

# Khatri



Fall/2015





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Maintaining a quarterly fanzine is not the world's easiest task. (Nor is it the hardest; there are, for example, bi-monthly fanzines....) Basically, more than anything else, the one phrase that best describes a fanzine, what a fanzine really is, is time-consuming. I am not really a fast typist (I did hit 40 wpm on my last test, but that's not my average speed), and it takes me be-half an hour and forty-five minutes to stencil one page. Call it 37½ for our purposes here, and 60 pages (some of which, like page 11, are very easy to type), and that's 37½ hours just stencilling. (Did you do that the easy way, or did you have to get out paper and pencil?) That's only a day and a half straight time, but it works out to a lot of evenings and weekends. And I do have other things to do.

There is also the question of motivation. KHATRU 3&4 wiped me out. Totally. That was a lot of work. And the finished product didn't seem to be worth all I'd put into it. I was Discouraged. More on this in a minute.

PHANTASMICOM 11 had been 100 pages, in May 1974. I swore then that I wasn't going to do anything like that again. (I had every intention of putting out a 100-page PHANTASMICOM 12, but I had in mind publishing it in sections over a months-long period and then collating, stapling and mailing the sections together.) Alas, how quickly we forget. When it came time for KHATRU 3, I could see no reason why I shouldn't do a 150-page combined issue. The pain of PhCOM 11 was gone--only the accomplishment was left. The accomplishment had been nominated for a FAAn Award; what problems?

(Incidentally, I appreciate--oh, do I appreciate--all the mentions of Hugos and FAAn Awards you people are tossing my way. I have no chance at either, because not enough people see KHATRU, but to know that the people who do get this do think it's worthwhile...that's good enough. Thanks. Bunches.)

The next time I say I want to do something like this, I want you, as my friends, to talk me out of it. It would be the only humane thing to do.

What happened? you ask.

It began when I first went down into the basement to run off the first batch of completed stencils. Thoughtfully deciding to ink the machine for starters (I have a clunky but serviceable Speed-O-Print Liberator 600, mimeo fans), I ran into my first problem: the ink cap was jammed. For hours I struggled with it, to no avail. I could not add ink to the machine. By calling around I found a repair place. Bring it over, said they. I took time off from work, drove home, picked up the mimeo, and carted it off. When I got there they told me they'd have their (one) repairman look at it the next day. (Let me reset the stage a little. (Yes, Cy, first draft on stencil.) As usual, I was way behind schedule. Every day I was not running off stencils killed me a little, because I had a serious, no so-what-if-you-miss-it deadline.) The next day, he looked at it. That's all. Thanks a heap, buddy. The next morning, I drove over determined to pick up the machine, fixed or not. People at work had agreed to look at it when I brought it in. I got there just as he was phoning me to tell me it was ready. But I had lost two very valuable days.

My next mistake: I put a new ink pad on it, assuming it would improve the appearance of the copy. To state things politely, it didn't. It worsened it. Other culprits: the correction fluid had aged a bit too much on me, so that corrections were less visible; and the stencils themselves were a motley group of good and less-than-good. (This issue is all on ABDick 1160s, my favorite.)

But the circumstances surrounding the artwork were what nearly sent me around the bend...not so much getting it from the artists (who all missed their deadlines, but since I was way behind schedule it didn't matter) (much), but printing it. This is the part my subconscious is trying to conceal, pushing it



way back into some really obscure little memory cells, hopefully there to wither and die. My subconscious is very good to me.

First off, the electrostencils were bad. Jack Chalker makes them for me, and he generally does a very fine job. This time, however, he made them with a broken needle. There was just enough needle to make it look like the stencils were all right, but (as you saw) they were not. All the artwork and headings printed grey. (And, I reiterate, I did not have the time to redo them. It was now or never.)

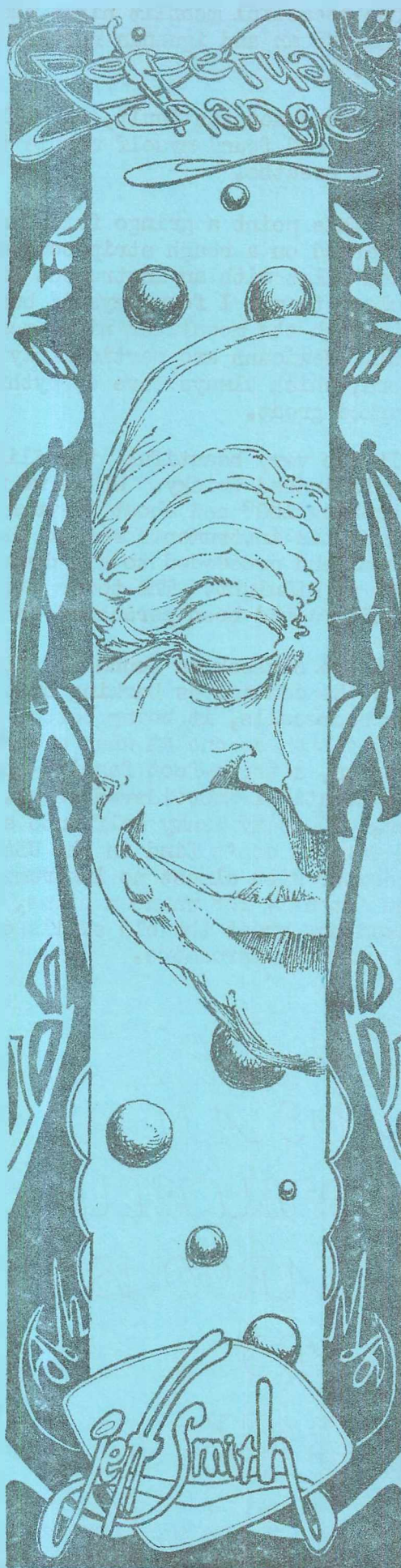
So, I glued all my electrostencils into place on the regular stencils. With Speed-O-Print stencil cement. DO NOT, EVER, PURCHASE SPEED-O-PRINT STENCIL CEMENT. It did not hold, and the stencils came apart on the drum, tearing and wrinkling wherever they went. Page 5 was totally destroyed, and the only way I was able to have a page 5 at all was to take one of the first few copies that came through, and xerox 300 copies of it.

I went starkers down in my basement, screaming and kicking and crying. A regular tantrum. Thank ghod I did not kick the mimeograph off its table onto the floor. I did hurl the jar of cement into the trash can with all the force I could muster, but that force was too mild by about a magnitude of ten to satisfy my rage.

...eventually...eventually...I calmed down. I nursed all the other stencils through. A bottle of ABDick stencil cement helped, but it had its problems sticking to the other shit. But I made it, and a gratifyingly large number of friends showed up to help collate. (Thank you.)

So, you see, it wiped me out. I had nothing left in the way of fannish energy. I delayed things and delayed things. I delayed the manuscript of the book based on the Symposium to Mirage Press. (I hope to have the publication date next issue.) I delayed work on this issue, which should have been dated February instead of April.

But the Press is rolling again. A few good things this issue, a few more next time. See you then.





One beautiful moonlit night when soft clouds chased their shadows over the balmy Caribbean and iguanas rustled in the coco palms, something went wrong with my heart.

This was not its fault, as will appear below; for some days I had had a high fever and found myself unable to hold down food or water and ultimately unable to breathe.

At this point a gringo friend alerted the coco-ranch owner, who had a small plane parked on a rough strip some miles away and a brother-in-law who is a Mexicana pilot with an instrument license. So, by some process which was never very clear to me, I found myself bundled in a truck, and subsequently we all set sail through the moonlight night across the Yucatan channel to the island of Cozumel. Mexicans are particularly wonderful at organizing eleventh-hour rescue missions, which always save everything except when they don't. In this case, it all worked great.

It was very beautiful, the flight. Between gasps I verified that blind flying is indeed tricky. While we were in one cloud I became positive that we were banking 180° and about to turn upside-down. Fortunately, the pilot was flying by his instruments rather than my hunches. We came out of the cloud true and level and proceeded to sit down on the huge blue-lit Cozumel International Airport at midnight. The tower was supposed to be closed but somebody--perhaps the janitor--had been persuaded to turn it on.

At one o'clock we found the Clinico National open for business; I recall chiefly the continuous barking of three small invisible dogs. The doctor was out on housecalls, it being better to have an emergency at one AM in tropical countries than at one PM when everybody disappears. Presently he arrived--Doctor Negrón, a three-foot fashion-plate with mustachios and a sharp white suit over a beautiful embroidered shirt. He had a fine old-fashioned authoritative manner. I got my lanky self onto a table for pregnant midgets, and experienced something you don't find in the USA--the extraordinary diagnostic skills of a good doctor with almost no instruments. He touched with firm listening hands, looked intently for unknown signs, asked strange questions. Under his hands I realized how great the old skills of Galen and Ostler were; here they had never died. It was impressive.

HOW TO  
HAVE AN  
ABSOLUTELY  
HUGALARGOUS  
HEART  
ATTACK



Above the incessant barking, he told my friends what was wrong. I had, it seems, a typhoid-type salmonella infection, I had pneumonia, and I was in congestive heart-failure due to severe dehydration, the heart not being adapted to pump a thin trickle of sludge. Beyond that, I had a peculiar murmur and total arrhythmia of unknown origin--and that is all I'm going to say about my illness, because I want to tell you a couple of things that may be useful to you if you happen to get sick in a foreign land.

The first you know already: HAVE A FRIEND. A devoted friend who speaks the language. This point will get even clearer as we go on.

Now for the hospital and the next lesson: Bring your own drugs! The hospital may have none. So, with me playing the role of Frankenstein's monster before animation, we taxied about the darkened town collecting bottles of I.V. fluid, syringes of antibiotic, flasks of electrolytes, heart stimulants, etc. (Could I have done that alone? Don't laugh.) And then we arrived at The Hospital. The new, beautiful beautiful hospital, an architectural delight of glass and tropical plantings, quietly but swiftly corroding in the salty air. The director met us, a young, fuzzy-chinned man, not one of your handsome Latinos but the charming type with sad, gay, all-knowing orangutan eyes.

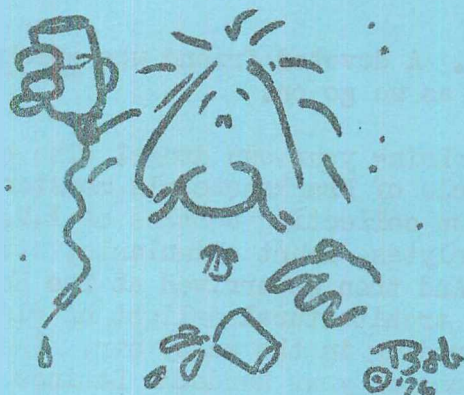
He led us, laden with bottles and boxes, down great glassy moonlit corridors. We passed an impressive toilet and turned suddenly into a small concrete cubicle with a green terrazo floor which was a work of art, inlaid with sliced pink conch shells: The Private Room. (There were two.) The Private Room was about 8 by 8, mostly filled with one rustling bed and one enormous baby-cot stuffed with plastic pillows showing dressed-up pigs and chipmunks. One bare light bulb shone on the foot of the bed. I tottered to the lovely window: Air! But alas, the windows do not open; it would spoil the architectural effect. Somewhere a fan creaked, bringing in stale corridor miasmas. I collapsed on the bed, and the director and the night-nurse went to work on what became known as the great vein game. (The problem was that while I pride myself on having as many veins as anybody, they are all too crooked to put needles in; over the next three days it became very exciting to hunt for a new one when the I.V. needle fell out.) The night nurse was a severe, stylish young lady called Rosario, who wore a white turban on her head in increasingly chic folds as the night wore on. By morning she had added gold glasses and looked like something out of a Bonwit

JAMES  
TIPTREE,  
JR.

OR,  
SO YOU  
WANT TO  
GET SICK  
IN THE  
THIRD  
WORLD?



# SHRIEK!



Teller ad. But she was all brains and heart.

Rosario and Doctor Jose took turns puncturing me until they hit one that hurt like hell but worked. Then my friends left, Rosario showed me the call-bell, which didn't work, turned off the light-bulb, and left too.

As the door closed, the most appalling noise I have ever heard broke loose and grew in volume until the walls rattled. It was the yelling of infants, about ten feet away, amplified to madness by the great glassy walls. It became apparent that I was in the only functioning ward, the one for maternities and sick babies, of which there are, alas, too many by far. Now an occasional infant cry is bearable, but

this was not occasional; it lasted, that first time, twelve hours. And it was not ordinary; I quickly identified the leader as an infant vocal genius. Never do I expect to hear again such crescendo rage, such pure peals of aggression, varied with eerie train-whistle hoots, crow-chuckles, the yelps of slaughtered swine, the ravings of total paranoia. As the hours wore on I comforted myself with this; at least I was being subjected to what must be near the best of its kind. (I afterwards discovered that the poor little devil had had a hernia operation and was, like me, on intravenous support. But unlike me he didn't appreciate it. By the third day, when they let him off the needle, his version of the affair must have been, Jesus, I had to yell like hell to get them to stop that; terrible job, almost didn't make it.)

Now I'm not going to bore you with a play-by-play account, but only give you a few items from my blood-soaked notebook which might be of use to you someday.

First, the thing to remember is that hospitals in small foreign towns are for treating your disease, not for frivolous purposes like keeping you clean, comfortable, or even fed. For instance:

There is no food. As in jails, your family or friends are expected to feed you. This is hard on the nurses and doctors too--they go downtown for long lunches. As one doctor sighed to me, "We have a kitchen with an ice-box and stove, but we have no cock." Luckily, in my case, the I.V. contained glucose and my friend brought me some juices and sour milk.

Bedding is a luxury. I had one (1) sheet, under me. When it got soaked with water and blood, I still got to keep it. Along about the end of Day 2 a lady called Esperanza offered to change it, but by that time I was attached to it--in more ways than one. There was, however, a blanket for one cold night, and a kind of bed cover made of something like dimity, which I wore like a poncho.

You get plenty of long, compassionate, doe-eyed gazes, soft touches of delicate hands to your fevered brow, but no nursing care as we know it. You are not, for example, washed. (In my case that meant lying in an increasing incrustation of sweat, leaked blood, etc. etc., not uncomfortable but somewhat hazardous as the exudates were still pretty infectious.) There was of course no way of brushing my teeth, no toothbrush, toothpaste, razor, etc. There was no soap, until on Day 3 Rosario stole me a cake from

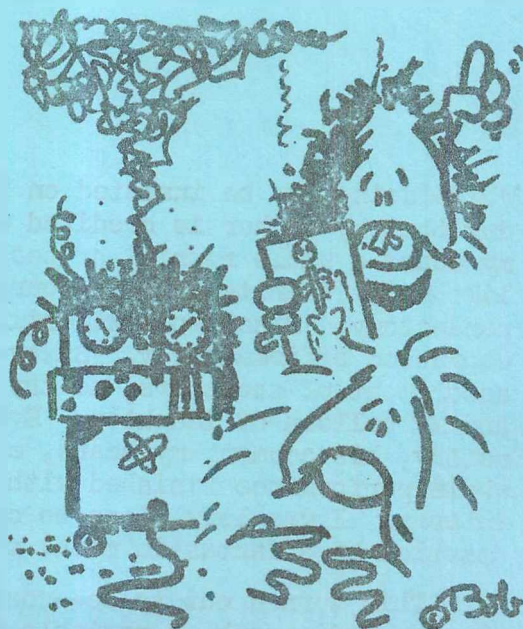
somewhere. There was, however, one (1) towel, which I became quite adept at washing with my teeth, my hands being occupied holding up the I.V. 7

Plumbing is a proud luxury. You get a toilet, but you do not get a toilet seat, and there is no guarantee that the water will flow out of anything, as I discovered while trying to repair a sanitary accident.

There are no hospital gowns. Somewhen in the madness I had latched onto an extra pair of shorts, but on account of the unremitting dysentery both soon became casualties. While waiting for them to dry (I finally gave this up) I managed to surround myself with the dainty thing, it being my strong feeling that beautiful young ladies, or young ladies beautiful or otherwise, should not be subjected to my grizzled, uh, nudity. The result was something like those bad copies of Michelangelo where Saint Somebody is surrounded by a limp billow of cloud, the ultimate corner of which floats across his crotch. As I became wilder and bloodier-looking, the resemblance to the walking dead out of a medieval pest-house increased. About Day 3 a tiny girl names Carmita took pity on me, and brought me a blue nylon nurse's dress for size 1; I got one arm into it and it came nicely down to my navel, increasing the general hilarity, re which see below.

Self-help is encouraged. In addition to being hooked into the I.V., I was sternly forbidden to get up; in short, I was to use the bedpan, which was pointed out to me. (It was a beautiful turquoise.) I used it--once. No one, you see, took it away or cleaned it. So as the dysentery bore down I got pretty expert at unhooking the I.V. bottle, carrying it over my head on a dead run into the bathroom, where I held it up with one hand, held the other hand down so it wouldn't clot, supported my improvised raiment with the third hand and attended to the necessities with the fourth. This was stimulating and prevented apathy.

Certain problems are beneath the medical staff. During the first night, it was discovered that the bed was wrong-way-round in the room, and broken beside, so that my legs were on the raised head end. Every doctor who came in pointed out that heart patients' heads should be higher, not their feet. They then investigated the bed, ascertained that it was wrong end to, and stood back, concluding triumphantly, "That can be moved." No one, however, moved it--until I nailed the last of the procession, leapt up, unhooked my I.V. bottle, and said, "You pull that end." Nothing loathe, young Doctor Reyes grabbed his end, and told me to pull my end. I let the cloud go, and gasping and panting, managed to twist the rusted monster around. Dr. Reyes solicitously re-hooked me, warning me that it was extremely dangerous to molestar myself. We all regarded the new arrangement with great satisfaction, he cranking up my head, several times. It also had the great advantage of placing the light-bulb over my head, and the unbearable sunlight from the closed window on my feet instead of my eyes. I felt tremendous joy, and sometime later led an expedition to bring the night-table out of the hallway and place it by my bed, so my water-glass wouldn't be on the floor. (I was told to drink fluid continuously but given no water-bottle.) It was in fact much more comfortable being able to breathe, and I date my renewed health to the successful Battle of the Bed.

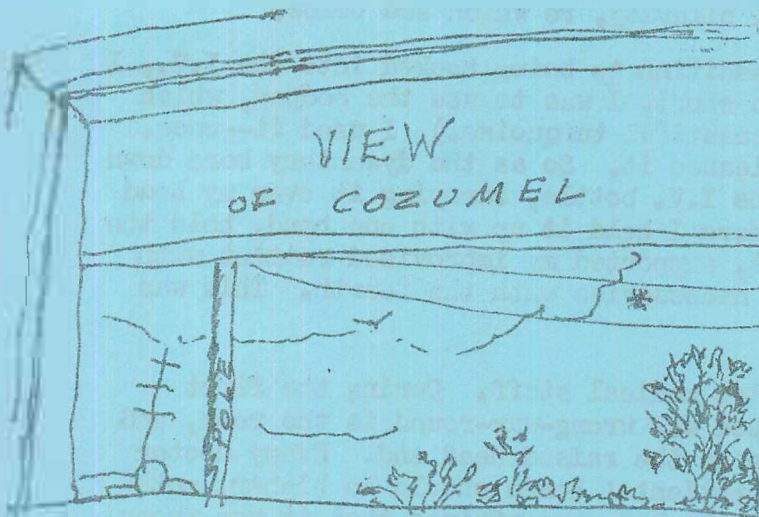




It is essential to learn names. Learn everybody's name, and fast. I used my trusty little notebook. You see, you cannot count on any means of summoning help beyond the human voice, and it makes a great deal of difference if you can call by name. I still start drowsily from sleep, howling "ROSARIO!" "CONSTANTIA!" "DOCTOR MESQUITA!"

Be prepared for a social experience. Sickness, even dying, is not regarded as terribly different or interesting. You have to contribute, to inquire about everybody's children, miscarriages, sad losses, marital prospects and status in the Oaxaca National Dance Festival. It also helps if you have something of value; for example, by a miracle I had grabbed my Collins phrase-book during the departure. (English phrasebooks are much better than American ones.) The result was that I often had as many as three doctors roaming my tiny room at once, trying their tongues on "Li-ver"

"Elt-nays" "El-beo" etc. They always scrupulously returned it to me, perhaps because I never let my eyes off it. (This may or may not be unfair; but another word of caution is to keep anything precious attached to you, whether in bed or elsewhere.) But sociability, joy, hilarity--it breaks out at every instant. The young director, demonstrating how badly my heart was doing, broke into a beautiful dance-step to illustrate the rhythm, and exited dancing and singing, like a music-hall turn. The pictures I scribbled--which Jeff may or may not have here--were lavishly praised and earned me some pineapple juice. Most hilarious of all was the Medical History. On Day 2, the Director decided to start a file on me and regularize my status. This involved a three-hour inquisition, covering all illnesses of all known parents, in addition to the sixty years of my own mishaps.



\* Site of twin-motor seagull.

\* Venus,  
Location  
of  
at dawn

While doing it, he insisted on improving his English, and I believe to this day that my father is credited with a hysterectomy. By the time we got to my scars a whole roomful of people were in delighted attendance, roaring like mad. "Nineteen forty-four?" the Director shouted, pointing to my appendectomy, "Nineteen sixty-six?" at the ulcer scar. "Forty-four!" we all chorussed affirmatively, "Sixty-six!" This went on through my miscellaneous assortment of souvenirs, me trying in vain to control my ponche, my I.V., and my bellows of laughter. Everyone admired the Director's English, his memory, his acumen, my scars, each other, and everything in sight, and the whole performance finished with a triumphant dancing sashay by the line of interns. I was left alone to chuckle until about midnight, when I was startled by a fantastic metal monster advancing into the room.

This turned out to be--wonder of wonders, in a hospital without an electrocardiograph--a portable X-ray machine, on which it was proposed to

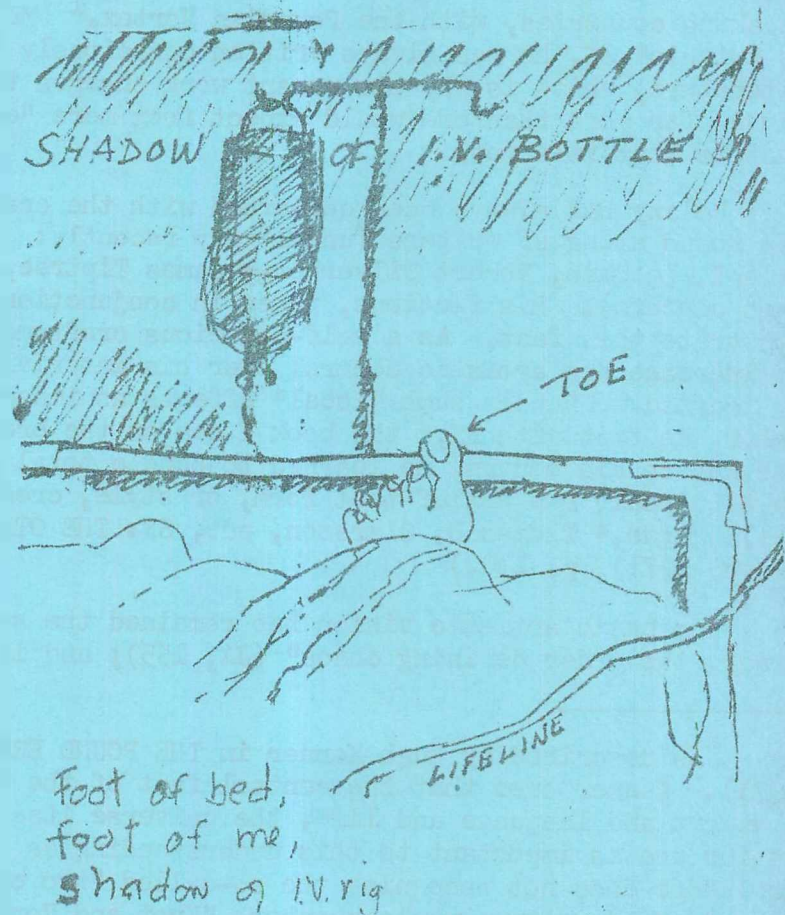


9  
record my pneumonia. After a couple of false starts, the interns and the Director got the monster and its control cabinet into the tiny room, and I was directed to stand up facing the wall and clutch an X-ray plate. Each of the doctors instructed me separately, and then the director said, "When I say Tome aire you must stand absolutely still without breathing." The only trouble was, that all his assistants yelled "Tome aire!" at intervals in succession, leaving me turning purple, until with a magnificent display the thing went off like fireworks, spraying me and everybody with a broadside of hard radiation. (Needless to say, no shields or protective clothing were had.) I thanked my stars that my gonads had little future, and the X-ray turned out to be a work of art which my dull USA doctor cherishes with some awe.

There remain a few oddments to communicate, such as that it is a very good idea to learn what medicines you are supposed to get so you can remind people, but this applies also to Norde-americano hospitals. Perhaps more interesting was the ten minutes of free strolling I was allowed on Day 2, when my muscles cramped up from confinement. I resurrected my pants and toured the imposing wards, all clearly visible from the glass corridors. Little knots of family surrounded every occupied bed. (That was when I learned about my nocturnal virtuoso, the 12-inch Pedro Domingo Camal, he of the voice and the hernia.) On the side where the examination rooms were I saw a door-sign "Rehydration." I asked about this; was it for alcoholics? No. What it was for was for what so many, many babies die of here, the same thing I had had a touch of: Dessication. The poor little things are usually far gone when they're brought in, all fluid parched out of their bodies from dysentery, vomiting, sweating and the constant heat. Their blood is barely liquid; they are dying of internal drought. So a special room is set up to rush liquids into them. Judging from the way they fixed me, they must succeed often. But I tend to fear it must leave damage.

I got back to my room just as it was being sprayed, for the umpteenth time, for fleas. Usually they sprayed me too.

And now I'll leave you with a couple of tiny glimpses which may stay with me longer than all the rest. One day while something medically important was happening in my crowded room, the I.V. acted up again and probably the most beautiful girl I've seen in years stepped forward to fix it. Her eyes were upraised, timing the drops by a tiny watch on her immaculate



# Samuel R. Delany and the pArts of Fiction

In this paper, I wish to explore some of the parameters of Samuel R. Delany's craftsmanship in his continuing apprenticeship to his art. It is my belief that Delany is a specifically modern writer whose artistic vision is solidly connected to the most important art of our century, that associated, in English-speaking countries, with the Poundian Vortex.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, although he has come up "within" sf, he has always written consciously for the larger world of all literature, which is why his recent work engages the reader on so many levels at once: far more than one would expect from mere "escape" fiction. But then, that is what it's not.

Delany has always been concerned with the craft of fiction to a degree seldom found among sf writers (until very recently: Joanna Russ, Thomas Disch, Ursula K. Le Guin, Robert Silverberg, James Tiptree, Jr., and a few others share this concern). His fictions, taken in conjunction with his essays, readily demonstrate this fact. As a self-conscious craftsman he has consistently sought to increase his artistic control over his materials. In the beginning he quickly learned to handle such "local" effects as imagery and individual scenes. Later, in fact with ES,<sup>2</sup> the book I see as the breakthrough novel for Delany and the key to his oeuvre, he learned to handle total fictional structure, and to make palpable his belief that form, or style, creates content. (See "About 5,175 Words," Thomas D. Clareson, ed., SF: THE OTHER SIDE OF REALISM (Bowling Green, 1971), p. 130.)

His basic artistic vision has remained the same: it is of "chaos caught in order, the order defining chaos" (JA, 155); and it is basically that of the

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<sup>1</sup>As described by Hugh Kenner in THE POUND ERA (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1971). Kenner sees that the central fact of the Pound era is the recognition that art and language and life, the universe itself (Einstein and Buckminster Fuller are as important to this understanding as Pound and Joyce; the central knowledge does not recognize the so-called "two cultures"), are "patterned energies." He devotes a whole chapter, "Knot and Vortex," to explaining this central fact. This new knowledge was up in the air in the 1910s and Pound had the proper antennae to pick it up. The grand articulator of so many of the important ideas in early 20th century art, he had realized that all art is now: all worthwhile art is patterned energy, now.

<sup>2</sup>All references are to the paperback editions of Delany's novels. In original publication order the abbreviations I use are as follows: THE JEWELS OF APTOR (Ace, 1968) - JA; THE FALL OF THE TOWERS (Ace, 1970) - FT; THE BALLAD OF BETA-2 (Ace, 1965) - BB2; EMPIRE STAR (Ace, 1966) - ES; BABEL-17 (Ace 1966) - B17; THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION (Ace, 1967) - EI; NOVA (Bantam, 1969).

Douglas Barbour







Poundian Vortex: of persistent "patterned energies" manifested in ceaseless change. His sense of the multiplexity of both the theme and the possible artistic renderings of it has continually expanded and matured, until in ES, EI and NOVA he has created literary artifacts as ambiguous, multiplex, and profound as any poem.

Delany's growth as an artist can be charted in the increasingly multi-  
various use he makes of mythological and literary allusions over a range of seven novels. He begins by making fairly straightforward mythical allusions, as his use of Robert Graves's *THE WHITE GODDESS* in JA demonstrates. He then proceeds to make obvious use of literary quotations for their ideological import (as in the quote from Auden's "*Herae Canonicae*" which serves as epigraph to FT, or the epigraphs to BL7 and throughout EI), as well as including several quite obvious allusions within the novels. Later, in EI and NOVA especially, the allusions are just as plentiful, but they are handled with much greater subtlety (as, for example, the allusion to Thomas Nashe's song from "*Summer's Last Will and Testament*" when Mouse first hears/sees a syrx performance, shows (NOVA, 9)).

In many ways, BB2 provides the first signs of the literary self-awareness that will mark all of Delany's later work. The ballad itself (BB2, 9-11) is a good example of the genre, but Delany has his real fun in the rest of the novel as he provides a plausible (and realistic in terms of the world imagined for the novel) explanation for every strange image in the poem. It is important that all of these images at first appear completely unoriginal, as Joneny thinks (BB2, 9). The real target of this little book is sloppy scholarship and criticism, and this is best brought out by Joneny who, as a conscientious student, discovers that his belief in the valuelessness of the Star Folk is the result of poor scholarship by the few investigators who have done any work on them. At the same time as this point is made, the various forms of documentation used in the construction of this novel make it a literary parody of the very kind of scholarship it mocks. As an example of literary self-awareness, BB2 is a promising beginning.

The "Destroyer" may have his analogues in any number of dangerous figures of folktales and legends, but he is also specifically an sf creation. Judith Merrill's point ("*Books*," *F&SF* (December 1966), p. 34), that "The old myths have not lost their power to enchant; they have simply lost the power of myth, because their images are no longer those in which we clothe our archetypes" is relevant here, for Delany--unlike Roger Zelazny, say--early learned the lesson: he will often allude to known myths and mythic patterns, but he will always dress them in his chosen future imagery, and specify the differences that must exist between his imaginings and those of the past. (On the importance of the concept "difference" in Delany's work, I refer you to Stephen Scobie's article, "*Different Mazes: Mythology in Samuel R. Delany's (sic) THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION*" (*RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY*, 5:2 (July 1971)).)

For me, ES is the breakthrough novel for Delany. In its complete, and carefully structured, self-consciousness as a literary artifact it takes its place alongside the fictions of Jorge Luis Borges, to take just one example, and its very form creates that particular allusion. However, ES is literally full of allusions: for example, the references to T.S. Eliot's *FOUR QUARTETS*, especially "*Burnt Norton*," are necessary pointers to the nature of this fiction and its meaning. Many of the other allusions, such as Lump's game of Oscar and Alfred, which he plays on Jo when they first meet, are much more light-hearted (ES, 44-47).

The two epigrams to ES are also important. The Proust quotation not only points toward the explanation of multiplexity, but suggests the ways in which memory and fiction work. The first stanza of Auden's "*Atlantis*"

is suggestive, but the whole poem is even more revealing as to why the journeys of Jo and the others can have no simple completion. There are a number of other specific, and small, allusions, like Charona (and Three-Dog) (ES, 15), but, as in all such allusions, since the first novels, Charona is different from her mythic original. 13

Bl7 is also different, especially in the way it makes use of the poems of Delany's wife, Marilyn Hacker. Throughout, the poetic epigraphs superbly complement the sections of the novel they preface, but when we also remember that the heroine of the novel, Rydra Wong, is a poet, we see that the presence of these poems fulfills more than one purpose. The most outrageous allusion in the novel is the name of Rydra's ship: the Rimbaud (Bl7, 46). Rydra's statement that the name was Muels' idea lays the foundation for the later revelation that she tripled with Muels Aranlyde (a perfect anagram, this time, for Samuel R. Delany), the author of *EMPIRE STAR* and the Comet Jo books (Bl7, 78): This is one of those moments of great fun in a fiction that depends upon an author's ability to get the reader to accept completely the philosophy of that fiction (the analogue can be found in Borges' "Borges and Myself"--in his collection *THE ALEPH AND OTHER STORIES*, 1939-1969--for example, as well as in many of his other fictions). I feel that Delany succeeds here: he does not destroy the mood he is building at this point, for Ron's joy at discovering that Rydra knew the author of his favorite books is matched by our delight in Delany's playful personal allusion.<sup>3</sup>

I have already indicated that EI is incredibly rich in mythical and literary allusions. Stephen Scobie's "Different Mazes," already referred to, is a very full examination of the many mythological allusions in EI, and reveals just how multiplex and "different" the many mythic patterns Delany plays with in this novel are. As Scobie points out in his listing of the various concepts of myth Delany uses, he has mixed his references with each of the major characters of his novel. Moreover, in his systematic use of contemporary Pop myth figures as if they existed on the same level of allusive importance as the figures of ancient myth, Delany suggests a great deal about present day mythic thinking, while further indicating just how mythological all humanity is to the strange race that inhabits his new world. In seeing the possible redemptive value (in literary terms) of the figures of Pop mythology, Delany joins such writers as Leonard Cohen (in *BEAUTIFUL LOSERS*) who have sought to redeem the time in their works.

Thus the important point about EI is this insistence throughout on "difference." In EI none of the mythic pattern repeats itself, rather a number of delightful variations on their themes are played out, in an increasingly multiplex manner, as the changes which are the controlling metaphor of the novel wreak their effect upon the narrative. By using myths in such an idiosyncratic manner, Delany creates a whole series of new ones, while at the same time creating a primer on the subject of myth itself.

The many epigraphs, taken from a wide range of writings, as well as Delany's own journal, serve much the same purpose as the poems in Bl7; they comment in various subtle and often oblique ways upon the sections they preface. The quotations from Delany's journal are especially interesting

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<sup>3</sup>As it happens, despite the fact that *EMPIRE STAR* was published first, *BABEL-17* was written first. Delany decided to make up what he thought would be an Ace Double by writing one of the Comet Jo novels referred to in the scene with Ron (Letter from the author, August 3, 1973). This does not greatly affect my argument concerning Delany's growth as an artist, nor my belief that ES quickly became an important exploration of fictional possibilities rather than a mere game. Delany appears to agree for he admits in that same letter that "I've always seen the work, ES that is, as rather a key to me oeuvre (sic)."



14 because they involve us in the very creation of the story as it takes form. Such manipulation of a reader's usual literary responses (for that is what it is) can be extremely irritating when a poor craftsman attempts it, but a writer of Delany's ability makes it not just an interesting experience but an intellectually and emotionally rewarding one.

Sandra Miesel's article on myth in NOVA ("Samuel R. Delany's Use of Myth in NOVA," EXTRAPOLATION, 12:2 (May 1971)) does for that book what Scobie's article did for EI. She points out how Delany has used and thoroughly mixed for his own purposes a number of basic Celtic and Indian myths, and that the basic archetypal pattern of this novel is the Grail quest (although Lorq fights to prevent his "country" (Pleiades Federation) from becoming a wasteland, rather than to restore it.) But Delany has also returned to the archetype of the poet/creator found in Graves' THE WHITE GODDESS, the book that was so important to his first novel. Graves' thesis that the muse of poets is the moon goddess, and that true, magical, poetry, or art, is lunar takes on new importance when we remember that Katin was born on the Moon, and is a lover of moons (NOVA, 14-15). For Katin is to be the writer of the novel we are reading, a novel that is steeped in magical and archetypal patterns.

Perhaps, in this novel, the way in which the various symbols and allusions are handled is more important than their mere presence. Katin's many speeches on the basic archetypal patterns their adventure (the narrative) follows fully explicate them for the reader. This is one aspect of self-conscious fictionalizing NOVA shares with ES and EI. The novel explains itself so successfully that very little of that kind of explication is left for the critic to do. As Richard Poirier suggests in his essay "A Literature of Law and Order" (THE PERFORMING SELF), such internal or self-explication is one of the hallmarks of "modern" (specifically, twentieth century) literature. Delany is in good company here, then, yet he adds his own little fillip by making sure that every time he uses the patterns that are so fully discussed in his novel, he changes them just sufficiently to make them slightly "different." This relates to his use of mythological patterns as a kind of "meta-communication" or "meta-language": a good poet will, as Pound says, "Make it new." Delany does precisely this when he makes something "new" and original out of old and archetypal literary patterns, shifting their focus enough to make his fictions new artifacts (not mere re-tellings of older stories), and yet not so far as to lose the emotive power attached to them.

From the beginning of his career, Delany has evinced a concern with language that is found in very few writers. A poet himself, and married to one, he has always been able to create powerful imagistic and metaphoric set-pieces within his novels. He has never lost this ability to create the single scene or paragraph of highly charged language; all the later novels contain examples of such writing. Many of them, such as Captain Leela's description of what it was like to be "loved" by the Destroyer (BB2, 88-89), are especially interesting when considered in the light of Delany's own critical thoughts on style in sf. In his discussion of Alfred Bester's THE STARS MY DESTINATION, a book which has obviously exerted a great influence on his writing, Delany argues that "the stuff of mysticism" is central to many sf stories, and that a piece of writing like the climactic scene of Bester's novel is "also a very powerful dramatization of Rimbaud's theory of the systematic derangement of the senses to achieve a higher awareness" ("About 5,175 Words"). Delany feels that the relation of much sf to the Symbolists could be investigated much more fruitfully than its relation to Jules Verne for example, and I think he has a point, at least in his own case, and those of a few of the stylists I mentioned above. The essay I have just quoted is proof, if proof were needed, that Delany has carefully thought out a stylistic approach to his writing. Multiplied examples of his use of synaesthesia, complex metaphor and surrealistic description



could be pointed out in the later novels, but I want merely to refer to two. Another of the lessons Alfred Bester's work contained was how to present violence in an imagery of extreme beauty. In EI, Lobey first comes across the dragons and their herders by coming upon a dragon in trouble. A beautifully and shockingly poetic image introduces the scene: "Attacked by flowers, a dragon was dying" (EI, 60). To a reader, who hits this line for the first time, the shock and delight at its rightness as the scene continues to build up a full picture of a dragon under attack by carnivorous flowers, aided by Lobey and his machete and, finally, Spider and his whip, is surely great. EI is jam-packed with such imagery, more and more of it as the novel progresses, for as Stephen Scobie points out, the steady increase of synaesthetic metaphor is an accurate linguistic reflection of the controlling myth of the novel: metamorphosis.

NOVA is the prime example of how to create a "terrible beauty."<sup>4</sup> The title, and controlling image of the book, is perhaps the perfect symbol/image for beautiful violence, and its import strikes upon nearly every action and emotion in it. Time and again, in a variety of situations, the image of a "pattern...frozen in a sunburst around the glaring point" (NOVA, 75) recurs, until the appearance of such an image, itself, carries an extremely powerful emotional load. The scene where Lorq attacks Prince with Mouse's syrx (introduced, on page 22, as "my ax": an example of the very careful construction of this novel), is one of the major versions of violent beauty in NOVA:

Prince wove and stumbled down toward the glow of Gold. Lorq crabwalked the jagged slope.

And struck.

Light whipped Prince. He must have regained some of his vision, because he clawed at his eyes again. He went down on one knee.

Lorq staggered. His shoulder scraped hot rock. He was already slicked with sweat. It trickled his forehead, banked in his eyebrows, poured through at the scar. He took six steps. With each he struck light brighter than Gold, sound louder than the lava's roar, odor sharper than the sulfur fumes that rasped his throat. His rage was real and red and brighter than Gold. "Vermin...Devil...Dirt!"

Prince fell just as Lorq reached him. His bare hand leaped about the scalding stone. His head came up. His arms and face had been cut by falling glass. His mouth was opening and closing like a fish. His blind eyes blinked and wrinkled and opened again.

(NOVA, 187)

It is important to note here that the scene described is terrible and ugly; it is the language and formal qualities of the description that are so very beautiful, and this, as I understand it, is the power of art.

As I have suggested, Delany had from the first a command of local effects in his fiction. What his slowly maturing talent and vision of sf has led him to, however, is a sense of the whole novel as a carefully structured fiction, a perfectly (as perfect as the artist can make it) articulated and beautifully multiplied artifact, a world made of words. His novels since ES are attempts to construct such imaginative worlds, "philo-

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<sup>4</sup>W.B. Yeats, "Easter, 1916," THE COLLECTED POEMS (London, 1965), pp. 202-205. The reference to Yeats is not as far-fetched as it might at first appear. As Sandra Meisel points out in a letter to RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY (5:2 (February 1972), p. 159), the original title for EI was THE FABULOUS, FORMLESS DARKNESS, a line from Yeat's poem "Two Songs from a Play."

16 sophically adequate," as William H. Gass puts it in FICTION AND THE FIGURES OF LIFE (New York, 1970), although they "are only imaginatively possible ones."

The early novels are traditional in form, and appear to be attempts at what can only be called "sf-realism," wherein everything, including characters, is presented in as "realistic" a manner as possible, so that a partial effect of journalism is felt, negated only partly by the imagistic set-pieces. Yet, and this is the irony of the situation, the endings of these early novels are to a great degree manipulated ones. There is a deus ex machina feeling about JA and FT that is missing in the later works. It is the result of the way in which the characters are manipulated within the story so that everything works out. To say this is not to deny that these novels are pleasing, nor to suggest that the manipulation of the plot is obvious, but the open endings of the last four novels, all of which derive organically from the narrative, seem much more natural, although it is likely that they are the result of a much greater labor of organization on Delany's part.

ES is the book in which Delany first realizes his new vision of what a novel can be. It is an exceedingly careful construction of a pure fiction, and the reader's enjoyment of it derives in large part from a recognition of its purity as a fictional construct. William H. Gass's discussion of "The Concept of Character in Fiction" provides a clear articulation of one of the levels of construction in ES:

A character, first of all, is the noise of his name, and all the sounds and rhythms that proceed from him. We pass most things in novels as we pass things on a train. The words flow by like scenery. All is change. But there are some points in a narrative which remain relatively fixed; we may depart from them, but soon we return, as music returns to its theme. Characters are those primary substances to which everything else is attached.

I have long tried to figure out precisely why I was so moved by the experience of such obviously incomplete characters as Jo, San Sevarina, and Lump when I read this book (considered from a traditional point of view, they are not "characters" at all: they change too much). I think Gass's theory points toward an answer. His great insight is that "character" defines much more than just "fictional human beings," and that what we mean by "character" refers to a function of the language of fiction rather than a mere "something" within the story.<sup>5</sup> It is language which creates "character," and it is language, coaxed into repeated patterns, which affects the reader of ES. (Or any novel, for that matter, if we take Gass's point correctly: my point is that in ES Delany has created a fiction in which this critical insight is incarnated in such stark simplicity we cannot miss it.)

With all this in mind, I wish to consider Comet Jo as an example of Delany's ability to render engaging characters, in even such purely fictional circumstances as ES articulates. Rydra Wong, Mouse, Katin, and Lorq, and all the characters of his novels are as purely made of words as Jo is, but the novels they inhabit are themselves rendered with much more depth and solidity than is ES. But the narrative of ES turns on its not being a solid construct, but a constantly changing one, in which endings and beginnings are the same, and lacunae are more prevalent than what lies between them.

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<sup>5</sup>See Gass, pp. 49-50, especially the comment that "anything...which serves as a fixed point, like a stone in a stream or that soap in Bloom's pocket, functions as a character." (my italics)



Unlike the other protagonists of Delany's novels, Jo is not defined by any specific actions or speech and thought patterns so much as he is defined by the lack of these. Jewel does tell us at the very beginning a number of the things he possesses, which looks like an ordinary approach to the creation of character, but he does so only to immediately remove nearly everything (ES, 6-7). Jo is not defined by what he possesses but by what he loses, by the continual changes he goes through as the story progresses. Jewel comments on his first losses, and his first gains:

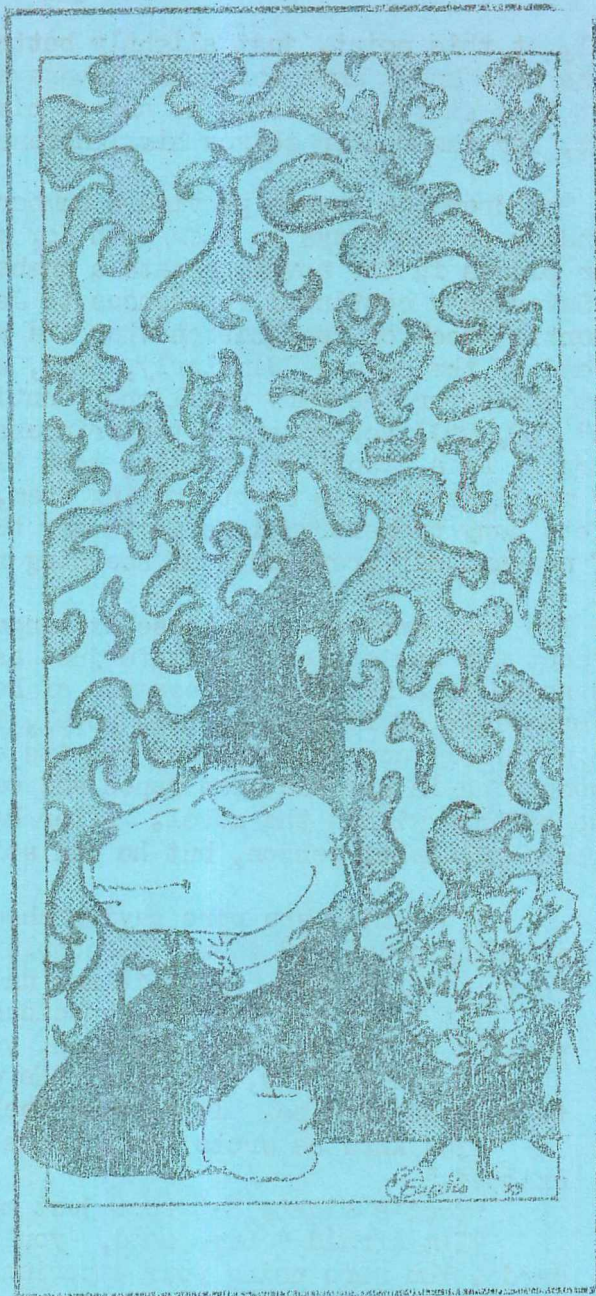
And later, when he had lost all but miraculously, the ocarina, he thought about all these things and what they had meant to him, and how much they defined his youth, and how poorly they had prepared him for manhood.

Before he began to lose, however, he gained: two things, which, along with the ocarina, he kept until the end. One was a devil kitten named Di'k. The other was me. I'm Jewel.

(ES, 6)

The words alone are important, for it is our memory of what Jewel has said that makes his statement to the confused complex reader in the final chapter (ES, 99) work so well: we respond to the knowledge

we have gained of all Jo's losses, and remember that Jewel did say he would have these three things with him until the end, and therefore there is an end. What Jo loses, in losing all these things, is his innocence, all that makes him "delightfully simplex." (ES, 40) His transformation begins as soon as he meets San Sevarina for the first time, when she tells him he's a beautiful boy and gives him the red comb he will later give her to fix up his hair. She also orders him to her cabin for Interling lessons, for his speech is atrocious (ES, 24). I said that Jo was not defined by any specific speech or thought patterns, but he has them, many of them. Delany creates dramatic scenes throughout ES in which dialogue can reveal character, and the changes it undergoes in Jo's case. As he tries to get a job on the starship Jo reveals by his every action and word his simplex origins, especially when he tries to get the foreman's attention at the wrong time (ES, 28-29). His response to the sadness the Ill cause in him is also very simple, but his asking San Sevarina what they are, after getting one answer to the question from Ron, reveals, as she notes, "the seeds of complexity" (ES, 35). Her comments on his potential readers (ES, 37) indicates one reason why he must learn to speak properly; the other reason is that he must be able to deliver the message he does not yet have "quite accurately. It would be disastrous if you were mis-heard!" (ES, 35). But Jo is



78 still, at this point, just slightly better than simplex, which is why everyone else knows more about his "message" than he does. His exasperation about this state of affairs is one of his endearing qualities at this point, for the reader shares his ignorance.

The dramatic scenes provide a number of various patterns of speech, depending on who plays in them with Jo, which by their reappearance at other places in the novel, create a number of language bridges within it. San Sevarina's continual references to Jo as a "beautiful boy" provides an authentic shock of recognition when the young princess uses the phrase near the end of the novel. Similarly, Lump, whether he is the huge machine Jo first meets, or the very small one ("until a few weeks ago...he was called Lusp" (ES, 96)) accompanying the princess, is given to making literary allusions. As a result of spending some time with Lump, while still maturing into multiplexity, Jo starts making them, too. Thus, one way of speaking of Jo's many transformations is to say that he changes by taking unto himself new and different ways of speaking and thinking.

The most emotional of these exchanges is the one involving Ni Ty Lee, the poet who has stolen Jo's life just as he has stolen so many others. This scene is a fascinating example of Delany's self-conscious playing with the materials of fiction in this novel, for a good portion of the discussion within it concerns writing and its effects, even as Jo's feeling "as if something in him had been raped and outraged" (ES, 70) demonstrates these effects within the novel. After he has read Ni Ty's poems, Jo has become a multiplex person, but he can still learn a few things from Lump:

"The thing you were saying about multiplexity and understanding points of view. He completely took over my point of view, and you were right; it was uncanny."

"It takes a multiplex consciousness to perceive the multiplexity of another consciousness, you know."

"I can see why," Jo said. "He was using all his experiences to understand mine. It made me feel funny."

"You know he wrote those poems before he even knew you existed."

"That's right. But that just makes it stranger."

"I'm afraid," Lump said, "you've set up your syllogism backwards. You were using your experiences to understand him."

"I was?"

"You've had a lot of experiences recently. Order them multiplexually and they will be much clearer. And when they are clear enough, enough confusion will remain so that you ask the proper questions."

Jo was silent for a moment, ordering. Then he said, "What was the name of the [lll your mind is based on?"

"Muels Aronlyde," the Lump said.

Jo turned back to the window. "Then this has all happened before."

(ES, 73-74)

Jo's final comment is most important in terms of the development of the narrative, but it also refers to everything he has learned from, and about, Ni Ty (and his earlier association with the older writer, Muels), reinforcing the earlier discussion about Ni Ty's poems' effect upon their readers. The last view we have of Ni Ty is of him diving his spaceship into a sun, laughing and sobbing as he does so; Jewel tells us, in the last chapter, that Norn (who is one of the "other bodies, other names" Jo used after his body was burned by Prince Nactor) is "standing at the front /of their crashing ship/, staring out at the glittering sun at which we hurtled. He had begun to laugh" (ES, 101). Such are the connections, purely linguistic in their nature, this novel insists upon in every facet of its construction.



Everything we have learned about Jo, the sum of his gains and losses, is brought to bear upon the penultimate chapter, in which he finds the princess and tiny Lump, and realizes sadly that he will not even deliver his message to Empire Star, or at least not for a long time, for his real message is for San Sevarina, to prepare her for her ordeal to come, an ordeal that will include the training of a young simplex boy to carry a message to Empire Star. The chapter concludes:

"Jo, do you know whether we'll win or not?"

"I only know that win or lose, it will take longer than we think."

Her hand slipped down his arm and seized his. "But you will help me! You will help!"

He raised his hands and placed both of them on her shoulders. Her hand came up with his. "I'll help you," he said. Empire Star drew nearer. "Of course I'll help you, San Severina. How could I refuse after what you've done for me?"

"What have I done?" she asked, puzzled again.

"Shh," he said and touched her lips with a finger. "If you ask questions that nobody can answer, you just have to wait and see."

Dick hiccuped in his sleep and Lump coughed discreetly. They turned to look at Empire Star again, and from the protective socket of bone and flesh, I too looked, and saw much further. I'm Jewel.

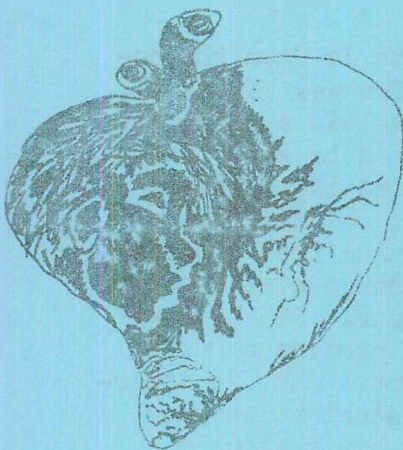
(ES, 98)

Jewel! The other protagonist, almost, for he has been with Jo from the beginning, and his are the words that have rendered it all for us. In Jewel, Delany imagined a most intriguing narrative voice, for Jewel is a character without character, a perfect example of what Gass means when he says "Characters are those primary substances to which everything else is attached." By his words shall you know him. And he has carefully and objectively shown us Jo's development to the point where he is so changed from the simplex child we met at the beginning that he is ready to undergo even greater changes as he serves the great message he was chosen to bear. Jewel, however, has the last chapter to himself, and he proceeds to provide a number of tiles for the mosaic of which Jo's story is but one part. What is interesting about this final chapter is its tone. Jewel's personal voice has not been heard too often throughout the narrative, for he has zealously served the requirements of the story, and remained, except for a few interpolations, a good omniscient observer. But in those interpolations, especially in the remembered scenes of his life before he crystallized, he appears as an emotional apprentice novelist who tends toward overstatement and rhetoric in speech. In the final chapter, freed from serving Jo's small tale to invoke the grand story of which it was but a part, Jewel begins to wax rhetorical again; but it works now, because it is supported by all that has gone before. When Jewel says, "Oh, I could tell you good news and bad, of successes and defeats" or when he employs oxymorons like "tragic victory" and "joyous defeat," they are fitting and proper, not purple prose at all. At this point in the novel, the various sources of verbal energy have generated enough emotion to convince us that Jewel is speaking honestly about it all: the story, in all its implications, is that grand. Delany's deep understanding of the stresses his narrative can support is shown in his rendering of Jewel's narrative voice at every point in the novel.

In ES Delany first attempted a work that would clearly be, in every word, its own fictional self. On every page he places clues, words, phrases, the reappearance of which are carefully orchestrated throughout the whole, so that ES most definitely returns the reader ever and again "to the clear and brilliant world of concept, to the realm of order, proportion,

20 and dazzling construction...to fiction, where characters, unlike ourselves, freed from existence, can shine like essence, and purely Be" (Gass). The novels since ES have also achieved Gass's ideal: in EI and NOVA the careful organization of the words throughout is rendered with such stark clarity that we are forced to conclude that Delany wants us to be aware of, and to respond, in proper literary fashion, to this organization. For he discovered, in the writing of ES, that if a writer can use language to create a pure and absolutely fictional "secondary world," he will move his readers purely by organizing his words properly. This knowledge, a knowledge which is central to the most exploratory modern fiction, has been a central part of, and theme in, all his fictions since ES.

This explains the use of the many epigrams, of the author's journal, and, most audacious of all, of an apprentice novelist, whose thoughts on form and pattern, and everything else, are not only organic parts of the novel in which he appears, but are also explanations of how that novel works. Now that Delany understands precisely what a fiction is, a world of words which he creates out of the basic material of language itself, he can use all the words at his disposal to outrage and delight his readers' imaginations by creating worlds of such profound order they dazzle the mind: I am referring to the extraordinary multiplexity of the various pattern systems within ES, EI, EI and NOVA, where any number of phrases, images, and metaphors recur so often they practically take on a life of their own, functioning as Gassian "characters" within the work.



If Richard Poirier is correct in seeing what he calls "performance" as another particularly modern trait, in Delany's performances in these later works we can discover another literary characteristic he shares with some of the major writers of our time, writers who have helped to make modern literature all that it is.

By performance I mean, in part, any self-discovering, self-watching, finally self-pleasuring response to the pressures and difficulties /of being an artist in our time, subject to an over-weening criticism and an artistically debilitating public life, and much else besides/....When a writer is most

strongly engaged by what he is doing, as if struggling for his identity within the materials at hand, he can show us, in the mere turning of a sentence this way or that, how to keep from being smothered by the inherited structuring of things, how to keep within and yet in command of the accumulations of culture that have become a part of what he is. Much of cultural inheritance is waste; it always has been. But only those who are both vulnerable and brave are in a position to know what is waste and what is not.

I can think of few contemporary novels which exemplify Poirier's statement as well as EI and NOVA. For in them Delany continually uses his sf precepts to create fictions in which the problems that Poirier sees as central to artistic expression today can be approach, broached, and perhaps even usefully left unresolved: "Endings to be useful must be inconclusive" (EI, 125). Although Poirier appears quite unaware of sf, or Delany, when he refers to "the writers I'm discussing" he could be referring to Delany, for he belongs to their company:

In their struggle with language and with literary shape, the writers I'm discussing become aware, and then turn this awareness



into forms of expression, that what are supposed to be instruments of knowledge do not offer clarification at all; they are part of what needs to be clarified. The kind of writer or personality or group I most admire displays an unusual and even arduous energy of performance. And my admiration for such effortfulness is the result of thinking that there is a good chance that everything more easily available for expression is cant or destined to become gibberish. One must fight through the glitter and rubbish to express anything worthwhile, to express even the rubbish. A writer or anyone else can be called "great" or "noble" in my sense who sees the perpetual need for such fighting, who is forever unaccommodated, determinately "unfinished"...an example of cadenced and self-measuring performance. Continually tensed within any use of language, such a writer's best acts are always performances of some daring, the very success of which transports him beyond the results of such acts, producing the dissatisfactions which prompt the next, and perhaps even better, ones.

Delany's novels, if read in order, reveal precisely this kind of struggle; and I would argue that they also represent his continued growth as an artist. The terms in which he saw this growth do not really matter; I see it in terms of his slowly blossoming awareness of what the novel could be (Gass's "a monumental metaphor"), and of literary creation as "performance," and I think these critical ideas help to clarify our understanding of his achievement. From ES on, Delany not only produces "determinately 'unfinished'" fictions, he continually builds on his past performances to create even grander ones the next time out. BL7 (previous to, but emerging from the same impetus to greater fictional complexity as ES) engages the concept that languages are means of perceiving the world, and presents Delany's first deeply realized galactic society as a method of exploring that concept in concrete fictional terms. EI uses a first person narrator..., and a series of mind-boggling games with mythology, including the basic myth of man (a truly Bergsonian conception, I feel). NOVA continues to play games with myth, while at the same time it pushes the innovations of BL7 much further, and in its use of a triple center of consciousness and perception, each character of which fulfills a specifically novelistic, or fictional, function, it carries the self-awareness of his fictional creations to a new level of multiplexity. Algis Budrys' review of NOVA (in GALAXY, January 1969) is relevant here, for when he says

I don't see how a science-fiction writer can do more than wring your heart while explaining how it works. No writer can. The special thing that science fiction does is to first credibly place the heart in an unconventional environment

he not only points out the special fictional properties of this novel, but he suggests why sf is a valid form of literary creation. "Fiction," according to William Gass,

is life in terms of the toenail, or in terms of the ferris wheel, in terms of the tequila; it is incurably figurative, and the world the novelist makes is always a metaphorical model of our own.

If this is true, and if Delany's suggestion that some kind of link exists "between the Symbolists and modern American speculative fiction"<sup>6</sup> is also true (and I believe it is), then huge metaphors which are in fact also images of mystical illumination can best be presented in terms of word-worlds which are, like so many Symbolist poems, new, and "different." And

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<sup>6</sup> Delany, "About 5,175 Words," p. 144. Note his insistence that many of the best sf novels are "the stuff of mysticism."

the "reality" they present is as clearly there (in the best works, such as Delany's best works) as it is in any other work of art: the good novel, the artistic novel, represents itself.

William Gass thinks works of art are socially important

Not for the messages they may contain...but because they insist more than most on their own reality; because of the absolute way in which they exist. Certainly, images exist, shadows and reflections, fakes exist and hypocrites, there are counterfeits (quite real) and grand illusions--but it simply is not true that the copies are as real as their originals....Reality is not a matter of fact, it is an achievement; and it is rare....We live, most of us, amidst lies, deceptions, and confusions. A work of art may not utter the truth, but it must be honest. It may champion a cause we deplore, but like Milton's Satan, it must in itself be noble; it must be all there. Works of art confront us in the way few people dare to: completely, openly, at once. They construct, they comprise, our experience; they do not deny it or destroy it; and they shame us, we fall so short of the quality of their Being.

It may appear I am making far too large a claim for Delany's best work when I say that for me it achieves the objectives Gass outlines above (and, of course, such judgments are personal, at the last), but that is the claim I do make for them; and I suggest that, in his case, the success of that achievement is bound up in the speculative nature of his fiction-making. In constructing word-worlds that differ so radically from our own, he makes sure that their "being" will be complete, they will exist entirely in the shape the words take on the page. If there is a much greater potential for sf than has yet been realized by more than a few writers, either within or without the field, it rests upon that fact, and it will be writers with the sense of craft and dedication of Delany, who share his awareness of the ultimately linguistic nature of literary creation, who will eventually create a body of fictions that will demand the attention of all who care about literature and art.

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"How to Have an Absolutely Hilarious Heart Attack," continued from page 9

white-clad arm. I heard a whisper, coming from a young doctor leaning on my pillow; Doctor Aurelio Tlacuac Flores, the poet, was whispering just loud enough for her to hear. "Maria?" Her lips never moved, nor her long eyelashes, but she breathed back with infinite distance, "Marie." Teasingly, almost too faint to hear, he tried again. "Marianne?" The drops fell, he gaze never wavered, but there floated back the firm correction: "Marie." "Marie," he echoed tenderly, and then in a voice so quiet I could barely make it out inches from my ear, he sang a little Spanish tune. "Marie, Oh I wonder what you are, I wonder what passes with you."

Later, much later, I shared my orange-juice with Marie, the darling of his love-whispers. She told me of the six children she had borne, four of whom had died. She was twenty-three and she gave me an exact clinical description of the cause of death of each one, including the twins.

My last memory of the National Health Hospital of Cozumel is also of a woman, a middle-aged lady of great efficacy named Isobel. On the thousand-year-old walls of Bonampak in Southern Yucatan is a mural depicting a group of victorious noble Mayas watching the losers being tortured by having, among other things, their fingernails torn out with pliers. The painting is fresh and brilliant, and among the noble group is a lady of high rank, wearing a folded white robe and many ornaments. She gazes down impassively, satisfied, her beaked face and slant eyes a mask of alien antiquity. But that face lives today. With just those features and just that expression did Nurse Isobella Constantia fold her hands upon her snowy stomach and survey my saved life and my dirty bed.

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Seven are the dread-filled towers  
 where dwells the druid sisterhood;  
 Surrendered to the salt sea marsh  
 and sundered from the solid land  
 surrounded by the drowning wood  
 Glastonbury silent stands.

The birches rustle beaded boughs  
 and rushes shush their reedy sough  
     the fen brume sweeps  
     around the keep  
 and flood-rings Glastonbury's towers

Rings of power grace my fingers  
 Runes of power guard my door

The poetess picks the road her Rover wends  
 winds the twining plots to weave the rhymes  
 wield the wild and roaring winter winds  
 that send his ship through storming seas of time  
     Yet not to Glastonbury's weind  
     is given sight to see all ends

Rings of power weight my fingers  
 Runes of power warp my door

The songstress trades in tragedy in jest  
 in tangled tales of joust and chivalry  
 in triad lays of legendary quest  
 she leads her lord to challenge devilry  
     Yet Glastonbury's ancient spell  
     grants his death as her request

Rings of power twist my fingers  
 Runes of power entwine my door

Bitter is the victory of faith betrayed  
 and spilling blood the price of bardic pride  
 O fair and valiant is the brandished blade  
 but raven robes of mourning drape the bride  
     and hereforth Glastonbury's whore  
     shall live resigned to die a maid

Rings of power scathe my fingers  
 Runes of power scar my door

The curlew calls as day is spent  
 and fog crawls over the festering land  
     and spectral lies  
     below the spires  
 of Glastonbury of the fens

Rings of power still my fingers  
 Runes of power seal my door.

PAULA MARMOR  
AND DONALD G. KELLER:  
SOME INFORMAL REMARKS TOWARD A  
REVIEW OF TRITON



- 1) The first thing one notices about Samuel R. Delany's new novel TRITON (Bantam, February 1976, \$1.95, 369 pp.) is that it is a conventional science fiction novel, at which point a large portion of his audience heaves a collective sigh of relief. It is, indeed, a space opera of sorts, resembling the Katin passages of NOVA and "Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones" in feel, as much as it resembles anything previous of his.
- 2) In a Heinleinian sense, TRITON is an immensely impressive achievement. Delany has created a truly futuristic society of staggering complexity which he brings across to the reader bit by bit with his usual subtlety. He will throw in some fact about the world in passing and it will suddenly strike the reader how different this future is --and then there will be no more explanation. It is a good example of what Damon Knight calls the Pole Two solution to transmitting background material: write from the point of view of a member of the society and let the reader glean what he may.
- 3) As in THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION, Delany prefaces each chapter (and the whole book) with quotes from various philosophical/theoretical sources, all very interesting in themselves, which become much more intensely interesting, thought-provoking, and multiplex when considered in light of how he implements them in the novel.
- 4) Toward definitions, one: The phrase 'ambiguous heterotopia' is capable of varied interpretations. 'Ambiguous' could almost be the catchword of metalogics, with its central theory that human discourse, like science fiction, is structurally indefinable: it can be categorized by simile and metaphor, by describing certain preva-



lent aspects, by delineating what it is not. 'Heterotopia' can mean 'heterogeneous place,' that is, a multiplex of dissimilar cultures; equally it can be 'another place,' parallel to utopia's 'no place.' A utopia is postulated as not existing: it is an idealization, an abstract construct. A heterotopia, in contrast, is a place that does exist, but separated in space (or time) from 'here': an extrapolation, a 'different' place. (Most science-fictional societies are hetero- rather than utopias.) The 'ambiguous utopia' of Le Guin's *THE DISPOSSESSED* is torn by a clash between two political ideologies rarified to philosophies; Delany's 'ambiguous heterotopia' is shattered by a war stemming from non-acceptance of social differences.

- 5) The enigmatic *DHALGREN* is put into perspective by the publication of *TRITON*. Delany is committed to science fiction and will continue to write it, he makes clear. In this light it seems that *DHALGREN* is nothing more than a giant copybook exercise, in which Delany deliberately used minimal setting and plot (the two strongest elements of conventional science fiction) in order to concentrate on characterization and style, and taught himself to write (even better than he knew already). If this evaluation is correct, it is a moot point whether *DHALGREN* should ever have been published; but then, there are some people who are interested in reading copybook exercises.
- 6) Delany's brief first period culminated in *THE FALL OF THE TOWERS*; he then took a quantum jump into a more refined style which produced his Nebula-winning novels and nearly all of his short fiction, culminating in *NOVA*. He then went into a fallow period, producing only the finger-exercises *THE TIDES OF LUST* and *DHALGREN*. *TRITON* is a new quantum jump of refinement, but feels like a first step rather than a culmination; it resembles *THE JEWELS OF APTOR* and *THE BALLAD OF BETA-2* in that respect. Delany is at the bottom rung of a level of writing far beyond the capabilities of the vast majority of the writers in the science fiction field.
- 7) *TRITON* can be viewed as a fictional essay-novel extrapolating from a connected series of concepts concerning social, i.e. interpersonal and societal, categorization.

".../This/ made it depressingly easy to define the people who did not use them, if only by their prejudices, as a type. He hated being a type" (p. 6). Much is made, throughout *TRITON*, of types: "Describe the preferred, physical type you feel most assured of your performance with!" (p. 53). "Yes, you are my type, which is why we got as far as we did. I've only met one other person in my life even vaguely like you dash not my type..." (p. 229). Although the convenient social shorthand of pigeonholing people as a means of not-dealing with them is a comparatively minor vice, it is symptomatic of a greater intellectual and emotional lassitude. Such categorization is implicit in the structure of formal logic and has its culmination in 'us or them' dichotomies: one cannot be both conservative and liberal, black and white, a satellite-dweller and a world-dweller, male and female.

Delany's metalogics is a construct against which to examine the 'logical' component of typology. The 'essay' (p. 57ff) in which Eron Helstrom explains the fallacies of the premise "to deny P is true is to affirm P is false" is equally applicable to social stigmatization and to semantics. 'Not-liberal' is not an equivalent phrase to 'conservative'; nor, as metalogics points out, is 'not-male' equal to 'female.' Delany has emphasized this point by exaggeration: he extrapolates a society wherein gender is a matter of choice; where men may bear and suckle children; where feminine role-titles may as often apply to men as the reverse (cf. 'e-girls').

"What makes 'logical' bounding so risky is that the assertion of the formal logician that a boundary can be placed around an area of significance space gives you, in such a cloudy situation, no way to say where to set the boundary, how to set it, or if, once set, it will turn out in the least

useful" (p. 59). The divergence of metalogics from formal logic may be summarized as a substitution of flexible parameters for rigid perimeters. This also has its social corollary. In her letter to Bron, the Spike says: "...you do italics adhere to some kind of code of good manners, proper behavior, or the right thing to do, and yet you are so emotionally lazy that you are incapable of implementing the only valid reason that any such code ever came about: to put people at ease, to make them feel better, to promote social communion" (p. 228). As an idea, social codes are metalogical parameters by which relationships can be approached. When they become rigid perimeters they create logical categories: 'aggressive' and 'passive'; 'chivalrous' and 'helpless.' Thus Bron is caught within a logical paradox which is the direct result of an acceptance of social perimeters: "...the doing, as /Bron/ had once suspected and now knew, was preeminently a matter of being; and being had turned out to be, more and more, specifically a matter of not doing" (p. 312).

- 8) Quick. There are three Brians in this book. Which of them is female? Which of them is male?
- 9) In his essay in QUARK/1, "Critical Methods: Speculative Fiction," Delany makes significant mention of a literary technique called expertise: "that method by which an author, deploying a handful of esoteric facts, creates the impression that he, or more often a character in the story, is an expert in some given field." Thomas Pynchon, perhaps the finest writer in America, has brought expertise to a high level of achievement; Delany, who believes that the technique "practically alone supports science fiction," has finally succeeded in his attempt to really use it in TRITON, and manages to do so on or near Pynchon's level.
- 10) Anachronism with anachronism: Bron Helstrom is a pathetic and dislikable creation, a Twentieth Century Man adrift in a world he never made: a world that never could have made him. Were he a man from his world untimely ripped, there would be some validity in his behavior. In his attempt to create his ideal woman in order to "save the human race," he develops a personality which is a mid-Twentieth Century stereotype with which he should be totally unfamiliar: he does not read ancient literature, classical theater is simply not performed, no such character exists in Ice Opera. Where does he find the perimeters within which she must perform? The supposition is that they come from his own needs, yet Bron is completely incapable of emotional extrapolation. He cannot see the P for which he unerringly creates the prototype not-P, born full-blown from his brow complete with prepackaged neuroses. One gets the feeling that Delany got to this stage of the story and let it run down, in anticipation of the appendices which are indeed some of the most important statements TRITON makes. So there is a serious flaw in Bron's woman--and most people won't see it. Or maybe that is precisely the point.
- 11) Toward definitions, two: 'The Modular Calculus.' "When a man who knows the game watches a game of chess, the experience he has when a move is made usually differs from that of someone else watching without understanding the game. But this experience is not the knowledge of the rules" (quoted, p. 220). The 'knowledge of the rules' is a modular algebra. The 'experience' to which the quote refers is a modular calculus. If, as Delany suggests (Appendix B, note IV), modular algebras are the grammars and syntaxes of thought patterns while modular calculi are semantics and idiom, then the development of the modular calculus is another of Delany's attempts to define 'style,' and TRITON his attempt to test that definition. It is also a partial parametal definition of science fiction.



- 12) Delany's style, always his finest asset, has been honed by his DHAL-GREN experience into an even more effective instrument. He has learned to use it with subtlety and restraint; in fact, his fans will miss his usual verbal pyrotechnics. He has also learned how to condense and compress, to make his words work as economically as possible. (He did this in THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION, but there he was almost too compressed.) For example, in Chapter Two, which is twenty-seven pages long, he does the following: characterizes two important characters, continues the characterization of his protagonist, describes in (suggestive, alas) detail a game called vlet (the same one that is in one of Joanna Russ's Alyx stories, which there seemed rather like a chess variation, but here is the Ultimate Game in that it contains all possible ways of playing games, much as the sensory-syrinx in NOVA contains all possible ways of Playing an Instrument), works in a long, complicated technical lecture, evokes a strong picture of the environment the protagonist lives in...all in a short space. At one point, the protagonist is playing vlet, thinking about his problems, and conversing on love and sex with his opponent: Delany presents all this as it happens, weaving the three threads together inextricably, and giving the reader no real signposts as to how to follow it. It needs close, attentive reading, but it is worth the trouble. This is an exceptional example that is nevertheless characteristic of the whole book.
- 13) Who the hell proofread this book? (The errors aren't all typos, either.)
- 14) The foci of TRITON's orbit are Bron's essay on metalogics (p. 57ff) and the Spike's letter to Bron (p. 228ff). The reader may find much of the former passing by partially understood; if so, it must be re-read until it is all understood, because the concept of metalogics is essential to understanding the rest of the novel.
- 15) TRITON does not have the majestic sweep and mythic depths generally associated with Delany's novels, NOVA in particular. The archetypes have merely become types.
- 16) When NOVA first appeared, Algis Budrys said, "As of this novel, Samuel R. Delany is the greatest science fiction writer alive; but NOVA is not necessarily the greatest sf novel ever written." This should be repeated in reference to TRITON: it represents a quantum-jump of technique over any of his previous science fiction; in fact, it may be the most sophisticated science fiction novel ever written. But it feels like an average novel, like a step towards a still-greater novel to come.

DONALD G. KELLER:

THE MAN OF A THOUSAND VOICES KEEPING PERFECTLY STILL

How good a writer is Richard Lupoff? How good is he capable of being? This is a thorny question which has been the subject of much discussion herein, mostly between Lupoff himself and our editor. Being a Lupoff watcher of long standing, I feel compelled to insert my two cents' worth.

The first fact to note is that I can hardly remember a single Lupoff piece that I did not like; he is definitely skilled at putting a novel or story together, and I seem to have an affinity for what he writes. His first book, ONE MILLION CENTURIES, whatever he may think of it, is a very fine ERBurroughs-style novel (obviously growing out of the voluminous reading for his excellent study of Burroughs); perhaps a bit too long, but it has a depth of background and extrapolation that is far superior to the

28 usual novel of this type, and could only be done at some length. His second novel, SACRED LOCOMOTIVE FLIES, is a nice little Brunnerian satire, notable particularly for the "Music in the Air" opening chapter; he and Brunner and Spinrad are remarkably good at bringing over the experience of rock music. INTO THE AETHER is simply a lark: an incredibly faithful pastiche of turn-of-the-century juvenile fiction, done (like Spinrad's IRON DREAM) so perfectly it becomes almost unbearable to read. And the forthcoming NEW ALABAMA BLUES is, from the pieces that have appeared so far (especially "With the Bentfin Boomer Boys..." in AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS), a fascinating set of experiments in prose style.

It seems to me that Lupoff's major failing (one that continues to be true of his two novels considered here) is that he doesn't do much a priori thinking; he takes story types originated by others and thinks them through to a point far beyond or in a direction totally different from the area the original author explored. His work shows much skill and imagination, but very little original thought.

Most of the forms Lupoff takes off from are pulp fiction (the Burroughs novel, the boys' book, the space opera). The major exception to this is the peculiarly Brunner-style disaster novel, epitomized in STAND ON ZANZIBAR: he did a fairly direct pastiche of style and content in SACRED LOCOMOTIVE FLIES; and in the just-released CRACK IN THE SKY he does a similar kind of novel in a more conventional straight-narrative form.

The major problem with THE CRACK IN THE SKY (besides the stupid title; the original title was FOOL'S HILL, which is much more appropriate to the book) is that it is too short. Lupoff has set up a society and web of subplots nearly as complicated as one of the Brunner behemoths, and tries to tackle it within the standard 80,000-word sf novel format. It simply can't be done. This problem leads Lupoff to compress things beyond the point of workability: logical links are left out and neither the background nor any of the several subplots have space to develop properly, so that the catastrophic ending seems almost accidental instead of the culmination of a carefully orchestrated series of events. This is quite unfortunate and very frustrating, because the conflicts that Lupoff had set up and the way the society worked were quite promising.

Like the very similar CENTER FORCE by T.A. Waters, this is what the average science fiction novel should be like. The state of the field today makes it a quite above average novel, but it could have been perhaps a great one.

I have to comment on the cover drawing of this Dell paperback. I don't know the artist's name, but he did the cover for CENTER FORCE and the Jefferson Starship's DRAGONFLY album cover, and several others: the machine-like sheen and starry highlights of the figures are unmistakable. The central image of this one is an ecclesiastical heraldic device known as 'the pelican in her piety'; it shows the bird piercing her breast with her beak to feed her children with her blood. In the cover, the body is an obvious stylized representation of the dome city of the book; combined with the title and the concept of a religious cult which destroys the dome in the name of love, it makes a brilliant metaphorical complex.

The major problem with THE TRIUNE MAN (Harper & Row) is a little bit different, and slightly more complicated. The concept and plot are considerably more original than anything Lupoff has attempted heretofore; it is quite an ambitious book. But he makes the mistake of using stereotyped characters: the book is about a comic-strip artist in obviously roughly contemporary time, and parts of the book are deliberate and hilarious pastiche of comic-book continuity. For some reason, the characters in the book are straight out of thirties and forties comic and pulp fiction: the



unscrupulous Mafia-type boss, the secretary with a heart of gold, the fatuous head of an asylum, etc. ad nauseum. Lupoff has a fine ear for the pulp version of realistic dialogue, and reproduces it in excruciating detail. I can't decide if this is deliberate or something he just inadvertently slipped into. In any case, in the 'serious' sections of the book it makes the writing seem much worse than it is.

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The story: Buddy Satvan is the author of a superhero strip, and one persona of a multiple personality, another of which has killed a man; therefore, he is in an asylum. The head of the syndicate he works for wants to squeeze him off the strip because his notoreity may kill a pending TV deal. The multiple personality was apparently caused by childhood experiences during World War II in Holland and Nazi concentration camps. There is also the spaceburn, an amorphous blackness which is gobbling whole galaxies and which has to be stopped....

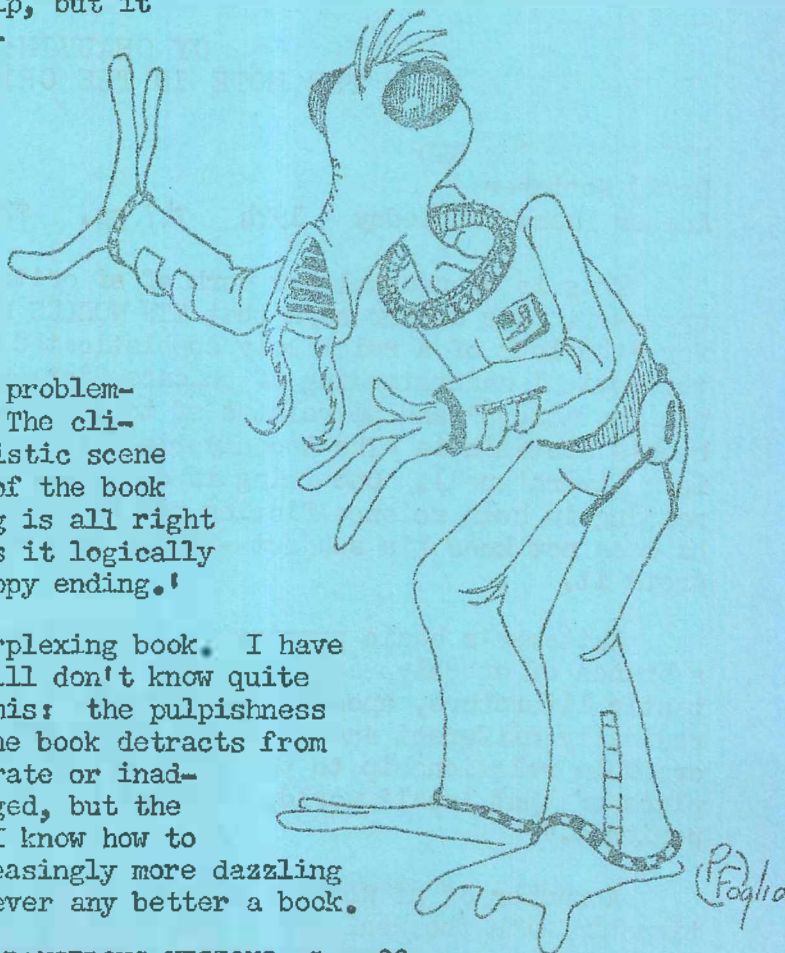
That's without the complications. From the standpoint of pure plot, Lupoff has wrought quite a book: he manages to juggle an extraordinary maze of subplots and weave them together dexterously.

What I can't figure out is whether it is a serious or farcical novel. The careful realism and genuine feeling of the war sections plus the general setup of the book make it seem very serious: an exploration of the effects of war, and one man's search for identity. (And a very sharp and believable sketch of the comic and tv industries.) But so much of the book is written in a superhero mode (sometimes when it is supposed to be more or less realistic), or, as I said, in a pulpish realistic mode, that it seems almost as multiminded as its protagonist. (Perhaps that is the point?)

It is also difficult to figure out what is supposed to be real and what imaginary. There is one long thread that is the continuity of Buddy's strip, but it ties itself into the science-fiction plot of Sravasti, the space station at the center of the universe, and the spaceburn. It seems to be imaginary still, but I'm not sure. The whole sf plot is very space-operaish, so it seems to be unreal, but its reality is central to the way the book ends.

And the ending is even more problematic than the rest of the book. The climax is a long Ellisonian surrealistic scene that resolves all the conflicts of the book with one big bang, and everything is all right again. The novel does not end as it logically should have, but in a facile 'happy ending.'

THE TRIUNE MAN is a very perplexing book. I have read it twice recently, but I still don't know quite what to do with it. I do know this: the pulpishness that permeates every aspect of the book detracts from it heavily, whether it is deliberate or inadvertent. I thought I had it pegged, but the more I think about it, the less I know how to judge it. It seems like an increasingly more dazzling trick of prestidigitation, but never any better a book.



(In his afterword in AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS, Lupoff .

30 relates how when he first encountered 'New Wave,' it seemed to him to be just "playing a few tricks." I think perhaps he still thinks so. Tricks--even tricks that work--are not enough: the tricks have to be an integral part of the book. His are more surface than they should be.)

One aspect of the Lupoff Problem is that he is too tied to the here and now, both literarily and thematically. (As one trivial example, every novel until THE TRIUNE MAN had an important black character, often the protagonist.) It is not necessarily a fault to be concerned with the problems of today and near-yesterday, but it seems to me that Lupoff's formidable formal talents are not well-suited to contemporary and future-contemporary fiction: it's too easy for him to fall into stale formulas. He is capable of writing sensitive contemporary-type fiction, but it needs the talent of a Le Guin or Silverberg to bring it off as strongly as he wants to.

It is rather presumptuous to advise authors, but if I were to make a suggestion of what sort of thing I think Lupoff should attempt, I would say: something new and original, as divorced as possible from the problems of today. (Every single one of his novels expressly addresses today, whether directly in THE TRIUNE MAN, as utopian allegory in ONE MILLION CENTURIES, historical allegory in INTO THE AETHER, or futuristic allegory in his two Brunnerian novels. This is not necessarily bad, but it's too easy to overdo the parallels and make them narrowly relevant rather than universal.) And something big: at least a hundred thousand words. He has shown a great deal of facility at the standard-format science fiction novel, and anything that comes that easily breeds laziness.

I would like to see Lupoff tackle something really complex, rather than the merely recomplicated things he has done up to now. After that, it may be easier to figure out how good he is capable of being--right now it's difficult to tell.

CY CHAUVIN:  
THE MOTE IN THE CRITIC'S EYE

NEW WORLDS FOR OLD  
David Ketterer  
Anchor Press/Doubleday 1974 347 pp. \$2.95

This is an unusual new work of sf criticism, one I'm not sure how to approach. Its author says that NEW WORLDS FOR OLD is intended to fill in for "the lack of a relatively sophisticated critical appreciation and theoretical understanding of science fiction, particularly its contemporary manifestations" and he relates sf to the "apocalyptic" in literature (the book's subtitle is "The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction, and American Literature"). One thing is certainly obvious: Ketterer has done wide reading in both science fiction and literature. No one can complain that he does not know his subject--though many will disagree on how he interprets it.

Ketterer's basic premise is that science fiction should be considered a branch of apocalyptic literature. Ketterer says, "Unlike mimetic or fantastic literature, apocalyptic literature is concerned with the creation of radically different and often visionary new worlds which, because of their credible relationship to the world of the reader...destroy and take the place of that 'real' world, at least for the duration of the reading experience."

A number of sf works strike me as having no more "credible" a relationship with the real world than most fantasy, but Ketterer's definition has the advantage that it attempts to point out what sf does, rather than



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describe what it is. This is not only easier to achieve, but is more worthwhile doing than the latter; it is a "dynamic" definition rather than a "passive" one. If we can discover sf's (inherent) function, then we can more easily improve it.

Ketterer mentions nearly every important sf writer at least in passing, though it is impossible to summarize all he covers. He devotes a full chapter to a number of important sf and non-sf works, such as Ursula K. Le Guin's *THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS*, Mark Twain's *A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT* and Kurt Vonnegut's *THE SIRENS OF TITAN*. These tend to be overlong in my opinion, and occasionally seem devoted to trivialities--e.g. he discusses blue and yellow color symbolism at one point in his chapter on *THE SIRENS OF TITAN*. Nor is his style particularly engaging: "An explanation as to why Twain excluded from his satire a normative and intelligent consciousness which might have provided a convincing source for imagistic significance, in favor of a philistine who is a most unconvincing source, must await the further development of my argument." More clarity and a dash of wit--e.g. Brian Aldiss or James Blish or even Sheryl Smith--could go a long way here. Ketterer is best in shorter lengths--his sections dealing with Dick's *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE* and Sturgeon's *VENUS PLUS X* are superb. He does not wear down his subject into boredom, and provides insight on these relatively contemporary sf novels that is lacking in other sf studies. I think most readers will appreciate his contemporary focus--one gets tired of discussions of *BRAVE NEW WORLD*, 1984, Verne and Wells.

Of course, as I've indicated, many will argue with his interpretations. They can be both outrageous and perceptive; Ketterer is not afraid to make the most biting criticisms. For instance: "That an 'intelligent' summary of the often arbitrary action of Le Guin's novel is possible without any mention of what it is that makes the Gethenians especially distinctive...argues against the book's structural integrity....Making sense of the novel, and this is its essential weakness, depends upon...seeing the way in which the mythic structure rigorously, almost mechanically, determines the various turns of plot" (all emphasis mine). I think many readers would disagree with this, and his interpretation of the novel's "mythic structure" that follows.

His discussion of Stanislaw Lem's *SOLARIS* is a bit more agreeable. "For Lem, there are no new worlds that man can experience. Wherever man goes, he will encounter only extensions of himself. As a thousand or more science fiction writers have demonstrated, our moon or the planets, Mars, Venus, Dune or Winter, are all envisaged as aspects of Earth....Whatever may be absolutely unique about these various worlds, man is unable to comprehend." The last sentence reminds me of a remark that Arthur C. Clarke made: that a sufficiently advanced technology will seem like "magic" to those in a society in a lower stage of development. Our ancestors would never be able to comprehend our present-day society, if they were transported here today; how much worse would it be if they (or we) encountered an alien civilization?

Ketterer (and Stanislaw Lem) view sf's presentation of alien worlds "as aspects of Earth" as "hypocritical"--and to a certain extent it is (and to a certain extent it is unavoidable, if one is to attempt to describe an alien world at all). I don't believe that sf writers should make the mistake of telling a story from the viewpoint of an alien, for if something is to remain "alien" it must remain unknown and unfamiliar. In a great many poor science fiction stories, the "aliens" are no more than humans (cardboard ones, at that, usually) dressed up in long green underwear. The "absolutely unique" can never be described--we have no words for it; writers can only deal in shared experiences (which justifies Lovecraft, who never described his Elder Gods in detail, but merely commented on their "macabre horror"). On the other hand, to insist too strongly on the "realistic":

32 non-description of the alien too strongly is to forget the purposes, as well as the limitations, of fiction. Fiction is intentionally anthropomorphic (or man-centered). The same Lem who complained about anthropomorphic sf also said that "Any path in sf which does not eventually lead back to Man can offer us nothing except the riches of a galactic freak show ("Lost Opportunities," S F COMMENTARY 24, p. 22). In summary, then: 1) no sf writer can describe "the absolutely unique" (or truly alien); 2) if he could, it would be valuable only as a curiosity item; 3) the problem is that some writers are pretentious enough to believe that they are, in fact, doing this.

But from Ketterer I get the impression that all sf writers have this fault, while I believe that only some do. I think it is interesting to note that much of the best sf deals with "aliens" that had once been human --the Gethenians on Winter, the telepaths in AND CHAOS DIED, and Cordwainer Smith's underpeople and Lords of the Instrumentality. In my opinion, this is a justifiable and satisfying way of dealing with the problem of the alien in sf and with the conflicting purposes of fiction (which demands that the focus be placed on man) and science (which demands that "the alien" be given realistic and logical treatment).

In other areas, I have absolute agreement with Ketterer. He points out that some "new wave" stories (such as P.A. Zoline's "The Heat Death of the Universe") use "a science fictional conception only for its metaphorical appropriateness....The tale's reality is grounded in a housewife and her kitchen." Science fiction's landscapes are not meant to be taken solely as allegory, but are meant to have a definite reality and verisimilitude.

Ketterer also sums up Vonnegut quite well: "In his search for meaning, man creates a multitude of alternate fictions, none of which can be proved to be true....Vonnegut /believes/ that, given this situation, it is man's responsibility to distinguish among these fictions not the more likely from the less likely, but the more humane and practical from the more inhuman and impractical." In CAT'S CRADLE, these fictions are called lies, or foma.

In any case, I'm not sure that the quality of a work of criticism should be judged on how close the author's interpretations match one's own; disagreement can be stimulating. (Errors of fact are another matter.) What hurts NEW WORLDS FOR OLD more is the author's often unapproachable style, his (in my opinion) distracting number of footnotes, and his occasional examinations of trivialities. In the longer chapters, he examines works with a microscope, and seems to exclaim in delight over motes of dust. (His totally irrelevant discussion of the sexual symbolism in the background of SOLARIS--with such quoted examples as "the narrow cockpit" and "the men around the shaft"--is a good example of this unfortunate tendency.) I also think that he neglects the short story too much in favor of the novel; not only have more short stories been published than novels, but more of the short stories are of a high quality in comparison to sf novels.

Still, Ketterer's aims aren't mine, and perhaps I have criticized him too much for this reason. This book should appeal to the academic, if not to the average reader. --Though I'd prefer a book on contemporary sf that was meant for both.

JEFF SMITH:  
LOST IN TRANCE OF DANCES

THE JEWELS OF APTOR/Samuel R. Delany/Ace -- It's a lot shorter than DHALGREN, which is one reason I decided to reread it. I looked through DHALGREN again, and put it aside again pending a less hectic schedule; but an



interest in Delany had surfaced, and so I reread his first novel. I had previously read it in 1968, not 1962. I had barely even heard of the man until BABEL-17 co-won the Nebula as best novel of 1966. At that point Delany seemed no different to me than A. Bertram Chandler, John Rackham, and all the other authors of Ace Doubles, very few of which I ever read. Of course, once I read Delany I never confused him with anyone else again. ~~THE JEWELS OF APTOR~~ is a sophisticated, philosophical sword-and-sorcery novel, elegantly written and a joy to read. It takes place in a post-atomic world, complete with mutants, but there's a freshness to it that transcends cliches. The book is a very good one, with good characters, a serviceable quest plot, and many, many interesting incidents, snatches of dialogue, and thoughts throughout. Definitely worth rereading.

The Pyramid Ellison, volumes 8-11: THE DEADLY STREETS; NO DOORS, NO WINDOWS; WEB OF THE CITY; and LOVE AIN'T NOTHING BUT SEX MISPELLED. Not much in the way of sf or fantasy in any of these. (The hardback of LOVE AIN'T NOTHING had a fair amount of sf in it, but those stories were dropped from the paperback because of their availability elsewhere.) THE DEADLY STREETS is surprisingly good. I had expected his fifties mainstream stories to be similar to his fifties sf, but these in this book are much better than his sf. They are primarily worthwhile as character studies of juvenile (and older) delinquents, but some of them are neatly plotted as well. "Kid Killer," an examination of desperation, is my favorite of the bunch. (I wonder if that's because I read it while the news was on, and Baltimore had had three violent episodes to report on....?) NO DOORS, NO WINDOWS more matches my preconception of what an Ellison/mainstream/fifties collection would be like. It's pretty awful. Short little pieces with obvious gimmick endings, unreal situations, and just generally not worth reading. The one new story, though, "Tired Old Man," I thought was quite good. (It may have been just in comparison, but I tend to think it is a good story.) WEB OF THE CITY is rather like a very long DEADLY STREETS story, and holds up pretty well. Still, the best long-length Ellison is "The Resurgence of Miss Ankle-Strap Wedgie," a novella about Hollywood in LOVE AIN'T NOTHING. There are many fine stories in this book: "Neither Your Jenny nor Mine," with a superb abortion sequence, and the war story "Blind Bird, Blind Bird, Go Away From Me!" are particular favorites of mine. A good book.

THE STARCROSSED/Ben Bova/Chilton -- Speaking of Ellison, he is becoming quite a fictional character. Anne McCaffrey's 1971 novel RING OF FEAR featured a highly-romanticized Ellison as Gothic hero, Rafe Cleary. (This was a popular novel among my college friends, and I know of at least one copy that falls open to the sex scenes.) Now, Bova has come up with a hilarious burlesque of the man. On one level a satire of the foul-ups involved in putting the series THE STARLOST on tv, Bova wisely used that only as a starting point, without feeling compelled to base too much of his novel on facts. The book is a farce, with its good moments and its bad moments, but the good ones are more plentiful and the novel is a lot of fun. ~~THE~~ The Ellison character is always seen through other peoples' eyes (as totally bananas, for the most part); I can only remember one brief scene in which he is alone. RING OF FEAR was told in the first-person by the woman. So it is left to fearless Isaac Asimov, in his new book MURDER AT THE ABA, to (I assume) tell the story from the Ellison character's viewpoint. (The Ellison character is the detective. Should be interesting; I'm looking forward to it.)

BLACK ALICE/Thom Demijohn/Doubleday -- Here's an odd one, a 1968 non-sf novel by Thomas M. Disch and John T. Sladek. An eleven-year-old heiress is kidnapped. Her skin is darkened and she is held in a whorehouse (held in an old funeral home) where she remains...of course..."invisible." Race riots and Klan meetings and family fortunes, escapes and recaptures, tender moments and violent ones. I don't know if they knew what they wanted to do when they started this, but it all worked out okay, somehow. Interesting.

(S(I really must abandon all pretense of being able to present the letters on the last issue in any sort of orderly fashion. Rather than aggravate my case of Editor's Stomach over the matter, I'm just going to dip in and present the more interesting letters, practically at random. I did, shamelessly, choose the following letter to go first. It is basically moderate, and it is supportive of my own role in the Symposium. As I am not printing the terribly flattering notes (and phone calls) about how much the issue was admired as a fanzine, I hereby absolve myself of all sin in leading with:)S)

DEBBIE NOTKIN 3/2/76  
1903 Virginia #3/Berkeley CA 94709

I think the Women in Science Fiction Symposium is one of the most impressive pieces of amateur publication I have ever seen--and well-deserving of the professional status which its book publication will give it. And, despite a lot of the feedback which you received from symposium participants along the way, it's my feeling that the strongest kudos go to you--for several reasons. (The next stuff is rather personal...but then so was the content of the symposium.) Everyone else involved in this production was already an ardent feminist (though of course there's a lot of variation in that spectrum) and everyone else was simply given a forum to say whatever they felt needed to/should be said. You, as provider of that forum, publisher of the results of that forum, also filled a role as 'enemy'--i.e., it's very hard to stand on a soapbox and declaim against someone who isn't there; personalized comments are almost always more persuasive (to a large audience) than generalized ones. And the only other two men in the project (though they both came in for some criticism) are somewhat more visible, quite a bit more famous/revered/notable, and less gratifying to attack. I'd be curious to know how "the mass of Catholic guilts and supposed inadequacies" felt about having that rather uncomplimentary description made public, but it didn't strike me as a particularly sexist remark. (And yes, I do consider myself a feminist, very much so.) It seems to me (and it seems to me that so much of the latter half of the symposium falls into this trap) that you can label all the ills, all the unfairnesses, all the inequities of this world as sexism, but if you do so, you are making a grave mistake. Even more important, if you (a feminist) will not allow continued sexism as an acceptable male response, and will not allow guilt or apology as an acceptable male response, and will not accept honest but incomplete efforts at change as an acceptable male response, where are you? It isn't even as clearcut as the militant blacks who discovered the same dilemma--they can cry "Back to Africa!" but there is nowhere women can go back to where men do not exist. "Pack to the amoeba?" Possibly, but not for me.

Before everyone starts jumping down my throat--yes, all men are sexist. (So are all women.) Yes, all encounters are sexist--and so are they going to be for as long as any of us live, and longer. I don't think anyone can deny that there have been major changes in the role of women in our society in the last twenty years--nor do I think anyone should even begin to justify them as sufficient. But, fortunately or not, we are not a race that is swift to change--and historically, those people who have demanded immediate change have suffered greatly--while spurring society on towards faster gradual change. The mathematical analogy to this is a simple one to visualize--if you move one extreme, it moves the center...and the majority of people tend to be most comfortable in the center. However, this doesn't make it any more comfortable or any less fraught for the people who are in the process of forming the new extreme.

The hardest thing to do in any movement for change--the thing that some people in the symposium seem to have lost sight of--is somehow to keep from oversimplifying the other side. Now, I am currently working for a bunch of lawyers for whom the phrase "male chauvinist pig" would have to be coined if it didn't already exist--and I only work for them on a temporary basis because they pay me a lot of money and I don't take any of their shit. But, even though I keep myself somewhat separate, they often annoy me a great deal. What I have to learn--and often I catch myself having forgotten--is that it isn't fair to go

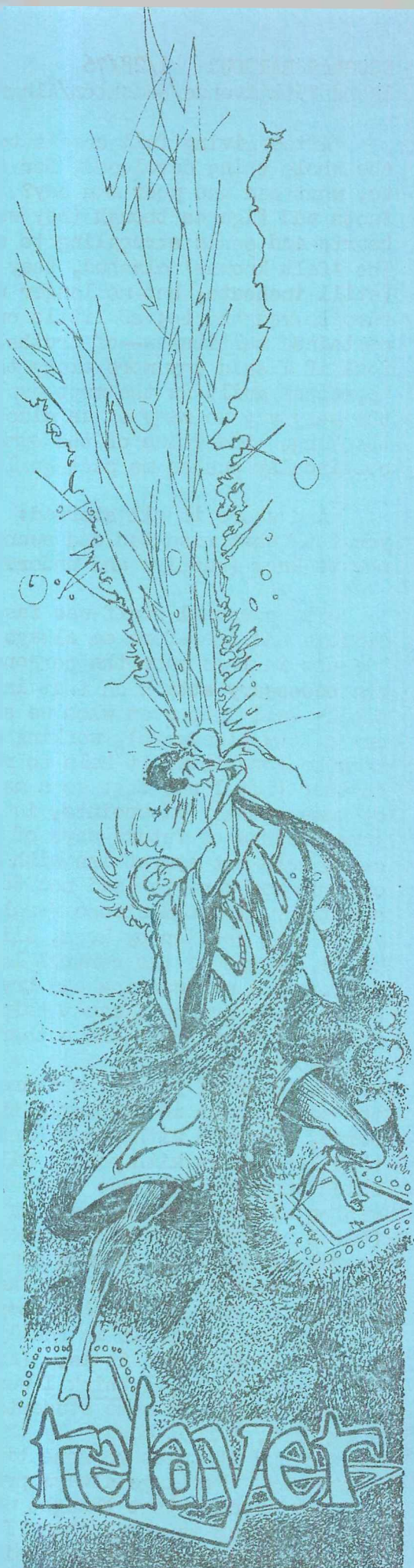


home and yell at the man I live with because some other men have treated me like an object. And if the man I live with does something blatantly sexist or unreasonable, and I tell him, he will do his best to hear what I am saying, to change his behavior, to excise more than twenty years of universal conditioning, and to respond to my needs--just as I try to respond to his. If I expected all my men friends to be entirely non-sexist tomorrow, I wouldn't have any--and they happen to be just about half the valuable people I know. (And if any revolutionary feminist with a gun in her hand aims at anyone important to me, there won't be any question about sisterhood in my mind, you can be sure!)

This really has turned into a polemic instead of a letter of comment, and I don't know if it's what you want or not. As far as specific comments go, it seems that one can either write four lines or twenty pages, but not much in between. I do want to specifically thank Joanna Russ for "This Is Your Life," which is one of the most poignant and descriptive pieces I have ever read--I have already passed it on to several people and intend to continue to do so. Chip Delany's descriptions of Marilyn Hacker's job experiences are almost too familiar to be painful any more--until it happens again, and again, and again to yourself or people you care about.

Everything in the symposium was fascinating--much was annoying and just as much was astoundingly right (to me, at least). It does seem to me that this kind of forum is really a useful one--perhaps this will be the start of some kind of a trend: symposia on different very controversial topics of general interest--feminist ones both with male participants and without, etc. It didn't seem to me that any of the participants had come close to exhausting what things of value they had to contribute, nor to tiring of the subject (which is so unfortunately close to all women, and to all men who choose to notice it).

Anyway, kudos, polemics and some desultory comments are all my typewriter seems to offer at the moment--hope at least some of it was what you wanted in the way of response.





After giving full credit to everyone who participated, for the energy the whole thing developed, for the incredible mind-buzz it all exploded into, what can one poor man say? I learned so much from it, not just the facts and figures though they were important, but the tours of minds, hearts and souls struggling to articulate and affirm these 'felt knowns.' The 'felt knowns' clashed, they ran into each other, they began to create a (still inchoate, but no longer utterly chaotic) pattern. There is so much here to respond to; so little one could really argue with. These stories contained multitudes--of truths. I felt that, and I'd be a silly damned fool if I said any more along that line except that while agreeing that "personal guilt is the most useless emotion there is" I suspect it's also the easy way so many of us discover to evade the real responsibility of thinking. The value of the symposium--to me as a biased reader--is that it continually pushed me past guilt to thought.

And where it all started: "women in sf": o wow, a mistake, except you took what resulted and swung with them, kept the interchange going, and now we know (surely) and understand (perhaps) a lot more than we did before.

The personal stuff was fascinating, not only because I admire these writers and therefore am always interested in knowing more about them, but because in this case the personal revelation makes possible the argument, the necessary attack on that institutionalized behavior we (yes, we) can so easily fall into even when we say (think, believe) we are helping (there's one of the giveaways), working with women for their equal rights, etc., and then because it won't help to replace one form of political repression with another (but I say that as a man: could I be wrong?), the coming together of women, their viewpoints, in symposia like this may just make possible some visions of future ways of life we can all accept as 'good.' Still, I can't help but sympathize with Joanna Russ's statement, "if the current social unease were to lead not to a more egalitarian society but to female supremacy, I would choose female supremacy because I am a female" (the whole long section by Russ, 111-118, as well as her "This Is Your Life," 66-73, is one of the central later statements of the symposium, at least for me as a man wanting and trying to understand); yet, if such a change seems to be coming I can't help but feel the battles will be awful. For the 'men' with power and authority, now and into the foreseeable future, are technological-capitalist-machos: that is their vision of right in the world. Even if younger men are (apparently) more willing to allow women the equal place in the world they (the younger men) say they (women) deserve, the ones with power (and authority--even if it's only the authority they have taken with power) will fight to the death to prevent changes which they can only see as loss-of-power/authority (thus Tiptree's bleak vision of those old men saving themselves for a dead world without women (but I remember the older general in DR. STRANGELOVE with his young, dumb secretary/mistress) is not simply frightening in its utter blindness to all human values but possible: the horrible ages-long death of "The City of the End of Things"?). And they (we?) love power/authority, even when we begin to wonder if it is really as 'good,' as 'proper,' as 'enjoyable' as we have been taught it is. (As a teacher I exercise authority: I warn my students of that, I think I would prefer an utterly egalitarian learning situation; yet if some students actually complain about my teaching methods I am hurt, I feel obscurely threatened (my sense of my authority is threatened?) and it takes me some time to think through their complaints dispassionately. Feelings always precede thought, it seems, always inform it, and can obscure that thought we (supposedly) pay homage to in our 'rational' lives. Which is why I think I can understand Joanna Russ's talk of the necessity for women to face their anger: if you don't know your feelings, won't even admit you have them, where are you? With your own selves, even?



But she made that point clearly enough.)

37

Interestingly, I was reading the ROLLING STONE issue on men just before I plunged into two days of KHATRU. Even where they were trying to explore the problems men face as they try to come to grips with the changes feminism has wrought the articles often betrayed an unconscious sexism. Yet the recognition that, today, many men--forced, against their will, to take a new look at sexual politics and their role therein--are no longer sure how to be people because they can't, guiltlessly at any rate, accept the old roles, is important. (And one story, on how Dr. George A. Rekers of the UCLA "Child Gender" Program--which works almost exclusively on male children--is using behaviorist techniques to make sure that young boys develop the 'proper' masculine attitudes to life, is really terrifying in its implications, the central one of which is that, however 'liberal' the ideology expressed by the experimenters, they will strive to make the child adapt to the sick society/culture, never attempt to discover ways to change the society.) Of course, what we need to learn about women is more important than rehashing already-known aspects of men. But perhaps women know us better than we do; for if, as masters, we didn't have to pay attention to slaves, also we really didn't have to pay all that much attention to ourselves. But surely our artists, at least, did that? Yes, and Tolstoy, one of the greatest, flunked--for women at least. It's funny: I loved WAR AND PEACE, and I loved Natasha, but I had forgotten all about the Epilogue: she doesn't live there, she lives elsewhere where she is alive. Perhaps silly politics (sexual politics in this case) tend to lead to poor art. Few critics would attempt to show Tolstoy's greatness on the basis of the Epilogue to WAR AND PEACE.

Geez. I could go on, and on, and repeat much of what's been said more than likely. I intend to reread and think about this thing a lot. I'd like to try and collate some things Delany and White say with Russ's feeling that "I do not think it is within twenty years of even envisioning alternatives to sexism and science fiction has failed signally in doing anything of the sort. We have no models." Russ is very probably correct--and I shudder to anticipate some of the answers to that statement you may get from certain male authors--yet she has in the past suggested that sf could imagine possible new models and suggested that Delany, for example, had made some efforts in this direction. Well, to defend Delany as a non-sexist sf author would be silly at this point (especially given his own comments), but White implies that she was attracted to sf partly because there were some women figures there who weren't complete wimps, and what was interesting about that was that they were imagined in an economic and political context, even if a severely limited one. Now--granting that like all generalizations this will only be half-true--sf, with all its failures of art, nerve and imagination, has, at its best, dealt with men and women in just such social (cultural, economic, political, etc.) contexts. Because, if you look at it, contemporary straight fiction tends to ignore its male characters' social contexts almost as much as its female characters' ones. Now, admittedly, the authors of straight fiction can, perhaps, assume that their readers will provide much of the context themselves, but that's still a form of cheating in so-called 'realistic' fiction. (And well, yes, Harold Robbins does tell us where his people work and all, but I am referring to supposedly 'good' fiction, and besides, Robbins, unlike Hailey, romanticizes the hell out of his contexts; Hailey, on the other hand, is accurate, perhaps, but deadly dull.) Can I hazard a guess that one reason we (all of us?) became interested in sf is because in it we could detect the slightest attempt--however slovenly and inept--to write of people (mostly men, yes) whose lives were larger than those we read in other fictions simply because something of those contexts beyond family and home, lover, and place to be creative (or the hunting trip: there's a big one) was at least implied, often even shown? Sf tends to social generalizations and thus it can possibly deal with economic, political and technological (un)-

38 realities which are beyond the ken of the straight (arty) writer. I don't know this, but I wonder about it, for if it is true it suggests one of the reasons women who want to try to envision really new ways of life are drawn to sf. The putative social/cultural as well as imaginative scope of sf allows for such creation.

I suspect there are a lot of holes in the above, but I'll throw it out for argument's sake anyway. Again, I think all those involved have created an incredibly important issue of KHATRU, one I think will be recognized as well as an important book. Thanks, from one reader who knows he needs his consciousness raised regularly (because that's another thing the structure of our culture and society make possible: the moment of awareness followed by an easy and unconscious falling back into the old ways of thought and behavior).

I was going to say the whole issue was the symposium, but the letter-col is good, and very interesting throughout, but especially for the Stableford/Clark exchange. Stableford comes off in this letter much better, I think, than he does in those articles I've read. Although I'm with Jeff Clark basically, I agree with him that Stableford's proposed study will serve some very important purposes. Not those I wish to serve, but I'll be interested to read and see if he can come up with any cogent reasons for the readers' reading of poor sf. My problem, and I have written of it in ALGOL, is that I, too, go along with Delany about style/form truly informing content--creating it, actually. Which means that merely 'functional' style tells us a lot about what it is talking about in its very stance as a style. Moreover, to muddy the discursive waters still further, all styles, if we may call them that, are, obviously, functional, if we take Delany's statement, "Put in opposition to 'style' there is no such thing as 'content'" seriously. A 'difficult' style is simply functioning in a much more complex manner, because the 'content' (and as Susan Sontag has pointed out, we continue to strew red herrings all about us so long as we continue to use those terms in even implied opposition) is, obviously, much more complex. (I would suspect that the greater complexity lies in the fact that the 'difficult' style is attempting to speak on several levels simultaneously, because the author of such a work is aware that our experience is multi-plex, inchoate, and never fully comprehended by us.) What Stableford is attempting to do in his study is likely to be very valuable for the 'sociology of literature'; it will not be of any real relevance to literature itself. It will, I am sure, be interesting, and I, too, look forward to it. Meanwhile, however, I shall stand beside Jeff Clark and look at literature for the experiences it can offer me, attempting, upon occasion, to articulate something of my responses, because that's an enjoyable thing to do.

The linguistics debate, so to speak, was enlightening. I think Jeff made his point quite clearly. As for films, my suspicion is that Sheryl Smith and I do not share much in our appreciation of film, and furthermore, I think that I do share an aesthetic perspective on what film, as art, is with Barry Gillam and Michael Carlson; so I tend to both understand and lean towards agreement with those gentlemen. Chacun a son gout, right?

ROBERT E. BLENHEIN 12/24/75  
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It appalls me that these fine sf writers, most of whom I revere as artists, seem to fail intellectually in terms of logic when deserting their roles of poets, artists and storytellers for the masquerading as lecturers. I cannot believe the void of good common sense permeating most of the 120 pages in this symposium on Women in Science Fiction, a symposium all too regrettably one-sided. I'd better become a little more specific or it may



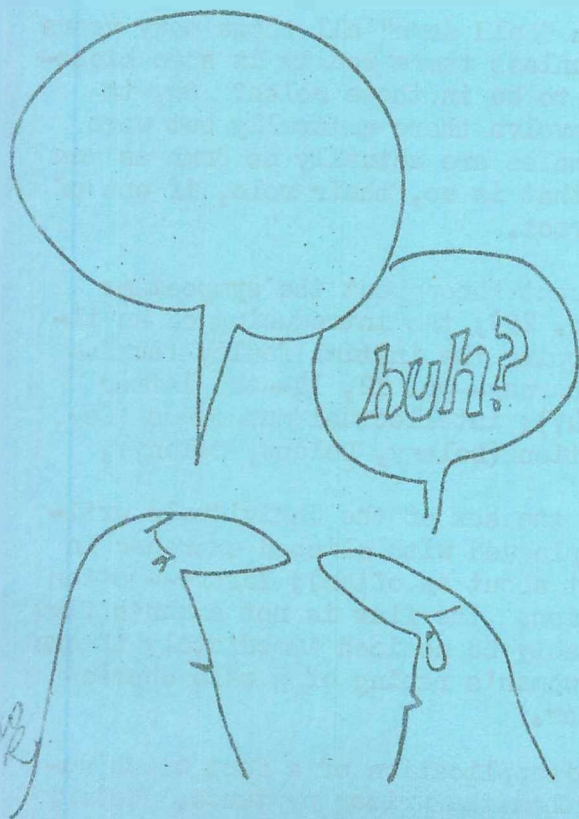
one-sided. I'd better become a little more specific or it may seem I am writing this to malign the writers here, which I do not intend to do. Not their writing, anyway. 39

Firstly you should know that I am far from the guys who customarily write anti-Women's Lib verbiage. I am not a loudmouthed fanatic, and I do not discriminate against women in an individual sense. But I do not deny certain things must be admitted to, even if it may appear to cast women in a something-less-than-desired light. A real "Male Chauvinist Pig" would've probably burned the issue, and I am not one; I am a fairly level-headed timid human being who approaches this task of criticizing your symposium and the authors participating with great reluctance. Why am I doing it then? Well, someone must--for the sake of Common Sense--provide balance for what must be one of the most slanted symposiums of modern times. In so doing, I may seem like a chauvinist perhaps to some, but in all honesty if the symposium were against women I would be just as quick in dashing for my pen in their defense.

Now, how did this 120-page article strike me? As a wagon-full of pseudo-intellectual claptrap; writers allowing their imaginations and rhetoric mastery to run away with themselves in their own ego-boosting games. This kind of mental exercising is usually indulged in by two half-stoned friends in a dusk-to-dawn argument for its own sake. I find it hard to believe these great writers could actually believe all they wrote here and would like to believe that they got carried away with the squeaking of their own pens and with their verbal pyrotechnics.

I don't mean to generalize; there were moments: Charnas (pp. 7-9) when she reveals her love for the potentiality of the field and recognizing all-too-often voids in the field's fulfillment of that potentiality; Yarbro's information on the Stegosaur; Le Guin's superb points about women in straight classics (WUTHERING HEIGHTS, PRIDE AND PREJUDICE, etc.), these in spite of the shoddily inadequate attempts made to refute them later; Tiptree on Yin-and-Yang thinking (but then he gets off the track on some "Mother" theory which is all-too-obviously strained); and--the most intelligent writing in the entire symposium--Kidd on pages 43-46 (which includes a rightful chastisement of Tiptree's "Mother" theory). But these moments were islands of common sense in the oceans of mumbo-jumbo.

For starters, I advise all of you to read Robert Ardrey's three great books, AFRICAN GENESIS, TERRITORIAL IMPERATIVE, and THE SOCIAL CONTRACT. Here is a non-fanatical, much-respected anthropologist inadvertently proving to most thinking readers how instinctive indeed are the definite roles of the male and female in their societies; and it is unbelievably consistent in almost every single form of animal life since the beginning of time. Now, I have not the time or the opportunity to go into this in detail in this letter, but I invite anyone who tends to throw such conclusions aside with a snicker to read these three books. Keep in mind that



WHO  
NEEDS  
THIS?



these books exist to examine Man's background, instincts, etc., not for any political or cause-oriented reason as disproving Women's Liberation. To me, this makes it a more valid study and what these books say in this regard is inarguable to my way of thinking.

Now, one thing which could be a gigantic blaze of optimism to those who are indeed against Women's Liberation in every respect: Ardrey says that a human baby at birth today has all of the instincts complete and intact that a baby had at the very beginning of Man. It is an optimistic thought to those totally against Women's Lib because from this one can just about see how today's Women's Liberation is just a temporary thing and will--in point of fact--ultimately accomplish little (if anything) and we will all revert back when the trend peters out to the real instinctive norm. Perhaps the movement exists for mere therapeutic reasons and its existence doesn't prove we are in the process of change, but is a mere function of the same thing. One must acknowledge Up if he acknowledges Down, Light if Darkness,

Life if Death; this whole big fanatical melee might be merely acknowledging the opposite as being the correct human way after all.

At any rate pur instincts probably know precisely what the norm is if we don't seem to. And Ardrey shows us ultimately how much our basic instincts--which never can be erased or altered basically--have dictated the way men and women have been going all those many, many centuries.

Does one really think women have been "held down" all those many years throughout all those different societies unless there really is some biological and anthropological reason for them to be in those roles? Oh, to come to the conclusion that women didn't evolve there naturally but were held down by their men, is to say that females are actually as dumb as men are accused of considering them--and, if that is so, their role, if one of slavery, might have been monumentally correct.

Specifically, the following were present throughout the symposium: semantic arguing (Wilhelm--p. 9, Delany--p. 29); the introducing of an illogical premise and then building on it hoping the initial faulty foundation is forgotten (Wilhelm--pp. 10, 11, Charnas--pp. 12, 14--the latter page a particular lulu--and Russ--pp. 46-47); intellectual muddiness (Delany's "Jung" stuff); men's over-compensation (Delany, Delany, Delany).

There were faulty perceptions due to the sex of the individuals writing: Wilhelm--p. 10 (men also have been plagued with cliched extremes in literature and have been conventional just about as often); Yarbrow--bottom of p. 15 (re her "Rape Is No Fun" discussion: the flaw is not a man's flaw but a non-restrictive one which will probably be noticed immediately if one imagines how a woman would write about a woman's raping of a male character). In these cases sexism isn't the flaw.

There were incorrect facts, or the misapplication of a fact which actually shows the opposite to be the case than the writer pretends. Delany



is the culprit here, and I must clarify this more specifically.

47

Delany mentions species of rhesus monkeys wherein he insinuates the female is dominant (p. 49).

Ardrey: "The status of the female offers an excellent contrast of freedom and oppressiveness in primate groups. We have seen (that)...a female may even be the leader. But those were the days before melancholy fortune burdened the primate with children who take forever to grow up; the evolutionary advance may have been of intellectual advantage to primate potentiality as a whole, but it reduced the primate mother to THE STATUS OF A SECOND-RATE CITIZEN. IN EVERY SPECIES OF MONKEY AND APE SHE IS SUBORDINATE TO ALL MATURE MALES." (Emphasis mine.) Even in cases when it appears the overlords are upstaged by the female, he says (in speaking about the baboon): "...A female baboon...may take it into her head to lead the family towards food, towards water....SUCH LEADERSHIP IS THE PREROGATIVE OF THE OVERLORD. HE MAY ACQUIESCE. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE MAY TAKE MORTAL OFFENSE AT SUCH AN EXHIBITION OF ARROGANCE ON THE PART OF HIS FEMALE INFERIOR, AND DESCEND ON HER PUNISHMENT-BENT." (Emphasis again mine.)

Delany mentions the entrusting to the male lion care of the young as the lioness hunts.

Ardrey: "...the male lion, despite OVERWHELMING DOMINANCE, abdicates certain sexual prerogatives to the females of his harem...(for) the three natural battlements of the forces of animal order are as essentially male in their dominion as the fourth, THE CARE OF THE YOUNG, IS ESSENTIALLY FEMALE." (Emphasis still mine.)

Delany rehashes the old idea of "...men in a position of totally inequitable political and social power." Hardly the truth. There's an old saying about the man in a household being like the President, but the woman is the Congress. And I'm sure you've heard the one: "I'm the boss--and I have my wife's permission to say so." Ah, women DO have power, but it has a more subtle appearance. Anyone who doesn't recognize this dual-leadership (albeit containing a figurehead) is over-simplifying monumentally and is not really perceiving the intricate meshing of the gears and is not being realistic.

Off Delany, on Charnas (p. 15): yes, men do have "as much to gain from this opening out as (women) do"; that is because men, too, have been victimized by the hand of Mother Nature as much as women. Women have NOT been victimized by men, they have not been FORCED into a role. They EVOLVED into their role (with all of its inherent bad points), as we men have evolved into our role (with all of its inherent bad points as well). Can't the people in this symposium conceive the simple fact that men, too, have gotten the shaft from Mother Nature? Where there is an action, there must be an equal and opposite reaction. More so-called "rulership" entails the same amount of extra responsibility. The business world, for example (if we accept it as a man's world), is not such a Cat-bird seat as all that! Can any woman really understand the sheer agony a man goes through when he loses a job, agony due to the role given him? This squawking is a case of "the other (wo)man's grass" looking greener.

And then there is the nonsensical manure that, yes, women can understand men more than men can understand women which is total crap when one disallows (as one should) certain inherent differences in points of view quite naturally obtained from roles being dissimilar. If women can indeed portray in fiction an aspect of men a man can't of women (baloney when one takes specific individual examples--never mind the damned percentage!), then a man can most certainly portray something else that a woman can't. It equalizes itself out necessarily.

Now about the lack of women in the arts (a not surprising sore point with Women's Libbers): what sour grapes indeed to cry out insinuating some ludicrous rationalization that men together totally suppressed a female Bach!!! An absurdity. Could it actually be that the inherent and undeniable human instincts our race was "born with" makes men really more adept in the creation of art? Horrors to Kate Millet! And today's deliberate attempt to mouth-feed the women's movement for pseudo-intellectual reasons perhaps is part of the trend and will peter out, too, when the pendulum swings back. (Film directors like Ida Lupino and Mai Zetterling do not prove anything at all; there are individual women with men's qualities just as there are feminine men; thank God that specific individuals are not bound by the majority's natural instincts! I contend the possibility that those two women film directors could be exceptions that prove the rule, as are other women artists.)

As far as science fiction, I'm not saying a woman isn't capable of writing a great piece of sf or becoming a great sf writer; the accomplishments of the women in the symposium attest to what INDIVIDUALS can do, but blaming men for keeping mostly (I have to add "mostly": remember Leigh Brackett?) out of the genre is laughable unless one is speaking of an individual man like John W. Campbell. I do, though, readily admit that the Golden Days of sf (sic) generally were a man's domain and women did have a hard time getting published--if, indeed, many tried. Well, assuming they tried and did have trouble getting in (they might have sat and mumbled about sf being a man's domain and didn't bother to try), men cannot be blamed, but the blame must go, rather, on the way things evolved considering our natural instincts.

By the way...

I know a man and his name was Sam,  
And he tried to enter his recipe for Lamb  
In a women's cooking contest presided by a Fran,  
But they all shouted out, "You can't! You're a MAN!"

(I knew ol' Sam...poor fellow had no organization behind him so he wound up staying at home and feeding his specialty to his two cocker spaniels and his goldfish.)

Anyway, no matter, there are quite honestly no villains here at all, in spite of Delany's absolutely insane babbling on pp. 22-37, wherein he demonstrates how much of a repressed chauvinist he really is, one of those who come off as sympathizing a little too strongly for appearance's sake. Oh, I'm certain he's quite sincere. Maniacs frequently are, a talent for brilliant writing notwithstanding. (I do love his fiction, I must add; tell Chip I don't hate him.)

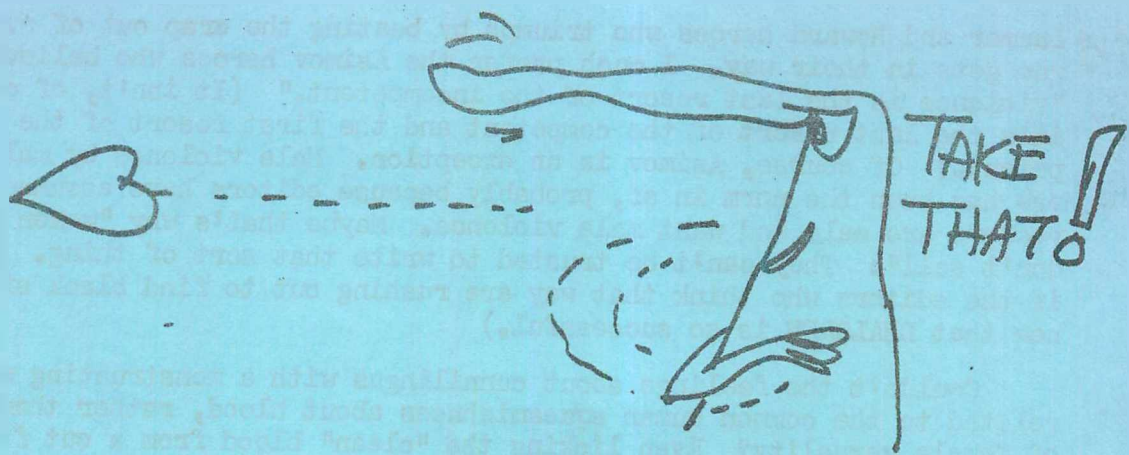
One last comment: all of you know the Libbers' screaming about women being badly treated on television, both in shows and in commercials. I just got through watching (and enjoying) a comedy on television which portrayed the husband as an idiot; and yesterday evening I must have run into about two dozen commercials with the smart housewife and the dumb husband, the former invariably right and the latter wrong. Why aren't men parading around complaining, picketing and forcing these commercials off the air?

I believe the answer lies in the definition of paranoia, and it doesn't seem that the men are inflicted with it, but the women are.

I wonder why.

(S(Sometimes I have to wonder how well you read the symposium; you seem to draw some of your arguments out of thin air. (For instance, the symposium's argument was not that men prevented women from publishing their work, but that they conditioned them into not trying to publish. And your





conspicuous addition of "mostly" to no women writers in the "Golden Age" was a red herring--Virginia Kidd pointed out that there were proportionately almost as many women writers then as now.) Other times you don't seem to think things through as well as you should, or to see things as clearly as would be best. (Regardless of who has the "smart" role and who the "dumb" on tv--and that seems to be the way they find easiest to present material--neither is presented in a very desirable light.) As for your basic point... "instinct" is a very debatable concept. (For that matter, so is Ardrey.) By which I don't mean to say you're wrong--only that there is reasonable doubt. There is also the question of whether instincts are sacrosanct, or whether they are obstacles to be overcome. These are not easy questions--they have been debated for years, and will continue to be so.

(S(There's a lot more to be said, but not by me at this point.)S)

ARTHUR D. HLAVATY 12/18/75  
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The symposium was fascinating, and it wasn't as badly printed as you said. There were relatively few words that were hard to make out. (But I cannot resist commenting on the irony of an apology for the magazine's illegibility that's harder to read than the magazine itself.)

I have one nit to pick with Tiptree. I agree that it's idiotic to think that "men and women exist at opposite ends of an infinite number of bipolar dimensions" (or any, for that matter), but that's not what the Yin/Yang means to me. To me, the concept of Yin/Yang means that the two sides of any opposition are mutually dependent. There would be no male without female, any more than there would be light without darkness. We are all in some sense male/female, as we are all good/bad, tall/short, etc. (And contrary to Samuel R. Delany, we are not all sexist; we are all sexist/anti-sexist. Most of us--including me--are more sexist than we should be, but all we can do is try to become less so. There is no such thing as "being an antisexist.") Suzy McKee Charnas may be right that believers in the Yin/Yang have often interpreted it as Tiptree does, but that doesn't invalidate the symbol, any more than the Inquisition invalidates the Sermon on the Mount. (By the way, I loved Tip's comments on flashers. We all know that a club is a phallic symbol, but to some a phallus is a club symbol.)

Charnas touches on an interesting point about the Heroic Quest: the idea that a Real Man deals with his enemies by strength, whereas women (and sometimes Evil Orientals who of course are not Real Men) use guile. Having realized in kindergarten that I would probably never be particularly good at the so-called "manly" way, I've never been able to identify with the

44 Laumer and Howard heroes who triumph by beating the crap out of everyone who gets in their way. I much prefer the Asimov heroes who believe that "violence is the last resort of the incompetent." (It isn't, of course; it's the last resort of the competent and the first resort of the incompetent.) Of course, Asimov is an exception. Male violence by male writers has been the norm in sf, probably because editors have assumed that sf readers are male and want male violence. Maybe that's why "women writers don't sell": They can't be trusted to write that sort of thing. (I wonder if the editors who think that way are rushing out to find black sf writers, now that DHALGREN is so successful.)

Couldn't the feelings about cunnilingus with a menstruating woman be related to the common human squeamishness about blood, rather than any fear of female sexuality? Even licking the "clean" blood from a cut finger will make most people feel a little queasy.

I think the part of the symposium that got through to me the most was Charnas's comments on woman = nature = death. I've had similar thoughts, but I would differ on male motivation. I have some of this kind of ugliness floating around in my own head, but I suspect that it's less envy of the woman's childbearing capacity than a reaction to the equation: sexual reproduction = death.



That's true in a sense. Amoeba do not die. You can see it in the African creation myths where people are offered the choice between immortality and children, and choose children. You can see it in Graves' KING JESUS, where Christ propounds the doctrine that if we all stop fucking, we will live forever.

If this is true, then it's tempting for men to see themselves as simply human, and to see woman as bringing death into the world by her very difference. It's a nasty and stupid thought, and I try not to think that way, but I'm not sure I always succeed.

I think that Don D'Amassa misunderstands me. I didn't say I'm against "message sf." What I am against is message criticism ("which side are you on" as the main factor in judging a book) and bad, heavy-handed message writing (like the three books he mentions). I suppose every story has a message in it, if you look hard enough. (S(Yes, an author can't help but write about what he believes. Even when he is writing consciously about something he disbelieves in, he couldn't disbelieve in that if he didn't believe in something different. On the other end, what a reader gets out of a story may not be what the author intended; it may even be something the writer never gave a thought to in his life. But that doesn't make it any less valid. A writer may hope that a reader may achieve something in the reading similar to what the writer achieved in the writing--but it is the act of achieving that is important, more so than the need for a specific achievement itself.))S)

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Sexism, if you research it back far enough, is a direct reversal of the ancient Welsh tradition. The Welsh, you may recall, were a matriarchy; the Queens/High Priestesses of Welsh tribes were exalted figures who kept several studs handy. From this evolved Chivalry and its code of Courtly .



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Love. Despite an overwhelming amount of nonsense spread by novels and Robin Hood-style movies, the original rules of Chivalry had the woman in the exalted position--for her, there was nothing a man would not try to do. Here, things went wrong--several dozen factors--the rise of Christianity, literacy, Kings, war, vanished traditions, et cetera--Chivalry went from exaltation to patronization to submission. A rise in western culture of the belief that women were much more easily tempted by the Devil caused the narrow views of the Christian Church to place women under a form of mental hammerlock. (If one has the time to wade through it, THE MALLEUS MALEFICARUM by Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger was a pivotal work helping these opinions to form. It was the investigation of witchcraft ordered by Pope Innocent III. The finds were that women were indeed suspected of falling under the "spelles of ye devil.")

I am quite curious as to the outcome; it certainly will not be within my own lifetime that the evils of sexist thinking will be cleared up--for we have constant reminders all around us. Movies from the thirties, forties, fifties and sixties ("Tell me about girls, Dad." "Women have minds of their own, son, and there's no understanding of them.") have some sexist bias trapped in them.

Novels: And what to do with Ernest Hemingway?--considered our nation's greatest writer? Toss him out due to his views? Good lord! The world is going to have to remold itself carefully; make new classic movies and write new classic books.

Poetry--of man's undying love for woman? Move it to a person's undying love for a person?

The stigmata will remain for a long time; the situation is moving a lot faster than it did fifty years ago; I do feel that this time the women are not going to forget and allow it to slip away and be forgotten, as the women's movement during the 'teens of this century was: they got the right to vote, and the movement petered out. (There's a pun there; yes, I am awarding myself another medal for subconscious humor. I just noticed it, myself.)

Incidentally, I saw a grotesque example of patronizing the movement the other day at the post office. A letter came into the librarian of the Wilmington Public Library. It was addressed to "Ms. Librarian." Why "Ms."? Why the assumption that the head of the bookborrowing place is a woman? (He isn't.) Why the coy "Ms."?

Someone, elsewhere, cited WATERSHIP DOWN as being a sexist book 'cause Fiver, Hazel and their group were not interested in the girl bunnies as people, but only as objects. This would be a matter of concern if you happened to be a rabbit. Either the person involved was seriously concerned that WATERSHIP DOWN was sexist, or he was making a joke. With the first, he comes very close to idiocy. I tend to doubt sexist motives are present in a book about bunny rabbits. With the second, he injects a little bit of humor into the situation (not at all bad for any movement). (S(It's quite possible for a book about bunny rabbits to be sexist, should it advocate the retaining of a sexist status quo, for instance. As for the absence of central female characters in WATERSHIP DOWN, I would say the only way to determine whether it is sexist or not would be to read R.M. Lockley's THE PRIVATE LIFE OF THE RABBIT, on which Richard Adams based the culture of his rabbits. If the male/female relationships of Adams' rabbits are the same as those of Lockley's, then the book is not sexist, regardless of how it might appear. (Unless someone were to write a book about an animal simply because its activities would be considered sexist in humans.) Okay?)S)

I bring up the "patronizing" bit only because I get to see it several

46 times a week around me. Often it comes to a woman opening a door for a man. I think that's ludicrous; not that is a reversal of the old standard, but it could very well be a bit of patronizing--he might have her convinced that opening a door for him is his bit for woman's lib. I saw a man ask a woman on a bus once to give up her seat, and upon her refusal he growled: "I thought you was a libber." (I have given my seat on buses to women, but only if they appear to be in their sixties and tired.)

ANGUS TAYLOR 1/17/76  
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In order to type this letter I've had to pull out of my typewriter the sheet of paper already in it, on which I was about to make notes on an article I'd just read. What was written at the top of that sheet was

Robert M. Young, "The Human Limits of Nature" in Jonathan Benthall (ed.),  
THE LIMITS OF HUMAN NATURE (London, Allen Lane, 1973).

Some of your readers or contributors might want to have a look at Young's article, or for that matter various other things Young has written. They are germane to the discussion in KHATRU.

I could say a lot of things about a lot of points raised in the fanzine, but I know you will be inundated with comments. So I will confine myself to commenting on a debate carried on implicitly by several of the contributors--but a debate which was not made explicit, and which I feel should be made explicit.

This debate has to do with the extent to which human potential is predetermined by our biological natures--not simply as male or female, but as creatures of nature, existing with a particular biological form in a given physical universe.

It seems to me that two basic positions were taken in this debate by the contributors to the issue: (1) the Marxist or neo-Marxist position, and (2) what I might call, for want of a better label at the moment, the "ecological" or "Taoist" position. Let me go back to Darwin for a moment.

Darwin's theory of evolution by means of natural selection had almost immediate repercussions in the field of social theory. It was welcomed both by factions on the left and on the right as providing fuel for their respective conceptions of society. Marx and Engels saw in it a parallel to the historical materialism they had developed. Yet Darwin's biological theory remained an analogy for them and the socialists, for while they were strongly attracted to its evolutionary thesis, they could not accept that the full implications of natural selection and the struggle for the means of existence applied equally in the social realm. Egalitarian principles meant the left could not accept the concept of a dog-eat-dog social sphere in which the strong were destined by nature to subjugate the weak.

And while moral values might make socialists somewhat hesitant about adopting a Darwinian approach, there is on the theoretical plane a basic conflict with the Marxist conception of the human-to-nature relationship. Social Darwinism is precisely the assertion that historical developments can be understood in the same terms used to describe the development of species in the biological world. Yet a fundamental tenet of Marx's interpretation of history is that the human essence cannot be reduced to human biology. Human nature (as distinct from nature, the natural world) is synonymous with man's "species being"--that is, with the situation of humans within society. (I'm afraid I have to use "man" for our species: there's no other word in English that's an exact equivalent. The ideal solution,



of course, would be to invent a new word for males--so that, as a female man is a woman, a male man would be a \*\*man.) That is, for Marxists, the specificity of human being consists in transcending the natural world. And it follows from this that, in the Marxist view, human nature is not fixed or predetermined but is being continually created--continually invented--in the dialectical movement of society and nature. For Marxists, then, nature mediates man with man, but history is not nature.

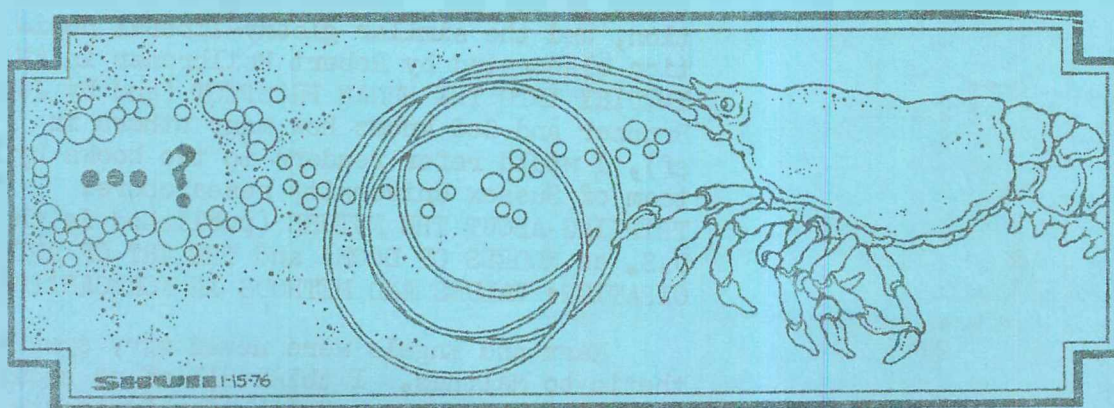
However, for those seeking justification for the maintenance of the contemporary social order, the direct transference of a crude Darwinian approach to social theory was the order of the day. Herbert Spencer is a well-known example here. In Germany an especially virulent form of Social Darwinism took hold--one which culminated in the Nazi view of the human-to-nature relationship.

Central to Nazi Weltanschauung was the tenet that human society must strictly obey the laws of the natural world, and that to abuse the non-human world or attempt to cut oneself off from it was the highest folly. But the Nazis, surprisingly enough, did not hold to an atomistic, mechanical, or deterministic view of nature. They were not trying to rob the human world of consciousness and vitality and reduce it to "mere" nature. On the contrary: they demanded that human vitality and will be given pride of place in the scheme of things. Only by returning to nature could the atomistic and mechanical aspect of human society be done away with, for it was nature that was the source and repository of all life and consciousness.

Thus while Nazi Social Darwinism "reduced" the human world to the natural world, this was seen as a movement from mechanism and towards divinity. Today, when in western societies we are once again urged to turn from the anomie of mechanical civilization and immerse ourselves in life-giving nature, I think it is important to understand just what our options are. A glorification of the fascist view of back-to-nature can be found in the sword-and-sorcery sub-genre of sf, not only in the stories themselves but in the related artwork of some of sf's best-known illustrators.

None of the symposium's contributors advocates this fascist perspective, of course. There is a back-to-nature strain, however, that runs from the Taoists through Kropotkin to Le Guin. This assumes, like the fascists, that man cannot "transcend" nature, but interprets nature in a very different way from the fascists--that is, nature is seen as basically benevolent: not a realm of dog-eat-dog but of mutual aid and cooperation.

I think it might be useful for those engaged in debate about culture vs. biology to try to orient themselves with respect to the Marxist position on the one hand and the ecological/Taoist position on the other. (I assume we will reject the fascist position, though it is important to understand it, if only to avoid it.) And it might be useful to see to what extent these two positions are reconcilable. There is, for example, in the



48 physical and social sciences the concept of "general systems theory," which seems to me to embody a basically ecological position, but which sees the emergence of new or transcendent properties at each systemic level.

My own viewpoint, I would say, is basically Marxist; but I am also interested in the ecological position, and would hope to see some synthesis emerge. However, where a Marxist approach is vital is here: we have to see issues like women's liberation not in isolation, but as part of human liberation--and that means in relation to the political and economic structures of our societies, and not only in a national, but in an international context.

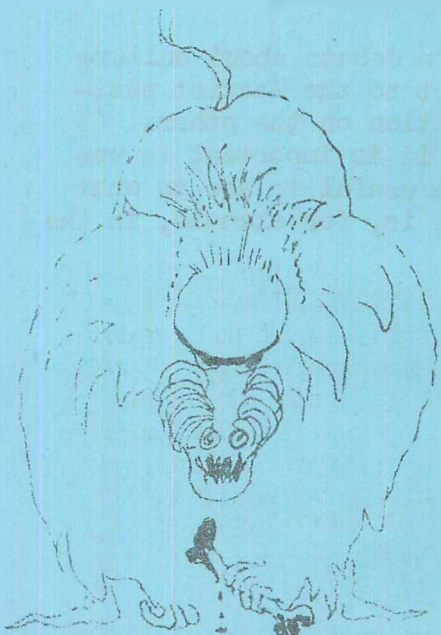
My views, therefore, come closest to those expressed by Kate Wilhelm. Women's liberation is important, but feminists who fail to see the movement in its broader context, and who ignore the oppression of men, only serve to mystify the issue, and delay the day of human liberation.

I might quote here the last lines from a traditional British ballad called "Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard." I expect a few readers will be familiar with it as arranged by Fairport Convention under the title "Matty Groves." It's about a noblewoman who has an affair with a young man while her husband is elsewhere. In Fairport Convention's version she seduces the poor lad, but in the original both of them have been looking forward to this moment for some time. However, they are betrayed by a servant, and the husband comes back and catches them together in bed. Whereupon he kills his wife's lover, whom he nevertheless describes as "the bravest sir knight that ever rode on steed." His wife, however, is not repentant, and, enraged, he kills her too. The last verse of the ballad runs thus:

A grave, a grave, Lord Barnard cryd,  
To put these lovers in;  
But lay my lady on the upper hand,  
For she came of the better kin.

Even in the grave, class is more important than sex.

Where I must diverge from Wilhelm is with respect to her un-Marxist pessimism about the future. She seems to adhere to the neo-Malthusian "limits to growth" school of gloom and doom that is so prevalent in the United States at the present time. Now, while I think it is imperative that modern industrial societies get away from their particular present-day growth patterns, I would also say that giving way to despair about the world situation is certainly counter-productive, and a position not dictated by a realistic assessment of what can or cannot be done. For a critique of the MIT "limits to growth" position, and the similar gloomy-liberal position elaborated by Robert Heilbroner in AN INQUIRY INTO THE HUMAN PROSPECT (and by John Brunner and God knows how many others in sf), I would refer readers to two books by a team of Sussex University researchers: THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE (published in the U.S. as MODELS OF DOOM) and THE ART OF ANTICIPATION: VALUES AND METHODS IN FORECASTING.



Marx and Engels were never very sympathetic to Malthus. I think all of us should at least approach neo-Malthusian forecasts critically.



And I wish Wilhelm would not talk about "communist countries." There aren't any in this world, and to use language that suggests there are only leads to further despair. I don't know of one single country that calls itself "communist." Many states claim to be socialist, though damn few are, in my opinion. Maybe three or four. (And I'm not talking about places like Sweden.) When Wilhelm says "communist" she presumably means "state capitalist"--which is something quite, quite different. The only communist country I know about is on a world called Anarres. And that's an anarchist type of communism, in line with the ecological/Taoist view of man-and-nature. I don't know what Marx would have said about Anarres. Maybe it's not quite what he had in mind; but I think he'd like it a whole lot better than state capitalism.

What has all this got to do with women and with science fiction? Absolutely everything. I hope that's obvious.

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On the matter of women in sf, it is evident that each person's opinion is highly dependent upon personal experiences and problems regarding women in society. Since this appears to be so, briefly, this is my position.

I have had the extreme good fortune to be married to one of those rare men who treats his wife completely as an individual. Consequently, I have no hostilities toward men in general, nor feel any special need to campaign for women's right, though I am always interested. I am now a self-employed potter, but while I was out in the working world in various secretarial and administrative aide positions, I felt some problems. However, I usually was able to manipulate circumstances and salaries so that I never had any major personal complaints.

I do want to question one statement made by Luise White on page 41 regarding Luis Alvarez. It's a small matter, but it got me thinking. While working as a secretary at the Rad Lab in Berkeley putting my husband through grad school, I occupied an office across the hall from some of Alvarez' group, and though I have direct and personal reasons for greatly disliking the man (among them that he took it upon himself to order me to "look busy" when I had no work to do, though he had no direct authority over me. I stood up to him and told him it was none of his business--and then became cowardly and took to closing my door so he couldn't see what I was doing), I seriously question the accuracy of the statement that he sat behind the pilot of the Enola Gay while flying over Hiroshima. Alvarez was not involved in the Manhattan Project during the War--he was working on radar development. Although I can fully believe that this is something he might have done, I doubt that he actually did it, and I would be interested in her source for this information.

I am in complete agreement with Kate Wilhelm (pp. 123-125) regarding Women's rights with respect to the existing system. I have been well aware of the problems of authority in the working world, and in many cases I was the one dealing with the problems and passing the information and solutions upward (the old "power behind the throne" problem). In fact, I made a conscious decision, as a result of my observations, to get out of the "working world." I am now cheerfully a producing potter with no direct link to these problems. My husband is quite envious, though supportive, and is a continual reminder to me how fortunate I am to be able to pursue my own talents and interests almost independent of the existing system.

Enough. Thank you for making the comments of these authors available. It is always fascinating to learn what intelligent and articulate people

50 see as problem areas and what possible solutions they present. I look forward to more sf involving these areas, either directly or indirectly.

MICHAEL CARLSON 3/5/76  
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KHATRU 3&4 is a goddamn masterpiece, certainly the most interesting thing in fmz in a long time, and a well-done physical presentation for something so long and involved. I shudder to think what your next letter col is going to look like. Is there a geometric progression involved? I mean, can we expect a 150pp fmz to get 300pp of letters, and if printed then to get 600pp of locs, etc? I could see the UPS, whoops, CPRR truck pull up outside the apartment. Three men lug a trunk up to the third floor. KHATRU 9. 4800pp. All locs. A loc in novel form by Don D'Amassa. Two books of barbourpoems. Cassettes from Keller. Singing locs. Sheryls carved on stone, Barry Gillams on film. I shudder. I've got to respond to this?

The only things that really bothered me in the whole symposium were failures to a) accept the realities of human existence and then adjust from there and b) to recognize universal human malaise as such. The point was made by others--we are dealing with human liberation; the system that enslaves most women also enslaves most men (even in the very simple way of making them dominate their wives, say, they lose human virtues--just to give a very simple example) AND WHEN ARE WE GOING TO REALIZE IT? THAT IT IS UP TO PEOPLE TO OVERCOME, ON THEIR LEVEL FIRST?

I don't hold much with revolution anymore. Not physical. Which is why KHATRU is so important, it will open eyes. It will open, we hope, minds. It is working, in a way that few things do, toward human liberation. And you thought it was just a fanzine.

ALEXANDER DONIPHAN WALLACE  
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There are, no doubt, male espers (grokers) who have the capability of penetrating the female psyche but not being one such it seems the saner course not to enter where angels fear to tread. It is quite natural, however, that in such an emotional area certain corrigenda may be noted. This, too, may be safely left to more competent commentators on the sf&f scene. Since molecular biology has come into existence it has been argued by the reductionists that the genotype has far greater influence than the phenotype. In other terms it is nature rather than nurture that controls life. As an example, "evidence" has been presented that blacks are genetically inferior to whites in the matter of intelligence. In due course it may be expected that there will be the claim that intelligence, or "success in life," is sex-linked (genetically), by some chauvinist boar.

U.K. Le Guin had less to say, said it better and kept her cool longer than any other panelist, as was to be expected of the premiere novelist (male or female) now writing in the sf&f category. The quantity of her writing is relatively small, but the quality is not exceeded by any other author.

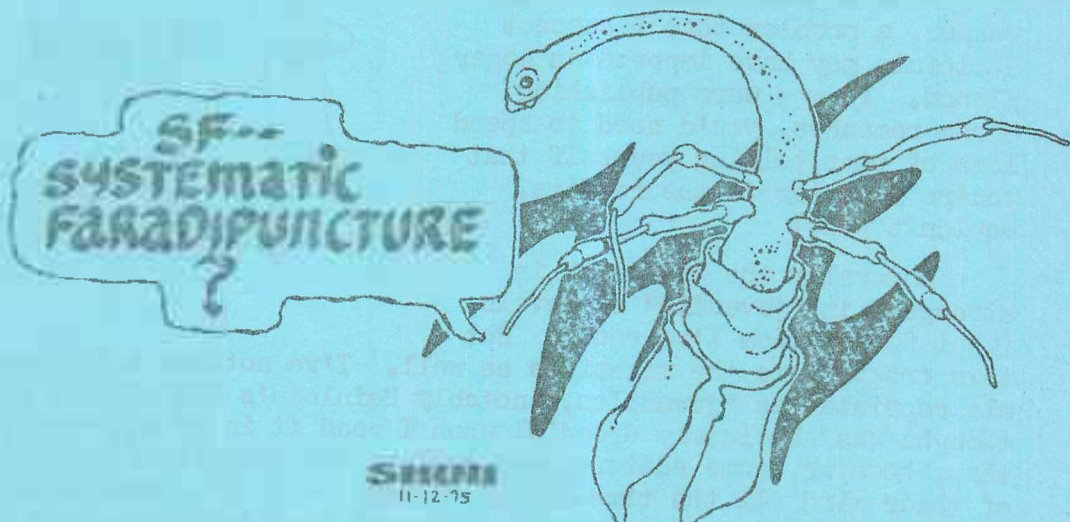
Adverting to Women's Liberation, I have seen no reference in the fanzines or prozines to the remarkable book by Anne Sayre, ROSALIND FRANKLIN AND DNA. (James Watson's THE DOUBLE HELIX should be read first.)

The Jeff Clark-Brian Stableford fracas can be molded in this form: Granting that 90% of all sf&f novels are "trash," it may be concluded that



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90% of all readers of sf&f use good money to buy "trash." Stableford's query is "Why?" In preparing a research monograph entitled "Economics of 'Trash' in SF&F" the first step would be deciding what is "trash" and what is not. Once "trash" has been identified there is the task of inquiring of readers why they buy it. One step nearer to what Stableford has in mind would be replacing "economics" by "sociology," but the research protocol would have the same format. I am inclined to argue that "trash" has no content and therefore can communicate nothing at all; it is all form and no substance. Of course one can study novels in all sorts of ways--counting the number of Romance-based words, counting the number of split infinitives, identifying the characters in Freudian symbols, investigating the cultural background of the author...ad nauseum. All of these are quite legitimate, since one doesn't go around telling scholars what the subject of their research ought to be, unless one is not properly trained and is rather naïve. Clark's response contains this unfortunate and absurd sentence: "Bad taste and crude people must be condemned." Accordingly, I must condemn Clark for exhibiting bad taste and for expressing it in a crude fashion. This being a display of bad taste on my part, he must then condemn me, and so merrily on. Mutual condemnatoriality! But is this a functional phrase?

The lettercol was exciting, amusing and interesting.



JEFF HECHT 1/23/76  
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It's obvious that the symposium became more than you had intended it to be and took on a life of its own. That's not a bad thing to happen--I think it was an overall benefit that gave participants an opportunity to expound on topics that otherwise wouldn't have fitted into a more formatted discussion. What it did seem to need was a more thorough editing to weed out meandering discussions and bits of rhetorical overkill in consciousness-raising. (Bear in mind, however, that I make my living in the real world editing a trade magazine, so I apply harsh standards. Judging from your comment that "nearly everything" was printed, I'm amazed you were able to pull it together as well as you did.)

There was one area that was left out of the discussion that I think is very relevant to the whole question of women in sf--the interaction of sf with the physical sciences and engineering. Obviously there is the origin of commercial American sf magazines with Hugo Gernsback's "radio romances" type of thing in the '20s. But there still are strong influences--when John Campbell tried to make ANALOG an advertising-supported "slick" magazine in the early 1960s, he was going after the advertisers who wanted to

52 reach engineers and technologists. And a high proportion of engineering and science students read sf--I went to Caltech as an undergraduate in the late 1960s, and I would estimate 50% to 80% of the undergrads were more or less regular readers of sf.

The interaction of sf and the technological fields is significant for two major reasons: it is an important factor in shaping the minds of people marketing commercial sf and it involves sf with one of the most male-dominated areas of our society.

Nothing is more illustrative of the perceptions of commercial publishers than the notorious Laser Books ad--"Harlequin brought you a great romance series for women...now they've created a profit-packed science fiction adventure series for men." The commercial-fiction formula calls for a hero that the reader can identify with--and once you've defined your reader as a teenaged male of the "gee-whiz" mentality with a longing for adventure, that requirement defines the story. (Rigidity of the formula increases with the publisher's need to feel superior to the reader, a problem that I suspect Harlequin may have imposed on Roger Elwood. If you were publishing nurse romances, you'd need to spend lots of time telling yourself that you're superior to the readers, wouldn't you?)

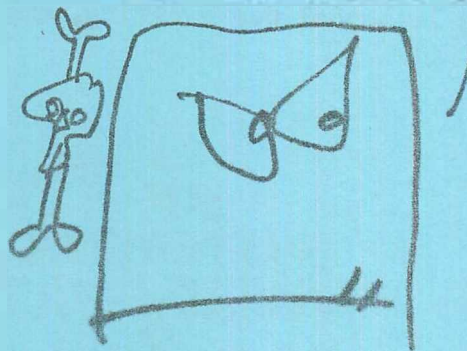
Naturally the "formula" is strongest in "juvenile" sf novels (what few of them I've read). But this creeps into the magazines as well. I've noticed a few magazine serials reprinted as "juveniles," notably Heinlein's *PODKAYNE OF MARS* (which I thought was absolutely dreadful when I read it in my mid-teens). Beyond that, however, some editors seem to keep the juvenile formula in the back of their mind all the time--Ben Bova said something about *ANALOG* stories needing to be comprehensible to teenagers when interviewed by *NEWSWEEK*, which may explain some of his editorial policies.

This discussion brings to mind a question--how many women (and men) were introduced to sf through the "juveniles"? I switched directly to "adult" sf in my early teens after becoming disgusted with the western adventure fiction and sports news that I had been reading--and I don't think that "adventure" sf would have been interesting even then, since it was the "adventure/action" formula that I was disgusted with. Is there an identification barrier for the female confronted with male characters? Is there a stronger identification barrier for the insecure male teenager confronted with female characters?

The male domination of the technological fields may be less directly relevant, but it is significant because it reflects, partly, the small proportion of women interested in the physical sciences. There are reasons for this, of course, most of them concentrated in the sexist educational system (until 1970, for example, Caltech wouldn't admit women undergraduates, an attitude typical of engineering/science schools).

This is important because one major route to an interest in sf is an interest in technology--and the extent that women are less interested in technology than men means that they will be less interested in sf, and

WHATEVER HAPPENED  
TO SHORT LETTERS  
OF COMMENT?





hence less involved in writing it. (That sentence is a bit convoluted, but I hope it conveys the basic idea.) During the symposium, I recall someone mentioning that very few women wrote "hard" sf--true, the only one that comes to mind is Brenda Pierce, who's done a couple that were awful even by ANALOG standards.

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This is also important because it's a problem that will be with us a long time. Too many women are technologically ignorant; it's a lot easier for most women to start a career in a "soft" field than in a "hard" one that requires specific technical training. This is changing, but only slowly; each year the number of women in Caltech's freshman class seems a bit larger, but women are still a small minority. And no amount of "consciousness raising" is going to get a woman an engineering job--it takes physics, math and engineering courses. It's as sexist for a woman to point at a man and tell him to fix the plumbing as it is for a man to ask the woman to do the dishes. (Exceptions will be recognized, of course, where detailed technical knowledge is needed, which is rarely the case.)

Maybe the elimination of sex-segregated shop and home economics classes will help the problem, but my feeling is that its roots are much deeper in our society and social attitudes.

The question of women in sf raises some related questions about minorities and such. Although modern sf steers considerably free of racial stereotypes, there are aliens to allow the reader to exercise his/her innate xenophobia, when that is important. In early sf, that meant friendly aliens were stuck with a "colored servant" caricature, but we seem to have grown beyond that. Note, however, that the prevalent idea of how racial harmony would be achieved was through homogenization; I can't recall any stories anticipating racial pride on the part of minority groups.

A similar situation occurred with women. All the way back to Gernsback writers could project that technology would free women from their daily drudgery, but they couldn't take it a few steps further to ask how women would want to fit into society afterwards.

Why such failures? I suspect because the writers were not deeply enough involved in the situations to really understand them. They were white, male and middleclass (by self-definition if not by birth), and infused with a sense of their own self-importance reminiscent of Mensa. The result is a general tone of implicit elitism, that explicitly surfaces its ugly head from time to time in stories like Kornbluth's "The Marching Morsers." (If you want a name-count index for measuring elitism, by the way, try looking for Italian names. Nobody's declared them a minority group yet, and many of the names are readily identifiable.)

In some ways, it's surprising that sf hasn't attracted more women and "minorities," since a writer can hide behind his/her name (or initials, or pen name). Nothing in the name "Samuel R. Delany," for example, identifies the writer to me as white, black, or whatever; without specific identification to the contrary I would tend to assume white, being white myself. Nor do the novels of Chip's that I've read give him a racial identity, nor even the cover blurbs that say he came from Harlem. (I have not read DHALGREN.)

A woman can hide (intentionally or not) behind a sexually ambiguous name (Andre Norton) or initials (C.L. Moore), though sex is generally more obvious from writing than race. But in purely commercial writing, the audience is unlikely to notice much of anything about the author except the name and cover blurb. An editor, if confronted with a publisher convinced that women authors don't sell, could abbreviate a name to initials or find a pen name for the author.

Artistically, of course, this is not legitimate, particularly if the author is saying something about his/her status as woman, black, or whatever. But some of the discussion centered on the commercial side of publishing.

(A note on the commercial success of women authors: I did a quick survey of a random sampling of 1950-vintage magazines on my shelf and found that FANTASTIC UNIVERSE had an average of two women per issue identified by full first names. GALAXY, F&SF and a scattering of short-lived magazines all had many fewer. And while I liked those issues of FANTASTIC UNIVERSE, the magazine didn't survive.)

Hmm...glancing through the symposium makes me want to go back and pick up a point I dropped earlier--women and technology. One thing that bothers me in the (admittedly few) "feminist" viewpoints I've read/heard is the absence of an understanding of the interaction of technology with the social role of women. It is, after all, technology that made the whole thing possible--primarily biomedical technology (medical care, birth control) and engineering (refrigeration, washing machines). Without such technology "homemaking" was a full-time 70+ hour a week job--analogous to the working-class work week in that era. And since the married woman was typically pregnant or burdened with an infant (presumably breast-feeding lasted longer in those days because there were few alternative sources of food edible by infants), it was only logical that the woman would be elected to stay home preparing food, clothing, etc. On farms, work was done at home, so the woman played a more active role.

I will readily grant that my analysis is quick and superficial, and that societal sexism plays an important role. Nonetheless, I think technology has its own essential role in making it possible for women to break out of stereotyped roles, and I think an understanding of the interaction of technological developments with the roles of women is essential. It's one of the things that sf should be playing with.

Something Tiptree said puzzles me: the importance that would be attached to an infant-father relationship if fathers had always raised children and the obscurity to which it (child-rearing or fathering?) is consigned because mothers do it. Did Tip tie his words in a knot? The whole business of child-rearing is given exhaustive treatment in an incredible number of books. Even if he's just talking about fathering, that matter is given lengthy treatment by psychologists; the total may be less than the space given mothering, but it's still more than enough. And in our culture the psychologists are, to a disturbing degree, the oracles of the sacred. I'm involved in fathering, and nowhere do I see it treated as "invisible and embarrassing." Is that some kind of generational guilt complex?

I sense in places a confusion of human issues and feelings with those of women which I think is just a natural part of the questioning process involved in our lives. Item--Russ mentions that women writers start writing later. It's not just women, it's people like Lafferty and Tiptree who were older than Joanna is now when they popped out of nowhere with their wild imaginations despite being at ages where many people's minds have begun to fossilize. Cull out the work of such "prodigal" hacks as Asimov and the early hack-mode work of people like Silverberg and you'll find the differences smaller than they seem at first. But don't ask me to explain away Chip Delany; I'm 28 and struggling with my own writing and I don't know how people like him do it.

Ultimately I have to agree with Wilhelm on "women's lib"--it's not taking us where we need to go if it just gives the middleclass female equality with the middleclass male. I just can't accept the overwhelming social significance of every woman with her own BankAmericard. My own view



is, I fear, cynical--I see the "women's movement" deeply tainted by spoiled suburban housewives and academic radicals. Bored with their dishwashers, color televisions and station wagons, the housewives want their own corner office, secretary and private parking space. The academic radicals (there must be a better word, but they are so often found in and about universities) are tied up in their own private game of "more radical than thou," without thought of where it's leading. I didn't see either of these types in the symposium, fortunately, though from time to time I sensed elements of academic radicalism.

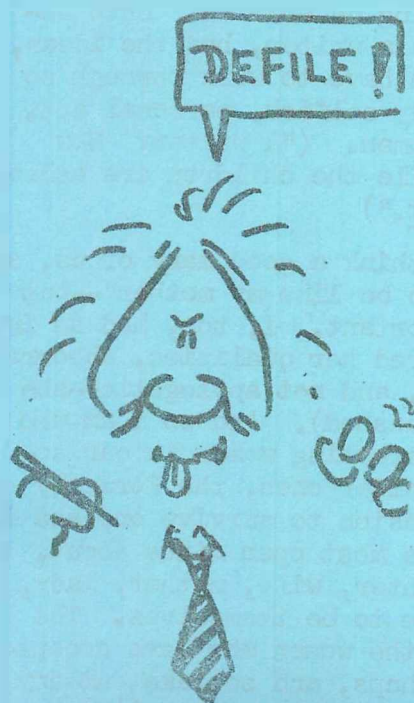
One final speculation on the symposium--I wonder what some defender of the "status quo" could have added. Of course I recognize the multitude of disagreements among the panelists, but I think something might have been added by an occasional provocative question or comment by someone with the ideology of a John Campbell or Bob Heinlein, as long as the panelists could have refrained from devoting all their energies to trashing him. (S(I think that someone taking an advocacy opinion would have allied all the other panelists against him, and I think the lack of a united front was one of the most important reasons for the symposium's success.)S)

SUSAN WOOD 3/24/76

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My main reaction to KHATRU 3&4 is: where is Ann?

I'm serious. I spent several years as the wife of a fanzine editor: I bought the stamps, he got the egoboo. It was not, I emphasize, his fault--we both accepted, for a time, roles we had been socialized into living. Yet fandom (read 'society'), that advanced elite of superior thinkers, ho, ho, wouldn't let us change the roles even when we tried. Mike in one editorial, and I elsewhere, tried to point out that, even if my presence wasn't visible in the replies in the lettercol (translation, he was the DNF, I was Wifey--and that, friends, is what I, I, believed), my presence, my contribution to the life-of-the-couple, was important: if I did the laundry, that meant Mike had free time to type the stencils. To which intelligent, sensitive people like Terry Carr replied: you are not a co-editor and do not deserve to be listed as such.



Quinn's comments on co-editing TWO VIEWS OF WONDER seem relevant here: don't do it. I responded in part, at least, by going away and editing my own fanzine, leaving the problem around for other women co-editors to inherit. (Suzle Tompkins of THE SPANISH INQUISITION had a sad editorial in the last issue about how a fan made a phone-call-of-comment to the Bushyagers, where she was living, to comment on the issue--to comment not to her, but to her co-editor, Jerry Kaufman, who was visiting at the time. Suzle just did the typing; she wasn't a 'real' editor....)

Is KHATRU a separate part of Jeff Smith's life, a room whose door is shut between him and Ann? I'm not asking this in any snide or put-down sense. I assume, in fact, that Ann isn't interested in being a fanpublisher. Yet you have a partnership, of some sort, and KHATRU

would be different without Ann, because Jeff would be different. Just wondering aloud about things which are perhaps no business of mine, or which, because I am a woman in fandom with relationships with male fans, ARE business of mine.

My main other reaction is one of utter exhaustion. Part of that may be empathy for you, for the immense task of bringing this together; most of it created by my task of having to put it together, react, sort out, decide, sift, feel through--assimilate this issue, and The Issue, with my head and my emotions and my experience (part of the male-female separation involves arbitrary separation of these parts of being human). And then go out and damn well DO something with whatever awareness you and your writers have given me.

After I've finished marking 30 4th-year term-papers.

My own problem is that I am too busy trying to be woman, man (that is, succeeding in the hitherto arbitrarily 'masculine' realm of 'career,' while still as woman trying to retain certain virtues of caring and responding and even nurturing) and integrated human being (and a practising Presbyterian-Taoist on alternate Wednesdays) to do something which really MATTERS: start the women's apa I keep talking about, so that discussions like this can continue.

If I didn't have strep throat all the time, I might even have written you a proper letter of comment. Instead, once I've marked the papers, I'm going to go to sleep.

Some of the above may be a partial response to Joanna Russ's point about women not writing until we're thirty. I'm twenty-seven, and I only feel, just now, that I'm sufficiently in control of my identity, my ideas, my skills, and my pride in them to even begin to think about embarking on writing. Chip Delany, on the other hand, knew at nineteen that he was a writer, had the ideas, had the self-confidence. The self-confidence. Women have to work through so much more before they can even begin to write: a very selfish, personal act. Taken seriously in men, regarded as a frivolity in women. ("A writer? How lovely. You can do it at home in your spare time while the children are asleep or at school.") ("Yes, dear, it's lovely, but I work.")

To develop another point Russ made: Joanna, I think a good many of us, and from the sound of it you yourself, vowed--not "not to be like my mother"--but not to live my mother's life. The difference is important. I, too, had an intelligent, sensitive, (self)squashed mother. I admired her qualities, abhorred the situation in which she found herself (not guilty, and not apologetic--she fought to get an education for me--but definitely squashed). And so I am who and what I am. And I notice, now, that the most interesting women in our society, by and large, seem to be the middle-aged and older ones, the Formerly Squashed, like my Mum: widowed, with just enough pension to survive on, she is now free from conforming to roles, and has one of the most open minds about. Ironical, that: all these women who, having been daughter, wife, mother, lady, pillar of strength to others, etc. etc., are now free to be themselves. The tightest minds, conversely, are the Newly Squashed, the women who have accepted certain rules and roles, feel frustrated by them perhaps, and so take out any doubt (about their choice? about the role itself?) by trashing women like me who





have chosen other (and equally limiting, please note) roles.

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I can only be an effective teacher, can only spend 8 to 5:30 with students, trying one-to-one to compensate a little for the horrors of a computer-run megaversity of 25,000 students, then home to put lots and lots of comments on paper, because I do not have a child to care for. For example. Choose: lose, any way. And I, lord help me, am a (relatively) UnSquashed woman.

You know what really struck me about this issue? Freff's casual/serious (very Freff) line: "I think we ought to start cultivating a sense of rational and perceptive joy." I try to live that way; but first it involved unlearning 27 years of patterns.

On the other hand, none of us would have been talking together like this ten years ago.

(S(About Ann: We fanzine fans take communication-through-fanzines so much for granted that we probably don't realize how alien this all is to some people, for different reasons. In high school I had a teacher remark to the class how abhorrent it was to receive a mimeographed account of a friend's trip to Europe, how impersonal it was; he'd have rather received a postcard saying "Hi. We just came back from Europe" than a detailed report no different from what everyone else received. On the other hand, a friend of Ann's, who moved out of state and to whom we sent a couple issues of KYBEN, felt very uncomfortable when reading them. She said it was like reading other people's mail; she felt like she was eavesdropping. These are not irrational responses--but they are very different from ours.

(S(So, simply, Ann is not comfortable writing for fanzines. She's been trying, in KYBEN--and succeeding, so far as I'm concerned--but until she's more at ease, until she feels more sure that what she puts on paper resembles what she had in her head, she's not committing herself to anything major. (Even here: she's twice tried to respond to Susan's letter, without being satisfied with the results. So I'm doing it. Is sexism rearing its ugly head again? No; it's just that Fanzine is my major medium of expression, not Ann's.)

(S(Ann's contribution is very adequately explained by Susan above; I couldn't do it without her assistance and her forbearance. And I know I'd better never devote too much time to fanzining, or she'd ask me to give it up. For her, I would. (---And aren't we lucky that fanzine editors generally marry such understanding people? I'm not just talking about patient wives, either; there's Ron Bushyager, for one.))S)

BRIAN EARL BROWN 2/20/76  
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Don D'Amassa asks the question: "Is DYING INSIDE sf?" Cy Chauvin has argued, convincingly, that it isn't. Or rather, that it's not a terribly great piece of sf. Whether or not the book is well-written is not at issue--that is conceded all around. What is in question is whether the science-fictional aspects of this story are of such importance to the story and of sufficient originality to be considered as a serious work of sf.

DYING INSIDE does read like a conventional mainstream novel with only a slight overlay of sf trappings. In technique, approach and theme it is mainstream. That greater communications results in less communications is a theme that--if I can trust James Gunn--is quite typical of the darker vision of mainstream literature.

But DYING INSIDE is not about a middle-aged Jew coming to grips with his morality. It is about one man's reaction to the talent of telepathy--and that makes it sf, for better or worse.

Historically, esp stories have divided into two responses: the super-man syndrome and the all-this-noise-is-driving-me-crazy syndrome. DYING INSIDE delineates a third alternative--that knowing people too well impairs the ability to cope/tolerate/get along with them. This is an idea that is as extrapolative and ideative as anything in the field.

One particular complaint Cy had against DYING INSIDE was that it used the stereotyped telepathy-as-telephone idea. The experience of telepathy, Cy argues, would probably resemble the experience Joanna Russ used in AND CHAOS DIED, and any work that doesn't follow her lead is not seriously dealing with telepathy.

I can, and will, argue that telepathy-as-telephone is a serious approach to telepathy.

There is a distinction between sensing a stimulus and perceiving it. An optical illusion is a result of the mental processes of perception, not a distortion caused by the sensing organ. We perceive sensations in ways that are most familiar to us, retranslating the unfamiliar to something familiar. If telepathy is a total sensory experience (a la Russ) it's as likely to suppose that the receiver will suffer from a sensory overload. Drowned in a sea of trivia.

The need to make sense of this mass of impressions, I will argue, could require the telepath to process this the same as he would process his total sensory impressions, and since that process is the one that results in the continuing conscious mind, the telepath would perceive another's conscious as he perceives his own--as an ongoing non-vocal voice. Thus telepathy-as-telephone, thus Silverberg. (S(Very neat. Take a bow. There's no real problem, though. Until it is proven how (or even if) telepathy works, all methods--yea, even having the receptor's fingertips sport mouths that speak to him as he scratches his ear--are fictionally viable.)S)

DONALD G. KELLER 2/18/76  
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I don't want to go into great detail on either the Stableford or happy-ending debates, but I will make this comment tangentially: I think if everybody read C.S. Lewis's EXPERIMENT IN CRITICISM a lot of things would be cleared up. Jeff Clark mentioned it in passing, but didn't emphasize it enough. It has an incredible amount of intelligent things to say about why we read, how we read, and why we read what we do and the way we do. I can think of very few books that have been more influential on my critical thinking. What it all comes down to is that unliterary people (like a lot of sf readers) read in completely different ways than literary people (like most KHATRU readers) do.

A couple comments from Freff's letter: THE LAST UNICORN is a high fantasy, and has as purely Tolkienian a eucatastrophe as you are likely to find, even in Tolkien. (This is judging from my comments on it in PHANTASMICOM 4 (S(1971)S); I haven't read it since then.) As for A FINE AND PRIVATE PLACE, I'm not sure. It's a contemporary fantasy rather than high fantasy, but perhaps it works the same way. Haven't read it, either, in a while. And as for where the Harlequin achieved a major victory, I can only say mrmce, mrmee, mrmee, mrmee. (S(Is this an apa? Are those mailing comments?)S)



Doug Barbour's poems were quite interesting, but I think they are what Jim Taylor once termed some things of mine, statements rather than true poetry. Not to diminish them thereby. I did very much like "my word-hoard is thus/en-smalld"---but then I'm an unreconstructed medievalist.

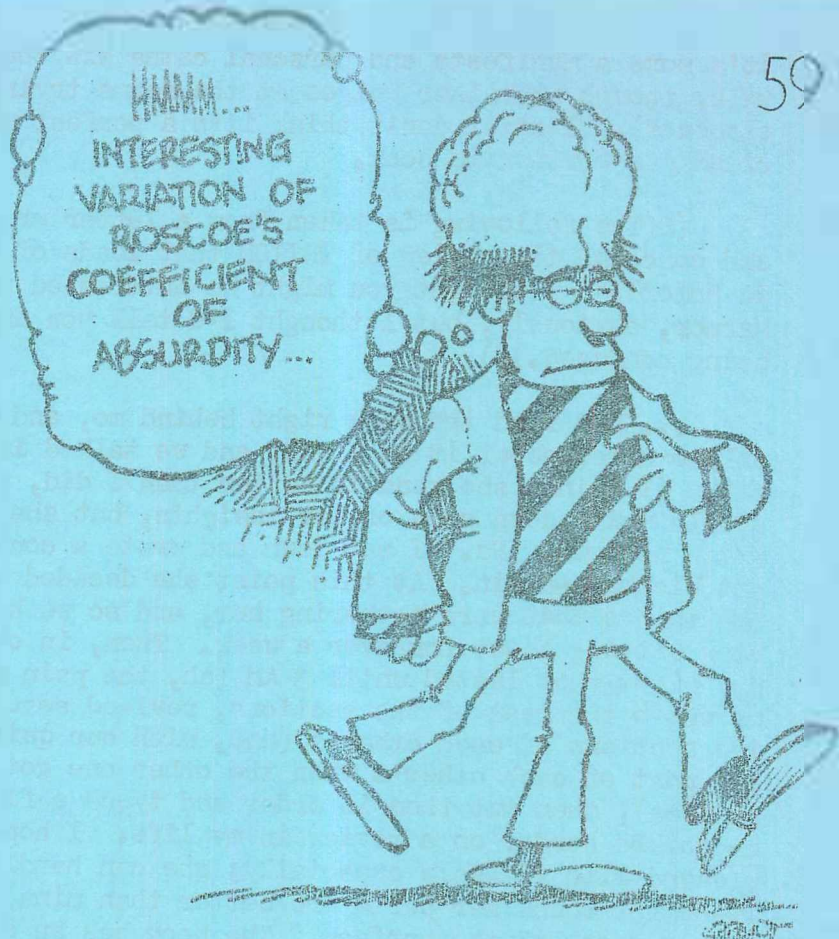
Which sort of ties in with why I like "Omelas": I get a kick out of allegory (also a medieval form); it's a neat system that you can push things around in and play with. Which sounds cold and unhuman, but then allegory never really has realistic characters (note the Le Guin story has none). I wonder if Sheryl is familiar with Borges; if she doesn't like him ei-

ther, I can understand her not liking "Omelas." It strongly resembles the typical Borges piece, which is often as much essay or allegory as story; not 'fiction' as narrowly defined, but certainly a fiction of a sort. I think Jeff Clark will understand what I'm saying here.

Sheryl, I've made a mental note to try VANITY FAIR, though with reservations. HENRY ESOMOND bored me to tears, and though I enjoyed what little I read of BARRY LYNDON (which I picked up prior to seeing the movie, which is gorgeous and well-made, but has massive problems with the two main characters), I haven't felt inclined to go back to it. I am familiar with Victorian and onward novels to some extent (Fielding, a touch of Dickens, Hardy, a little Proust, lots of Joyce, most of Pynchon Hesse (particularly DAS GLASPERLENSPIEL), and most recently I've been reading Mann's DOCTOR FAUSTUS), so it was just not the difficulty of THE FEMALE MAN that threw me.

After reading a number of reviews, and the Symposium, I have at least partially changed my mind about that book. I don't withdraw any of the things I said, because the review represents a valid point of view on the book at one moment in time; but I have to feel now that the difficulties I had with the form of the book were mostly my fault. I will have to go back and reread it (something I haven't done yet).

As to content, let me answer Cy Chauvin: yes, it is a funny book, but most of the humor is of the sort that it hurts so much that you can't do anything but laugh. (Remember Mike Smith in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND.) At rock bottom, it is perhaps the most serious book any of us will ever read, because (as Judith Weiss pointed out to me in a letter) it reveals the deepest, most secret thoughts that many women have, feelings that have been heretofore locked away without any possibility of expression until Joanna Russ got up the courage. I don't have to share the thoughts to appreciate their power and personal truth. This kind of vitiates my cry about wishfulfillment, because the book really falls in its own category;



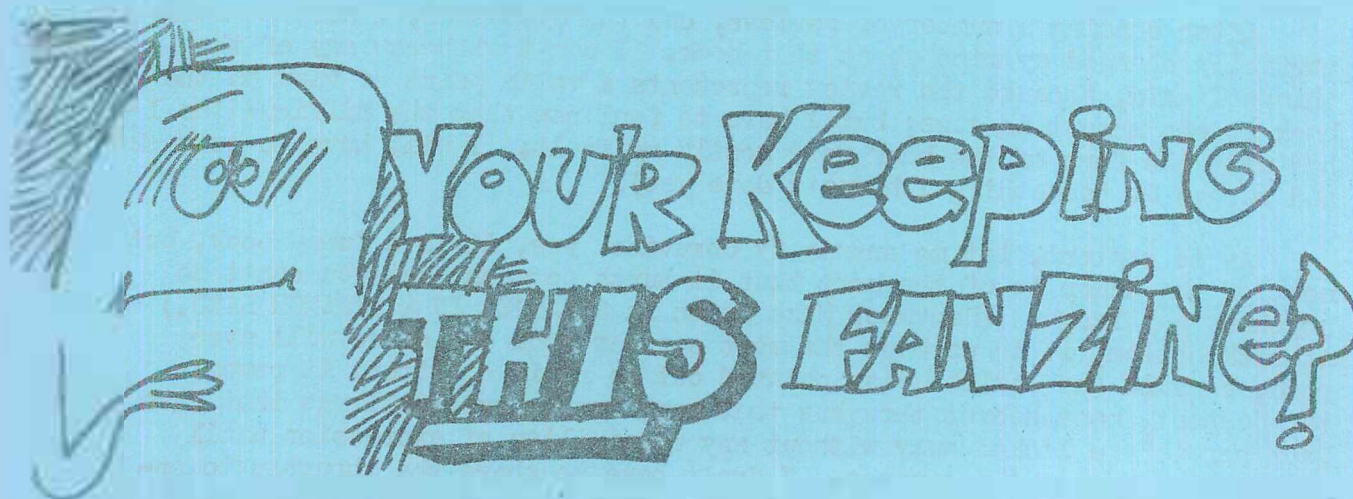
60 it's more a manifesto and personal catharsis than a novel (it is a novel as well, though it rather bulges at the seams trying to hold in all its many elements). I still don't think it's a perfect work of art, but it is decidedly a worthwhile book.

(S(The following is taken from a letter written a week or so earlier, and concerns the review of TRITON that leads of this issue's "Nous Sommes du Soleil." I thought you might be interested in this. "Kate" is Paula Marmor, obviously, but I thought I'd tell you anyway to keep you from being confused.)S)

...Kate read the book right behind me, and was equally as intellectually excited about it as I was, and we talked it back and forth quite a bit. (I think) she read it better than I did, actually.) I told her she should write down some of her insights, but she kept insisting she couldn't write reviews. Ha. I sat down and wrote a couple of the notes herein, and got blocked--again. At this point she decided to write down a couple of the things that were bothering her, and so we had the fragments of the review sitting about for over a week. Then, in one incredible session Saturday night that lasted until 3 AM (ah, the pain and pleasure of creativity!) we wrote the rest of the sections, revised several of them heavily, rewriting sections of each other's (and, with our quite unusual rapport, composing part of each other's when the other one got stuck or one had a corollary idea), then put them in order and typed a final manuscript. I have never worked harder on a review in my life. I hope you like it. We are pleased with it (Kate especially; she can hardly believe she actually wrote it--but I think her parts are better than mine), except that it is obviously a scratch of the surface. The book has an enormous amount of depth to it....

#### WE ALSO HEARD FROM

a great number of people. The one other letter I really did want to print was from Don D'Amassa, and if I'd known I was going to run out of room I would have put it in earlier. As I mentioned at the outset, though, this was a very free-form lettercolumn, for the most part, with all the letters lying on the floor next to the typewriter stand, and I just reached down and grabbed. Letters on the Symposium are still welcome, particularly if they tie in with the discussions in this "Relayer." There will be a return to editing next issue, though, because I have a lot of material lined up for the next few numbers. (I had other things planned for this issue, as well, but I wanted to let everyone have his/her (why did so few women write? a lot of women got the issue...) on the Symposium.



4/16/76





