of his thesis he must fall back on a subject area in constant turmoil: the nature of SF. And he must choose only one of the common opinions set forth. Namely, he emphasizes the future, the change, and the extrapolation (considered, let it be noted, as a "way of regarding" SF, not as its "content"). Elsewhere in the article he implies that he offers these characteristics as description, not definition as people within the literary culture would do. Which is natural enough, considering his view of SF as pure medium. But the problem is, what do you do with those examples of SF that don't exhibit the described characteristics?--that don't really exhibit the extrapolative method in any proper way (and I admit here that, even in my parenthetical reconstruction of his thoughts above, Stableford is not very clear on what he means, precisely)?--that are set in the past?--that offer an alternate present?--that are in any number of ways insignificant in terms of what the medium is supposed to do and yet are still popular and fulfilling a social function as required? You cannot blame this objection on the narrowmindedness of misguided literary theorists. When you operate with a behaviorist outlook as Stableford does--concentrating only on visible, measurable behavior, the "symptoms of operation," if you will--you have to take into account all behavioral manifestations, all symptoms. If you don't, the patient may die from your diagnosis as stands. And so the Stableford thesis quakes a bit on this count.

I'm more or less willing to waive this objection, simply because nobody is having smashing success in defining SF anyhow. However, a corollary problem arises which leads into a much more serious area (--my main opposition, in fact). This objection is a reaction to the dogma that each successive medium loses in informational capacity in relation to the medium it contains; coupled with the notion that SF is a genre that "contains" literature. (Presumably, all genres branch off and "contain" literature variously.) Given the characteristics Stableford adduces for SF, this whole neat little complex is somewhat too convenient. A containing medium offers less, and SF offers (a specialized) less as demonstrated by its mediumistic character--therefore SF must be the containing medium of literature. Not included in literature, but containing it; just as literature itself must contain print and offer less than it does or can. But the Cartesian circularity of the thing is this: we must accept SF as described (my first objection), and, more importantly, must accept that each successive medium following and developing from speech--(and I only wish to take the media up to literature; I don't accept the progression

as stands after that)--though it gains in dissemination ability, truly does lose in informational capacity.

And so:

THE THIN EDGE OF THE WEDGE. Stableford readily employs "informational capacity" to mean not just ability-to-transmit-hard-data, but also the less tangible expressive capacities. Expression is communication too; it is communication of a softer kind of data--often of patterns, feelings and relationships not directly statable. Thus he says writing loses speech's "meanings conveyed by tone and emphasis." --But he hasn't taken the matter far enough; it works both ways. He's ready to acknowledge that each new and more conventionalized medium gains in social usage, but he doesn't see that the switch does very definitely involve other added expressional capacities, and how these are unique and unduplicable in speech alone.

For example, in literature, which becomes such with the advent of writing. (You don't, strictly speaking, call a people's vocal sagas "literature" --it doesn't mean they're inferior stuff, just that they're not written and not technically that.) Take the "paragraph": in writing or print you lose all the idiosyncratic modulations of vocal tone and emphasis, but how in speech do you duplicate the effects achievable through the paragraph--especially in literature as fiction? Do you use a pause?... Different length pauses are more analogous to devices such as the period, comma, semi-colon. The problem is, things like the paragraph are convention or symbolic directions which work on sight. They can't be adequately approximated in speech, not really.

Or consider the ambitious in literature. Take Joyce, seven years on ULYSSES; take Delany, five years on DRALOPEN--assume them composing just a couple pages of their works--assume them drafting, re-drafting, and polishing --how do you think they could've fashioned the effects of their prose over just a couple pages if they had nothing but speech (and memory, such as it is) to work with??

Of course. Obvious, you say. Simple... It's just these simple things that get overlooked in such clean-limbed mediumistic theories. Stableford speaks of the burden print takes off memory, but he doesn't notice that it also functions in this other area as well. These things are obvious, but they are also genuine expressive capacities, newly acquired, which can help to elaborate on fineness and complexity of thought and feeling, though the route they take is less immediate and direct. More is gained than is lost, I think.

So we begin to see some light that's not going to go away simply by rubbing our eyes long enough....

And now:

OUR BIG PRODUCTION NUMBER. In the beginning, Stableford says: "There is no direct way that a man can transfer the content of another man's mind into his own, or convey the content of his own into another. In order that communication may take place at all a medium of some kind must be employed. One primary medium developed by man was speech. In this process ideas are translated into phonemes, transmitted as sound waves and re-translated into ideas by the recipient."

This is an extraordinary opening. It goes on into all the other media. It goes on grandly, quite calmly and lucidly. It goes on right through to the end of the thesis.

But there is one thing missing right from the start. One word that is missing. In fact, this word is never used during the entire course of the article. This word is--

LANGUAGE.

Insignificant? An oversight? --Hardly, in either case. What the word means is hardly insignificant. And if it's an oversight, it's a half-unconscious acknowledgement perhaps of some devastating anomaly which would change the view of the whole thesis.

Stableford jumps right from "ideas" to "phonemes," but he doesn't tell you what phonemes are a feature of--because they're a feature of language. Language is the common thread running through all those media. They should read: spoken language, written language, printed language, and literature--which is of course printed language organized in Stableford's special way.

Language: thoughts of all kinds are embodied in it. We anthropologically acknowledge that human culture is communicated mainly through it; language sets us off from the animals. Stableford, it almost seems, carefully avoids referring to it: he speaks of literature as the elite cultural medium, of its being out of date. But it's not simply literature--it's the thing literature is based on, language. High subtle language.

The problem Stableford has is in stating unequivocally that language is a medium. Or maybe he would if he'd thought of it at all. It'd tend to louse up the media progression as stands, but likely you could juggle around some corollary notion and fix things up again. So, shall we call language a--even the--medium of thought?

--If we do, we open ourselves to a roaring fallacy.

In all its roaring majesty this fallacy, product of the "natural logic" which Stableford's likely to assume, is simply this: that thought occurs independently of language, that language just facilitates its expression. That language couches thought, so to speak--hands it around on a silver platter.

This just isn't so. Inter-cultural data roar out that it's not so.

The Sapir-Whorf linguistic hypothesis argues this. It maintains that language through its grammatical structures shapes our thought structures; that a language actualizes only certain possibilities in perception of reality; that no language and culture based on it ever sees all of reality--just gets different overlapping chunks of it. Whorf writes: "We are thus introduced to a new principle of relativity, which holds that all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated."

It should be noted that this isn't an ironbound notion. Language isn't utterly tyrannical; otherwise there might be no end of problems in communication between, say, Western and non-Western linguistic groups. But language is not just a convenient medium for slinging thoughts about. That has been established.

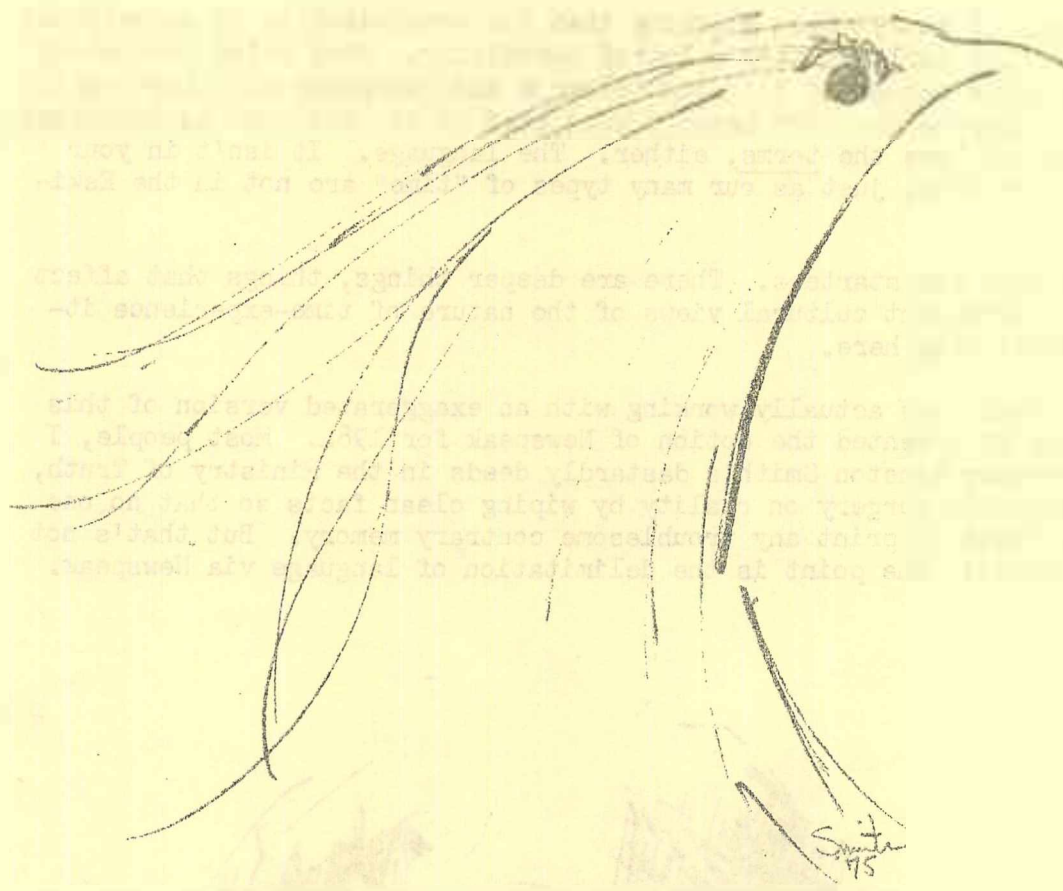
Back to Whorf and observing "the same physical evidence" for a moment. Consider this: how many terms do we have for snow--solid water, if you will, in any form? Terms that aren't just synonyms? Let's see: there's snow, sleet, hail, ice, slush, powdery snow, wet snow; we might even throw in frost, xime... As you can see, we're really reaching toward the barrel's bottom now. But the Eskimo would just be starting--he has something like 20-30 terms for

different kinds of snow. Even allowing that the precipitation is exceptional in his part of the world, that's a lot of perceiving. Just being told about this, do you think you could join him tomorrow and recognize all those varieties? Highly improbable. You haven't been bred to it, but just as importantly, you would not have the terms, either. The language. It isn't in your perception of reality, just as our many types of "time" are not in the Eskimo's.

That is just for starters. There are deeper things, things that affect significantly different cultural views of the nature of time-experience itself. But let's stop here.

George Orwell was actually working with an exaggerated version of this principle when he invented the notion of Newspeak for 1984. Most people, I suspect, remember Winston Smith's dastardly deeds in the Ministry of Truth, performing cosmetic surgery on reality by wiping clean facts so that no one could substantiate in print any troublesome contrary memory. But that's not the crucial point: the point is the delimitation of language via Newspeak.





Destroy the vocabulary and you control the thought. If you haven't got the term, you can't have the thought.

This is not utterly absurd. Stableford says: "Not all ideas can be conveyed by speech." True enough--but let's even make it "by language": not all ideas can be conveyed by language; some abstractions are better expressed visually or aurally. But further, there's a catch. Not all ideas, complex ideas, can be truly thought without language. That's Orwell again. The point is, you may have inchoate feelings or other stray perceptions, but if you don't have organizing principles provided by language, you're not likely to have a properly constructed and distinguished thought. When you take away language, you don't just straitjacket the tongue; you can also straitjacket the mind. Sure, snow isn't as important to us as it is to the Eskimo--so we don't need the terminology. But this could be fatal to us if we suddenly had to move in with him. And if the Eskimo came down to spend a winter on the East Coast--even if fewer types of snow occurred--don't you think he'd still notice more than we do? --If we notice half of it, we still ignore it, because we can't structure it.

So where does this leave us in relation to Stableford?

Let's pick another point and begin to storm his thesis yet again:

This is why Stableford's comment that literature is an outdated elite cultural medium is so absurd. It's not outdated and it shouldn't be just for the elite (though they'll claim it if no one else will). Not only because "language" should be in his comment, but the alternatives he offers (he doesn't mention most of them by name) either involve lesser uses of language or are generally visual in derivation--visual arts. Yes, even from the beginning all human culture has not been communicated through language; some of it's through observation and imitation, as with animals: visual. A lot can be communicated visually, certainly--but the overwhelming preponderance of

cultural information resides in language, even if it's language in combination with pictures.

And this is not because language-is-outdated-but-we're-still-hanging-on-stubbornly-anyway. And you can't object that Stableford says "literature" instead. As I said, that's a miscalculation on his part. Literature is the highest organization of language. It is. D.H. Lawrence: "The novel is the highest example of subtle inter-relatedness that man has discovered." That has been echoed by others as highest expression of our civilization, or the like. I can accept that on the basis of what the novel may do with language. Vide Stableford--that expression is all information, from hard to soft to what-have-you.

Film and TV and such media can't begin to compare. How long do you think we could maintain our civilization if we used just visual communication tomorrow--no printed texts on screens and no soundtracks using language more complexly than is ordinarily done (I won't be outrageous and specify that we have no soundtracks)? --Not could we ever have got started, but could we maintain what we have? Is there a way to neatly chop out all the irrelevant useless bullshit of "intellectuals" and just hold onto the stuff that'll keep us going?

That's a laugh. But I shudder at it. I shudder to think.

No, my dear. There may be some things words cannot express, but if the only language you can speak is the language of love, my love, I'll abandon you for a moron.

As I said, visuals can't compare. Film is really a lousy medium for telling stories and only exists impurely and on sufferance. The true center of film, considered for its potential, is the kinesthetic image, the realm of direct sensory impressions, pure motionful visuals--and narrative only interferes with this. (Why should film tell a story? --Does music tell a story? Does painting tell a story? Does sculpture tell a story?) Why should film tell a story? Narrative in film is considered effective only because we come to it with our thought and perceptions educated in another medium--literature. Most of the filmic conventions are literary. And when films are weak and seem to cheat on certain points in telling such things as simple suspense stories it's because there's something you can do in word stories that you can't approximate in a new convention for film--and so the resultant glossing-over in these areas gives us an occasional irritating sense of disruption.

But that doesn't matter to us. We breed ourselves to it willingly. Because the secret of film and especially TV is--

--that they're a lot easier than reading. That's it, pure and simple.

The reason is that the story in sight is being offered direct through one medium--it's representational of just what it is, people doing things to one another--whereas in words the story transmits through two media, one of them the visual imagination. Words are vague and specific and rich, and demand participation as well.

And that's where the thought is involved.

Film is just too damned specific as used. "Clankingly real," Vonnegut put it. And when it can be richer narratively (though not using it's proper potential, as cited above), as it is in major "auteurs," it is largely so at the sufferance of sophisticated literary enhancement in ways both conscious and un-. (Sorry, Barry, but it's so.) It's that all-pervasive education-via-language syndrome again. Don't forget, watching a narrative film is a per-

ceiving activity, and perceiving is affected by linguistic exposure. (Check audiences: "art" films are watched by people with a greater stake in the arts --the verbal arts.) One of the prime reasons why abstract films may be so difficult for most people to watch is more than that they're used to stories--it's what the stories represent, their education background in traditional media, which becomes hamstrung when you're confronting just pure moving shapes in dynamic relations. It's like a child being forced to sit through classical music in grade school; he doesn't know how to listen yet. It's all new, even though he's heard other, more "impure" music before.

Film as employed for learning is too damned specific and can't convey, by and large, general principles and thought structures. Take a film for training. You might easily learn how to fix a car--even without a soundtrack, conceivably--but you won't learn the principles behind the whole mechanical system without printed language and study. --Automobile literature, they'd call it.

Visual media can't compare on higher levels of culture. You do most of your visual learning in your early growing years--at precisely the stage where your language is yet to be fully developed. The higher learning, if you do any, has got to be at least to some crucial extent through language.

All right, you may say, we can still have a visual culture by just bringing what education we acquire elsewhere through language media, to film--just start concentrating on film. After all, it is a great quick efficient disseminator.

But the fact that it is, is precisely why it won't help in the areas that count. It's a better disseminator than books because what it disseminates is less complex. A disproportionate emphasis on film will mean nothing gets exercised sufficiently in the language area. If a kid can hardly read already, giving him TV isn't about to help. It may keep him watching, it may teach him something specific and socially useful, but that's about it. There must be a certain amount of training in that other area, reading--not because of the factual information gained so much as because of the kinds of capacities developed for thought.

This is the difficulty with relatively uneducated people who look suspiciously and act grudgingly toward "intellectuals." --Aw, he just went to school longer; he read more books. And who needs to spend time on that stuff? (Where's the money in it?)

The point isn't that he read more books. The point is not, to an important extent, even the specific content of those books. As long as they were of a fairly demanding and various nature and were read demandingly, their point is the expansion of thought processes they help effect. Anyone can go through college and get a diploma--but it doesn't mean he's educated. In the nature of the system in this country, it means he's grounded in specifics (this country is nothing if not "specific!")--gets certification of competency, hopefully, for a job area that pays well. It's got nothing to do with the finer things in life, unless they're material and can be consumed when the blessedly ever-shortening workday is over.

It's the capacities (which Stableford stresses, but in another and altogether less adequate way) that are more important than specific information retained. The ability to extract all sorts of information at will.

A culture that's becoming increasingly visual like ours can only be supported by enough active people who are not that limited. Functional literacy can be defined as being able to fill out a job application or a voter registration form only so long as there are people who can read well, and can use and create

thought therefore.

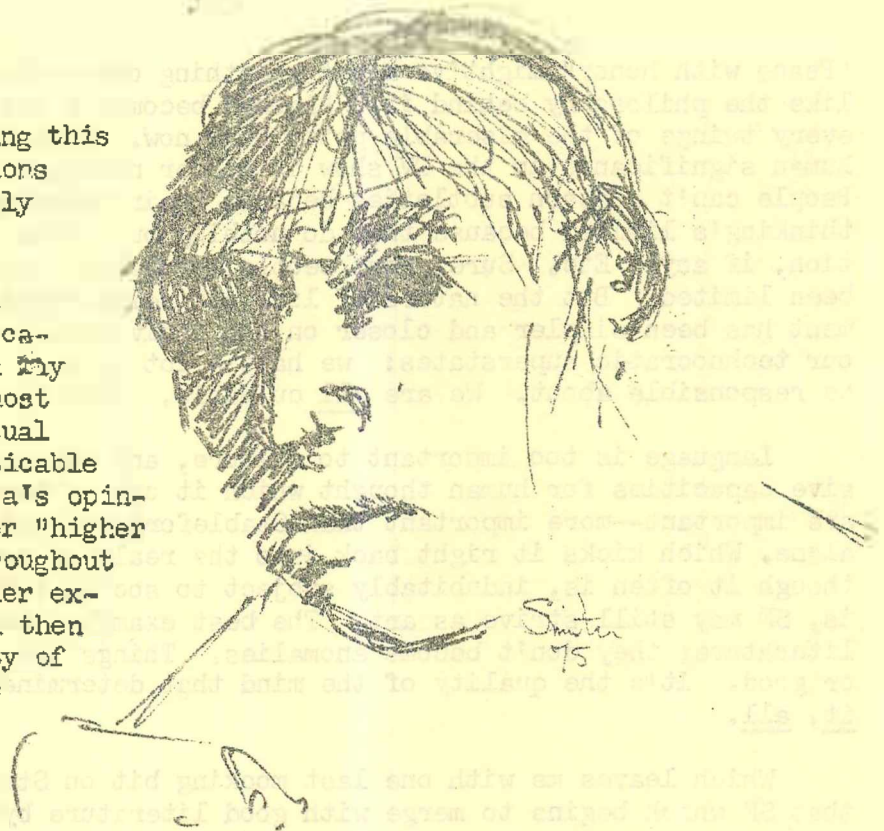
It's struck me in doing this piece that these observations I'm clarifying are precisely the concussed ground from which arises my tremor of doubt over James Tiptree's wonderful ideas about the capacities for old age which may be developed. Doubt for most people, because of our visual culture. It is easily noticeable that most of Middle America's opinions (I won't even consider "higher thoughts") are uniform throughout life, never change but under extreme lengthy duress. And then slightly. It's the poverty of experience. What could be more damning to visual culture than to notice a thing like this, and then to notice as well that

when the workday is over life is spent in front of the tube largely, or going on vacations and to sports games. Period. And this is why my phrase above--"blessedly ever-shortening workday"--is in a sense grossly inaccurate, because it's not a blessing. It's been noticed that leisure time is a problem. Sure. Now we speak of "training" people to use their leisure, educating them directly for this. The reason? Any activity which is not pleasurable consumption on the primitive level has been closed to most people. Their minds have never been exercised, their feelings have not been refined, and so subtler things are closed to them.

All of this is what's so farcical about the notion of the global village and how it's bringing us all together, showing us the human condition close up as it is everywhere, in pictures... So what? A chunk of the human condition enters your livingroom at the flip of a dial--and what's the effect? Living picture postcards. We're still the same old people that could care less (if only we didn't have to look), sitting here staring at some strange harried little people who do care less. That's all. The images are undigested, untransmuted: they engender no thought in themselves. Thought and morality and compassion must be nurtured elsewhere, then borne out in action and experience. And you can guess where elsewhere is. By and large, only low-grade moral suasion of the social convention/pressure ilk can be taught to the visual sense. And that's called modelling behavior in personality theory. And again, it's teaching specifics. Not universal ethical principles. Perhaps it's a nasty swipe, but this isn't far removed from Pavlov, really...

Oh, I could go on. My crayons are just getting started on the picture of Apocalypse. But I look up at the reeling pages and see that this is the twelfth, so I'd better wind down.

Where all this leaves Stableford--if language is the crux--becomes obvious. It is missing from the equations and it causes his whole thesis to start unravelling, because the nature of the media just ain't quite the same anymore. Even in the newer word-derived media it's not the media per se that are of import, but the usage they make of language--what quality is it? Again, Orwell and the devaluation of language politically; even in our own world.



"Peace with honor" might've meant something once--eloquent, though you don't like the philosophy behind it. "Agony" becomes a term for the headache or every twinge of the miserable petty body now. Just as the minimal event of human significance in the TV show is murder nowadays. It's all blunt and big. People can't discern subtleties because their thinking's limited. And their thinking's limited because they do nothing but watch TV and read rotten fiction, if any. Etc. Sure, most people throughout cultural history have always been limited. But the nature of life and relationships among men and environment has been simpler and closer on the individual level. It's different with our technocratic superstates: we have a lot more at stake and a lot more to be responsible about. We are all culpable. Just for being.

Language is too important to culture, and because it is, it's the expressive capacities for human thought which it can achieve through literature that are important--more important than Stableford's "social usage" considered alone. Which kicks it right back into the realm of art, SF and all. Bad art though it often is, indubitably subject to social influences though it usually is, SF may still strive as art. The best examples become just that, as good literature; they don't become anomalies. Things are always being "used," bad or good. It's the quality of the mind that determines whether that will be it, all.

Which leaves me with one last mocking bit on Stableford's SF. He says that SF which begins to merge with good literature by being good literature is retrogressing. I hardly see how. In terms of his own description of good SF as being not necessarily good fiction but a good disseminator of certain kinds of cultural information dealing with change, most of what comes out in the field, which is doing what he says it should (not too difficult, really), and which is nevertheless bad fiction--is clearly not as worthwhile as good literary SF which may do the same. The latter is a bonus if it doesn't obscure the ideas significantly, a bonus even in his media system. And presumably SF (written) can handle more complex ideas than the other visual-oriented SF media (film, TV and comics) of his "lateral spread"--otherwise its days as a disseminator would seem to be numbered. The way of the dodo is the next step.

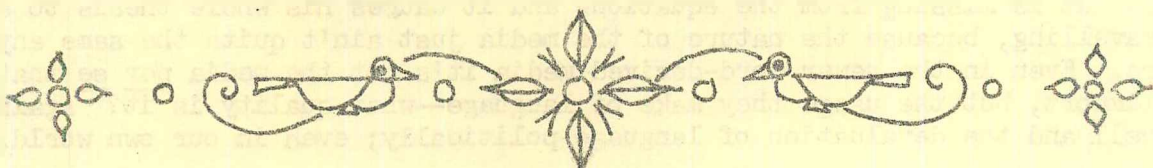
A recent thought, when recalling a bad science fiction with some nevertheless sense-of-wonderish ideas in it: wouldn't it be just as well, when a bad writer gets his notions developed, to go around disseminating them personally, publish an essay, perhaps invite a few people over for the evening and discuss them? --Why wade through an ersatz novel to get them? That's just wasted verbiage in the media system. If they were ever interesting ideas, they'll be just as acceptably presented as dry speculations barebones.

And who knows? A real writer present, on the tail end of his first six-pack, may get a good piece of literature out of the evening...

Stableford: "In sociological terms what we communicate and the ways we communicate define what we are."

Yes. Yes indeed--what we are. Let's hope that SF as literature, and therefore in a fuller sense than Stableford's or McLuhan's a "tool in the training of perception," functions to show us what we are--instead of simply letting us be. I look back over the insistent defunct pages here--

--and words just fail me.



MULTIPLEX MISDEMEANORS the figures of the artist and the criminal in Samuel R. Delany's sf novels DOUGLAS BARBOUR

At one of the turning points in *EMPIRE STAR*,¹ Lump says to Jo:

"...I want you to take a complex statement with you that is further in need of multiplex evaluation: The only important elements in any society are the artistic and the criminal, because they alone, by questioning the society's values, can force it to change."

(ES, 84)

From the beginning, with Geo, the poet, and Snake, the thief, in *THE JEWELS OF APTOR*, Delany has placed criminals and artists in societal contexts where their actions would become multiplex and ambiguous commentaries on Lump's statement.

The artist as social outsider is commonplace in 20th century literature, and there is no need to traverse such familiar critical ground once again.² Even the artist-as-outlaw is now accepted, as both Jean Genet's works and career demonstrate.³ Delany is obviously obsessed with this figure, for it is one of the few constants in his fiction. Although his interest can partially be explained by the fact that he is a black artist in contemporary America, a reading of his work reveals the obsession is basically a literary one, deriving from his intense effort to discover, through his own art, some reason to believe in it.⁴

¹In this article, I have used the original Ace paperback editions of Delany's novels and the Bantam paperback edition of *NOVA*. All page references are to these editions, as follows: JA (New York, 1968); FT (New York, 1970); BB2 (New York, 1965); B17 (New York, 1966); ES (New York, 1966); EI (New York, 1967). *NOVA* was published in hardcover in 1968; the Bantam edition was published in 1969.

²See Colin Wilson, *THE OUTSIDER* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1956), *passim*.

³See, e.g., Jean Paul Sartre, *SAINT GENET: ACTOR AND MARTYR* (New York, 1963), from which Delany quotes (EI, 50). Indeed, Genet's concern with the idea of "masks" is extremely relevant to the people of EI, as they attempt, without much success, to wear the masks of long lost humanity.

⁴This is also a major twentieth century concern in literature: to discover a transcendent or social value for the art that so significantly demonstrates the artist's alienation from society. Delany's literary use of this

To return to Lump's statement, Delany has written of both criminals and artists, occasionally creating a figure who is both. Almost always, the criminal or the artist is seen ambiguously; neither is necessarily questioning society's values for what might be called "right reasons." Nevertheless, most of them tend to prove the statement right. Geo and Snake do not unquestioningly accept the cultural values of Leptar, and for that reason they are able to accept and even help to create the changes it will have to undergo. Jon, in *THE FALL OF THE TOWERS*, is imprisoned for a criminal act of his youth; he kills a palace guard out of fear, not because he questions his society's values. But he becomes an intellectual criminal when he escapes, because his life in the mines, and his life afterwards, leads him to conclude that his society's values are wrong and need to be changed. Vol Nonik, the artist/criminal of this book, stops being a criminal as he gets more deeply involved in his art. He is, however, associated with the City of a Thousand Suns, and in terms of Toromon as a whole, that city is a criminal act; it has been created by self-confessed Malis, people who no longer believe in the values of Toromon. The total situation in *THE FALL OF THE TOWERS* is ambiguous and complex, however, and many other Malis are criminal without any redeeming ideas. One way of evaluating Lump's statement, then, is to demonstrate how much the context of its use qualifies it.

In *THE BALLAD OF BETA-2* there are no artists, per se, unless we consider the unknown writer of the ballad one. Because it was likely written by a One Eye, a connection between "criminal" activity and art is suggested. The Norms aboard the ships perceive the One Eyes as "criminals," to be tried and killed because they are "different." But it is obvious that the One Eyes are only a few brave people trying to hold onto the knowledge of their forefathers, a knowledge now lost to the community as a whole. In the context of the degeneration of the Star Folk's civilization, the One Eyes appear as culture heroes doomed to tragic destruction.

In *EMPIRE STAR*, the question is put to Jo just as he is about to join Prince Nactor's army. His immediate response is his decision to go AWOL. Because he realizes that he is not an artist like Ni Ty Lee, his only choice, it appears, is to be a criminal. But in whose terms? He commits a criminal act against the army, but the army represents a very special society anyway, and in this case, Prince Nactor turns out to be an enemy of the Empire as a whole. Thus Jo's acts are not an unqualified answer to the problem Lump has posed. Jo is questioning particular values but not all values. On the other hand, we have been told that the Empire condones the slavery of the Ill, so Jo is questioning some of the values of the Empire itself, not just those of Prince Nactor. Since he has the support of Princess San Sevarina, or is supporting her, he is not simply a "criminal" in his acts, but something more.

BABEL-17 represents a further complication of the terms of evaluation. Rydra begins as a person who, like most of her fellow citizens, accepts the necessity of the war with the Invaders. It is only as she gains greater knowledge and understanding that she comes to question the assumptions of the war. Insofar as she does question those assumptions, she is "criminal" even before she becomes involved with Butcher, a criminal par excellence, as his history shows. Of course, Butcher is a criminal because the Invaders have made him one, by removing his memory, and feeding him Babel-17, the language without an "I" (he had been a spy for the Alliance); but even so, he has committed some frightening criminal deeds. When Rydra enters his mind, both receive revelations which expand their, and the reader's, sense of possible human activities.

theme is another reason for considering his work apart from mere pulp or popular fiction.

You are so big inside me I will break. I see the pattern named
The Criminal and artistic consciousness meeting in the same head
with one language between them...

Yes, I had started to think something like--

Flanking it, shapes called Baudelaire--Ahhhi!--and Villon.

They were ancient French po-

(B17, 145)

Butcher, with his still weak ego, has difficulty assimilating Rydra's poetic faculty with its ability to yoke a variety of concepts and images into ordered patterns of meaning; Rydra, with her fears, must assimilate the dangerous knowledge that Butcher frightens her not because he had done things she could not do, but things she could do. Where he must grow to be able to use language for truly human communication, she must grow to accept the potential for cruelty in herself, for only by knowing it will she be able to control it.⁵ By the end of the novel, when they have learned to accept and to love each other, they still set out to commit a criminal act in terms of their society, escaping custody to end the war. This act reveals how strongly they oppose the accepted values of that society, which have informed both the Alliance and the Invaders in their battle over a twenty-year period.

It should be obvious by now that Delany realizes a straightforward evaluation of Lump's statement is impossible. What is possible is the creation of a series of artistic struggles with the problem the statement articulates, and that, on one level, is what each of his novels represents. Naturally, the exploration of the problem in THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION is "different."⁶ Neither artists nor criminals are the same in the world of this novel. But although the nature of that world is continuous change, making it difficult to discover a body of values against which an individual can revolt, the mythology of humanity by which these people live supplies the values of stasis, or non-change, which they attempt to live by. Thus their values are strangely hypocritical; that is, they are real, but impossible, values. Because their knowledge of this fact is painful, they try to pretend it is not so; which explains Dove's activities on behalf of the unworkable human genetic system by which they are trying to populate the planet.

All the important characters Lobey meets are criminals in so far as they know, and act upon their knowledge, that their race must change and no longer follow the old human rules. In their role-playing with the mixed masks of human mythology, they are also artists. Spider, with his singing whip, his terrible knowledge of myths and his questions for Lobey, is a synthesizer. Green-eye, a criminal Christ who attacks everyone's way of life by his parthenogenetic presence, is a moral artist. Kid Death is more criminal than artist, as his mythological connection with Billy the Kid implies, but even he can practice certain derivative arts, such as torture and the Western cliff-hanger scene (EI, 89). Everything about Kid Death is negative. Unlike Green-eye, he can only resurrect those he has killed. Green-eye is beyond his power and Lobey has the music he lacks. "Kid Death can control, but he cannot create, which is why he needs you," Spider tells Lobey (EI, 121). Lacking a creative impulse, all Kid Death can do is destroy. Because he is too danger-

⁵I believe that BABEL-17, in this scene anyway, comes very close to expressing some of the ideas concerning individuals' potential for violence which Delany explores in much greater and more terrifying depth in THE TIDES OF LUST (New York, 1973).

⁶"Different" is a key word in THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION, as Stephen Scobie has pointed out in "Different Mazes: Mythology in Samuel R. Delany's THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION," RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY, 5:1 (1971), pp. 13-14.

ous to live, Spider kills him when he is caught spellbound by Lobey's music.

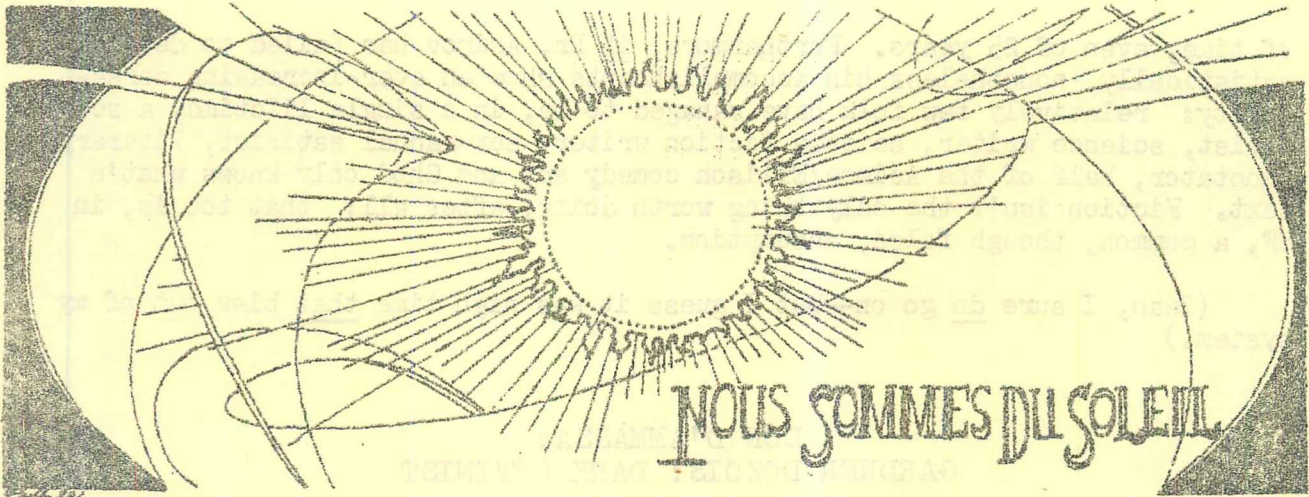
Lobey is not an obvious criminal, but he is criminally negligent in his basic relations to others. A pastoral fool, who accepts his society's mores without thinking, he always understands things too late, never asks the right questions and continually fails those who depend upon him, except Spider, at the end. He appears to learn from his mistakes, but is this enough? The ending is equivocal on this point; Lobey may have gained, or perhaps will gain, the knowledge to become an effective agent of necessary change in his society, but we cannot know that. He is a criminal only by default; he does not challenge his society's values, he simply fails to live up to such transcendental ones as loyalty and friendship.

In NOVA, a number of figures represent various formal relations of the pattern of the criminal and artistic consciousness. Mouse is a special example of both; a criminal by necessity in his youth, his major act of thievery takes place when he steals the sensory syrx. As a result of that, he goes on to learn how to use it, travels around the world, gets his sockets and joins the larger society of the galaxy, eventually crewing for Lorq, where he finally suffers enough knowledge to grow up. Thus when he is a criminal he is incapable of questioning his society's values, but, as a result of his criminal activities, he eventually finds himself in a position to learn enough about that society to be able to question it. Katin, a self-conscious artist, and thus different from Mouse, teaches the musician almost everything he learns about this society. Because Katin's pursuit of the outmoded Novel as an art form involves a great intellectual effort to comprehend all facets of society, he is fully capable of questioning its values. Possibly he accompanies, and supports, Lorq because he concludes that Lorq's successful completion of his quest will mean an eventual change for the better for the whole galaxy. Nevertheless, he is no criminal in the ordinary sense of that word. Neither is Lorq, although the Reds call him and his whole family pirates. Lorq's actions are criminal, perhaps, but that is too simplex a judgment of them. Both the Von Rays and the Reds are above such judgments; the only literary comparisons that fit are with the heroes of Greek and Jacobean tragedy; these are special people for whom some rules just do not apply. The comparison is justified, I think, because Delany points up the "nobility" of these characters throughout. They are, in Nietzsche's words, "beyond good and evil." Lorq tells Prince, "'The reason I must fight you is I think I can win. There's only that one. You're for stasis. I'm for movement. Things move. There's no ethic there'" (NOVA, 183). Simple judgments are impossible precisely because there is no ethic where Lorq carries out his quest. And there can be no doubt that Lorq is, quite consciously, challenging many of the values of his society.

Delany never arrives at any kind of final evaluation of Lump's statement in his novels. No final evaluation is possible: that is the multiplex view. But he does, over and over again, present the problem in concrete terms, now showing it from one perspective, now from another. And one point clearly emerges from his many examinations of the problem: the artistic consciousness differs from the merely criminal in its power of organization and control; it

(continued on page 60)

⁷"The very young, Lorq thought, the very rich" (NOVA, 68). Lorq is a member of a special, galaxy-wide aristocracy; as Ruby says (71), they are "unique." It is because they are so powerful in their wealth and property that they live on a plane in the culture posited by this fiction equivalent to the rulers in Greek tragedy, the heroes of Jacobean drama. That is what I mean by "nobility" in this context.



SHERYL SMITH:
SO WHAT HAVE YOU DONE FOR US LATELY?
from a letter of comment on PHANTASMICOM 11

The comments of Messrs. Glicksohn and Sabella, on the apparent artistic decline of Zelazny and Asimov respectively, manifest a shared assumption which is quite common in science fiction circles. This assumption is that a writer is "supposed" to develop, and that not only his craft, but his artistry also, "should" show continual improvement.

Excuse me, but this does not always happen, either in SF or in other fields of art, and I think much disservice is done by such expectations to those writers who don't happen to progress in this manner. SF, with its media-emphasis on newness, on "something different" for the coterie who've read everything to date, and with its omnipresent example of scientific "advancement" and technological "progress," seems particularly prone to value its artists by "what have they done for us lately"--and, alas, most of the artists tend to value themselves too by that standard.

This whole unfortunate situation is based on false premises, however; for the creative high point of an artist's career does not always come at the end of it. An artist's "best" productive span may fall anywhere within his lifetime; it may be quite brief or last for decades. An artist has no control over this; and it seems unreal to me, to tacitly disparage those artists who fail to maintain or to exceed their own earlier levels of excellence.

This misguided disparagement seems particularly unfair to such as Zelazny, who has produced flat-out A-1 SF--which is also fine literature--in almost unparalleled quantity, starting with "A Rose for Ecclesiastes." When Zelazny began to sell, he was better than most writers ever get; and if he should never again reach the heights of his beginnings--which is not at all a certainty--by no means could this diminish his overall artistic stature. It doesn't matter when such excellence comes--just if it comes at all.

As for Dr. Asimov--well, despite Harlan Ellison's kvetching about fans who praise Asimov's early "Nightfall" as his best fictional accomplishment, I can't help feeling that...dammit, it is! But why should that be so disgraceful? If Dr. Asimov's fiction these 25-odd years has not attained the elevation of "Nightfall," this does not mean--with all respect to Mr. Ellison, whose own work has developed--that the good doctor has been wasting his time. Surely no one is saying that since "Nightfall" Dr. Asimov has been a stone bore. On the contrary, he has written much fiction of beguilement and delight. To provide real entertainment is no mean feat, and certainly no waste

of time, even of 25 years. Furthermore, if Dr. Asimov has failed to develop artistically, nonetheless his accomplishments show an ever-increasing versatility: relatively few folk have managed to be, in a single lifetime, a scientist, science writer, science fiction writer, sex-manual satirist, literary annotator, half of the Asimov/Ellison comedy act and Ghod only knows what's next. Fiction isn't the only thing worth doing, after all: that too is, in SF, a common, though false, assumption.

(Yeah, I sure do go on--but I guess it was high time that blew out of my system.)

DON D'AMMASSA:
GARDNER DOZOIS: DARK OPTIMIST

One of the more interesting new writers to surface in the SF field in recent years is Gardner Raymond Dozois. With only eighteen published stories, he has been twice nominated for the Hugo, and five times for the Nebula. His popularity has increased despite charges of ambiguity, pessimism, and defeatism. Dozois sold his first story in 1966, while still a teenager. The military subsequently interfered with his career, employing him as a military journalist in Nuremberg, Germany. Dozois was born in 1947 in Salem, Massachusetts, which gives rise to speculation about his ancestry. The consistency with which he turns out top quality, award-contending stories surely implies some degree of witchcraft.

Dozois' fiction is frequently characterized as pessimistic and despairing by critics like Alexei Panshin. In a recent interview with Donald Keller, published in Jeff Smith's PHANTASMICOM II, Dozois acknowledged that his fiction is often grim, but insisted that he is in fact optimistic about human beings. He considers a true hero one who continues to struggle in the face of hopeless odds, who faces death defiantly, who snatches dignity if not victory from the jaws of defeat. The important goal--perhaps the sole worthwhile human achievement--is interpersonal contact, human interaction. Dozois invests this drive with so much power that when such contact is restricted in his fiction by society or environment, the pent-up energy is eventually released in warped, often highly destructive, avenues.

Dozois has also been accused of writing obscure, overly subjective stories whose meaning is lost to the average reader. He denies that this is his intent, stressing that fiction should not abound with imagery and language which cannot be readily deciphered by the reader. On the other hand, he points out that it is impossible for any writer to totally avoid symbolism: "...whether you are aware of it or not every word you put down on paper, every sentence you put down on paper, has its symbolic undertone."

None of this means that he feels compelled to predigest his fiction for the reader. Reading should not be a totally passive occupation and the reader has certain obligations, just as does the writer. Dozois attempts to write his stories on a variety of levels, with each level interacting with and reinforcing the others, but capable of standing alone. The more effort a reader is willing to exert in reading his fiction, the more benefit he should derive. It is quite possible, says Dozois, to get more out of a story than the author consciously put into it: "...the author is not the final arbiter of opinion as to what a story means."

The first Dozois story, "The Empty Man," appeared in the September 1966 issue of WORLDS OF IF, then edited by Fred Pohl, and is untypical of the author's post-military output. John Charlton, a superhuman undercover agent for the empire of Earth, is employed by rebels to overthrow a repressive planetary

government. He does so in short order, after an unnecessarily melodramatic series of preliminaries involving a handful of subplots. The "superman" story is very difficult to do well, and the early Dozois wasn't up to it.

Many of the best Dozois stories have appeared in Damon Knight's ORBIT series. "Where No Sun Shines" (ORBIT 6) is a chilling anecdote set in the near future, with America torn by a racial war. A young man is forced to witness the brutal execution of a Black man and two White sympathizers by an army unit. With a remarkable economy of words, Dozois illustrates the dehumanizing effect of this act not only on the victims, but on the executioners. A lieutenant is portrayed fondling his weapon as he stands over the body of the dead woman; the sexual connotations are obvious, and their perversion clearly implied. Despite their death, the White couple remain heroes; their willingness to risk all for a fellow human being despite the overwhelming repressive measures taken against them is a heroic act; it mirrors the optimism of the author about the human spirit.

"A Dream at Noonday" (ORBIT 7) utilizes the same deeply introspective style. A man lies apparently wounded, while through his mind runs a tangled web of love and death, machinery and masculinity. Most of Dozois' fiction is, in form, an extended narrative soliloquy, a single character chronicling his reactions or memories. This particular story is an extreme example, with no formal plot at all. This does not, however, mean that nothing is happening in the story; indeed, an entire lifetime is recapitulated in a few short pages. Though not one of his stronger pieces, "Dream" does point out Dozois' concentration on characterization rather than plot.

Dozois had a strong contender for an award with "Horse of Air" (ORBIT 8). The title is extracted from "Tcm O'Bedlam's Song": "With a burning spear and a horse of air, to the wilderness I wander." It is a highly appropriate source, for the story is set in an insane society, and the only character is a madman, a megalomaniac who fancies himself a natural aristocrat. He and his peers have taken refuge in the Towers, self-contained penthouses which have gradually been transformed into prisons. The prisoner considers his own social class partly responsible for the fall of civilization, charging it with abdication of its corporate responsibilities. But he cannot totally accept a charge which would implicate himself, so he justifies their inaction on the basis that "it takes such a lot of effort to remain civilized."

He externalizes his loss of self and class esteem in the usual manner, through selection of a scapegoat: "It was the n----s. I hate to say it....I had high hopes for them all. But they got greedy....We should have realized that idealism is a wasting disease....I have no prejudice; I speak of cold facts." Dozois indicts the present "liberal" establishment, pointing to the hypocrisy that lies behind society's stated support for equal opportunity. As he dissects the personality and rationalizations of his character, so does he also reduce America's mass self-delusion about the nature of our society to man's basic insecurity and fear of the unknown: "He fears that in climbing up they will shake him down" and "He hates them because they are not part of the mechanism...." At the same time, he shows that total isolation from humanity leads to a warped, malicious, potentially destructive personality, for the imprisoned man fantasizes the repeated destruction of the world at his instigation.

The title of "A Kingdom by the Sea" (ORBIT 10) is taken from Edgar Allan Poe's poem "Annabel Lee." Poe's lament for a lost love is echoed in this story of a slaughterhouse worker who becomes enamoured of a girl who appears in his dreams. Mason is a man whose "future has become his past without ever touching his present." The monotony of his job and its repugnant nature have reduced Mason to an organic machine. His discomfort is "the kind of unease

that pistons in a car's engine might feel when one of the cylinders begins to misfire." His inevitable encounter in his waking life with his communicant--apparently a cow which Mason is forced to kill in the course of his work--is both comic and tragic. The story works on a variety of levels and is an excellent example of how a story's interpretation may well hinge on where it appears. Taken as a story of science fiction, "Kingdom" is a sober handling of a somewhat absurd concept--a telepathic cow. In the interview with Keller, Dozois explains that he had intended the story to be interpreted as a psychological fantasy, that the fantastic elements were designed to be purely figments of Mason's imagination. Either interpretation is acceptable, but the author's version enables us to better interpret other events in the story. Mason's indifference to the nature of his job is revealed as a mask, disguising his dissatisfaction from himself. The fabricated telepath--Mason's desire for contact with other beings on an intimate, personal level--becomes the means by which he can symbolically commit suicide. The deprivation of meaningful human contact in his life has warped his attitude toward himself as well as others.

"Machines of Loving Grace" (ORBIT 11) borrows its title from another writer: novelist and poet Richard Brautigan. Medical science, administered by machines, has inflicted involuntary immortality on the human race, and the young female protagonist makes several unsuccessful attempts to take her own life. This story perhaps best illustrates the theme of the indomitable human spirit struggling against insuperable odds. The apparently limitless power of the machines, their ability to resurrect the dead, the "loving grace" referred to in the title, all clearly imply that man's technological developments have achieved the status of demigods, at least, a tendency we already see from time to time today.

"Flash Time" (ORBIT 13) is a brooding tale about the decay of community. Set among a group of brusque, independent people in rural Maine, the story reveals a series of increasingly brutal and dehumanizing events, culminating in murder and human sacrifice. By cutting themselves off from one another emotionally, the characters have developed inner pressures and no safety valve. Sooner or later this pressure bursts free and, uncontrolled, will take unpredictable and quite possibly unpleasant forms. Although set among a group traditionally considered taciturn and remote, Dozois clearly means that society as a whole fails to provide sufficient emotional outlets.

Dozois has had appearances in a variety of original anthologies and once in a prozine, in recent years. David Gerrold bought one of his early stories for GENERATION. "Conditioned Reflex" is another story more concerned with character development than plot. Soldiers have been drained of emotion and humanity, killing is reduced to routine, the soldiers are manipulated for purposes they will never comprehend. This is a theme that reappears later in the author's work, and is handled elsewhere with far more success than in this early piece.

"The Sound of Muzak" appeared in the first volume of the ill-fated QUARK/series, edited by Samuel R. Delany and Marilyn Hacker. It features a group of soldiers trapped below ground in a bomb shelter, out of touch with the rest of the world, and suspicious that unbeknownst to themselves, a nuclear war may be flourishing on the surface. Dozois points out one of the more depressing aspects of our society, one particularly evident in the military: "You've got to follow the rules, whether you understand the reasons for them or not." The author avoids the simple ploy of making the Army the scapegoat for society, using it rather as the medium in which dehumanization is expressed: "I wonder what kind of society produces men like us?" Man is represented as a cog, ground smooth by the machinery of society: "...we couldn't escape the machine because the machine is in us..." There is a degree of pessimism in "Muzak"

because the author appears to say there may be no way out, that recognition of the irrationalities of our society does not lead to their inevitable rectification, but perhaps to the destruction of the perceiver. "Those who can't stop thinking, those who see, don't survive." Contrarily, the fact that there are some people who do continue to think, to recognize and struggle against imposed restrictions, is a hopeful note. In the Keller interview, Dozois explains that the dates in the diary kept in this story correspond to the Lenten season, and the failure of the door to open casts into doubt the probability of resurrection. This seems to indicate that Dozois himself has a great deal of personal doubt as to the eventual triumph or defeat of humanity when it is forced finally to confront its own shortcomings.

"The Man Who Waved Hello" (UNIVERSE 2 edited by Terry Carr) is set in another rigidly stratified future society where conformity is of paramount importance. The quiet, unhappy hero finds his only pleasure in drugs and through exposing himself over a viewphone. Once more we are shown that the overpowering drive toward human contact, when inhibited, will express itself eventually, even if in socially undesirable ways. "In a Crooked Year" (TEN TOMORROWS edited by Roger Elwood) follows an insane soldier as he wanders through post-holocaust ruins on a quest to find "the one who's responsible." He ultimately realizes that he, like everyone else, "did want this, secretly wished for it to happen." Fulfilling the death wish of his culture, he commits suicide, perhaps realizing that man had so thoroughly isolated himself from his fellow man that the only means remaining for interpersonal contact was through mutual self-destruction.

In "Wires" (FANTASTIC, December 1971) a dying man realizes that all men are pawns, manipulated by unknown forces. "Flying," which appeared in EDGE, published in New Zealand, is a somewhat similar sketch about a man's identification of himself with the plane in which he flies, and about the human search for some transcendent quality in the universe. "The Storm" (FUTURE CORRUPTION edited by Roger Elwood) deals both with human isolation and free will. A young boy, who eventually becomes psychologically stunted and pathologically unhappy with his life, is possessed by his older self in an attempt to alter the circumstances that led to his personality dysfunction. Predictably, the older self is not capable of reshaping itself: "Now that he had his freedom, he began to wonder what to do with it." None of these last five stories substantially advanced either the reputation or the accomplishments of the author; they are simply restatements or embellishments of concepts better expressed elsewhere in his fiction.

"A Special Kind of Morning" appeared in Robert Silverberg's first volume of the NEW DIMENSIONS series in 1971, was in the running for that year's Hugo award, and was chosen by Silverberg for a second anthology, ALPHA 5. The rebel Quaestors defeat their enemy, the Combine, by employing primitive weapons and tactics against which no safeguards have been taken. The uneasy compatibility of intellect and modern society arises again: "Goth...thought too much to be a really efficient cog." Dozois stresses that we are responsible for our own situation and that this responsibility necessarily carries with it discomfort: "We make our own heavens and hells....How much easier when we could blame our guilt or goodness on God." When the hero is saved by a creature he considered sub-human, he begins to realize what has been done to his own personality because of his participation in the war. He has lowered the value of his own humanity by failing to accept the other as a fellow human being.

"King Harvest" (NEW DIMENSIONS II) is another ostensibly pessimistic story. Pollution, chemical and bacteriological agents have utterly destroyed civilization and mankind is doomed. Dozois indicts our isolationism from each other once more, holds it responsible for inflicting itself upon all of human-

ity: "Everyone was a stranger now; there was no way to fight that ultimate isolation." But even as the story's dying hero wanders through the desolation of his world, knowing full well that he is doomed, he can still defy the universe and his own fate, and defend the value of human life: "Damn you, she is human, she counts for something."

There is a further dip into the metaphysical in "The Last Day of July" (NEW DIMENSIONS 3). John is a neurotic intellectual who is gradually losing faith in his own abilities. As his work and life become less meaningful, he experiences premonitions of doom. He becomes progressively less in touch with the "real" world and eventually passes through to another level of reality, thus escaping the impending world's end. Although this story has some brilliant passages, the character of John is never realized sufficiently to make the reader care what happens to either him or his world. The escape to another universe might be interpreted as an optimistic note, but it seems too pat, too much a product of wish fulfillment.

For the most part, all of the above fiction shares the same basic structure. Dozois expresses his views through a single central character in each story in what are essentially soliloquies. His visions are often dark ones, his endings downbeat, his observations frequently depressing in spite of the persistent note of wry optimism. His characters are usually insane, insecure, or unstable. There is an overall unity of theme that makes the body of his work more consistent than with most writers, but there is one drawback. Brooding, introspective stories do not often appeal to a broad cross-section of readers. Only the singular strength of Dozois' work has allowed such a normally unpopular story technique to gain such wide notice.

Fortunately, Dozois is not content to travel constantly in the same paths and "Strangers" (NEW DIMENSIONS 4) breaks the mold of his earlier work without sacrificing the attributes that make that work distinctive and worthwhile. "Strangers," a complete novel, is reminiscent in many ways of Philip Jose Farmer's THE LOVERS, though with a much greater degree of introspection and psychological development. Farber, a neurotically unstable Earthman, falls in love with and marries Liraun Je Genawan, a Cian native. To a great extent, Farber pursues the marriage specifically because the authorities of both worlds oppose it. Additionally, Farber's neuroses seem to result from his inability to relate to his fellow Earthmen. Unfortunately, the differences in culture are such that he is at least equally incapable of communicating with his wife, and the shock of this discovery drives him even further into himself: "Every day--very gradually--his mind became a little bit duller." His desire to maintain even this small thread of contact is so overpowering that it eventually leads to a horrible death for his wife and his own insanity.

"Chains of the Sea" (CHAINS OF THE SEA edited by Robert Silverberg) is another plot-oriented story, quite possibly Dozois' best single piece of fiction. Tommy, a typical introspective Dozois character, is troubled and isolated from his fellow children. Other elements of the novelet are distinctly atypical. We learn that man is not now and never has been the dominant race on Earth, despite appearances to the contrary. Spaceships arrive to contact the Thants, beings existing on our Earth but in another plane of existence, undetectable except by certain children. Man's belated attempts to initiate communication with the Thants are completely ignored. Tommy and the Thants interact on a far wider range than in previous stories by Dozois, and the atmosphere is different, reminiscent of R.A. Lafferty. The plot is far more complex and developed than heretofore. Dozois seems to be refining and expanding his abilities. Although this story also failed to win the Hugo for which it was nominated, it is evident that Dozois will not be denied this recognition much longer.

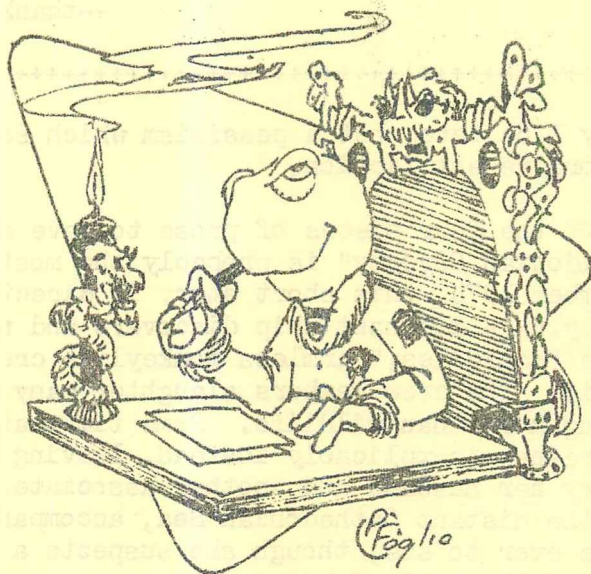
Dozois describes himself as hovering between reality and fantasy, science and magic, attempting to blend the two in his stories. During his Guest of Honor speech at the 1973 Disclave, he warned against what he called the balkinization of SF into various camps, "hard science," "new wave," etc. He suggests that the really outstanding SF will be stories that "gain much of their power by rationalizing traditional fantasy, that keep the inner power of the dream and the irrational, but attempt to analyze it in terms of the known and the rational...works that will invoke the sense of wonder without insulting the rational intellect."

In the Keller interview he illustrates one aspect of this by professing to be influenced by his childhood animism: "I notice that my people keep turning into things and my things keep turning into people." Good SF should, he says in "I Was the Invisible Man" (SFWA BULLETIN, Fall 1974), appeal to both "the gut and the head."

Dozois believes that only by maintaining an open attitude toward disparate points of view will the field, as literature, progress: "The best SF is seldom stuffy or pretentious, or arrogant in that particularly purblind way that excludes automatically the validity of ideas and viewpoints other than your own." The fact that many mundane critics have closed their minds to the genre doesn't mean that we who believe in the value of SF should emulate them by closing off parts of the field ourselves. Certainly not the part which includes Gardner Dozois.

DON D'AMMASSA:
MICHAEL BISHOP: ALLEGIANCES AND BETRAYALS

In an article written some time ago for Chris Sherman's ANTI-THESIS, I predicted that Michael Bishop would soon become one of the more successful new SF writers. Happily, and rather uncharacteristically, my prediction appears to have proven correct. "Death and Designation Among the Asadi" and "The White Otters of Childhood" were both on the final ballot for the Hugo last year, and "On the Street of the Serpents" and "Cathadonian Odyssey" are serious contenders for similar recognition this year. Bishop's first novel, A FUNERAL FOR THE EYES OF FIRE, has appeared, and a second is in process. In that earlier article I characterized Bishop's work as basically pessimistic, cor-



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 short story
 --thanks to Virginia Kidd and Michael Bishop

rectly I believe, but a pessimism which seems to have been mellowed a bit in his more recent fiction.

Of the four pieces of prose to have appeared since that early article, "Cathadonian Odyssey" is probably the most even in quality. Appearing in F&SF, September 1974, this short story is directly inspired by Weinbaum's "A Martian Odyssey." A merchant ship discovers and names the planet Cathadonia, inhabited by the "squiddles," armless monkeylike creatures that are both arboreal and aquatic. The crew members slaughter many of the indigenes, considering them nothing more than wildlife. Some time later, a survey ship attempts to land, but crashes inexplicably instead, leaving Maria Jill Ian, the sole survivor, to bury her husband and another associate. She then sets out on a journey toward the distant Cathadonian Sea, accompanied by Bracero, the only squiddle she is ever to see, though she suspects a telepathic bond exists between Bracero and the rest of his race.

She names the alien "Bracero" presumably because of its use as a term for "wetback" in the US. Bishop's propensity for puns is at work here, though, for "bracero" in Spanish also means "a strong arm," and in Portugese, "one who lends a hand." These subsidiary meanings are relevant because we learn that the squiddles have PK power. When Maria longs for her dead husband's company,

Bracero acts as the focal point for forces which transport the decaying body across the planet's surface to her side. When she becomes homesick for Earth, the entire planet is pulled through space in similar fashion, the climactic scene in the story.

"Odyssey" deals implicitly with betrayals. Maria is "a woman betrayed by her own kind and ambivalently championed by a creature carrying out a larger betrayal." The actions of the merchant crew resulted in their interference with the descent of the survey craft. The death of Maria's husband, therefore, results from the actions of "civilized" humans: "The men of the GOL-DEN, after all, were not savages." Bracero's attempt to help Maria results eventually in the extermination of his race by vengeful humanity, the "larger betrayal" to which Bishop refers. Despite the unfavorable light in which mankind is portrayed, Bishop reveals his somewhat grudging admiration for human aggressiveness along the way: "Men are the ultimate vermin, Maria, as indefatigable as cockroaches, capable of outlasting the universe."

"On the Street of the Serpents" (SCIENCE FICTION EMPHASIS #1 edited by David Gerrold) is a novella, and one of Bishop's most ambitious undertakings. The central character is also "Mike Bishop," although as in Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal," the author Bishop and the character "Bishop" are two altogether different people. The novella is divided into four parts: "Bishop" as a teenager living in Spain, as a 26-year-old with a family, as a middle-aged man who assassinates a rejuvenated Mao Tse-Tung, and as an older man living out the balance of his life in a prison.

"Bishop" is a megalomaniac. He describes his wife as a "madonna" following the birth of his son, Christopher. As "Christ's" father, he is therefore God, with the power of life and death over mortals; by naming his second son "Joshua," the successor of Moses, he also assumes the role of leader of the Chosen People. "Bishop" is a man of many disappointments. He feels that age is corrupting youth. As a teenager, he is shocked to see a young girl of his acquaintance keeping company with a member of the Guardia Civil. He also feels that he is one of the few people who recognize that the United States suffers "in direct proportion to the Old World's steadily increasing prosperity." His ultimate self-martyrdom is the result of his attempt to correct what he sees as an injustice in the new world order.

"Bishop" recognizes also that in modern life, "change...is the only constant." He is an ardent patriot, humiliated that the US has lost its pre-eminent position because of the systematic elimination of international barriers. He resents the fact that the world's standard of living is rising at the expense of that of his home country, and cannot understand how the world is becoming so radically altered: "I have very little understanding of international relations," he tells us, and "the world confuses me nowadays." This parochial worldview is manifest in his habitual reference to Spaniards as foreigners, even in Spain. Our decline, "Bishop" decides, is much our own fault, that we "gutted ourselves of all rectitude" in Southeast Asia and "persevere in making our moral commitments on the basis of a coin toss, or worse."

The two themes, corruption of youth and the decline of the US, have appeared elsewhere in Bishop's fiction, but never so thoroughly unified as in this story. Nisei, a young girl, is somehow cheapened by her contact with the Spanish policeman, at least in "Bishop's" eyes. Mao has been rejuvenated by taking control of a young man's body, which horrifies "Bishop," despite the rather clear depiction of the operation as beneficial and constructive rather than destructive or monstrous. The displaced man was suffering from an incurable brain disease and requested that he be made the depository of Mao's personality. Nevertheless, a tinge of corruption remains, reminding one of the young boy forced to commit murder in "Pinon Fall," the boy drained of will by

a succubus in "Darktree, Darktide," the young boy impaled by a flying object in "In Rubble, Pleading," and other examples from Bishop's early stories.

It should be emphasized here that Bishop's portrayal of Mao in a positive role in this story does not necessarily imply approval of Marxism. Implicit in much of Bishop's work is the idea that events can transform people, even dictators. Franco, for example, "has allowed the serpent's tongue to touch inside him a responsive chord of metamorphosis." Rather, he is saying in this story that the destiny of humanity does not and should not reside exclusively, or even primarily, with the U.S. or any single country.

The remaining question which we should consider is: Why did Bishop use himself as the central character, and why portray himself in such unfavorable colors? Certainly his surname ties in well with the religious theme, as well as "Michael," which comes from the Hebrew for "Who is like God?" But if that were all, he could as easily have called the character Michael Church or Pope. Bishop even states in the story that "I didn't belong in the role I had scripted for myself." Is it just self-indulgence, as was charged by John Curlovich in THE SPANISH INQUISITION? I think not. I suspect Bishop was pointing out that tendencies toward this kind of mania, that "the same hatreds, allegiances, and gut fears that move the multitudes" move us also. As with many of Bishop's characters, "Bishop" seems to be undergoing a crisis of identity. Markcrier Rains, for example, from "The White Otters of Childhood," has himself transformed into a shark; the young boy in "Darktree, Darktide" is drained of the "peculiar qualities that made him Jon Dahlquist and not somebody else;" the dead woman in "The Windows in Dante's Hell" submerged her identity in the concept of space flight; the researcher in "Death and Designation Among the Asadi" discovers much he hadn't known about his own personality through his study of the Asadi; and in this novella, "Bishop" wonders of his son: "How, therefore, may he recognize himself" in a world where national barriers are falling and the entire world is moving toward a more homogenous society?

"Allegiances" (GALAXY, February 1975) is set in the world of the Urban Nuclei, and is a direct sequel to both "The Windows in Dante's Hell" and "If a Flower Could Eclipse," tying both sets of characters together. The US, a continent of domed cities, is isolated from the rest of the world, which is believed to have reverted to barbarism. The countryside outside the domes has been surrendered to nature and to bands of disenfranchised citizens either expelled or fugitive from the cities. A team consisting of characters from "Windows" is sent to cajole two expatriates (from "Flower") back into the cities. The team eventually learns not only the trivial lifeview of the Nuclei, but that the Europeans and Asians have developed interstellar flight and are in communication with alien races.

Although not one of Bishop's better stories, "Allegiances" provides many clues about his other stories, particularly A FUNERAL FOR THE EYES OF FIRE, which is set in the same future, though some time later. The decline of the US has apparently been counteracted by refusal to recognize the accomplishments of the rest of the world, and the country has turned completely within itself. Bishop suggests that we should pledge our allegiance to mankind as a whole rather than a single nation. Menewa, a team member and an American Indian, casts his lot with the Urban Nuclei, despite their lack of reciprocity, hoping for eventual enfranchisement. Menewa "gave his allegiance foolishly, then acted upon it foolishly." Although "Allegiances" serves to tie the two preceding stories in the series together, widening our knowledge of the surrounding world at the same time, it does not stand well alone. The domed cities are barely seen in the story, and the European civilization only hinted at. There seems to be insufficient information for either Menewa or the reader to decide where his loyalties should lie, other than the clear bias

of the author. The introduction of aliens at the story's end is done in a clumsy, unsatisfying manner, almost as though it were an afterthought.

A FUNERAL FOR THE EYES OF FIRE, issued early this year by Ballantine, is an extremely complex novel operating on so many levels that this article would become unmanageably long if examined in great detail. Two expatriated citizens of the Urban Nuclei, Gunnar and Peter Balduin, brothers, wish to settle on the home world of the alien Glaparcans. To do so, they must convince the Glaparcans that they have something constructive to offer. The brothers therefore contact another alien race, the Tropemen, who are having difficulties dealing with a religious minority on their planet, the Ouemartsee. Peter Balduin develops a plan by which the Ouemartsee, with the Balduins as overseers, will be transported to the Obsidian Wastes of Glaparcus, an area whose climate is abhorrent to the Glaparcans, but pleasant to the Tropemen.

The catch to the entire plan, or at least one of the catches, is that the Ouemartsee resent being manipulated, even for their own hypothetical good, and have religious ties to their home world. Gunnar Balduin, through whose eyes the story unfolds, soon becomes entangled in a web of motivation more complex than he had conceived possible. Among the major difficulties he encounters are the constant disagreement among Tropeman officials about the best method for dealing with the Ouemartsee, and the apparent conflict between Stephen and Anders, two Glaparcans who accompany him to Trope. Ultimately, Gunnar learns that the Glaparcans actually plan to use the Ouemartsee as slave laborers, and that his brother was fully aware of the aliens' hidden motive from the beginning.

The preceding plot summary is hopelessly superficial, the bare skeleton of a mesh of interrelationships. Most SF writers develop their inter-character conflicts in sets of two, i.e., Alpha and Beta dislike each other, but Beta and Gamma are lovers. Gamma likes Alpha, who also likes Epsilon, but Epsilon can't stand Gamma, although he does like Beta. And so on. These sets of two can become incredibly complex, particularly if a large number of characters is involved. Bishop expands this basic structure to a higher degree. His characters interact in sets of three as well as two. Where the sets of two consist of a protagonist and an antagonist, Bishop adds a third category, the intercessor. The diversity of interpersonal relationships is obviously increased enormously, even with a limited number of characters, thereby more closely approximating reality.

For example, the Magistrate of Technic is the head of Trope's government. This necessarily causes an adversary relationship between himself and the Pledgeson of Aerthu, head of the Ouemartsee minority. As an outsider wedded to the philosophical system of neither, Gunnar is called upon to intercede between them in the negotiations. Gunnar himself is frequently in conflict with Stephen, one of the Glaparcans, and Anders, the other Glaparcans, is forced to mediate between them. Foutlif, commander of the army of Trope, is violently disposed toward the Pledgeson, which paradoxically forces the Magistrate to intercede with his own antagonist. At another point, the Pledgeson is opposed to Gunnar, until the intercession of the young Ouemartsee boy, Bersern. Gunnar's relationship with the Magistrate eventually becomes filtered through Foutlif, until Foutlif becomes Gunnar's adversary, and the Magistrate once again becomes intercessor. This pattern of threes extends through the entire novel, both on the straight narrative and buried metaphysical levels.

The major conflict in FUNERAL is not the question of the Ouemartsee destiny; there is a basic philosophical conflict involved. The planet Trope has been unified under a single government since the time of Sessber Goerlif, a legendary figure who transformed a barbaric society to its present form within a single lifetime. The Tropemen are extremely long-lived, however, and under-

go a periodic inner evolution which alters their individual physical and mental makeup. Goerlif's rule was characterized by his glorification of reason and law, and his attempt to eradicate or minimize traditions. One of these latter is the ritual cannibalization of the eyes of the dead, believed by primitive Tropemen and the Ouemartsee to result in the revelation of the deceased last vision. The Magistrate, Goerlif's successor, ascribes to the beliefs of his culture, although he does admit the "fallibility of reason" in some circumstances. The Pledgeson is the successor to Aerthu, spiritual leader of the Ouemartsee, who believed in maintaining his followers' traditions despite the temporal authority. The Pledgeson therefore believes that instinct does have value, that it is not necessarily antagonistic to reason. He even invokes reason as a defense of instinct at times, telling the Magistrate that it would be against reason to prohibit the traditional treatment of the zharnana, the eyes of the dead.

On the philosophical level, it is much more clear why Gunnar is able to function as intercessor between the two. Although Stephen tells him that "reason and morality don't fit you," Gunnar later states that "I think that pure reason rules out love...and that instinct preserves at least its possibility. A slave to neither system, I can love or refuse to love as my heart and mind direct." Stephen later recognizes this dichotomy in Gunnar, describing him as "a veritable repository of instincts." Straddling the fence, Gunnar is able to recognize and deal with both viewpoints.

Many of the undercurrents of the novel must be extracted from dreams, visions, and legends. Early in the novel, Bishop relates a Glaparcian legend about Loki, a bit of a hero and a bit of a villain. When the rule of law began, says the legend, Loki fled to the Obsidian Wastes so that he could continue his banditry. There he discovers a handless caricature of himself imprisoned in the ice, begging for a release which Loki denies him. Loki learns that this being calls himself Conscience, and that Conscience had sent his hands by means of two hawks to form a shelter for civilization. Stephen and Anders become "hawks" to Gunnar thenceforth, the means by which the Glaparcians send the hands of conscience (Gunnar and Peter) to shelter civilization. This symbolism is reinforced in the reader's mind near the end of the novel when Gunnar encounters Stephen's empty spacesuit, and notices that the gloves are missing.

At another point in the novel, Gunnar witnesses the destruction of the zharnana of Ifragsli, an Ouemartsee artist. Ifragsli appears to have foreseen the exile of his people, an indication that the Ouemartsee religion may well have some basis in fact, although the humans and Glaparcians suspect that the Ouemartsee actually have developed mind-reading and other psi talents. Gunnar thinks of Ifragsli as the conscience of the Ouemartsee, perhaps indicating that art functions as the conscience of society.

Bishop's fondness for word play is evident. The Aristocratic Glaparcian is nicknamed Stephen, which means "crown." Gunnar carries around a ceremonial derringer. Tromisins are growths toward external stimuli, an appropriate name for the Magistrate's people. Gunnar refers to Foutlif as "Fatlip." Many of Bishop's early themes are also present in FUNERAL: the corruption of youth, in the person of Bessern, who violates a confidence and commits theft through necessity of circumstance; the disappearance of the US as world leader; and the necessity to be careful of one's allegiances. There is also a strong religious theme: the Ouemartsee history seems too closely related to that of the Jewish people to be entirely coincidental.

FUNERAL is not a perfect novel. The Ouemartsee society is well described, but the surrounding culture is never directly witnessed, only reflected in the characters of the Magistrate and Foutlif. The surface story

functions adequately within this limited context, but the conflict between instinct and reason might have been better established had the reader been able to observe at first hand the result of Goerlif's ministrations. Bishop hints at one point that all three races (all are humanoid) may have sprung from a single source, but he never develops the idea at all, leaving one to wonder why he bothered to mention it. I also had difficulty accepting the need for a standing professional army on Trope, since the Tropemen believe "coercion is the tool of the desperate." George Flynn recently pointed out that Bishop disguised this incongruity by emphasizing it. Isn't it strange, we are told, that the Tropemen had an army despite not needing one.

Aside from its occasional rough spots, FUNERAL works quite well overall. Bishop has wedded the ability to portray a richly alien society such as he created in "Death and Designation Among the Asadi" to the complex characterizations of "The White Otters of Childhood." The novel may or may not win an award, although the complexity itself may put off many readers, but it is an auspicious first novel and bodes well for the future.

DONALD G. KELLER:
TUNING THE BELLS THEY RING

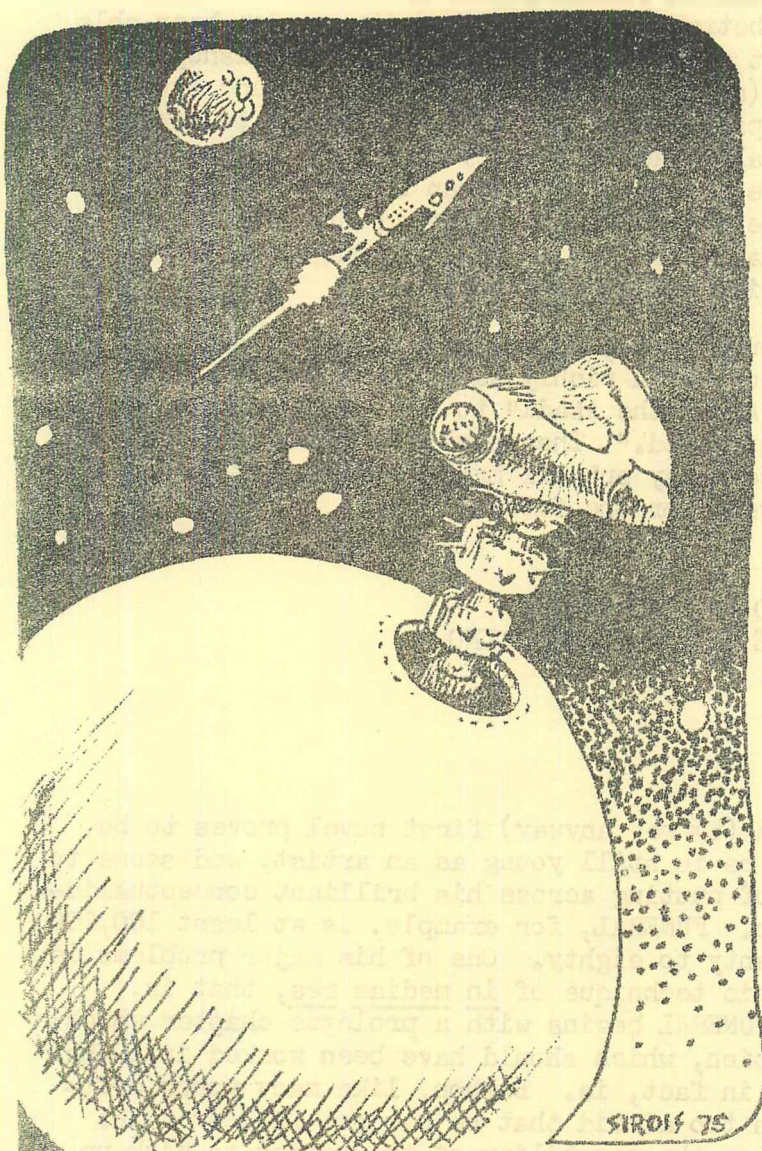
A FUNERAL FOR THE EYES OF FIRE

Michael Bishop

Ballantine \$1.50 294 pages

Michael Bishop's long-awaited (by me, anyway) first novel proves to be, again, an ambitious near-failure; he is still young as an artist, and seems to be having trouble with the craft of putting across his brilliant conceptualizing in the most economical fashion. FUNERAL, for example, is at least 100,000 words long, but it feels like seventy to eighty. One of his major problems is that he has not mastered the Homeric technique of in medias res, that is, starting his story late enough. FUNERAL begins with a prologue chapter which is mostly dry and synoptic exposition, which should have been worked into the background at a later point--and, in fact, is. Bishop, like many young writers (I recognize it in myself), is too afraid that he has not filled in the background enough; he underestimates the capability of the reader to pick up as he goes along. He does not know when to stop explaining and start telling. And another mild problem he has is the old one of having characters lecture each other; he attempts justifications at some points, but they are just a little bit clumsy.

The story Bishop has to tell, however, is excellent. Like his award-nominated "Death and Designation Among the Asadi," it is anthropological sf, and is an excellent example in a tradition that includes Edmund Cooper's underrated A FAR SUNSET, Silverberg's DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH, and some of Chad Oliver's and Edgar Pangborn's fiction. His aliens are brilliantly imagined, and he leads us in a subtle progression from the familiar to the strange: at the beginning we find two Earthmen (from the Urban Nuclei future of "The Windows in Dante's Hell" and his recent GALAXY novella) working with two Glaparcans, who are basically humanoid but with fleshy eyes. They are on a mission to the planet Trope, where the humanoids have no mouths (nourishing themselves by osmosis/absorption) and organic crystals for eyes. Furthermore, there is a tribe of Tropemen called the Ousmartsee (who are to be transported off-planet), who have a primitive/mystical society quite at odds from the civilized rest of the planet ruled by the reason-oriented Goerlif Legacy. By the time we meet the Ousmartsee we have already believed so many impossible things before breakfast that they seem hardly more so. Bishop is a master at concretizing his conceptions.



FUNERAL is a textbook example of how plot and story are two different things, and how story is the more important of the two. The plot follows logically and the mission is accomplished, but sort of in a way that it happens after the end of the story. The story is the psychological journey of the protagonist, a young Earthman, and how he learns diplomacy and trust. It is also the story of the Tropemen and how their world works, and the personal tragedy of the Magistrate, the ruler of the planet and keeper of the Goerlif Legacy.

The actual plot of the book did not interest me especially, but the stories were fascinating. Bishop, like Le Guin and certain other writers, is excellent at putting worlds together and buttressing them with background material. He has a myth from Glaparcus, told to the protagonist in the prologue, which serves as a sort of gloss on the book and is used as a metaphor throughout. The conflicting philosophies of the rationalistic Goerlif Legacy and the mystical Way of Aerthu's Pledgeson (the Ouemartsee) have valid parallels on Earth (some of which Bishop notes), and play off against one another very well,

particularly in the dream-vision conversation between Goerlif and Aerthu which is included. The whole quasi-religious ritual concerning the Tropemen's "eyes of fire" is one of the most imaginative alien customs I have ever encountered.

And Bishop makes us believe all of this completely, because he knows how to bring concepts in and use them over and over again so that we are thoroughly familiar with them. I am undecided whether this is a low-level talent or not; it's certainly a necessary talent to have for science fiction of this sort.

Though there are some flaws in Bishop's craft, there are also areas where he excels. He always writes well, with strong richly-figured descriptions and striking metaphors. He uses a device of extra-indented italics for the myth and the dream-vision mentioned above as well as two important flashback sections; this allows him to interrupt them where necessary and still have them set off well. He probably should have used it even more than he did. He uses it especially well in the epilogue: the plot is over (the useful part of it, anyway) and he has one more scene that he wants to end the book with, but also has some material between the end and that scene and some more after that scene. So he uses the indented italics for both flashback and flashforward, resulting in a tightly-woven and very effective ending.

A FUNERAL FOR THE EYES OF FIRE, then, is an ambitious and somewhat suc-

cessful novel with some large flaws. Bishop seems to be learning his craft, slowly, as he goes. It is almost cheering to see that his first novel is not a masterpiece; too many great first novels prove to be flashes in the pan. I am still convinced that Bishop is going to be a very important writer in the field in a couple years.

THE FEMALE MAN

Joanna Russ

Bantam \$1.25 214 pages

I'm not sure I should be reviewing this book. In the first place, a male reviewer such as myself is in a dangerous position when he tries to judge an outspokenly feminist book such as this. In the second place, it is deliberately booby-trapped (on pp. 140-1) with almost every possible criticism, and so any reviewer who does not praise it takes the risk of looking like a fool. But since it is the major new work of one of our finest writers on a subject that has consumed much of her creative thinking for some time, and since it has already garnered much praise, it needs to be commented on. So disregarding the consequences I will take the plunge.

The first thing to be said about THE FEMALE MAN is that it is a propagandistic work, a term I use with no connotations intended: very simply, it has a message to put across. Ignoring the specific message (for the moment only), there are two ways of transmitting a message literarily: in straightforward expository terms (the essay), or in illustrative, symbolical terms (fiction or allegory). THE FEMALE MAN attempts to do both at once, and wavers uneasily between the two: some parts make excellent fiction, other parts are excellent essays--and some parts don't work as anything.

An instructive parallel can be drawn between this book and some of Ursula Le Guin's recent fiction ("The Word for World Is Forest," THE DISPOSSESSED and "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" in particular), which is also propagandistic in nature, and told (particularly the last-named) in a mixture of narrative and exposition. There are similarities in setting (Whileaway reminds me strongly of Anarres), and the whole tone of THE FEMALE MAN is almost exactly like that in "Omelas." In fact, that story is a gloss on the shortcomings of Russ' novel: Le Guin, in an extraordinary feat of literary art, leads the reader step by step to a worldview that I for one am not sure I agree with, but which convinces me totally; Russ, expounding views I mostly agree with, nearly fails to convince through a combination of confusing literary form and overdone propaganda.

Taking the former first: while Russ' short stories are very clear and often brilliant ("When It Changed," "Nobody's Home"), her novels--deliberately, one assumes--are thorny and hard to follow. (I've never gotten through AND CHAOS DIED, and this new one took considerable work.) THE FEMALE MAN is told from a bewildering number of points of view (often unidentified), and in a series of quick cuts back and forth with little seeming organization. It is extremely difficult to keep one's bearings, and I often got lost. It also feels incomplete: Russ is dealing with at least four different worlds including our own whose relationship in time, space and alternities (it's a bastard word, but thanks anyway, David) is difficult to figure out, and she uses only what is necessary to her narrative. The concept of a fully-realized space/-time continuum is lacking. In a ploy similar to Piglet's RELATIVES, a woman from each of these worlds is used as a character (and I still don't know if the this-world character Joanna is identical to the main narrator or not)--narrating parts of the book each--and are brought together at various parts of the book. This allows Russ to perform an artistic schizophrenia, embodying her various attitudes in her various avatars, and play them off against one

another; this works very well.

There is some other excellent and incisive writing here: the material on Whileaway bears comparison with Le Guin; there is the party scene (pp. 33ff.) where the Whileawayan fends off male chauvinists of various types; or the seduction scene (pp. 68ff.); or the plight of the archetypical old maid (Part Six). Russ' portrayal of modern social interaction is devastating and often very funny, but it is also calculated to make even the most liberal male uneasy.

And this is my major objection to the book: its message seems to be that a truly liberated male does not exist in this world, and women would be better off by themselves. Consider: Whileaway is, of course, the world from "When It Changed" where all the men died of plague. Another parallel world has men and women separated and at war--with the women portrayed as doing better. Of the sexual acts in the book, the only non-Lesbian one involves a "man" grown from culture tissue without intelligence. This is all wish-fulfillment fantasy, something artists should not let themselves get away with. The way to correct an imbalance is not to swing it the other way, but to bring it to the midpoint. I found the book equally as offensive as I would find an ANALOG-type promilitary story.

The most damning thing I can say about the book (or any propaganda, for that matter) is that it won't convince anyone who isn't convinced already. Of the dozen or so human beings of the female gender I know well, I can think of maybe one who would really like this book. (They are all the equals or betters of any man I know, and number among them my closest friends.) Male chauvinists (who need the most convincing) will see in the hostility of the book a justification of their attitude. Liberal males will praise it, but only because its anger cows them or makes them feel guilty. Only feminists of a similar kind (the convinced) will wholeheartedly endorse it.

As for my reaction, it was none of the above, but rather intense frustration: both at the literary form (I had a damned hard time following what was going on) and also due to the fact that, while I recognized the male attitudes put across in others and empathized with the women (the plight of the intellectual in workaday society is, after all, similar in some respects), I didn't recognize my attitudes anywhere. One particularly galling example from p. 117:

HE: I can't stand stupid, vulgar women who read Love Comix and have no intellectual interests.

ME: Oh my, neither can I.

HE: I really admire refined, cultivated, charming women who have careers.

ME: Oh my, so do I.

HE: Why do you think those awful, stupid, vulgar, commonplace women get so awful?

ME: Well, probably, not wishing to give offense and after considered judgment and all that, and very tentatively, with the hope that you won't jump on me--I think it's at least partly your fault.

(Long silence)

HE: You know, on second thought, I think bitchy, castrating, unattractive, neurotic women are even worse. Besides, you're showing your age. And your figure's going.

Now, I can see myself getting into a conversation like that; however, the woman's last reply would piss me off only because she felt she had to demean herself and be so deferential to me--it would make me unbearably uncomfortable. As to my reply, I would say, "Oh. Can you explain that? I would like

to understand why so I can rectify it if possible." Anyone who would answer otherwise is childish.

Joanna Russ is one of the best writers in science fiction; any list of the best that does not contain her and Le Guin and Wilhelm with (say) Delany and Tiptree and Ellison is either chauvinist or uninformed. She is a brilliant critic (I hope F&SF gets her to write for them on a regular basis) and short story writer and an ambitious novelist. It distresses me to see her justified preoccupation with feminism on the one hand and her admiration for the Carol Emshwiller/James Sallis (two writers I cannot read) brand of fiction writing on the other leading her away from the powerful and clear-sighted work she is obviously capable of. THE FEMALE MAN can only make her more enemies than she's already got.

CY CHAUVIN:
THE TWO SIDES OF URSULA K. LE GUIN

There are a number of characteristics--important ones--that are common in both Ursula K. Le Guin's fantasy and her science fiction. This makes it necessary to examine both when trying to explain her general concerns and her art; the two cannot be rigidly sealed off from one another, but blend and blur together.

In her fiction, Le Guin is concerned with showing what effect a created environment, a "secondary universe" different from our own, might have upon men (or beings that are almost men). This is something that all good sf and fantasy attempts to do, but Le Guin has been better able to express this than most writers of fantasy and sf.

Several other characteristics in her fiction stand out: her characters are generally alienated individuals, people who do not fit into the society into which they were born, and who quite often have some psychic or magical powers. The imaginary or "secondary" worlds that Le Guin creates also are generally neither wholly scientific or fantastical in nature: instead, elements of science and myth are merged together in them, in the manner of Zelazny and Delany. This fusion gives her worlds a stunning freshness, and helps us appreciate more fully the effect environment has upon the actions and very nature of men.

All these characteristics are present (in embryo form) in Le Guin's first published story, "April in Paris" (FANTASTIC, September 1962; reprinted in THE BEST FROM FANTASTIC, 1973). In this story, a very alienated and lonely U.S. college professor specializing in the 15th century history of France is transported back to that era/time by a lonely and alienated alchemist. Le Guin very carefully gives both a scientific as well as a magical explanation for this occurrence. "Is there any magic?" asks one character. "Can the laws of nature be broken?" And another replies, "Loneliness is the spell, loneliness stronger...Really it doesn't seem unnatural." Their loneliness is the inward psychic/magical power that moves these men (and later, two lonely women) to this place. This story, however, does lack her characteristic concern for the effect of environment upon individuals and society, primarily because it is set only in the realistic past and present.

An early science fiction story in which these same elements can be seen is "The Dowry of the Angyar" (AMAZING, September 1964; reprinted in THE BEST FROM AMAZING STORIES, 1973) (S(also the Prologue to her first novel, ROCAN-NON'S WORLD, Ace 1966)S), which is also her first really important work. The main character in the story, Semley, is somewhat alienated from her society; she is a queen, but a poor one, and is upset that her daughter has no expen-

sive jewelry for a dowry. She, however, unlike most of Le Guin's protagonists, has no inner powers.

The whole tone and mood of the story is like that of a fantasy tale. Men "could hunt in the forests and windride all over the Western Lands, but they must watch their swords rust, and their sons grow up without ever striking a blow in battle...." Most of the story seems like a fantasy, and it is only our superior knowledge that makes us see that many "magical" occurrences in the story are actually the result of applied science (i.e., the ride on the spaceship she takes, the time dilation effect of her ride through space, etc.). In effect, we see the events of the story from two different viewpoints; something that generally occurs when elements of fantasy and sf are mixed.

Le Guin also shows us the tragic effect a change in environment can have upon an individual. Semley goes on a space voyage which lasts only a short time for her, but which lasts much longer for those on her planet--she returns home to find her husband dead and her daughter a grown woman. This is something beyond Semley's understanding--these "cold equations" which have destroyed her life. Since Semley's space voyage was motivated by a desire to find a necklace which was lost by the house of Angyar long ago, perhaps Le Guin is saying that we should be content with what we have--else in a quest for something better, we may lose it. Particularly if the thing we desire is a material possession, and what we are apt to lose is not. This would fit well with the Tao philosophy that is present in much of her other work (especially in *THE LATHE OF HEAVEN*).

These same elements are present in Le Guin's novels. In *CITY OF ILLUSIONS* (Ace 1967), the protagonist has telepathic powers, and is alienated from his fellow men. The world (Earth, in this case) is again a mixture of science and myth. It is one after a war, and ruled by alien Overlords. The landscape is rural, settled with small villages and camps (like a fantasy), except for the city alluded to in the title, which is built and inhabited solely by the aliens, who represent the invasion of science/technology into a primarily fantastic world.

Le Guin's concern for the effect environment has upon man is less clear here than in most of her later novels. This novel (and her two other early Ace books) show the great influence Andre Norton has had upon Le Guin, but like in Norton's works, much of the background and culture seems subtly wrong--as though the different segments of it would not fit together in real life. One anthropology text I have says, "Mankind is simultaneously engaged in two kinds of evolution--the biological (physical) and the cultural. Human evolution can be understood only as a product of the interaction of these two." One's environment is what causes both these types of evolution, and science fiction and fantasy study the effect change causes in them both.

If the environmental constructs of the imaginary world created are based on religion or myth, we will view the story as a "fantasy;" if on science (social or physical), then as "sf." Or one can combine them, as Le Guin does here and in most of her other stories. Alexei and Cory Panshin present an interesting comment on why a writer might choose to use both in the April 1973 *FANTASTIC*, when they discuss Roger Zelazny's novel *THIS IMMORTAL*:

This story is set not thousands or millions of years from now, but only a few hundred years after world-wide atomic war. In this short space of time, certain humans and animals have taken the form of mythic creatures: satyrs, centaurs, winged horses, and sea serpents. The question whether this development is primarily plausible or primarily mysterious is debated for us by two of Zelazny's char-

acters.

The first, a poet, says, "Do you not see a convergence of life and myth, here, during the last days of life on this planet?...I mean that as humanity rose out of darkness it brought with it legends and myths and memories of fabulous creatures. Now we are descending again into that same darkness. The Life Force grows weak and unstable, and there is a reversion to those primal forms which for so long existed only as dim racial memories--"

And the second, a biological engineer, answers, "What you have said so far proves nothing other than that in all infinity there is a possibility for any sort of life form to put in an appearance, given the proper precipitating factors and a continuous congenial environment. The things you have mentioned which are native to Earth are mutations..."

There is no conclusion to the argument. You may take your choice of explanations, if you like. Practically speaking, however, you must accept both. The very fact that there is no conclusion to the argument, that it is left unsettled, permits these creatures to be simultaneously plausible and mysterious.

(p. 111)

The same can be said of Le Guin's creations; they are at the same time both plausible and mysterious.

There is another way of looking at this. Myth and religion look both backward and inward; they invoke images of the (simple) past, and have an intense (emotional) effect upon the mind, if properly used. Science (both physical and social) looks both forward and outward; it invokes images of the future, and is based upon the observation of our external environment (rather than upon inspiration, or that generated solely by the human mind). These two basic and very different ways of looking at reality are brought together by Le Guin (and other writers) in their stories, for interesting fictional results, I think.

And this is one of the major reasons why Le Guin is such a powerful and important writer of both sf and fantasy.

JEFF SMITH:
LOST IN CHANTS OF DANCES

STORMTRACK
James Sutherland
Pyramid 188 pages 95¢

In his introduction to this book, Harlan Ellison quotes Ben Bova's "rave reactions" to this first novel. It may be unfair speculation, but we are not told and thus are left to wonder why Bova did not buy the novel and serialize it in ANALOG.

If I were an editor, would I have bought this book? It's doubtful. If my inventory were low, perhaps I might have. It is not a bad book. If I had a choice, though, I would not. It is not a good book, either.



The most obvious flaw, at least to me, is the language. Sutherland is no stylist, and while he certainly is capable of putting sentences and paragraphs together (a feat not all sf writers can claim as part of their repertoire), that is about all that can be said for him. Look at how the book opens:

In the heat of the morning the city moved.

As he stepped from the monorail he saw it. Currents of dusty pavement heat made the buildings waver and heave like a row of exhausted animals panting in the sun. Across the street, the Government Center towered over them, reminding Ross why he had traveled all the way here. He had no choice, once a week they required him to report in.

It's the same as parole, Ross thought, as he watched the Center building pulsate slowly. Except--I'm not a criminal, am I?

He glanced at his watch. Two minutes.

He was going to have to hurry, as usual, or miss his scheduled "consultation" with the computer, and that would never, never do. Pushing through the crowd around the main door, Ross wondered what would happen if he decided to skip a week, or if the monorail broke down, or if he got that new flu going around. But he knew the answer. He would promptly lose his job. Or rather his nonjob.

Better get a move on, he told himself.

There is nothing seriously "wrong" with the grammar in those paragraphs, and anything that might be academically incorrect is certainly justifiable in creative writing. The problem is rather the lack of central vision. It is obvious that the scene did not spring forth Athene-like from Sutherland's forehead, but that he had to struggle, searching desperately for the words. He had no real idea what he wanted the scene to accomplish. (This is getting terribly specious, but I would guess that particularly the last few sentences, beginning with "Pushing through the crowd," were written blind; and that the "Better get a move on" was directed at least as much to the writer as to the character. --I recognize in that section a lot of my own frustrations in abortive beginnings.)

Fortunately, the book as a whole does not appear to have been this difficult to write, and many of the other scenes seemed to have been properly visualized before committed to paper. Still, there is a lot of clumsiness and--perhaps because of his "training" in writing popular science articles for VERTEX (very good ones, too)--there is a bit too much tell, a bit too little show. Very expository dialogue (though at least it is dialogue rather than monologue).

Unhappily, I cannot stop criticizing the book here. The plot, also, is no great shakes--falling a few feet on the Heinlein side between a Tom Swift, Jr., novel and a Heinlein juvenile. There's no warning anywhere on the book to lead us to expect a juvenile, but that's what this book is. A kid is rather inexplicably given a unique job a bit beyond his ability. (Why did he get the job? "But you have an even more desirable quality; you can adapt." Adult readers need more than wish-fulfillment, I'm afraid.) For a change of pace, the kid does not save the day. He just stumbles around trying to adapt. There's all kinds of intrigue (much of it terribly obvious) and damn little material about weather satellites. If there'd been more serious extrapolation (as we're led to expect there would be) the book might have been worth reading. But there's much more super-science than science. I did enjoy super-science as late as my highschool days, but such enthusiasms die young in a lot of us.

And all those "good" and "bad" aliens running around disguised as humans (following "years of skillful plastic surgery")!

So why then not trash the book entirely? I suppose because it's an honest effort, a serious attempt by a writer not at the time capable of constructing and sustaining a novel. And it has its moments. But the story should have been shelved, permanently, and the good things kept and used again later. STORMTRACK is a failure, but that's no sin. It isn't ambitious enough to be an interesting failure, though, and The Harlan Ellison Discovery Series is one in the hole. Next?

NEBULA AWARD STORIES NINE

edited by Kate Wilhelm

Harper & Row \$7.95 241 pages

The Nebula Award books are back on the upswing with Kate Wilhelm's volume. (Last year the stories Isaac Asimov left out would make a better anthology than the ones he selected. Though the nominees were of such high quality that it would have been near impossible to produce a bad book, I was disappointed in the actual collection. Of course, I suppose the fact that I would just as soon have left out a couple of the Nebula winners themselves might have something to do with it....) (The winners: "A Meeting with Medusa" by Arthur C. Clarke; "Gest Song" by Poul Anderson; "When It Changed" by Joanna Russ. Asimov's selections: "The Fifth Head of Cerberus" by Gene Wolfe; "Patron of the Arts" by William Rotsler; "On the Downhill Side" by Harlan Ellison; "Shaffery Among the Immortals" by Frederik Pohl; "When We Went to See the End of the World" by Robert Silverberg. The rest of the nominees: "Son of the Morning" by Phyllis Gotlieb; "The Word for World Is Forest" by Ursula K. Le Guin; "With the Bentfin Boomer Boys on Little Old New Alabama" by Richard A. Lupoff; "The Gold at the Starbow's End" by Frederik Pohl; "The Animal Fair" by Alfred Bester; "A Kingdom by the Sea" by Gardner Dozois; "Basilisk" by Harlan Ellison; "In the Deadlands" by David Gerrold; "The Funeral" by Kate Wilhelm; "And I Awoke and Found Me Here on the Cold Hill's Side" by James Tiptree, Jr.; "Against the Lafayette Escadrille" by Gene Wolfe.)

Wilhelm has done a fine job. The anthology is well balanced, the variety is wide, and yet thanks to the editor's fine introductions the pieces all seem to belong together. In her general introduction she traces the basic ideas of science fiction from classical-philosophy beginnings to modern applications, and follows these with specifically-oriented story introductions along the same lines, showing that all these stories are fictional explorations into the realm of Answers--and as she points out, it is no disgrace that we haven't come up with the answers we've gone looking for: "These ideas are the same philosophical concepts that have intrigued mankind throughout history."

The stories:

The novella winner is Gene Wolfe near the top of his form, "The Death of Doctor Island," gracefully written. But while there are a lot of fine words here, there seem to be more than necessary. On the levels on which I read the story, it is a ruthless rejection of the coddling given the unsalvagable of society--where four might exist, two are destroyed to the supposed advantage of the other two, and through them everyone else. (I say "supposed" because there is no real way for us to know.) I know there are deeper levels I cannot touch, psychologically--I haven't the knowledge. Still, they affect me on a primal level. I am awed by much of what happens in this story; even though I don't "understand" the events, they mean something to me. The problem with the story (and it may be deliberate) is that there is no frame of reference. We have no assurance that Doctor Island correctly postulates the outside society, or even if he is sane. Neither are we given the slightest hint that he might be insane. He controls us for the entire duration of the story, just as he controls his inhabitants. (Doctor Island is the island his--or her--pa-

tients live on.) Was Doctor Island correct in setting up the girl's death, the boy's trauma? Were they reprehensible acts? There is absolutely no way of knowing. One might guess, basing his opinions on our life now--but is theirs the same? Is it even close? Again, no way to tell. We know much less than even the patients do. So while it's a gorgeous piece of writing, it doesn't mean a whole lot to me. I don't think I can take anything away with me from my reading of it, outside of a couple striking images. (Like the Point, where the person you try to touch avoids you, and the person who touches you unsettles you, and all three are you.) Yet, oddly, while I find it less than satisfying, I do not find it disappointing.

I have never been able to understand Edward Bryant's popularity--just about everything I have ever read by him as struck me as competent and empty. "Shark," though, is quite nice, and though it may not go down as one of the great classics it will probably survive. Through a shifting series of scenes Bryant manages to imply a great deal, about the rigid post-revolutionary society his protagonist is trying to avoid by staying on his Pacific island (Per and Inga Lindfors--the "representatives of the Protectorate of Old America" sent to Floger, the hero--are completely interchangeable, speaking in tandem and in general one cold person in two bodies; the new government is presumably the same), and about Folger who takes action to avoid having to take action. Nothing is really told us about Valerie, the woman who wanted to be changed into a shark, but even so we can attempt to deduce certain things--the best thing about this story is that while reading it I really felt interested in fully realizing what Bryant was saying, in filling in the well-chosen gaps. A very neat piece. (Odd that two stories on the Nebula ballot involved a human being turned into a shark. The other was Michael Bishop's "The White Otters of Childhood." What'll it be next year?)

The next two pieces are an interesting pair: ANALOG's editor talks about the need for knowledge and an ANALOG writer protests about the gathering of too much knowledge.

First is "With Morning Comes Mistfall" by George R.R. Martin, a much simpler story than its two predecessors in the book, told in a style in reality far less graceful than it appears on the surface. (Gentle, yes, but too derivative and too self-conscious. It's a heavy hand that lays this gentleness upon us.) (Okay, look: "Every mistfall," he replied, turning toward me with a wistful smile. He was a fat man, with a jovial red face. Not the sort who should smile wistfully. But he did." "Wistful smiles" and "jovial red faces" are descriptive phrases that should be used only as last resorts, when all originality fails. And the final "But he did" is as irrelevant a sentence as can be found. There are a lot of such statements-of-the-obvious in this story. Regardless of intention, the only purpose they have served was in netting Martin a couple more dollars by padding the word-count.) In the story, a scientific expedition goes to the planet Wraithworld to see if there really are murderous wraiths hiding in the mist. After a year and a half it can prove there aren't. The mystery solved, nobody ever bothers going to the once-popular tourist attraction again. The magic is gone. Actually, Wilhelm boils the whole story down to its essentials in her prefatory paragraph. The story itself follows as a mere embellishment, entertainingly told and much more easily dismissable than it should be.

Ben Bova, in his article "The Future of Science: Prometheus, Apollo, Athena," doesn't believe that any knowledge should be avoided--I feel that if Bova were the leader of Martin's expedition, he would have wanted to find out if there were wraiths to learn, not just to know; no-one in the story is interested in learning. The article is an excellent one, so full of enthusiasm that (at least temporarily) I am optimistic about the future. Bova is right--we can learn enough; the problem is convincing ourselves we need to before

it's too late. (Someday it really will be too late.)

I mentioned "shark" stories earlier; it has been widely noted that there were two major "snake" stories in 1973. To my mind they are the best two stories in this book.

Vonda N. McIntyre's "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand" is an astonishingly good story, the kind of story that makes you realize that if you weren't a science fiction reader you'd have never run across it. A masterpiece of control, outside of one sentence at the beginning (moved to felicitate the story opening) it is a completely linear description of events. There are no flashbacks (not even of a sentence or so), and no explanations of what we are seeing. No histories of the characters, or the land, or the tribe. Nothing but the unembellishment of one event, told in a marvelously clear style. Thus we are left to wonder: why does this one lone woman wander, friendless save for her three snakes, healing those so afraid of her that death is almost preferable to her ministrations? Who trained her for this task? Why her? What happened to the world to make this necessary? Yet, for all the unanswered questions, the story is immensely satisfying. It's a matter of effect, and purpose: "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand" is not about a world in which the snake-healer is necessary, it's about a very weary snake-healer in such a world, trying to survive and to help others survive. McIntyre has taken us to exactly the one small point at which questions can still be asked but need not be answered; everything we really need to know is in the actions and dialogues of the characters. A truly superb story.

The other "snake" story is Harlan Ellison's "The Deathbird," a novelette of prodigious power, even for Ellison. In a way both his most subtle and most blatant work, I feel it is the culmination of all his work for the past several years, and have not been satisfied with anything he's done since. "The Deathbird" is an excellent example of how the apparatus ("tricks" to some) can help a story. The core of this novelette, the story of Nathan Stack, reincarnation of Adam, and the Biblical Snake, was published as "Snake in the Crypt" in KNIGHT, December 1972. It was good but not the major piece I was looking for. "The Deathbird" is "Snake in the Crypt" plus the apparatus, a series of questions directed to the reader at various points in the story, questions that often call for re-evaluations of what has just been read. Preceding a moving essay on the death of his dog, Ellison states flatly, "It is clearly an appeal to the emotions." The rapid change of moods is unsettling (as it's supposed to be) and effective. The most striking bit in the whole piece, to me, is this:

4. Which of these phrases most typifies the profoundest love:
- A. Don't leave me with strangers.
 - B. I love you.
 - C. God is love.
 - D. Use the needle.

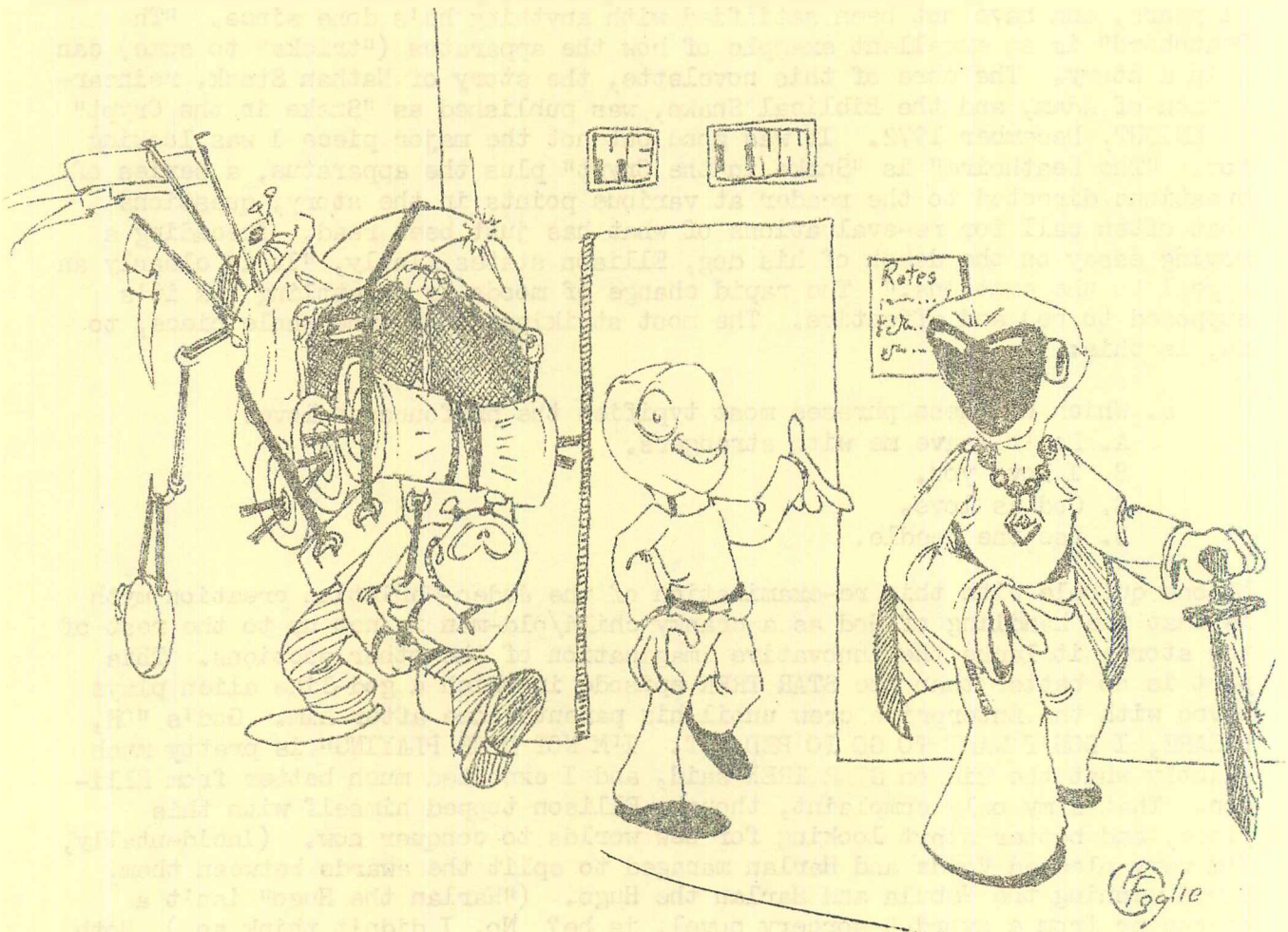
My one quibble with this re-examination of the Judeo-Christian creation myth is that the handling of God as a cranky child/old-man is not up to the rest of the story; it lacks the innovative imagination of the other sections. This part is no better than the STAR TREK episode in which a god-like alien plays havoc with the Enterprise crew until his parents come after him. God's "OH, PLEASE, I DON'T WANT TO GO TO BED YET. I'M NOT DONE PLAYING" is pretty much exactly what the kid on STAR TREK said, and I expected much better from Ellison. That's my only complaint, though--Ellison topped himself with this piece, and better start looking for new worlds to conquer now. (Incidentally, I'm very pleased Vonda and Harlan managed to split the awards between them, Vonda winning the Nebula and Harlan the Hugo. ("Harlan the Hugo" isn't a character from a sword-&-sorcery novel, is he? No, I didn't think so.) Both

stories were worthy of recognition, and it's good they both got it.)

"A Thing of Beauty" by Norman Spinrad is mostly a joke story, far from Spinrad's best. It's a clever joke, done just right, so its existence is justified--and the ending is...uh...pure gold, fabulous--but I'm just as glad it wasn't the short story Nebula winner.

James Tiptree's "Love Is the Plan the Plan Is Death" did win the short story award. It's quite an unusual piece, first-person viewpoint of a totally non-human being, and completely without any human characters or even artifacts. (The typical alien-only story is about the alien creature stumbling across an unmanned earth spaceship and trying to piece it out.) The Plan is that race's way of life, and the beings do not understand it. The hero, Mog-gadeet, is only aware that he does not like the Plan, which ends in death, so he decides to make his own Plan. However, it doesn't work, and he falls into the true Plan, which ends in death, during which he decides the Plan is good. Which certainly makes this a conservative/reactionary story, doesn't it? What the Plan is is of little consequence to us, though. This story is to be read for the baroque language:

Oh, beautiful you became, my jewel of redness! So bursting fat and shiny-full, but still my tiny one, my sunspark. Each night after I fed you I would part the silk, fondling your head, your eyes, your tender ears, trembling with excitement for the delicious moment when I would release your first scarlet limb to caress and exercise it and press it to my pulsing throat-sacs. Sometimes I would unbind two together for the sheer joy of seeing you move. And each



night it took longer, each morning I had to make more silk to bind you up. How proud I was, my Leely, Lilliloo.

(I'd love to hear somebody good read this one aloud.) The astonishing thing about the story is that it is easily comprehensible; in fact, I think Tiptree was so afraid the language would prove impenetrable that he over-explained. "The winters grow, he said. Oh, yes. Tell them the winters grow," his mother tells Moggadeet on page 210, and by the top of page 215 it's obvious what that means. But further down on page 215 it's very patiently explained--a section the story would be better off without. It's a good story, though, a touching one, as Moggadeet (who is even less aware of what's going on than we are) falls in love and tries to protect his "fireberry" from the Plan by becoming her Mother. A true original.

Following Damon Knight's stream-of-consciousness survey of the external side of sf in 1973 (not the stories, but the publishers, editors, writers, readers and fans), Wilhelm indulges herself by adding one short non-nominee, "The Childhood of the Human Hero" by Carol Emshwiller, a story I will simply pass over by saying it means absolutely nothing to me--but then, children don't do much for me, either.

All told, an excellent book. It's unfortunate that there wasn't room for either of the two Bishop novellas, and that McIntyre's fine short story "Wings" has been overshadowed by the fact that "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand" was published in the same year, but I have no complaints, not really. It was a pretty good year for short fiction.

LOOKING AHEAD

I wonder if James Gunn will be limited to the short-list nominees for his NEBULA AWARD STORIES TEN? For some reason the short fiction categories were limited to three nominees apiece. (The reason given in LOCUS was "so that voters would get a chance to read everything.") Not a wide selection... The short fiction winners were "Born with the Dead" by Robert Silverberg, "If the Stars Are Gods" by Gregory Benford and Gordon Eklund, and "The Day Before the Revolution" by Ursula K. Le Guin. The runners-up were "A Song for Iya" by George R.R. Martin and "On the Street of the Serpents" by Michael Bishop; "The Rest Is Silence" by C.L. Grant and "Twill" by Tom Reamy; and "After King Kong Fell" by Philip Jose Farmer and "The Engine at Heartspring's Center" by Roger Zelazny. Nominated but withdrawn was one of James Tiptree's best stories, "The Women Men Don't See." It seems a small pool to fish an anthology from, especially considering that the Hugo ballot this year has seventeen short fiction nominees, only three of them on the Nebula ballot. (Two of the winners, though.)

LOOKING BEHIND

I did a little bit of computation on the Nebula anthologies, and thought you might be interested. (Actually, I thought if I printed it I wouldn't have the loose papers laying around; I could throw them out and just refer to the magazine whenever I wanted the information, assuming I ever do.) The author with the most stories in the Nebula books is (surprise!) Harlan Ellison, with five: "Repent, Harlequin!" Said the Ticktockman" and "A Boy and His Dog" won Nebulas, and "Pretty Maggie Moneyeyes," "On the Downhill Side" and "The Deathbird" were editorial selections. Four writers have placed three stories apiece: R.A. Lafferty (selected: "Among the Hairy Earthmen," "Continued on Next Rock" and "Sky"), Joanna Russ (awarded: "When It Changed;" selected: "The Second Inquisition" and "Poor Man, Beggar Man"), Robert Silverberg (award-

ed: "Passengers" and "Good News from the Vatican;" selected: "When We Went to See the End of the World") and Gene Wolfe (awarded: "The Death of Doctor Island;" selected: "The Island of Doctor Death and Other Stories" and "The Fifth Head of Cerberus"). A dozen are represented with two stories: Brian W. Aldiss (one awarded, one selected), Poul Anderson (two awarded), J.G. Ballard (two selected), Samuel R. Delany (two awarded), Gordon R. Dickson (one awarded, one selected), Fritz Leiber (two awarded), Anne McCaffrey (one awarded, one selected), Larry Niven (two selected), Frederik Pohl (two selected), Theodore Sturgeon (one awarded, one selected), Kate Wilhelm (one awarded, one selected) and Roger Zelazny (two awarded). As for the singletons...eight have had only their winners anthologized (Arthur C. Clarke, Vonda N. McIntyre, Richard McKenna, Katharine MacLean, Michael Moorcock, James Tiptree, Jr., Jack Vance and Richard Wilson) and twenty-two people have not won Nebulas (except Le Guin, who won for a novel) but have appeared in the books anyway (Edward Bryant, Doris Pittkin Buck, Terry Carr, Philip K. Dick, Sonya Dorman, Gardner R. Dozois, Carol Emshwiller, Stephen Goldin, James E. Gunn, Harry Harrison, H.H. Hollis, Keith Laumer, Ursula K. Le Guin, George R.R. Martin, Edgar Pangborn, William Rotsler, Robin Scott, James H. Schmitz, Bob Shaw, George Henry Smith, Gary Wright and George Zebrowski).

And one final bit of trivia: When "If the Stars Are Gods" by Benford and Eklund appears in NEBULA AWARD STORIES TEN, it will be the first collaboration ever to appear in the series. In fact, it is the first collaboration ever to appear on a short-list, final ballot in the history of the Award. (In the Award's first year there was no short-list, and one story in each category was a collaboration; none of them won.)

NEW DIMENSIONS 5

edited by Robert Silverberg

Harper & Row \$7.95 234 pages

I wish I could say better things about this book than what I'm going to say. NEW DIMENSIONS 1 was an excellent anthology, and II and 3 were very good. 4 I haven't read, but it appeared to be a notch down in quality, and now 5 has come out with some very good material but a failure as a book.

I don't know if Silverberg has overextended himself, but it seems as if in the last year or so the long stories he received went into his anthology THE NEW ATLANTIS and only short pieces were left for ND5. The individual pieces are generally of high quality, but 21 pages is the upper limit for an individual story; there is an insubstantial, unsatisfying feeling to the book as a whole.

The highlight is provided by Michael Bishop, with "Rogue Tomato"---a gorgeously outrageous fantasy. It begins:

When Philip K. awoke, he found that overnight he had grown from a reasonably well shaped, bilaterally symmetrical human being into ...a rotund and limbless planetary body circling a gigantic, gauzy red star. In fact, by the simple feel, by the total aura projected into the seeds of his consciousness, Philip K. concluded that he was a tomato. A tomato of approximately the same dimensions and mass as the planet Mars. That was it, certainly: a tomato of the hothouse variety...he had to admit that he was baffled. This had never happened to him before.

Kafka's "Metamorphosis" is not the only story that serves as this one's precedent---but regardless of literary allusions, this is a fabulous tale, very "logically" following Philip K.'s life as a tomato. Fantastic, I love it, and

it will hold up to repeated rereadings.

Bishop also has a neat little piece on an artist sending the sun into nova for his latest masterpiece, very cleverly done as a take-off on the "Contributors" notes of the anthology business.

The best serious story in the book is Gregory Benford's "White Creatures." I had trouble with the beginning, as it starts off sounding very much like Malzberg, or Malzberg-influenced Silverberg. (The only problem with that is that Malzberg himself is so prolific we don't need Malzberg imitators.) But quickly it becomes a very-well-realized character study, one that remained with me after reading. To my mind, this and "Rogue Tomato" make the book worthwhile despite its relative minoriness.

Among the other good pieces: "A Solfy Drink, A Saffel Fragrance" by Dorothy Gilbert, in which the first messages from space are poetry. This is a story that perhaps James Sallis could have written in one of his romantic periods. There is no plot to speak of; the first part chronicles the receiving of the messages and the second part is a translation;

"Sail the Tide of Mourning" by Richard A. Lupoff, companion to "With the Bentfin Boomer Boys on Little Old New Alabama" in AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS and "After the Dreamtime" in ND4. Lupoff deals with myth in this one, more blatantly than Zelazny ever did, yet with a keen eye on the necessary subtleties. Told with style and grace, this reinforces my belief that Lupoff could be a major sf writer if he wanted to;

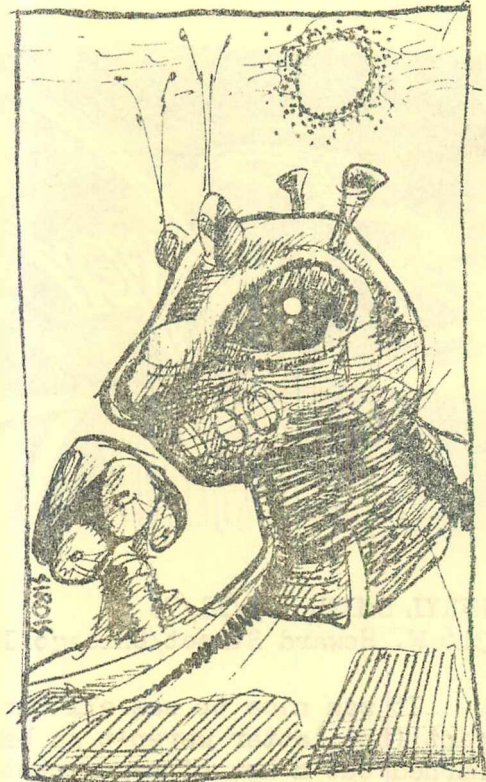
"Theodora and Theodora" by Robert Thurston, a...an...uh...er...yes. Two Theodoras married to two Spencers on two vacations to Italy (only one Italy) with two Italian lovers (who look alike) and....I don't know why I like this story (because I believe in an order to the universe?) but it's neatly done.

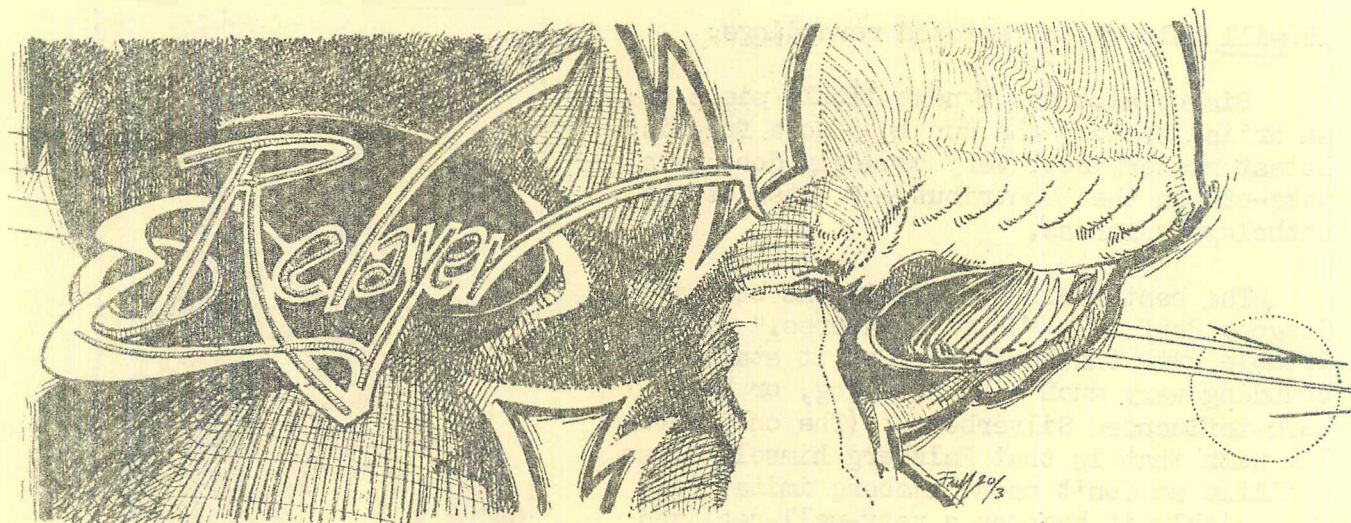
"The Mothers' March on Ecstasy" by George (no more "Geo.") Alec Effinger, an absurd mad scientist bit about a researcher trying to cure the world, which is suffering from an attack of happiness;

"A Scarab in the City of Time" by Marta Randall, one of the serious stories, a woman from Outside trapped in hiding in an enclosed city that no longer believes in an Outside. She gets in, sneaks around for several months, and then finally gets out. It's well told, but nothing really special;

"Achievements" by David Wise, very uneven, but the good moments are priceless. Best is the comparison of "The Achievements of Nature" and "The Achievements of Man": The Grand Canyon and Laurel Canyon. Cripples and Thalidomide. Extinction and Genocide. Epilepsy and Jitterbugging.

And there are seven more. None of them really struck me as bad, though I liked the ones I mentioned better. But they do not make for a good book. It's like eating a bowl of salad dressing; more is needed. Even combined with THE NEW ATLANTIS for one large anthology probably wouldn't be enough to really justify putting all these in the same book. Maybe if read during a steak dinner...





SHERYL SMITH 3/11/75
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It was nice to see all those comments and replies re the Dougybrook in print (the latter weren't as bad as I remembered them, thank Ba'al). I sure churned out a lot of hyper rhetoric that year (and an even more hyper tragedy) --ah, the good old days!

"Press Until the Bleeding Stops" by Raccoona Sheldon. Ugh, what can I say to convey the fit of nausea this didactic tommyrot evoked in me? (Why? Why? Why? the hell did you print it?) (S(I guess because I liked it.)S) What Ms. Sheldon sees as blood is really the stagey equivalent, and she doesn't even know how to splash it effectively. In fact, it is the deadest "bleeding" I ever saw. (Perhaps Ms. Sheldon has confused blood with bile, or maybe even ichor?) ...Oh, I have one that's more appropriate: The lead-content of Ms. Sheldon's message has caused her story to sustain permanent mental dysfunction --i.e., it is retarded. No, I will not say the same about Ms. Sheldon. But I will say her control of the English language is inadequate, her ideas (if this one is typical) are hackneyed, and her emotional content is (no doubt) sincere and earnest bullshit. (No, I won't be surprised if you choose not to print that--it is strong criticism and might not be taken in the impersonal way I intend it. I do not know Ms. Sheldon and have no wish to give personal offense--but that story of hers is one of the most godawful excuses for fiction I have ever seen! If she is past high-school age (S(quite)S), her literary judgement is zilch or she would've never let it be printed. Quadruple ick to that one. --And again I ask, why? Better stick to "Boring Articles About Science Fiction.")

Bob Sabella's "Thoughts on the Current Wave, etc." shows "thoughts" indeed, and raises some interesting points. True, sf isn't the thrill-a-minute thing it was for awhile there in the late '60s (though there are signs these last few months that things may be picking up some); but I don't know if I agree with his bleak view of the arts in general (only rock music looks to be in a hopeless decline). Movies, though they have settled down some from their late '60s burgeoning, have maintained a respectable level of quality (and we have YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN now which does more than that), and science fiction, despite the 50s throwbacks that have been winning Hugos (the ANALCG freaks have always been rather numerous), has also held its own. Things these last five years have not been as exciting as the early New Wave years; but no art or genre can maintain a renaissance high all the time: there is no way artistic energy can be kept at an explosive level, without a stretch of R&R to gather strength. The arts are as cyclic as the seasons are, in their historic

courses; and if there must be periods of lowered activity, one can at least be assured that future creative rebirths are just as inevitable.

I have not read all the novellas Don Keller praises--in fact "Strangers" is the only one I remember reading--but I believe him, I believe him! He is a beautiful, sensitive analyst of fiction and I hope he never gafiates.

Your "Sense of Wonder in the Mundane World" was lotsa fun. Brought back memories of the looming grotesques I and other hapless folk were forced to view microscopically, amid the lab work of college. The only interesting sights on those slides, as I recall, were mineral studies under polarized light (psychedelic as geology ever gets), and the dizzying antics of those ridiculous round green beasts familiarly known as "E. coli." (If I really have those little speed-demons in my intestine, how come I manage always to be constipated?)

As for Tiptree's "Looking Inside Squirmy Authors"--ooh, beautiful! I have been reading Harrison's AUTHOR'S CHOICE anthologies--and you can chalk up one more nosey supporter for the BAD STORIES BY GOOD WRITERS anthology. It would be interesting to see, not only why the writers think their chosen stories are inadequate--but whether the stories they think are bad seem so to me! Some writers is, and some writers ain't, good judges of their own work, of course, and that anthology could very well show which are which. Wow, what a game!

About Barry Gillam's movie critiques--all but one--I have nothing to say, since I managed to miss (on purpose) most of the films he discusses. But I made up for it by seeing YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN some half-dozen times, and I will fight him on that one, all right!

Frankly I suspect Mr. Gillam's disenchantment with that film is not the film's fault but Mr. Gillam's. At least that gentleman is to my knowledge the first and only one to consider a Mel Brooks film not funny; and it seems that though the professional critics do not always think Brooks' work is good (rightly so, I find), they are always amused by it (me too). And--scout's honor--for all I know, Barry Gillam is absolutely the only one who isn't.

Mr. Gillam was also upset about the fact that Brooks presumes to parody James Whale's films, particularly THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN. Although this objection is not likely to carry much weight with anyone who is not a reverent Whale devotee (that is, with most of us), I think Mr. Gillam was rather misguided in making it. Brooks is not a nasty put-down parodist, for one thing, and I believe his target was not James Whale's films in particular but the cliches of the Horror Film as a genre, the formulaic grotesqueries that were actually taken seriously in the thirties, but which seem, at best, a little hoary these days. (Of course, I cannot claim Mr. Gillam's reverence for '30s monster-gothic movies: for instance I was able to take the silent NOS-FERATU more seriously than the '31 DRACULA, at which I laughed myself silly. THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN I have never seen, but it too sounds like a scream (non-horrible) from what I've heard about it; I gather it opens with a shot of Mary Shelley sitting by the fireside with Percy Bisshe and Lord Byron, saying the decorous equivalent of "Well, if you guys thought FRANKENSTEIN was creepy, wait'll you hear this one!"--and what follows, per tolerably trustworthy repute, is godawful. Oof!)

As for Mr. Gillam's charge that YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN is full of "caricatures"--well, they did not seem so to me (and if I don't know characterization I ought to, since I presume to write verse tragedy); but even if they were, what has characterization got to do with the quality of movies? That is not the forte of this visual medium, though Gene Wilder may make it seem so!...And

if Mr. Gillam considers the comedic sexual emphasis to be the "reduction of human relations to a matter of male and female electrical leads" (say what?)---with his MA in literature I presume he recognized Brooks' traditional approach for what it was---then he must've found Shakespeare's comedies pretty tough sledding, Restoration comedy appalling, and picaresque novels atrocious (thereby missing all the fun in English literature, even).

I have tried to determine from the rest of the article what Mr. Gillam likes about cinema. It appears he is fond of bits and pieces of things that are/have been reasonably accessible to the non-fanatic audience, but (except for THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN) the only whole movies to get his blessing are distinguished by their "relative unavailability." (And the bulk of his enthusiasm this year is reserved for an as yet undistributed, 3 1/2 hour French film he calls a "whimsical, charming comedy." Whimsy and charm at that length? Hmmm.) Considering all the old and non-Hollywood films I've had a chance to see even here in the cinematic boondocks (if it's worth showing, and it doesn't turn up in a movie house, the colleges will get it sooner or later), I am convinced that the number of "unavailable" good films is rather small. Possibly I will consider Barry Gillam a reliable film critic if and when I am convinced otherwise.

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Almost all of the first KHATRU (love that cover) has been read, but the only comments I really had were on a couple of Barry's negative judgments; and seeing now what damage I've done in my article, I doubt I should turn quixotic and defend a couple of mere "horrors." ---One thing I'd like to bring up though in case no one else does: in YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN the stiff wooden arm on Kenneth Mars' inspector is not (as Barry and at least one other critic have implied) derived from Dr. Strangelove, but from Lionel Atwill's similar role in SON OF FRANKENSTEIN. ---Brooks knows his Universal oldies, if nothing else.

DON D'AMASSA 3/17/75
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The similarities between Byron and Ellison have been pointed out many times before, but never substantiated as well as in Sheryl Smith's fine analysis. Ellison's reply points out a development in much recent SF that appears to displease or perhaps even threaten many SF fans---the idea that we, as normal human beings, might be the source of real heroes. Kimball Kinnison, like the shining knights of yore, is an amusing fairy tale hero. Stories of this nature should be read and enjoyed as such, not as the pinnacle of literature. To take a recent example, look at Piers Anthony's RINGS OF ICE. Anthony took a cross-section of misfits from our society, plunged them into a catastrophic situation, then portrayed each as drawing from an inner core of humanity the strength to act heroically. It's the exact opposite of the "anti-hero;" it demonstrates that each of us possesses the capacity for greatness. But every review I've seen has ignored or slighted the characterization and concentrated on the plausibility of the disaster. Dozois is another recent writer whose characters triumph in being human, even when they fail to overcome the external situation.

I do think, however, that Sheryl is incorrect in two of her expressed opinions. Patrick McGuire's argument that the critic often is able to provide background or insight useful to the reader and with which the latter can better enjoy the artform involved remains unscathed by her rebuttal. I better appreciate Cubism because I understand what was being attempted; I more fully

comprehend Mailer's fiction because I've read THE PRISONER OF SEX. A century ago, writers were writing for a more limited audience, and they had a pretty good idea what that audience had read or experienced elsewhere. This isn't true anymore. No one reads everything of significance. So critics serve two purposes: pointing out particular works, interpreting those works in (possibly) ways generally unavailable to the casual reader.

Sheryl also implies that political or philosophical attitudes are irrelevant to the appreciation of art. Again I disagree. While it is true that one should not allow one's personal beliefs to interfere with one's evaluation of a piece of literature, there are cases where the viewpoint of the writer is extremely important. For example, I would be wrong to praise "The Guerilla Trees" by H.H. Hollis just because I share the author's political views; in point of fact, the story is clumsily propagandistic. Similarly, it would be improper for me to pan Poul Anderson's THE STAR FOX because I disagree with his analysis of the Vietnam war; the novel does function within its own context. On the other hand, I have been engaged in a running debate with Michael Coney because I feel that his female characters are always cardboard (with the exception of one utter villain--Caricca Jones). This isn't because he is a bad writer, but because--as I interpret him--he is incapable of accepting a female as his intellectual equal. In this case the author's viewpoint quite definitely does have a bearing on the interpretation of his work. Any analysis of Coney's fiction which doesn't take this into consideration strikes me as hopelessly inadequate.

Moving on to other subjects:

Bob Sabella sounds a very familiar note. SF is losing its power; all the good writers are inactive, decadent, or outside the field. As I recall, however, Bob doesn't do all that much reading in the field. Certainly he must at least have heard of Michael Bishop, James Tiptree, Gardner Dozois, T.J. Bass, just to name the four that most immediately strike my attention. One bad year does not necessarily indicate a trend. We've already had several major novels in the last few months, THE DISPOSSESSED, DHALGREN, A FUNERAL FOR THE EYES OF FIRE, and both Bishop and Dozois have forthcoming novels. I'd wait a while yet before I sounded the death knell for the genre.

I resent Angus Taylor's attempt to politicize the field, however, as any restriction strikes me as a form of censorship. His description of what SF writers should be writing is not only rather narrowminded, it excludes cautionary tales, dystopias, and the like, which--according to his expressed concerns--should be precisely what he would want the field to produce. I often get the impression that Angus never even attempts to see things from any point of view but his own.

Donald Keller's analysis of the past year's novelets is excellent. That, naturally, means that I agree with him almost entirely. I'm glad to see someone else point out that Michael Bishop is one of the finest new writers in the field. It does seem to me, however, that he reads too much autobiography into "On the Street of the Serpents," and forgets the difference between author and persona as in Swift's "A Modest Proposal," to take a very pertinent example.

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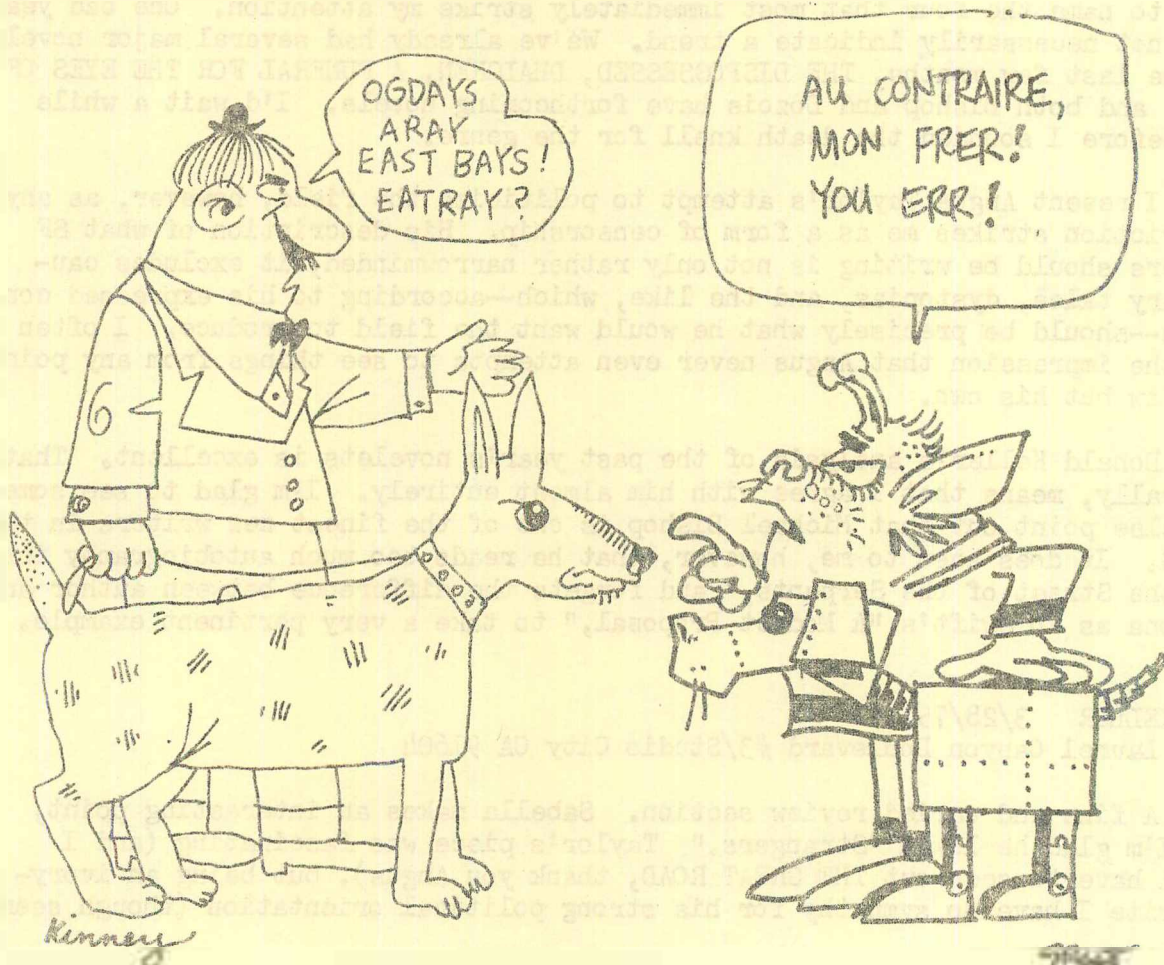
A fine and varied review section. Sabella makes an interesting point, and I'm glad he liked "Strangers." Taylor's piece was fascinating (and I shall have to seek out THE GREAT ROAD, thank you Angus), but being an ivory-towerite I have no sympathy for his strong political orientation (though seem-

ingly he is using it in a more-general-than-usual sense; still, I avoid any sort of politics when possible). Your bit was neat and very witty, but all I could think of was Monty Python's bit about "The Wonderful World of Sounds"-- "And Now! The sound of a tsetse fly sneezing, magnified EIGHT MILLION TIMES!" Tip was marvelous, as usual, and dammit, I for one would buy the anthology. Do it! Can't say much about Barry Gillam's piece; it's good criticism, but I agree less with him on films than I do with you.

The Ellisen/Byron thing is, of course, a fine piece with a lot to say, but I won't comment further except to note that the quotes were too long, and my mind balked at reading Byron's. For despite the fact that I've been reading a lot of poetry lately (Yeats, Eliot, Charles Williams, Ted Hughes--who I think is much better than his more famous wife Sylvia Plath), I share the modern reader's distaste for narrative verse--I'll take Morris' prose any day, though his verse gets the critical attention.

Speaking of criticism, a rebuttal to Sheryl through Patrick McGuire: I find criticism extremely helpful and enhancing, and often as much fun to read as the work itself. And sometimes (whether I'm merely an uncareful reader or not I don't know) I find a work impenetrable before reading criticism and clear afterwards. Particularly Eliot and Williams: C.S. Lewis' commentary is absolutely necessary for the Taliessin poems, and I read "Ash-Wednesday" several times without making head or tail of it--but after reading guides to it I found it great.

Minor niggle to McGuire: Pushkin did not know English--at least, no better than I know Russian or you, Jeff, know French: that is, well enough to make awful blunders but not well enough, certainly, to read great poetry. He read Byron in French. This comes from Vladimir Nabokov's huge commentaries to his translation of EUGENE ONEGIN.



DOUGLAS BARBOUR 4/7/75
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Of course, I was one of those who only heard of Sheryl Smith's article in later issues of GORBETT, so I am very happy to see it finally, and discover what all the shouting was about. Alas, therefore, that she seems unable to appreciate LOTR as much as it deserves. On the other hand, the lady shows great insight where her likes take her, and she likes enough of what I likes for me to say, ok. I also like her style, most of the time, and her disclaimers just before she brushes back her sleeves and leaps into the critical fray. On the whole, I dug it, and I think she supports her claims--often just barely--well enough. I think one of the things that interests me most about the whole donnybrook is that it isn't litcrit as her teachers must've taught it to her. I know that stuff, I even write it, but I am unhappy much of the time with it, especially when dealing with pop or post-modern material (and with Ellison--or Delany, Disch, Russ, Le Guin, the best of the new sf writers, in fact, you're dealing with both). The academy, most of it, doesn't have the vocabulary yet to handle this stuff, so we can attempt to deal with it the old way (as I often do, struggling to break the bonds but not knowing quite how) or we can try a lot of new things, including a kind of critical writing that because of its fannish insouciance digs in from a slightly different angle. I enjoyed Sheryl's article, but I don't think her English 100 prof would accept it as the right stuff. Fuck 'im, Sheryl, and keep this kind of thing up. I also enjoyed the opening remarks, even if I did somewhat agree with Patrick McGuire's response to them. I think your juxtapositions were illuminating. I do sort of wish you'd said a bit more yourself about how this Byronic thing operates in Ellison's fictions, but maybe that's asking too much. Anyway, I think Ellison sometimes leans toward overstatement, yes, in his prose, but he knows how to do it so as to hook you but good, and I find it refreshing. Also, he's written these very fine stories, see.

Anyway, I'm glad KHATRU and GORBETT exist for some sercon writing, cos I still like to hear what people thing about sf, especially about what's happening now. So on the whole, "Nous Sommes du Soleil" pleased me mightily. Bob Sabella provoked me to thought, and disagreement. Not so much with his points about the 60s, but with his depressed feelings concerning now. He and Don Keller should get together, cos I would think Keller is pretty happy with what's happening. At least in the novella. If I have read Keller before, then I think he's improved mightily, and that this review is a truly interesting one. I have read only one of the five novellas he mentions: I intend to read them all. Partly because of what he said. I think it's a good sign to see a careful critique of the best--pointing out the flaws even in these goodies. I think Silverberg's novella--the only one I've read--is very good, but I tend to agree with Joanna Russ's review of it. But Silverberg is a man of many talents and surprises, and he is writing tough stuff right now. Your little tidbit, Jeff, was fun, and I'll try to find that book RSN. Tiptree's comments, as usual, full of tiptreeish whimsey and wit. I enjoy hearing authors on themselves, too, even if I don't always trust them. Another reason I like Ellison, I guess.

Barry Gillam was a delight. I haven't seen all the pictures he mentions, but he writes with a real awareness of film language. I felt I could trust his insights because he informed me through his critical prose just how much he understood about film, and sf; and usually, if we get someone who knows one he doesn't know the other. A fine piece. (S(I don't agree with Barry a lot of times, but, like you, I trust him. When he says something is wrong with a film, I have no trouble believing it. Barry expresses himself so well, though, he can capture a film so truly in a couple paragraphs, that I can usually tell if I would like the movie or not, "despite" his criticisms. I'm not as critical of films as Barry--I haven't the knowledge--and it's obvious (to

Barry as well) that things that strike him as clumsy and poorly executed are not going to bother casual movie-goers like me. Barry is not doing reviews for a newspaper. He's not telling us what we'll like and what we won't. He's telling us what's good and what isn't, and he has tough standards. If he were doing this for sf books, for the medium in which we're more critically knowledgeable, he wouldn't have all these complainers wandering around. But we as a group are less critical of film than of literature--and that is hardly Barry's fault.)S)

ARTHUR D. HLAVATY 3/25/75
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Gesundheit! (You'll probably get a lot of letters saying that, but I couldn't resist.) (S(I expected them, too, but didn't get them.)S)

Angus Taylor's article is an example of a depressing trend in sf criticism. I have always felt that the main thing that was wrong with traditional sf was that most of it forgot that fiction is first and foremost about people. Just as bad porn focuses on the sex organs and tells us little or nothing about the people attached to them, so bad sf fails by denying human interest in favor of technological interest. (This trend is by no means dead; consider RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA.) Ironically enough, now that more and more writers are returning the characters to center stage, we see the rise of what might be called the Western Union school of criticism--the idea that the Message is central, and once again the people are secondary. (S(Even now, in the Seventies? Substantiate this with specifics, and let's brawl a little. Okay?)S)

Ideological criticism is tempting; the sexual stereotyping and smug, unthinking acceptance of The Way Things Are (in America at the time of writing) in so many books seem to cry out for attack, and one is tempted to praise a Mack Reynolds for daring to think about the unthinkable, despite his obvious literary flaws.

But it is a temptation which should be resisted. There are two dangers in ideological criticism: First of all, good writers whose ideologies do not conform to the critic's are ignored or put down with cheap shots, while bad, but "correct," writers are praised. I believe that the second danger is more serious. Joanna Russ has warned against the assumption that books can be disassembled by the critic, that a single element, such as ideology, can be discussed in isolation. Taylor's article seems to suffer from this latter flaw.

Philip K. Dick has concerned himself with nothing less than the nature of reality, and the problems people have in perceiving and reacting to it. To reduce this to "the sociology of knowledge" is vulgarization. The strength of his best work is precisely that he does not make the links to external politics explicit, but leaves the reader to decide whether such links are the most important thing.

I do not believe that it is a mere verbal quibble to say that THE DISPOSSESSED is a novel, and not a blueprint. SF has had enough blueprints, from LOOKING BACKWARD to THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS, and they have had all the human interest you would expect to find in a blueprint. Blueprint novels deal in externals; they are travelogs which take the reader on a guided tour of the wonders of Utopia without telling us what they are like from the inside. It is Ms. Le Guin's genius that she is first and foremost concerned with the people who live in her Utopia. Brilliant details like the children's prurient fascination with the idea of "jail" will stick in the reader's mind long after the scenes of happy workers (in other Utopias) have faded. Even in her picture of Urras, which occasionally verges on caricature, Ms. Le Guin is wise

enough to know that people can always be more (or less) decent than the systems under which they live. THE DISPOSSESSED is "an ambiguous Utopia" because it reminds us that all Utopias are ambiguous; Utopias are places where people live, and people are ambiguous.

Perhaps I am being unfair to Mr. Taylor; perhaps he sees more in the writings of Dick and Le Guin than blueprints, but he gives no indication here that he does. Ms. Le Guin herself has expressed dissatisfaction with "The Word for World Is Forest" because it preaches at the reader. I believe that THE DISPOSSESSED can be exonerated from this charge, but you'd never know it from reading Taylor.

I didn't enjoy Tiptree as much as usual because I do not share his interest in what writers inadvertently reveal about themselves in their writings. (I'm just as glad Sheryl Smith didn't speculate on whether Ellison the person is really like Lord Byron.) Perhaps that's why Tiptree cherishes his anonymity; he fears that his writings have already Revealed Too Much.

JOE D. SICLARI 4/20/75
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Thanks for the issue of KHATRU. I enjoyed it, was taught by it, enraged by it and mystified by it.

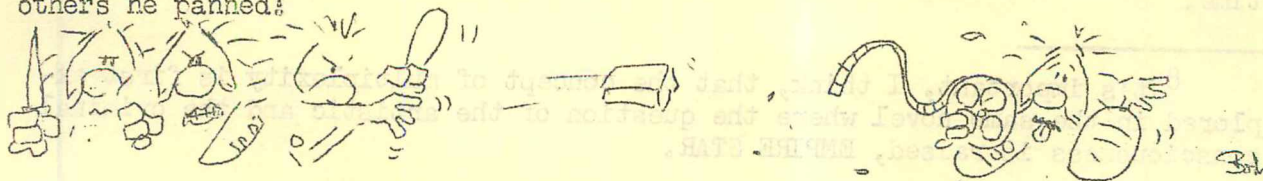
This is going to be just a few short comments. Sheryl Smith's article was easily the best item in the issue, reprint or not. It was very informative and thought-provoking, as well as very accurate. I seem to take turns at being confused or enlightened by Ellison's writing, and I remember similar feelings when I read Byron. With both of them, often the very structure of a sentence or the order of the composition screams multiple meanings. This article entices a much longer comment (deserves it, too) but many of the responses you printed list some of my own ideas.

"Press Until the Bleeding Stops" offended me. I'm not a hard-hat, but the very indifference and violent aggression and lack of empathy which this story is trying to show is placed in such an absurd degree that only revulsion is felt on my part. A writer needs empathy for both aggressor and defender (antagonist and protagonist, if you prefer) to make a story believable.

I liked the "Nous Sommes du Soleil" section. The variety of subject and opinion was most _____ (pick your own word). (S(Lazy, lazy, lazy!)S) Your part was appreciated--too many people think that unusual views of common things are only useless trivia. While in many cases this is true, how often does enjoyment come from something that is otherwise useless?

Tiptree expressed a pet peeve of mine. I like knowing about a writer when I'm reading one of his stories, especially anecdotes, and most anthologists are putting only stories in their books. Maybe it's the voyeur in me.

Gillam's film column--outrageous! He shows absolutely no sympathy for the film-maker and what the film-maker was trying to achieve, only what he (Gillam) wants to see in the film. I disagreed with just about everything he said on films which I had also seen. It made me want to see some of the others he panned!



BARRY GILLAM 4/13/75
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KHATRU 1 is another handsome Smith fanzine. The most provoking piece is Angus Taylor's letter. I don't agree with him but I respect anyone who writes that well.

The Bob Smith illo you used for my article is very nice. He manages to convey the joy of watching movies, especially watching them informally, at someone's house.

I thought your sparse use of artwork appropriate to such a text-oriented fanzine. Bob Smith's visual anecdotes work well with Charlie Hopwood's piece. As for the rest, the more mystical seem to be the more appropriate--in part, I suppose, because KHATRU suggests something uncommon. Jim McLeod's cover illustration makes excellent use of scratchboard for its interesting portrait of simultaneous motion and calm. The Freffs and two of the Sirois' (that is, excluding his overbearing title page drawing) pick up this mood. Of this group, Sirois' shadowy solar face appealed to me most. That one appraising eye, half closed and uninvolved, is a fine complement for the swirling fringes of the head, somewhat in the manner of McLeod's cover.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: Michael Bishop Robert Bloch Gil Gaier Dave Gorman
Keith Justice Virginia Kidd Raylyn Moore Raccoona Sheldon Susan Wood

Forthcoming

The format still isn't set, but somehow next time you'll get "Women in Science Fiction," the symposium with Suzy McKee Charnas, Samuel R. Delany, Virginia Kidd, Ursula K. Le Guin, Vonda N. McIntyre, Raylyn Moore, Joanna Russ, James Tiptree, Jr., Luise White, Kate Wilhelm and Chelsea Quinn Yarbro. Also known as Frankensmith's Monster. An incredible document.

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"Multiplex Misdemeanors," continued from page 24

is creative--and multiplex--in a way the criminal consciousness can never be. Delany has explored this aspect of the theme from his very first novel, where Geo's power of imaginative synthesis is contrasted with the mate's and Urson's inability to respond to the multiplicity of experience which life, willy-nilly, presents to everyone.⁸ Even Vol Nonik, in THE FALL OF THE TOWERS, is shown as clearly superior to the thugs who rape and kill his wife in that he can create his poems before committing suicide. The thug dies having learned nothing from life, and with no knowledge of self, action, or of the connections between them. Even Lorq is more artist than criminal; with his vision of an ultimately better galaxy, he destroys to rebuild, something the Reds, lacking his synthesizing multiplex awareness, cannot possibly comprehend, which is why they fear him so. And the artist? He, too, destroys, when he leaves his past works behind him, beginning once more to build an artifact that will match what his imaginative vision has revealed is possible, next time.

⁸It's important, I think, that the concept of multiplexity is first explored in the same novel where the question of the artistic and the criminal consciousness is raised, EMPIRE STAR.

