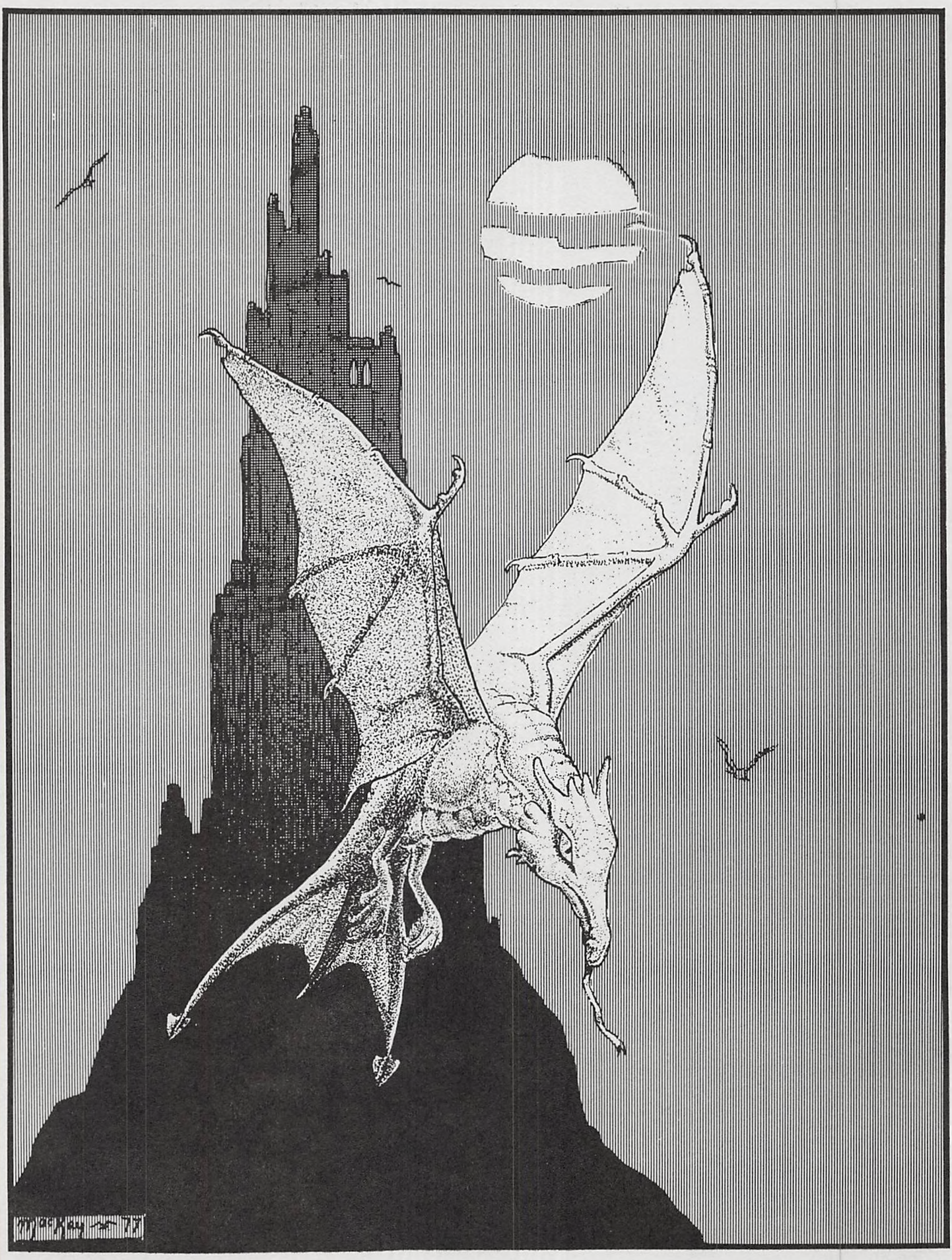
# Knights 21



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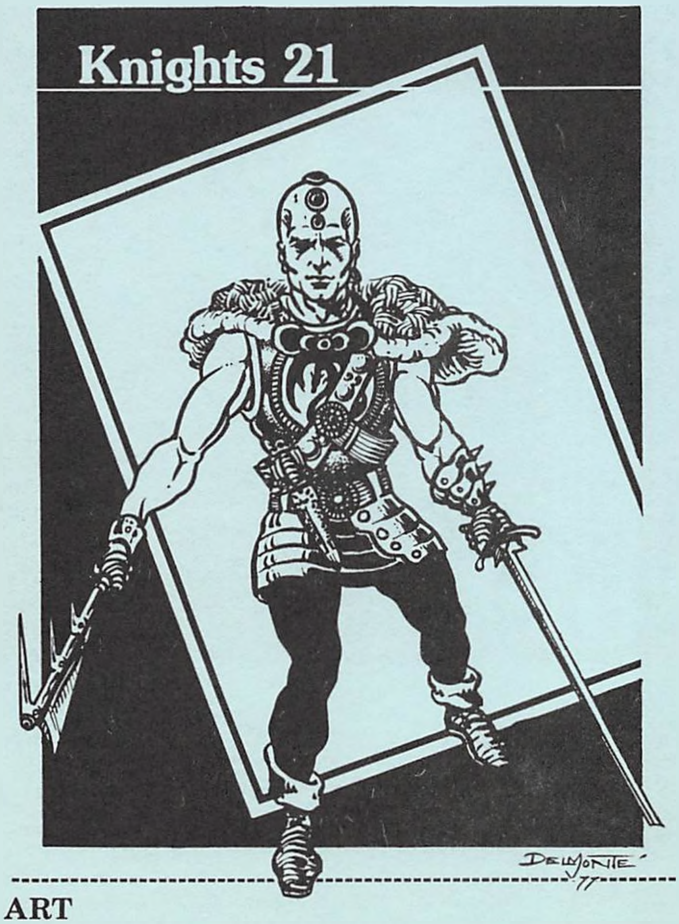


**ART**



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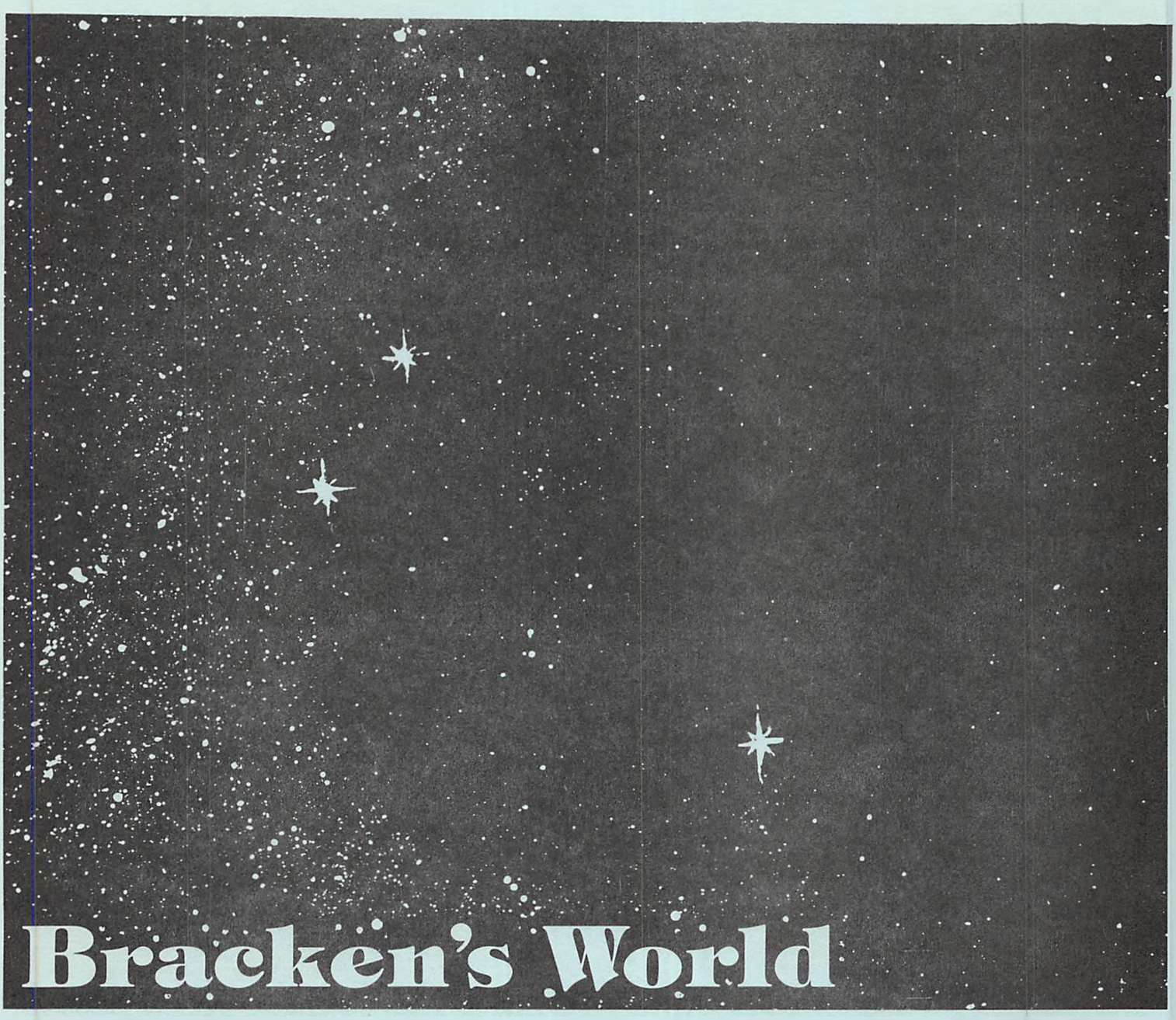



**Pretention Is As Pretention Does**

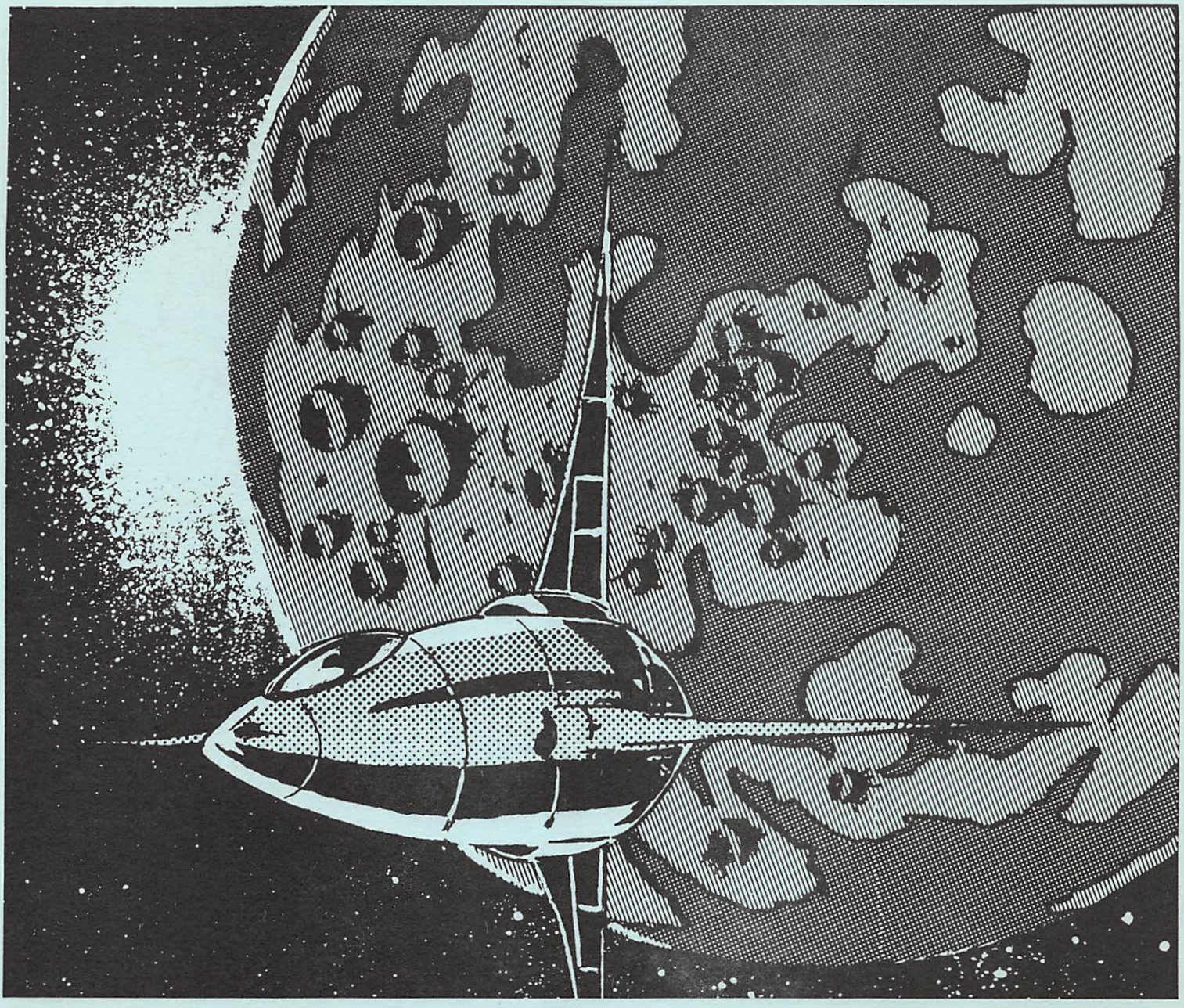
" 'Pretentiousness' is a greater interest in appearance than in substance," states Brian Earl Brown in his fanzine review column in *Rothnium 4*. It is unfortunate that the more attention a fanzine editor pays to the physical appearance of his fanzine, the more likely he is to be castigated for pretentiousness, but it is a reality in today's fandom. Many graphically excellent fanzines have been criticized for written content that fails to live up to the quality implied by the appearance, and, undoubtedly, many fanzine editors with the potential to publish graphically superior fanzines fail to do so for fear of being labeled "pretentious."

It is sad that fanzine readers and reviewers fail to understand what it takes to publish a fanzine that is appealing not only to the eye, but to the intellect as well. Many fanzines have appeared over the years that were filled with well-written, entertaining articles, and many have appeared that were models of graphic excellence. Few, in my mind, have accomplished both at the same time. The best written fanzines tend to use a simple, utilitarian design and many of the graphically superior fanzines can make no claim to excellent writing. It takes a solid combination background in editing and "magazine" design to publish the very best of fanzines. It takes a combination background few fan editors have.

Probably the best example of this I can use is myself. I edit and I design to the very best of my abilities, but what most often gets noticed is the difference between the writing and the physical appearance.

When I set out to publish the best fanzine I could (a decision that should be made by every fan editor at the outset—I waited until my thirteenth issue), I obviously turned to graphics. When I went to the library I found, and read, dozens of books on magazine design, but could find none on the art of editing, none that could teach me how to solicit articles, choose between contributions, or edit a letter column. I transferred my knowledge into practice and have greatly improved the physical appearance of *Knights*. My knowledge of editing, however, has been left to the school of hit-or-miss.

Later my emphasis on graphics landed me a job with a "daily" newspaper where I began to refine my skills. No matter what we printed, and much of it was crap, it was my job to make it appealing to the eye. If it was not appealing, I learned, it would remain unread, regardless of the quality of the writing. In my present position with a



printer/publisher, I handle work from some of the best magazines and best advertising agencies in the St. Louis metropolitan area. I learn more about design each day I work, and I learn how the individual pieces all fit together to make an ad or a magazine page that is visually attractive.

At the same time, I've had to teach myself the art of editing, and I learn something new with each issue I publish. While I know the quality of what I print is improving, I'm not about to let the physical appearance of my fanzine degenerate to where it was in the beginning.

In the very end, while a utilitarian design may be a perfectly valid one for many fanzines and their editors, it isn't what I, and a handful of other fan editors, want to use. We want to feel free to experiment with the physical appearance of our fanzines without the fear of being saddled with the unwanted and frequently untrue "pretentious" label. We aren't better than our fellow editors just because of our emphasis on graphics, nor are we worse. We just have different values, different desires, and different backgrounds.

Please, let's let the unnecessary cries of pretentiousness fall by the wayside and all try our best together.

**Scheduled for future issues:**

"DAVID!" — one of the longest in-depth interviews of a science fiction author ever to see the printed page. David Gerrold reveals his thoughts on writing, editing, and the SFWA. David Truesdale, well-known in fandom for his penetrating interviews in *Tangent*, handles the questions, and Diane Duane provides the introduction.

"All This And Clarion II" — Grant Carrington was one of the few writers to attend the first two history making Clarion Workshops. In a sequel to "Timid Bank Clerks And Other Writers," Grant takes us back to the second Clarion Workshop.

"Furor Scribendi" — There's more to being a neo-pro than signing a book contract and dreaming. You still have to write. Mark J. McGarry begins a new column for *Knights*.

Thomas F. Monteleone and Grant Carrington continue with their columns each issue, and currently scheduled arkwork includes pieces by Jim Barker, Grant Canfield, Joan Hanke-Woods, Teddy Harvia, Barry Kent Mackay, Joe Pearson, William Rotsler, and Taral.

Stay with *Knights* as we enter the 1980's. ■

## Your Mailing Label:

The number after your name on the mailing label indicates your last issue.

X — This is your last issue. Please renew your subscription.

? — We trade all-for-all or have some similar arrangement.

! — You seem to have gotten on my "forever and ever" list. A friend, perhaps?


# Babes On Bourbon Street

**by Mike Bracken**

The French Quarter of New Orleans teems with a life style we were neither prepared for nor fully able to comprehend. We were babes on Bourbon Street in a city where the coming of age happens long before 21.

"It's a party town," we were told by a drunk in the Sheraton lounge our first night in town. It's an impression we weren't to lose the following day.

The French Quarter never closes and while pieces of it may be locked up from time to time, from every outward appearance it is a 24-hour tourist trap and haven for society's misfits.

The French Quarter appears to be a dilapidated ghetto. In a space of perhaps four blocks, my wife was accosted by a dirty, fatigue-jacketed young man inquiring if she wanted to "buy some Columbian," and we witnessed a nearly bare-breasted hooker telling her pimp the extent of damages done to her. The blood on her face had freshly congealed and the scars were the mark of another woman's nails. From the pieces of conversation we heard as we passed she was the victim of another hooker. And even with his three-piece suit and blow-dry hairdo, the pimp managed a nearly sympathetic expression when he asked, "Where is she now?"

*New Orleans Magazine* described the city as having a liberal attitude, and we had our first inkling of this when we spotted a pornographic magazine vending machine in the lobby of the Sheraton. What we hadn't expected is the preponderance of nudie reviews and massage parlors that line the streets of the French Quarter.

Hidden behind the facade of bleak despair lay much more, however. Many parts of the French Quarter feature music—anything from Dixieland Jazz to the trio of balladers in the middle of Royal Street. Artists of many kinds line the court around Jackson Square, offering everything from portraits sketched on the spot to oil landscapes that had obviously taken many hours of hard work. While we were there a black gospel group and the U.S. Navy Steel Band both performed in Jackson Square.

On the East edge of Jackson Square, just two blocks from the Mississippi River, a whizzened black man in a battered leather hat loaded us and two other couples onto a horse-drawn carriage and took us for a short, but expensive tour of the French Quarter. It was he, in a slurred Southern drawl, who explained the outward appearance of the Quarter's buildings: in order to maintain as much of the Quarter's original flavor as possible, the city will not allow owners to repair the exterior of buildings unless they are in an extreme state of disrepair. However, the interior of many of the buildings are said to be gorgeous and small apartments are fetching as much as $450 a month with waiting lists. Indeed, when peering through the wrought-iron grating on one home we were able to see a built-in swimming pool, and many courtyards inaccessable to the public feature lavish gardens.

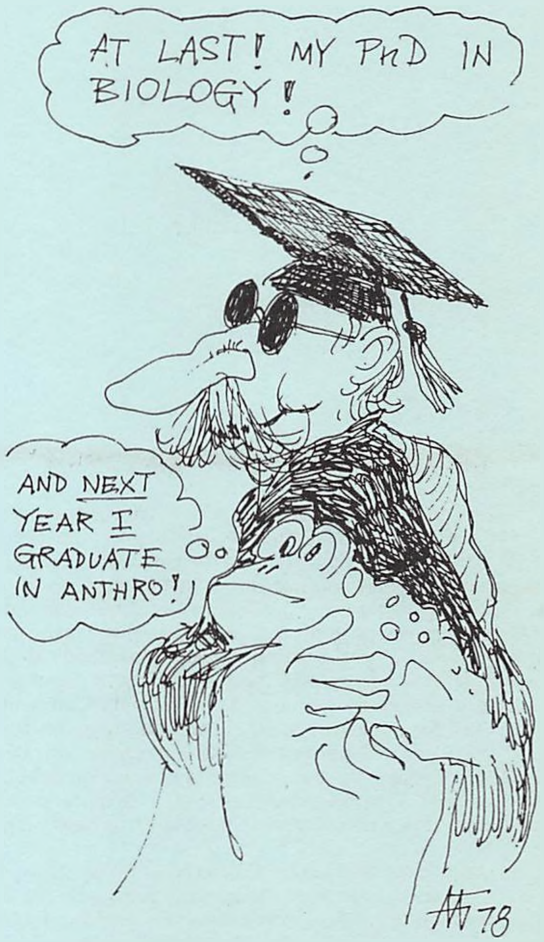
Sandwiched between the Mississippi and Decatur Street in the French Quarter is the French Market Place, a gathering point for the Quarter's residents as they pick their way through the fresh produce and the flea market junk that makes up the market place. Unlike the rest of the French Quarter, the French Market Place seems much less geared to the tourist.

Since it is legal to sell alcohol 24-hours a day in New Orleans, we saw many people carrying Tequila Sunrises and beer in disposable cups as they wandered through the Quarter.

Young black boys just barely in their teens tap-danced in the middle of the street, then stuck their hands through open car windows, refusing to move until their palms were laced with change.

Only a few blocks from the Southeastern corner of the French Quarter is the International Trade Market where one can travel to a revolving restaurant on the top floor, or for $1 a head travel to an observation deck on the thirty-first floor. The view of the city as you ascend in a glass elevator, and the view of the entire surrounding area from the deck make it well worth the time, effort, and money.

In short, the French Quarter is very much like the Gumbo served in many restaurants within its borders: it is a strange mixture of many things. People in Pierre Cardin seem just as at-home in the French Quarter as the beggars in 10-year-old Levi's. ■




# "It's Better Than Not Writing" by David Gerrold



So there I was at the 36th Annual World Science Fiction Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, and I was on a panel with several other writers—and one of them was a woman I hadn't seen since I stopped going to *Star Trek* Conventions, (a person of excellent intention, but somewhat limited publishing experience) and she was talking about her work and how much she loved it.

She spoke with sincerity, and what the hell, she was telling the audience what she *knew* in the best way she could; only, for some reason (perhaps I was suffering from the onset of immediate cynicism) it all sounded so *banal*. She was saying things like, "I love writing. I find it exhilarating. I can hardly wait to get up in the morning and get back to my typewriter."

I could empathize with what she was saying; I'd been there myself; but it was a hot day (in Arizona, in August, it's *always* a hot day—even at midnight when it cools down to 105°) and my "mad monkey" impulse was rising.

It's the monkey-wrench urge. Sometimes things are running too smoothly, and we stop paying attention and start falling into those walking trances that pass for existence and we fail to realize that we're taking it all too seriously. At moments like that—say in the middle of the small talk at a cocktail party, or while standing in a crowded elevator—something in my mind snaps. It needs to holler "Bullshit!" at all the banal retentives in the world, to turn cliches upside-out and inside-down, to break loose from the maddeningly familiar because even the sense of *deja vu* has become a *deja vu* experience. It's the urge to hit Anita Bryant in the face with a chocolate cream pie because "God told me to." (And I'm only sorry someone else beat me to it.) It's the kind of impishness that makes me applaud exceptional rudeness in other drivers, cheering them and saluting their skill at being petty, because to do anything else would be to validate their rudeness with my anger, and I won't allow myself to be thrust back to a chimpanzee level of reaction. That makes me angry to be asked to be less than I am.

The "mad monkey" urge is a left-field impulse that refuses to accept the dreary, the mundane, the plastic and the obvious, and strikes back with the outrageous, the ridiculous, the unusual and the unexpected. It is, if nothing else, a last bastion of silliness, inspired or deliberate, against the deadening assult of the bland, because the only rational response to compulsive banality is irrationality. It confuses the hell out of the opposition, it momentarily shakes things up enough so that maybe they'll come down better, and if nothing else, at least it provides a few seconds of free entertainment.

—so I have learned to encourage this impulse, this "mad monkey" of mine; and long-time friends and companions have learned to recognize its onset by the appearance of a certain devilish expression on my face—a wild-eyed rictus like a twinkle gone cancerous—something like a grin, but with a lot more savagery and mischief in it.

I have been told about this expression of mine—I have never seen it myself, *except from the inside*, because no one has ever been quick enough to catch it with a camera—but I can feel it and I know what they're talking about. It's part of the mental set my mind switches into when the "mad monkey" rises. One psychiatrist friend of mine says, "When I see that look on your face, I know you're about to go for someone's jugular."

The impulse rises in the strangest places. Once, I was on a panel at a local convention with four other writers (all of whom were notorious for smoking funny-smelling cigarettes) and the topic was, "Can psychedelic drugs be a useful tool in science fiction writing?" and as each of us made our opening statements, each of *them* took great pains to disassociate himself from the material, carefully pointing out that since marijuana was illegal (very much so in 1969) in California, this all had to be strictly *theoretical*. Each one in turn made a point of stating that he had never smoked dope of any kind. Goodness! By the time the microphone got to me, the "mad monkey" was so obvious that the first three rows of listeners were already laughing, and all I could think to say was, "Well, I *have* smoked pot a few times, so at least I know what I'm talking about. The rest of you phonies, get off this panel."

The audience applauded.

That's the way the mad monkey works. Leaving me sitting there with a reputation for a fast-mouth and an embarrassed expression. "Did I really say *that*?"

I don't know where it comes from—

—well, yes, I do...

Once—a long time ago—because it was supposed to be one of the things to do, I wanted to be a cheap-shot artist. I wanted to be good at snappy put-downs because it seemed that that was the way to rise to the top of the structure of social interactions; if nobody could top you, you were the top. Yeah! I wanted to be the man with the last word. The shootist.

Maybe that's where the "mad monkey" impulse was born.

The cheap shot impulse has long been stifled (I hope)—or at least controlled. Cheap shots are not funny. They're not even fun. The truth is, cheap shots *hurt*. They hurt the victim and they hurt the shootist by desensitizing him to the feelings of others.

When you hurt people, they don't like to associate with you. Even if you don't hurt them directly, if they sense that you have the *ability* to hurt them, they become distant as a protective maneuver; they'll be courteous, but it'll be only a casual affection, not one based on real warmth.

So the cheap shots had to go—or they had to become something else. Maybe they became comedy shticks. It's fun to go for the laugh. Laughter is an immediate reaction and it's a *warm* one. And best of all, laughter makes people feel good. (Oh, I guess I still drop an occasional cheap shot now and then, old habits are hard to break, but now the shots are deliberately placed and given only when fairly earned; I no longer wholesale them as casually as before.)

—anyway, that's the genealogy of the "mad monkey." He's a sublimated aggression-signal; instead of getting too involved in the game of brag-and-threaten he deals in a joker—

—and so here was my colleague, basically a kind woman, a good woman, a writer of some note, and she was going on just a *wee* bit too long about how she *loved* writing, how much fun it was, and so on and so on, and I could see that not only myself, but the other panelists were wishing they had worn hip boots because it seemed to be getting awfully deep in here—and the "mad monkey" impulse came rising up in me like a cork released at 60 fathoms, and I opened my mouth and I said, "I have to disagree with you, Jackie, I really do. I guess we just have different attitudes about writing. I hate it. It's not fun at all. It's hard work. Back-breaking work. The most painful and unpleasant work in the world. I hate it. I loathe it. No, let me re-phrase that—I *L-O-A-T-H-E* writing!"

She looked at me, honestly puzzled. "But—but—then, *why* do you write?"

"Because—" And here, I gave her my biggest and most sincere grin as I paused, I really did love her at just that moment; it isn't always that people deliver their lines so accurately on cue. "Because—" I said, "—it's easier than *not* writing!"

The audience laughed. And then they applauded.

That part surprised me. But this was a science fiction audience. Many of them were would-be writers themselves. Many of them were writer-groupies. Many of them wrote for fanzines, and most of them read fanzines and were therefore privy to the musings of many of science fiction's sharpest minds. The point is, this was an audience that had learned to identify with writers as living, breathing human beings. We were *not* the grinning, pipe-smoking photographs from the pages of *Writer's Digest*, overstuffed corporations with only one story to tell, inhabiting overstuffed flesh that used to be someone with ideals—nor were we the *real* writers, the ones who sweated and slaved, undiscovered, starving in garrets while their masterpieces languished unread in some heartless publisher's slushpile! Jeez, no—how much despair does an audience need? No, we were just some of the boys: local liars swapping a few tales about the business of swapping tales. We were "just guys." They could talk to us and we would listen to them as if they were real people too. (You want to see amazement? The next time a 13-year-old asks you a question, turn to him, give him your full and undivided attention, and answer him as if he were another adult. You'll blow the kid away—why? Because


you'll probably have been the first person in his life to respond to him as if he were something other than a child. He'll respect you because you will have demonstrated that you respect him. But that's part of what science fiction fandom and conventions are all about.)

Whatever the case, this audience *understood* in that one moment of applause and delighted laughter that I was trying to say something *more* about the relationship of a writer to his craft. It is far *more* than "fun." It is *more* than just "exhilarating." Those are words you use for hobbies—like skydiving or hang gliding or moto-cross—but writing is no goddamned avocation!

When it comes to describing the heart and soul and feeling of writing, you need to use language that's a little more basic, a little more earthy. Writing is ball-busting hard work! It's no damn fun at all! *Fun* is for arts-and-crafts classes at summer camps! *Fun* is not a word to be used as an adjective to modify the noun *Art*-with-a-capital-*A*.

All right, look—yes, *Art* can be fun. Writing even can be fun. And it *is* exhilarating. And once in a while, yes, I even have days when I can hardly wait to get to the typewriter. Yes, it happens. I can even remember a time when there was nothing else in my life *except* my writing—and a lucky thing too, because it kept me from going a lot crazier than I would have been without it. But these are the highs of writing—and the word *fun* somehow trivializes them, somehow puts them on a par with skateboarding and going to Disneyland and making love with beautiful women—without ever really imparting to the listener the *real* feeling of the act of writing.

Here are a few more accurate evocations:

You study the chessboard for almost an hour—and suddenly, there is a thrilling surge of *Aha*! You see the move that will give you the opening you need; finally, after nearly forty moves, you begin to beat back the enemy attack across the board and you start closing in with your own exorable trap. You begin to feel buoyant, but your joy stems not from the fact that your opponent is Bobby Fischer and you're about to win your sixth game in a row of the World Chess Championship—but from the overwhelming beauty of the bloody mayhem you have sprung on him.

You are an astronaut on an orbiting space station; you have been assigned an extra-vehicular-activity, and you are hanging in space 1000 kilometers above the roof of the world. Houston asks you to stand by for a moment while they monitor certain results of your experiment. The voice of Mission Control tells you to "relax, enjoy the view." You do. And it's *fantastic*!

You have been writing for four months. You have almost completed 10,000 words, 400 pages, 18 chapters of unrelenting suspense and terror, and you suddenly realize that you can pay off all the running gags that you have been using for comedic relief almost simultaneously with the climactic release from horror that you have been building toward for so long. You accomplish both in the very last paragraph, almost the very last line of the book, and you chortle, holler, guffaw, and cackle excitedly for a good, self-satisfied hour.

You are a five-foot-nine-inch white man, playing pro basketball for the San Francisco Warriors and all night long you have been outscoring everybody on the court by your incredible inside moves. You never seem to be where they expect you and you keep sinking those astonishing thirty-foot shots! It's the last game of the championship playoffs, there are three seconds to go, your team is one point behind, you are thirty-five feet from the basket, and as you leap to throw the ball, somebody body-blocks you sideways; you try to correct in mid-air—the ball sails across the court and drops neatly through the hoop! The fans don't let your feet touch the ground for more than an hour.

That's what it feels like!

Do you begin to see why *fun* is such an inadequate word?

It doesn't even *begin* to relate to the experience. It's from a totally alien spectrum of meanings.

It is fun to *talk* about writing perhaps. It's fun to read a good book. But the *act* of writing is the culmination of months, years, sometimes decades of thought and preparation. It is not a casual act. The price of a typewriter and a ream of paper does not guarantee one's transformation into an author. Effective writing is a discipline as difficult and as demanding as piloting a 747 jet airplane. It may very well *be* fun—but the word *fun* carries with it the deceiving implication that the disciplines involved in achieving mastery of a craft—whether it be piloting a jet airplane or creating the internal reality of a novel—are somehow casual disciplines, easily learned.

We see the exhilaration of the chess champion or the astronaut or the basketball player—we do not see the months, years, and decades of what has become such an overriding way of life that even after the moment of achievement has been reached, the individual continues to train and prepare, casting about for even greater challenges, because the alternative to finding them is to start one's dying. The discipline is preparation for the individual and necessary challenges of the craft—and that discipline is *not* fun!

It is the achievement that is fun, the sense of accomplishment—not the discipline, not the labor.

"But—but—*why* do you write?" she asks. "If it *isn't* fun, why are you *doing* it?"

The question is so *rarely* asked.

Lay persons almost always ask the *other* question, the wrong one: "Where do you get your ideas?" I have never know a non-writer to think to ask, "*Why* do you write?" (And I have never known a writer who *needed* to ask.)

"Because—" and I will my most sincere grin at you as I answer, because this is a line I love to deliver, and I cannot help but love anyone who gives me the appropriate set-up, "Because—it's easier than *not* writing."

And that's the point of it all. It sounds like a joke, it's phrased like a joke, but after everything else, it's the only answer left that makes any sense.

I have given this answer before, many times. It is not original with me. Theodore Sturgeon said it first, and when he did, his listeners were puzzled; only a few of them understood what he was saying. Only the writers in the audience knew, only the painters, the singers, the dancers, only those who had involved their lives with the pursuit of one art or another knew why anyone pursued *any* art at all. The words may have been spoken first by Theodore Sturgeon, but the

answer to the *why* is a *because* that is common to all of us who write, to all of us who tap into our own wellsprings of the soul to share what we find there. It's a feeling, and emotion that can be evoked, almost described, but never explained—at least not to those who have not already experienced it themselves. And if you *have* experienced it, then it's not an explaination that you seek, but an analysis and understanding of the workings of the process itself *so you can do it more successfully the next time*.

That's why the applause of the audience startled. Their applause seemed to indicate they *understood*—and appreciated. Maybe they did. But I had expected puzzlement from the many and knowing nods only from the few. I had thought it was something of a secret *why* anyone wrote—a secret easily discovered by anyone who gets bitten by the bug, but still a secret nonetheless. But whatever the response, I was pleased with myself at having been able to say, "Because—it's easier than *not* writing!" Some jokes you tell for yourself.

It was a joke and a truth, both at the same time. Those are the best jokes of all—and probably the truest truths as well.

Writing *hurts*. Writing at your very best, at the very top of your form, hurts more than anything else in the world—it is like running a four-minute mile—it is a dreadful terrible physical and mental exertion and you are always poised on the brink of oxygen starvation and exhaustion and you keep yourself going only by your sheer will to continue—the pain is excruciating....That's why it feels so good when you stop. It feels *so good* just to stop and *cherish* the sense of accomplishment when you finally complete another piece of structure. And oh, God, *yes* it is positively exhilarating to feel finished and proud and pleased with yourself—oh, *yes*!—but that moment is so fleeting, so ephemeral. It disappears the moment you turn back to all those finished pages and start leafing through them, realizing that you still can do a little more to make them better, they still don't represent your best—and because there's still that extra little bit that you can do, you have to do it, because to do anything less than your best is dishonest. *Your name goes on this book*!

It's a goddamned rollercoaster. It can drive you manic—it can give you fits of depression so bad you climb into bed for a week and try to will yourself to death just to see if you can do it, and then two days later you're bouncing around the house plotting out a massive trilogy—

—but it's still easier than *not* writing!

Because *not* writing is to deny everything you know, everything you *believe*.

*Not* writing is to deny your ability to touch other human lives.

*Not* writing is to deny your worth as a person and the validity of your feelings.

*Not* writing is to deny the value of your own life.

*Not* writing is the most savage crippling of oneself that a writer can perform. It is not only a deliberate act of self-destructiveness; it is a perversion almost as bizarre and disgusting as celibacy. And it is as ultimately fatal as any draught of hemlock delivered from the hand of a gracious friend.

And the same is true for painters and *not* painting, and dancers and *not* dancing, and actors and *not* acting, and any other art or craft that a human soul can *care* about.

There is this driving *need* to reach out—somehow....

To a writer, it feels like this:

There are stories growing in your head. They are irridescent flowers and silk-winged butterflies. Or they are little red-eyed bats and warty-green bullfrogs and galumphing yellow elephants. Or supersonic dragons and horrid goblins and pirouetting faeries. Or towering sequoia trees and bloody Tyrannosaurus Rex and mighty Leviathan plowing through gray Atlantic seas. They are images and wisps of words, phrases and rememberances, scents and senses, giggles and hurts, turmoiled emotions and conflicts and essences and places and personalities—all unconnected, floating free and looking for a framework, a structure of some kind on which to pause and grow. These are all the possibilities that your soul can conceive and they grow inside your head like living things.

If you write, you give them a *place* to grow. You give them a validity, a *right* to exist. And most of all, by the act of writing, you give them *encouragement* to keep on existing and growing. They grow—oh, how fast ideas grow with proper nuturing! They grow quickly into relationships, then into patterns forming structures, complex and wonderful, and always as they grow, they keep on spawning huge litters of new possibilities, all of which also grow up to become whole new families of imagination. You encourage them all— you have no way of knowing which little cherub will become an archangel and which will become a terrifying demon, but you take the risk—because all of them, each of them are *you*, each single piece expressed in different form so you can recognize its essence. The act of nuturing these pieces is the act of cherishing oneself. You can encourage them and the space inside your head becomes a wondrous magic place, all full of moments so exciting that you can hardly wait to share them with your closest and most special friends. The very act of giving these thoughts the validity of existence encourages more to come and keep them company. The imagination grows when it is exercised—and the heart and soul grow with it.

—and if you *don't* write, if you thrust these thoughts away like an unkind, uncaring parent, then they wander homelessly inside your head, looking futilely for a place to live. Some of them find places, but never the *right* places—they attach themselves to whatever places they can find, parts of your life perhaps, and push and pull them out of shape, creating pains you never knew you had and cannot figure out the reasons for. But most of these lost possibilities just keep moving on like lost refugees, displaced persons of the heart, until eventually they die. And where they die, they stay. They lie there decaying, moldering away...rotting and festering until they stink up the inside of your head with a stench so foul and loathesome that you begin to wonder if H. P. Lovecraft has been emptying his garbage there.

*I don't want dead things stinking up the inside of my head*!!!

And that's what *not* writing feels like.

Do you begin to understand the *why* of it? Do you begin to understand why I say *it's easier than not writing*!

I never wanted to be a writer. There were a lot of other things I wanted to do instead—


—and maybe I was exposed to too many Walt Disney movies when I was a child (and I mean the *real* Walt Disney movies, not the plastic imitation ones; the ones where old Uncle Walt sat down with his animators and acted out the stories for them himself and supervised every step of the production because his name was going on the credits first and sometimes he even threw out whole sequences because they weren't good enough to be in a Walt Disney movie; those were the ones worth remembering)—but I also remember feeling cheated, *really* cheated, when I found out that all those wondrous feats of magic that I so thoroughly believed in were only...*make-believe*. Pixie dust was only animated twinkles, twenty-four unmoving drawings every second; nothing except illusion, and it was we the audience who brought the life to those illusions in our own heads. And I felt *cheated*! But they did it so brilliantly that in that moment each of us was blinded to our own potentials to make our own magics. Oh, damn them for lying to us! And damn them again for being so wonderful that we accepted their illusions as a better magic than our own!

Their lies were just too compelling! And I wanted there to be *real* magic in the world—not illusions—the kind of magic that turns puffy pumpkins into glittering carriages and transforms silly mice into magnificent stallions and creates golden castles out of thin air. I wanted there to be the kind of magic where wonderous things could happen simply because you needed them to and you were dreamer enough to wish upon a star.

But here instead were only gaudy falsehoods and illustions....

It was only make-believe. It was only flickering shadows.

The screen had never been a window at all, it was still only a wall.

And yet—

—if the magic *wasn't* real, then why did it look so damnably convincing?

I was curious, perhaps *too* curious for my own good. I began to study the craft of illusion: animation, special effects, acting, editing, directing, and even eventually storytelling—because there had to be *some* kind of magic working to make the illusions look so real. Was there really a storyteller's magic? Or was the magic in the eyes of the beholders? I desperately wanted that answer, desperately wanted to find the source of whatever kind of magic there was in this world— to tap into it and use it. And something else—I needed to know where it came from and who it belonged to. Whose magic was it anyway? Whose heads did it belong in?

Eventually, *this* is what I learned:

The real magic isn't on the screen or stage or in the pages of the books. It's in the *process* of creation. It exists *first* for all the artists, all the writers, all the actors, all the painters, all the poets, all the others who *create* new things. Where there was nothing, now there's *something*, and the creation of a piece of art is as close to *real* magic as any human being has ever come.

And it's *equally* in the process of the viewer's appreciation and enjoyment—for he recreates the magic every time he listens to the telling of a story or the singing of a song or he opens his eyes to any other act of *love* that we call *art*.

It is the *process* that is magic—both creating and appreciating. It's my magic. I cherish it. It's special. In it I have rediscovered the source of all illusion—it's a kind of faith, and courage too, and most especially *love*. It's a lot simpler and a lot more basic than all those other bits of flash and dazzle, but the act of involvement in the *process* works a much more powerful spell upon the listeners and wizards both—and that's the *joy* of it, that great expansion of the human heart and soul.

And so the process goes and I go with it. As I work, it works on me. Sometimes I hear the magic process speaking to me in the voice of Alec Guinness, saying, "Use the Force, asshole!" The magic isn't always patient. It's demanding. But I wouldn't have it any other way. The process is a terrific magic because with it I can make the most marvelous things come true. All I need to do is imagine them and they exist—first within my head, then eventually in yours. I don't even need any special words, no *Bibbidi-bobbidi-boo*, because I can use plain old everyday words, ordinary words, and make them work extraordinary magics too! The English language is one terrific set of electric trains!

Fun? Good Lord! It is not *fun*—it is *living*! *Fun* doesn't even begin to describe the joy and excitement of the *real* magic that happens when you can reach out and touch another human soul with your own thoughts and feelings, and once in a while actually *grasp* a moment of common understanding! And if you can do *that*—if you have the *capability* to do that—*then not doing so is the equivalent of dying*.

And I'm not ready to die! *No way*! I am certainly not going to go willingly! I am going to stay here as long as I can and make as big a mark as possible on this world, so that other people will know that I was here—and that mark is going to be that other people's lives are somehow better for my having been a part of them!

So I write. Because it's the *best* thing I know how to do. And the most *important* too. I write almost every day. Sometimes only a few hours, sometimes twelve or more. I write and sometimes I hate writing and sometimes I don't, but no matter what, I keep on writing because no matter how I feel, ultimately in the *act* of writing I am making magic. I am channeling all my unformed chaotic energies—and it matters not a whit whether they are positive or negative energies, they are still raw power to be used—I am channeling all those roaring, screaming energies into crystallized moments of fear and fantasy, beauty and horror—and that act of transformation is a magic act. *Magic* because the results are always positive. No matter what the polarity of the energies of chaos, the results of the process—at least in *my* typewriter—are *always* positive.

In those wondrous, marvelous moments of experience remembered and experience created, I learn how deep it's possible for me to *feel*—and rediscover once again just how thoroughly I am *alive*!—and those are the moments that *transcend* exhilaration and make all the pain and rage worthwhile.

And that's the *real* magic!

Now, do you begin to see...?

Once having known that kind of knowledge of oneself, how could anyone bear life *without* it? ■

# Grenadiana

by Grant Carrington



**Death And Designation In Pine Mountain**

In July, 1978, I received a letter from Mike Bishop, in which he mentioned that he was reading Ernest Becker's *The Denial of Death*, and that he was impressed by it. I had read it two years earlier, and I didn't feel the same way. But I must be some kind of maverick, for the book had won the Pulitzer Prize for non-fiction in 1974.

The book is Becker's attempt to replace Freud's emphasis on sex and the Oedipal complex with Man's fear of death, which Becker claims distinguishes Man from other animals. Although they recognize death when it occurs, they have (as far as we can tell) no comprehension of their own future death.

Man, on the other hand, can forsee his own distant death, if not its circumstances. Furthermore, Man "not only lives in this moment, but expands his inner self to yesterday, his curiosity to centuries ago, his fears to five billion years from now when the sun will cool, his hopes to an eternity from now." In other words, Man can create science fiction, where he deals with the very real probability that not only will he personally die, but so will his progeny, his entire species, and eventually all life.

But much science fiction deals with this prospect with hope, even with the possibility of eventually somehow escaping the implosion of the universe back to the Cosmic Egg (as in Poul Anderson's *Tau Zero*). Becker, on the other hand, repeats over and over his theme of terror and helplessness of man, of the futility of existence.

Is it any wonder that when I visited Mike Bishop in his home in Pine Mountain, Georgia, a few weeks later, Mike told me he had recently been waking up in the middle of the night, suddenly aware that he was going to die? Certainly not, for Mike Bishop is 32, an age when the small indications that one has passed one's physical peak begin to add up. The person who is in his mid-thirties can no longer ignore those signals his body is sending him, telling him that he isn't quite as young as he used to be—the muscle pulled playing softball takes a week to heal instead of a day; his hairline is beginning to recede; the wrinkles on his forehead don't smooth out when he quits frowning. Dozens of little notifications from the body's Aging Department, no one of which is important unto itself, but all put together, they say: "You're growing old, boy." And somewhere along the line there's that last little straw, and the camel's back breaks, and you suddenly realize that you're dying. You're really dying! You aren't that special someone that you've always thought you were—that somehow you were the one who was going to beat the odds and cheat Old Man Death—and the thought of dying becomes a very personal one. Number One will die.

This isn't to say that it doesn't happen to some extent earlier in life. We are all aware on an intellectual level that we're going to buy the farm some day. How many nights did I lay in my teenage bed, listening to the thumping of my heart, waiting for it to suddenly miss a beat, becoming finally so frightened I rolled over to a position where I couldn't hear it?

I thought I was aware that I was going to die when I was in my twenties, but it was intellectual awareness. Suddenly, sometime in my thirties, it all came home with a vengeance, and the awareness wasn't some mental exercise, but I *knew* with a gut feeling, with an emotional certainty, that *I* was going to die. As my father had, as H. G. Wells had, as William Shakespeare had, as millions and billions before me had. I was no different.

**What Fools These Mortals Be**

Or was I?

Isn't it possible that a means for immortality will be discovered in my own lifetime?

First of all, let's make a few definitions. What is immortality? What is meant by the term? It has a nice ring to it, but it is as undefined as the mathematical terms for infinity and eternity. How can you know you're immortal until you've lived forever? (And does that mean living through the implosion of the universe or its heat death?)

No, immortality, for practical purposes, doesn't mean living forever. It means living for a very long time, say, two centuries on up. Two centuries doesn't sound like much in cosmological terms but since it's only slightly beyond our grasp at the moment, it's a good starting point.

It would be nice if our Immortal were protected from accidents and violent death as well as debilitating diseases, but that may well prove impractical, especially accidents and violent death. It would mean maintaining life systems at their current levels, replacing cells as they die, especially those of the brain. Perhaps it would also mean

a rejuvenation, so that a 60-year-old would once again be, physically, 20 years old.

(There is, of course, the possibility of organ transplants. Ignoring the problem of where the transplants would come from, there's the question of how much organ transplant trauma a body can take. Similar questions occur for artificial organs (and, in any case, I'm talking about only the possibility of an immortality in one's own body). There is the possibility of ego transfer to another body or even to a computer, and, finally, the possibility of Mankind someday "evolving" into disembodied consciousnesses that can float ethereally through the universe at will forever and ever and ever. But (repeat) this is not physical immortality within one's own body.)

So, basically, for the purposes of this discussion, we assume that an "immortality" process has been developed, which allows you to live a thousand years or more in the same body you were born with, at an approximate physical age of 25. Futhermore, an immunity to most known diseases is included in the immortality (except, probably, the common cold). On the other hand, you are not protected from any kind of violent death (although the body might be able to heal more quickly from non-fatal wounds) or any new disease that might come along...and you are probably not fully protected from cancer.

Why not? Cancer is basically the result of cell division gone wild. The cancerous growth is feeding on tissue that (eventually) you need to live. Immortality of the type described above is likely to be nothing else but a controlled cancer; brain cells (which do not replace themselves) induced to divide at a controlled rate so that you don't become an Immortal Vegetable, other organ and muscle cells replacing themselves at a rate to keep you at optimum performance. In such a closely-balanced system, it's not unlikely that things occasionally will get out of whack, and some cells will start reproducing at a cancerous rate.

How would people live with such an immortality? Very, very carefully. They would probably live close to medical facilities, in case of that cancerous emergency. They would protect themselves as much as possible from physical violence, living hermetic existences in rooms full of rounded corners. No knives or even needles. Certainly, they would not want to visit other planets. Disregarding the dangers of the trip itself, there's the possibility of encountering diseases to which they are not immune.

Since the Immortals will probably control money (else how would they be able to afford immortality?), they will also control the world. There would be no interplanetary exploration, for fear of what the explorers would bring back to Earth. Naturally, population would be closely controlled, so that the Immortals wouldn't be threatened by overpopulation.

(Reproduction among the Immortals may well be controlled to the point of extinction. After all, Mother Nature is not a member of women's lib. Men can keep producing viable sperm for most of their lives, whereas women are born with a fixed number of eggs, most of which never even leave the ovary. It will probably be possible to extend a woman's child-bearing days well past 40, but there is a limit. If men have a limit, it's well beyond that of women.)

All of this sounds pretty boring. Eventually, some Immortals will become so bored they will commit suicide, either directly or by getting involved in dangerous activities, such as spaceship racing. Those who hold onto their immortality will probably be dull, uninspired, and fearful people.

All, in all, it looks as if immortality's a mug's game.

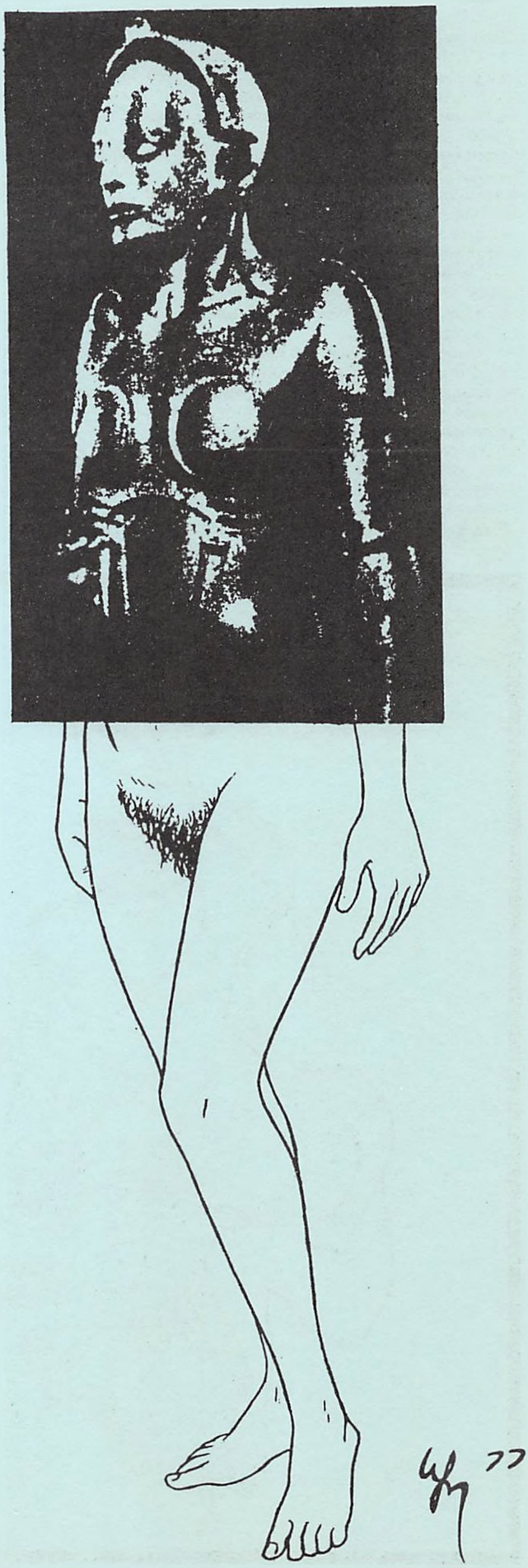
**If Only The Good Die Young, Thank God I'm Evil**

All the above may sound like sour grapes. Although it's possible that a form of immortality may exist before I die, it may not. Even worse, it may arrive while I'm still alive, but too old to undergo it—perhaps the trauma of an operation needed for immortality would be too much for an 80-year-old body.

Sour grapes, it may be. It certainly is a way of convincing myself that I really don't want to be immortal anyway, that I'd rather be dead. And who would want to be an Immortal in the average 80-year-old body? There would be the hope that someday a rejuvenation would be invented, but how long could you live with that hope before it became sour?

But I *was* immortal once. As I said before, when I was in my teens and twenties, I felt as if I'd live forever. Death was something that happened to other people; intellectually, I knew I would eventually die, but I didn't really believe it, down in my gut, down in the very core of my being.

Perhaps others feel it all their lives: Glen Cook has told me that he's been angry ever since he was in his teens over the fact that he was going to die—it seemed unfair; and Al Thorburn has told me that



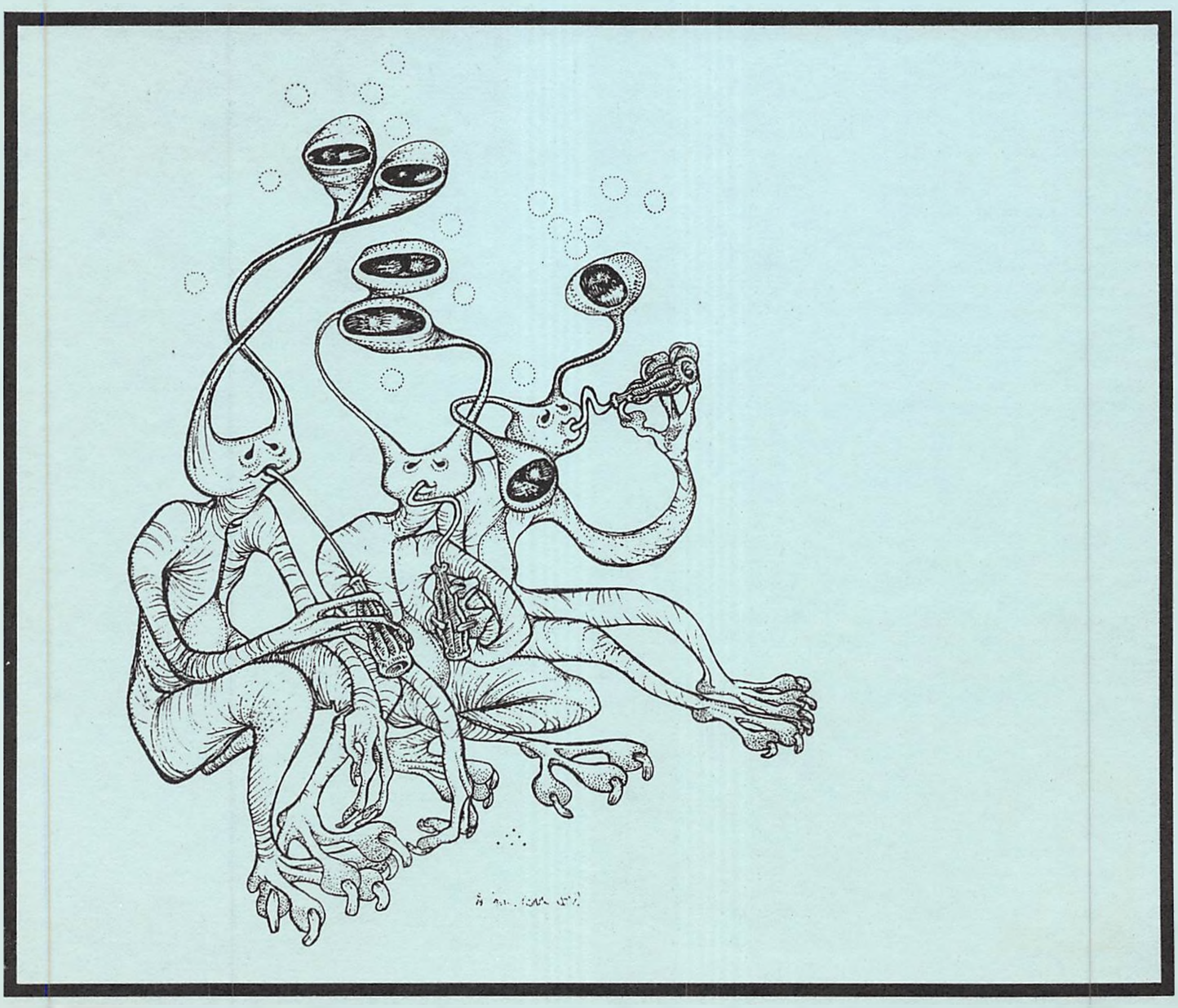
he's known it all his life—perhaps he has, and perhaps he only knows it intellectually, as I did, and the gut feeling of his own personal death has yet to touch his core.

Psychological texts, however, indicate that it is fairly common for people to become aware of their mortality on a gut level during their thirties or forties. Then a kind of panic sets in (I will not speak for the ladies: I'm sure something similar happens to women around this time, but its symptoms may be different): suddenly the confirmed bachelor marries a 15-year-old girl; the happily-married husband starts having affairs; the armchair athlete starts running marathons on city streets. There is a frantic attempt to capture one's lost and misspent youth. (Youth is *always* misspent, no matter what one does.) Eventually, this period passes, though it may take years, and the individual begins planning for his remaining years (which may be more than those he's already lived), taking care of that slowly-decaying body, or perhaps falling into a lethargy of Sunday-afternoon football games that only speeds up the rate along the path to his grave.

Something strange has happened, however. When I was in my twenties, I felt I would live forever. Nonetheless, I was intent on becoming immortal in the only way possible. I was going to write a treatise on mathematics that would make Einstein look like a grade-schooler; I was going to write literature that would make Shakespeare look like a writer of poor children's literature. Now I'm forty, and I *know* I'm not going to live forever. Frequently while driving, I am all too aware of how easy it would be to become just a piece of bloody meat on the highway. (Indeed, it's a wonder I've survived as long as I have; at the lab, they call me "Crash" Carrington.) Barring accident, I expect to live a physically active life past 80, since I come from long-lived families on both sides: one of my great-uncles was running a large dairy farm until shortly before he died at 96. (No one, as far as I know, has ever made it to 100 in either family, however: I plan to be the first.) Yet, knowing that I will probably never be physically immortal, I am less concerned now with literary immortality. My goals are lower: I will be happy to have a few books published, and it will be nice if I can make enough money writing to buy some land up in the Georgia-Carolina mountains and live there with a couple of white German shepherds, and the sunsets, and run occasionally in a road race or two. (I would like to run a marathon, but I doubt I have the will power.) Living and enjoying every day is more important to me now than showing the world how brilliant I am. And that's not surprising, for now I know that my days are numbered, even if I don't know what that number is, and all the literary immortality in the world won't do me any good when I'm dead and gone and buried in my grave. After all, when Dylan Thomas was my age, he'd been dead for a year.

Don't get me wrong. I don't plan to go gentle into that good night. I plan to give the Man with the Sickle a hard fight when he comes for me. That's why you'll find me out running in the woods at three in the morning, why you would have found me a couple of weeks ago running a five-mile trail run over hills and through icy water. That's why I'll keep writing, in the hopes that I *will* write that book that will make the world forget about Shakespeare. I'll keep fighting—I do want that literary immortality, I do want your approval.

But I want to enjoy this evening's sunset even more. ■



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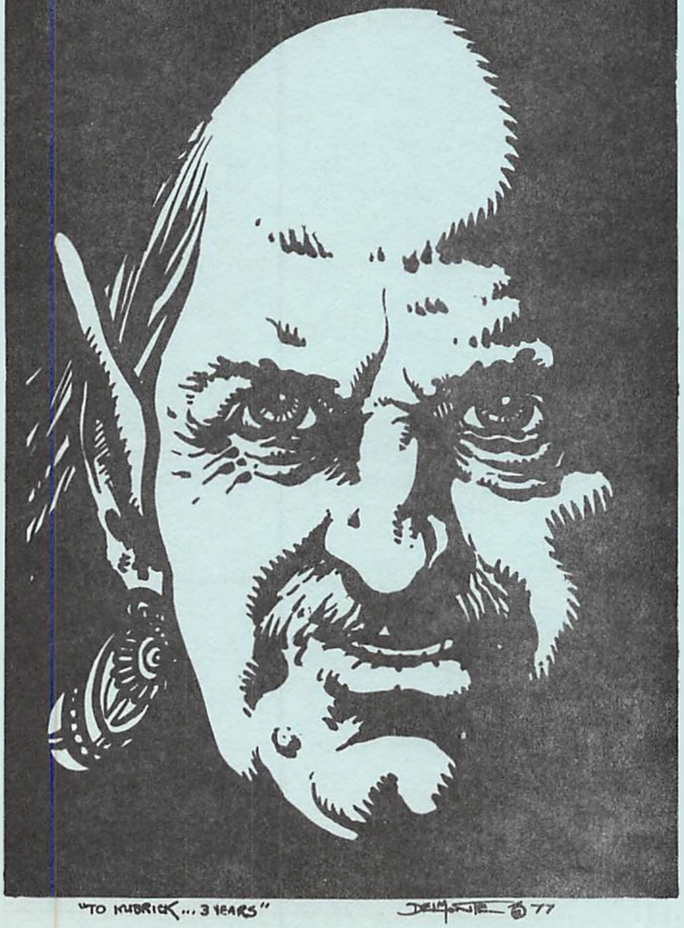
# The Mothers And Fathers Italian Association

## Thomas F. Monteleone






**Brass Brassieres And Cathode Rays**

*For those of you who remember the previous incarnations of this column, let me first say that it feels good to be back. It has been almost two years since my last installment of MAFIA, and a hell of a lot of water and pollutants have passed under the bridges since then. More, in fact, than I could (or would want to) go into at this point. Part of the reason for MAFIA's hiatus is my own personal life and its attendant happenings, the other is the sporadic life of* Knights *itself. In other words, neither I nor Mike Bracken live for the production of fanzines, but would like to keep a hand in it if possible.*

*For those of you who do* not *remember my columns of yon, let me do a quick briefing of what they were (and will be) like. Basically, I write a column in each issue about any topic which rankles, amuses, or in some way touches my like in connection with sf and the people thereupon involved. I have columnistic freedom (to coin a phrase, I suppose) to write whatever I please, usually managing to endear and enrage different parts of my readership. Which is just fine with me. If I have learned anything over the years of professional writing, it is that you will* never *write anything that everyone likes, or conversely, that everyone loaths.*

*That goes double for fan writing.*

*And so, my friends and cavilists, the topic for today's discussion is sf and the world of Television, as might be deduced from the semi-cryptic subtitle above.*

Unlike many of my fellow sf writers, I have had some contact with the subculture which is responsible for the programming and productions which grace our Zeniths, XL-100's, and Trinitrons. I have had this (mis)fortune because I have a wonderful film and television agent, Margot Van der Meulin, who loves my stuff and lives/works in Manhattan. Margot knows practically everyone in the TV industry worth knowing, including such notables as Freddie Silverman and Aaron Goldberg. Over the past several years, Margot has labored to sell some of my material to the Network folks in the form of both movies-for-TV and series scripts. Although she has been, as of this writing, unsuccessful, I have learned *mucho* about the entire industry, and the byzantine processes of thought and bureacracy which are at work on the Avenue of the Americas, where the various Network "towers" are located.

The first thing one has to do in order to get a show on TV is, of course, to Know Somebody. I Know Somebody: Margot, who in turn Knows many Somebodies. I take one of my stories or novelettes, and convert it into what the TV people call a "treatment," which is just a short synopsis of the narrative, which explains everything in terms of *scenes*, i.e. very visually. A treatment need not be longer than 7 to 10 pages, and there are several reasons for this: chiefly that TV execs are *very* busy people, and they don't have time to read lengthy, definitive prose. They also don't have very long attention spans, it seems.

So that is Rule One: keep your treatment short and to-the-point. Dostoevsky would not have done well at ABC.

The next thing to do is write a treatment that is *not* "too sophisticated for our audiences." That quote is a line which has been leveled at me from countless Network Programmers and Producers. This is surprising, not because I have not written intelligent, imaginative material (because I have), but because virtually *all* of the TV execs *are* intelligent and discriminating people. The problem turns on several Beatitudes of Television which all the Networks live and die by. The foremost being that the TV audiences are an immense herd of doltish sods with the perceptive powers of, perhaps, a soy bean. It is often called the Lowest Common Denominator theory of TV programming, and the operative word is "Common," as in The Common Man, whom we all know, as Thoreau so eloquently wrote, lives a life of quiet desperation. It is because of this thinking that the viewing public is treated to all manner of nonsense from *Laverne and Shirley* to *Man from Atlantis* to *Battlestar Galactica*. It is a belief that a program is viable on TV *only if* even the slope-browed are able to derive "viewing pleasure" from the show's content.

I, among many others, don't believe this kind of crap. I think most people watch television because they have been *conditioned* for almost two generations to *watch television* each and every evening. They have forgotten that there are other things they could be doing, and therefore they watch whatever bullshit the Networks throw at them. The "ratings" are simply more bullshit: what does it matter that the Nielsen families prefer *Laverne and Shirley* to *WKRP in*

*Cincinnati*? That's like saying more people liked the Edsel than the Nash, or that drowning ranks above fire as a preferable manner of demise.

The end result is still the same, friends. Crap is crap, no matter how you slice it.

It is my learned opinion that if tomorrow night, by some arcane means, when everyone sat down after dinner and switched on the cancer rays, everything was changed, i.e. none of the programming currently available was being offered. Instead of *Soap* and *Hello, Larry* everyone was forced to watch: Opera; Shakespeare; The American City Ballet; The Boston Symphony Orchestra; Plays by O'Neil, Odets, and Saroyan; lectures and slideshows by Carl Sagan, Adrian Desmond, Louis Leaky, and Kenneth Clark; and selected kinescopes from *Playhouse 90, Alcoa Presents,* and the *Dick Powell Theatre.*

And guess what? I'm willing to bet that almost everyone would *still* watch their televisions.

Oh, I'm sure there would be some defections for a few weeks ("Hey, whatzis horzeshid!? Where's *B.J. enna Bear*?!"), but that eventually, things would calm down, and people would return to the pasttime that has become as much a part of their lives as brushing their teeth. People would watch Olivier and Ozawa, Baryshnikov and Kirkland, Sagan et al for the same reason they watch the Fonz: they would be *forced* to watch it.

And rather than watch nothing, they would watch *something*. Because we have become a nation of Watchers.

And don't tell me that all that cultural programming is available now, and that people would watch opera and theatre on PBS if they really wanted to. That's a cop out. The point is this: People don't watch anything because they *want* to, they watch because that's what they *think they should be doing.*

PBS television is like, for most people, the Stock Exchange. It is another country, a place where Other People do things differently than the rest of us. The natural reaction is to avoid PBS programing in the same mindless, automatic fashion that most of us flip past the daily quotations of the NYSE and the AMEX on the way to the Comics.

Which brings us back to what I was originally trying to say before getting wound up: don't write anything that smacks of anything heavy or truly intellectual.

Rule Two: Make your treatment as "safe" and formula-tried-and-true as possible—what worked before will work again, and don't forget that slavish imitation is the key to success.

William James would not be appreciated at NBC.

All of which finally brings me around to the Brass Brassieres.

The majority of the projects I have offered to the TV People have been sf, horror, or some kind of fantsy material.

This is like the Kiss of Death, friends.

You get responses like: "Sci-Fi never makes it on TV."

And: "People don't understand this kind of thing."

And even "All this Space Stuff is too expensive to produce."

And this is almost before they have even looked at your treatment, much less read it.

My usual rejoinder to the TV People, while we sit at lunch in the CBS Executive Cafeteria munching on filet mignon and asperagus hollandaise, or at the Twenty One Club having prime rib, is: "Well, what about *Twilight Zone*?"

The TV People usually grab for their water glass, pause, and mumble something like: "Well, that was almost twenty years ago, and besides, Serling didn't really write Sci-Fi."

Sometimes you get the urge to grab people by the throat and simply squeeze.

You can tell these sultans of crap that, yes, *Twilight Zone* was on almost 20 years ago, but Christ!, it is *still on* in every major city in the country, being rerun in syndication on independent stations, and carrying a large share of the viewers every night that it runs (which is usually five nights a week).

You can tell them, over and over, that Serling *did* write sf, and they don't seem to hear you.

To the TV People, it isn't sf if there aren't spaceships and monsters, and chase-scene after nauseous chase-scene. Of course most of the "sci-fi" on the Tube has been a failure. Look at the track record of what has been on (all of which was written and produced by writers and producers who don't even have the slightest inclination of what sf actually *can* be): *Lost in Space, Man From Atlantis, The Invaders, Logan's Run, My Favorite Martian, UFO, Space: 1999, Battlestar Galactica, The Night Stalker,* and Others that my memory refuses to remember.

*Star Trek* was certainly a success, and regardless of my own opinion of the series format of the show, the reason it achieved a modicum of respectability in terms of what TV sf *could be* is because it was written by **science fiction writers.**

*Outer Limits* was also critically successful because it was an attempt to deal with themes and ideas which resonate through the field of sf literature, and was also scripted by people in the genre. People who *know.*

And of course there is *Twilight Zone*. Nothing needs to be said about this fine show, other than there has been nothing like it in the history of sf-and-television.

The problem is that there are very few people in the TV machinery who know *anything* about sf, fantasy, and horror. Mention Heinlein, Asimov, Bradbury, or Clarke, to most of them and they think you're talking about some esoteric wines from Europe and California. And there is a catch twenty-two at work: you can't get on TV unless you have already done something *for* TV. So the only people who get a crack at doing anything smacking of sci-fi for TV are those clowns who have already pandered their garbage-formula-series on Tv in past "seasons."

Which brings us to the third rule, which is, although facetious, probably also true.

Rule Three: Don't write a treatment which contains any *real* elements of sf, fantasy, or horror. If they do read it, they'll just ask: "Yeah, but where's the spaceships?"

All of which makes it sound like the situation is fairly hopeless, and I suppose I'm being unfair in my cynicism to make it sound like that. The truth being that I do believe there is some hope for sf et al on TV. In spite of what I have already detailed, inroads have been made. As I write this, Charles L. Grant and myself have a series under consideration with Twentieth Century Fox. The series was created almost two years ago, and has never been bounced by any of the TV People. They all like it, but have been reluctant to go ahead and produce it because Charlie and I are unknowns in the TV World. But like all businesses, to get the break it sometimes comes down to Who You Know, and Charlie and I met a very nice gentleman named Don Wallace, who has written many things for TV, including years and years on the scripts of one of ABC's soap operas, and who is currently directing a few things for 20th Century TV. Don loves our series proposal and is currently hyping it with *his* friends at Fox.

It is possible that we might make it on the air, or at least get some development money for a pilot.

It is also possible that this is just a pipe-dream.

Other irons in the fire include a series created by Llewellyn Productions, a production company of which I am a member. The series is based on a character created by Seabury Quinn, and is called *The Casebooks of Jules de Grandin.* We have written a batch of treatments, character logs, and story projections for this show, and it has climbed all the way up the NBC ladder to the final hatchetman, Silverman himself. If he says yes, we go. If he says no...we also go, but in a different direction.

I have also helped develop an anthology series very similar to the Serling format called *Darkside*, which Warner Brothers is interested in producing. Any or all of the above could succeed or fail. The odds of making it are of course enhanced if and when any of the above are accepted for some kind of development.

The point I am trying to make is that you can beat your head against the wall with the TV People for *years* before getting a definite yes or no out of them, and then wait another year before you find out *why* they did what they did. Television does not understand sf, and it is doubtful that they ever will. Rod Serling was a maverick, a brilliant young, wealthy scriptwriter, who was *not* representative of the TV People.

There are a thousand million horror stories about the TV industry, and if any of you are conversant with Harlan Ellison's marvelous two-volumn work on TV, *The Glass Teat*, you have no doubt read about some of them. Harlan, by way of digression, is an enigma to the TV People. Obviously impressed with his talent, his vision, and his ballsy charisma, they have given him assignment-after-assignment in TV, which he has completed with great success. (One of his *Outer Limits* scripts, the one *everybody* remembers with Robert Culp, "Demon with a Glass Hand," won a Screen Writer's Guild Award.) But Harlan does not sit well with the TV People because he is an independent thinker, an artist who will not allow his work to be compromised. He does not take TV's litany of crap, and has not been as successful on TV as he deserves to be.

This is unfortunate because Harlan Ellison is exactly the kind of Serling-type personality necessary to bring in a new era of good sf to the TV screen.

Well, hell, maybe I can do it...?

The fact remains that somebody *has* to do it, or there will never be anything of quality in our field for us to enjoy on TV. ■

# A Disease Called Perry Rhodan

## by Frank C. Bertrand

In chapter seven of the first *Perry Rhodan* series novella, "Enterprise Stardust," (Ace Books, 1969) by K. H. Scheer and Walter Ernsting, Major Perry Rhodan and fellow Space Eplorations Command astronaut Captain Reginald Bell view a large alien spacecraft which has evidently made a crash landing on the Moon. Bell's reaction is collapse, incoherent babbling, trembling, and sobbing. Rhodan's is momentary disequilibrium from sudden confrontation with the fact that they, the human race, were no longer alone. After both have recovered from their initial shock and regard the alien ship with the "sober eyes" of multi-talented scientists, Bell philosophizes out loud, "Do you have any idea what we proud little men are in comparison to those beings over there?" (p. 59). Rhodan's sharp response to this is noteworthy:

> *This improbable spaceship has not at all proved yet that its occupants are more intelligent than we*...Ignorance is by no means the same as stupidity. *You should take into account whether the ignorant person has been given the opportunity for learning, and even if he has had the opportunity, it would still depend on the degree of wisdon possessed by the caretakers of knowledge. One cannot assimilate more knowledge than is supplied by one's teachers.* (p. 59, emphasis mine)

This retort is more than just an anthropocentic argument; it is also an apt explication of *why* the ongoing *Perry Rhodan* series, some 124 books to date in the U. S., should be diagnosed as a leukemia in modern science fiction and treated accordingly.

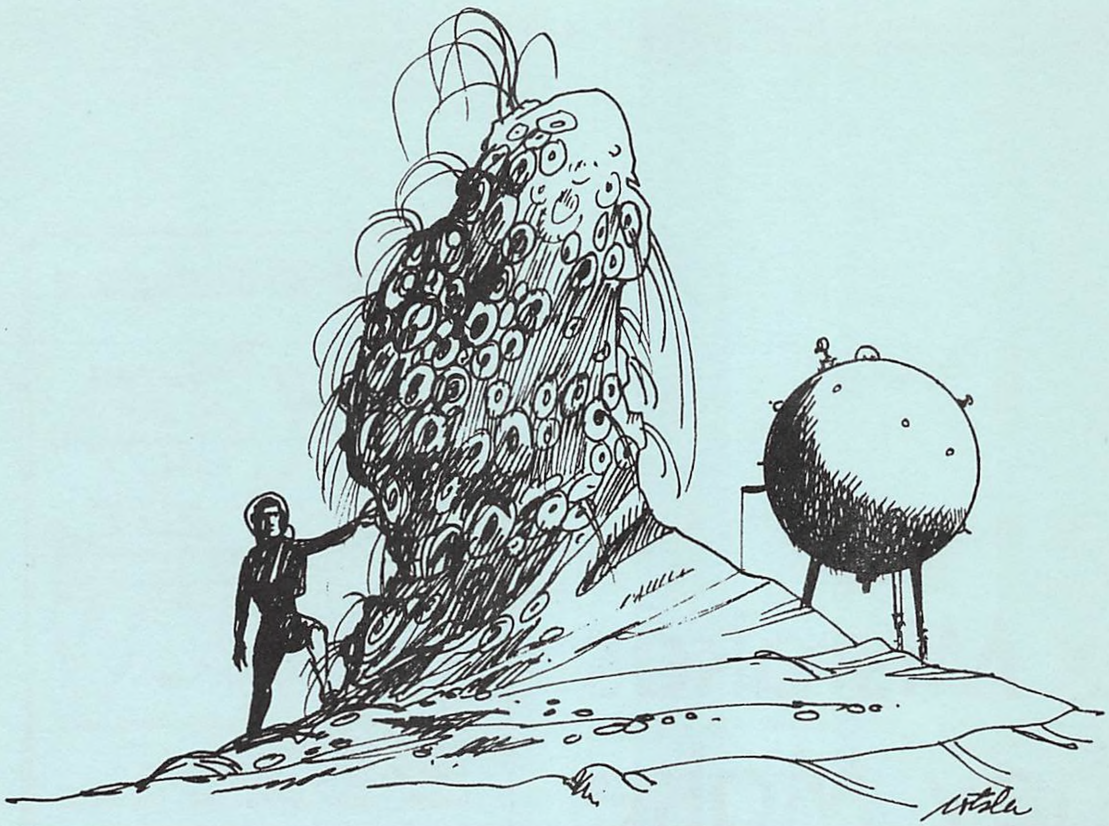
The plot-line of "Enterprise Stardust" is a simplistic tale of the first manned spaceship, the *Stardust*, to land on the Moon. The three opening chapters are explanatory and detail preparations, crew members, lift-off, trip, and touch-down. The first major complication occurs midway through chapter three when remote control signals from Earth for the *Stardust's* turnabout maneuver are blanked out by a strong jamming signal, causing an autopilot landing sixty miles beyond the lunar South Pole instead of the planned landing near Newcomb Crater. Rising action proceeds from here to the climax in chapter seven, said climax related in the opening paragraph of this essay. The outcome or resolution fills the concluding three chapters, explaining why the alien craft was on the Moon, who and what its occupants are, and setting the basis for all that follows in the *Perry Rhodan* series as, in chapter ten, the *Stardust* returns to Earth with its four astronauts *and* one alien aboard. At this point something begins to take shape in Perry Rhodan's mind's eye:

> *In images still remote and nebulous, he saw gigantic interplanetary vessels race into the skies and heard the hum of their faster than light engines; and he knew, proudly, that these were built by human hands. He saw a globel government. He glimpsed a world of peace and prosperity, a world that had earned galactic recognition.* (p. 98)

The point-of-view for most of this is one of limited omnisciency; the authors tell their story *through* Major Perry Rhodan, the hero, the protagonist. His responses reflect what happens in the novella; the story filters through his consciousness. But Rhodan's reactions are about all the reader *is* given. What little else one learns about Perry Rhodan is his age, 35; his job, United States Space Force test pilot; his educational background, nuclear physicist with a subsidiary specialty in ion reaction engines. It is also mentioned in passing that he was the first astronaut to circumnavigate the Moon. The central, most important character, then, ends up functioning as though he were a one-dimensional resident of a Skinner-box. No infancy, puberty, or adolesence; he enters center stage as a full grown 35 year old military scientist.

More curious is the fact that physical descriptions of Perry Rhodan in "Enterprise Stardust" are confined almost entirely to his face, from a "bright twinkle in his eyes" (p. 14) to he "stood smiling up at the blue sky" (p. 98). In between there are two references to his "lean and narrow face," and many to do with his "famous grin": "laughing bitterly," "smiled blankly," "mask like grin," "sarcastic smile," "impertinent grin," "faint smirk." These adjectives and various of Rhodan's actions point toward his truer nature, a cold, impersonal, autocratic one. He thinks "with the steely precision of a machine" (p. 79). He has "senses as keen as an animal's" (p. 21), and at one point "the serpent's eye stare of a merciless conqueror" (p. 87). He wonders "about a certain *pragmatic* issue" (p. 84, emphasis mine) and states that "through no fault of my own, I can claim a high IQ" (p. 71). Finally, he notes that the Moon and the absolute vacuum of space "were the dangers to mind and soul that one had to accept somehow. One either rose above them and adjusted to them with *stoic* unconcern or perished" (p. 48, emphasis mine).

It should be expected, then, to find scattered throughout "Enterprise Stardust" what might best be labeled "Perry's Platitudes." For instance, "Let's use the *intelligent* way and discuss our differences" (p. 72), "The situation no longer appears fantastic, if one looks at it objectively. It's nothing but a matter of instinct" (p. 65), or, "I always



understand reasonable arguments, and the human fear of the unknown is probably the most reasonable reaction that the creator implanted in us" (p. 61). He can even contradict himself; compare the second aforementioned homily with, "under certain circumstances we must also be capable of overcoming the dictates of instinct" (p. 62).

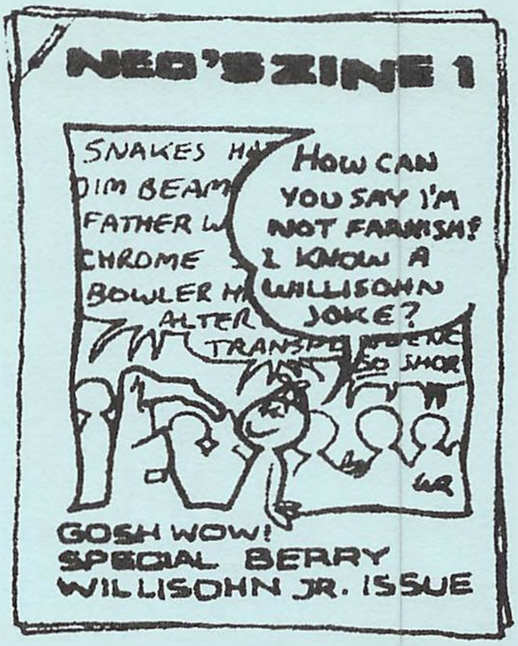
Yet, this egotistical, impassive, flat personna is made to appear far superior to those around him. The *Stardust's* crew was intended to be and is descibed as a "select four man team...a special military scientific team...a complemetary team. They are adjusted to each other psychologically and in the coordinated employment of their diverse specialities" (p. 11). Rhodan's fellow crew members are Captain Reginald Bell, Captain Clark G. Fletcher, and Lieutenant (Dr.) Eric Manoli. Bell, however, is likened to an "incredibly elastic rubber ball...a short, heavyset man obviously inclined toward a pot belly." Manoli is described as "short and sinewy," and Fletcher as a "chubby faced giant...with the tender skin of a newborn baby and the dishpan hands of a care worn washer-woman" (pp. 14-15). Fletcher is, in fact, used throughout as a scapegoat figure, the opposite of Perry Rhodan. Rhodan himself refers to Fletcher early on as his "problem child" (p. 14). Though the crew's navigator, a specialist in astronomy and mathematics, Fletcher severely bites his own tongue during the sudden acceleration of blast-off, laughs hysterically amidst the utter calm following the unscheduled autopilot landing on the Moon, and when first inside the alien spacecraft, trembles convulsively (p. 81). Finally, his reaction to Rhodan's landing the *Stardust* in northern China upon return to Earth is to rave "with a madman's senseless fury," and accuse Rhodan of being a traitor (p. 93).

Even the aliens, Khrest and Thora, appear unfavorable in contrast to Perry Rhodan. Though from a race several million years old, and rulers of The Imperium, the Arkonides are degenerating, in the process of progressive decay, "not...in the realm of normal attitudes or ethics but rather in a total relaxation and surrender of will," (p. 78), that factor which turns thought into action. This is symbolically reinforced by the Arkonides' *fictif* screens, a simulator game that audiovisually represents elements in the subjective psyche. Billions of Arkonides, as do the fifty on board the crash-landed spacecraft, keep a habitual daily vigil in front of their *fictif* screens while games are created by different masters of the medium (p. 78); for them the work of a new *fictif* artist takes precedence over all else.

It's in this manner, then, that Major Perry Rhodan is depicted and set off as a narcissistic "superman," a character who prevails by virtue of being a ruthless egoist of superior strength, cunning, and force of will; all the other characters in "Enterprise Stardust" exhibit faults in degree and kind. Perry Rhodan is, in fact, a near personification of Nietzsche's concept of the "will to power" in that, as interpreted by Walter Kaufman, the "acme of power is embodied in the perfectly self-possessed man who has no fear of other men, of himself, of death and whose *simple personality,* unaided by any props, changes the lives of those who meet him and even imposes itself on the minds of those who encounter him only at second hand..." (emphasis mine). As well, there is a mild taint of fascism about Perry Rhodan, the kind found in the system and ideology called *fascismo* which flourished in Italy under Mussolini. Therein the old, competitive, hedonistic ethos of liberalism was replaced with an austere, stern, rigorous patriotic morality in which the heroic values of service, sacrifice, indeed death itself were once more respected. But Rhodan's superiority is shallow, lacking in what Georg Lukacs has termed "intellectual physiognomy," the character's "way of thinking." Rhodan exhibits little or no moral bent and intellect—the way a person reacts to a situation, the way a person thinks about themself and their situation. He is a character who has locked himself into his own monomania, the epitome of the evil that men do to each other in the name of "ideals" like "socialism" and "revolution." He is, at best, according to Frye's classification of fictions by the hero's power of action, the typical hero of romance, superior in *degree* to other men and to his environment; but, he is, at the same time, a naive-tragic hero, a primitive or poular hero who becomes isolated from his society.

In the end, Perry Rhodan, along with the other characters in "Enterprise Stardust" remain, as E. M. Forster once wrote, "unalterable for the reason that they were not changed by circumstances... they never need reintroducing, never run away, have not to be watched for development, and provide their own atmosphere—little luminous disks of a pre-arranged size, pushed hither and thither like counters across the void or between the stars." For them ignorance *is* the same as stupidity. Both words have to do with a *lack* of something, one knowledge and the other intelligence. And it is this lack that is analogous to the reduction of red blood cells in a leukemic condition, a lack that causes pallor and weakness, symptoms which the Perry Rhodan series clearly evidences. That any of the standard treatment procedures could effect remission in this instance is highly doubtful. It is best to let this patient die off by itself. ■

# The Mistakes They Make






I speak of mistakes, and not the commonplace garden variety. Everyone who can claim to be receiving any decent number of fanzines at all has seen enough cruddy repro, underinking, and missed slipsheets to last a subjective lifetime; all have shuddered over crowded messy layouts and continuations of articles placed *before* the article itself, excesses of spelling errors or the inadvertent omission of a return address or worse, a name. These things are actually reasonably forgiveable—the first few times.

And I'm not even speaking of the ill-advised approaches to first issues, born out of unfamiliarity rather than fuggheadedness, such as the "phony prozine". That comes out of the inspiration of impressionable neofans by the prozines into producing their very own magazine full of their own fiction; in a sense they "invent" the fanzine because very often none of them have ever seen or heard of fanzines before, or only sketchily. And numerous good faneditors started off that way before showing their more advantageous colors. An example is David Hull's *Rothnium*, begun in mid-1977 with strong prozine derivations, with fiction and a rather formal self-consciousness. *Rothnium* shows great promise of becoming one of the better genzines around, with balanced contents of serious and fannish—while still keeping, more as a joke than anything else, its ISSN number and subtitled designation of *Rothnium "Magazine"*. The main mistake about "phony prozines", however, is that of publishing amateur fiction at all. If it's good, then the author ought to try to peddle it professionally; if it isn't and the author realizes it, he ought to be too embarrassed to expose it to public view. And if it isn't and the author *doesn't* realize it, he's probably beyond helping and even the shocking truth first-hand in scathing LoCs would probably bounce off. Even then, many people in fandom are too kind to point out shortcomings.

On a slightly better level, assuming that the temptation to print bad fiction has been resisted, there is still the standard first issue, admittedly stereotypical, but still seen quite often. The desire is strong to produce a fanzine and although the editor has seen enough zines that he doesn't totally reinvent the fanzine, he doesn't yet have the contacts in fandom to draw more sophisticated material. The maiden effort may have many basic production flaws, and will contain school-style book reports by the editor's friends, something about whatever science fiction movie or TV show is the current rage, pictures perhaps of the principals of the show, and an editorial complaining about the difficulties the editor had in putting the issue together. Even the first issue of Mike Glicksohn's much vaunted *Energumen* fit this basic pattern. But Glicksohn, luckily, had some highly talented friends and the zine rapidly improved. Some new titles never get better.

But these things are not really mistakes, and it is the subtle mistakes I wish to discuss. The subtle mistakes arise not so much from the physical form of the fanzine as from the personality and motives of the editor behind the zine. Where these fall astray, the zine will fall astray. Even though many in fandom won't notice this or will let it pass, there will be those who do notice, and they will be critical—often receiving criticism in turn from those who don't see or who turn a blind eye.

There are many wrong motives for publishing fanzines. The trendrider's "everyone's doing it" is one of them—if the motive is purely to edge into a group of people publishing fanzines where there is otherwise no intrinsic interest at all. On the other hand, it's quite a different matter for the potential faned to give an honest try-out to a new hobby. And while there are very few fans who don't like to bask in the light of positive egoboo, it seems somewhat warped when the *sole* reason to invest the work involved in a fanzine is to get egoboo, or to bootlick presumed BNFs in order to shortcut to that exalted status.

BNF-bootlicking has in it the germs of further mistakes, again motive-related. Unless the faned has many personal BNF friends, it looks a little presumptuous to try for BNF contributions exclusively, ignoring the many equally talented fan writers and artists who don't happen to be high up in the fannish social register. Likewise, unless there are friendships involved, it doesn't seem right to wahf all LoCs except those from presumed BNFs. And unless the writer can claim personal aquaintence with some of the pillars of fandom and thus be privy at first hand to anecdotes concerning them, it assumes too

much intimacy to relate such incidents as though these people were the writer's own family.

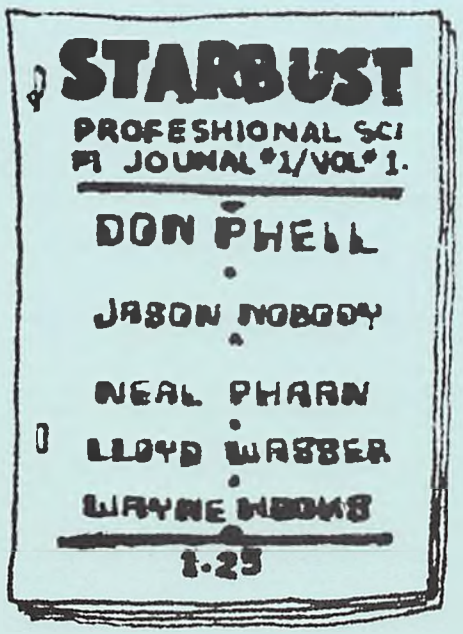
Then there are the pretension schticks. This is not to say that elaborate production values are bad, rather that unless the large amount of work involved is done because the editor-publisher enjoys it, and gets genuine creative satisfaction from it, perhaps having studied or worked in the graphics field, a very objective evaluation of motives would be in order. Most of the recipients will notice and comment positively on the handsome graphic extravaganzas produced by some genzine editors; but a very large majority wouldn't think any less of *good* contents if the package were plainer, and the zine would be received just as favorably by fandom. It is quite true that because of past experience, the graphics end comes naturally and easily to some genzine producers. Some fanzine editors may have more finesse with the visual than with the writing aspects, and this merely expresses honest personal taste and goals; but, at worst, beautiful presentations have been known to mask inferior contents, and this is not a good thing if the motives in the format are questionable.

Another pretension schtick is the hugeness syndrome. It is one thing when the editor prefers for his own convenience to publish one large issue rather than three or four smaller ones, but the size has to be justified by the content. For an editor to set himself a goal of, say, 70 pages, and then start packing in all the insipid ditherings he can lay his hands on until the size goal has been met, makes him a four star phoney. This sort of thinking can arise from a misguided editor's mistaken assumption that the size is a prime contributory factor to the success of whatever large genzine is the object of the one-upmanship. The better zines seem to have to struggle to keep down to a manageable size and their problem is more an embarrassment of riches. The better editor faced with a shortage of material either publishes a good small issue or delays publication until the arrival of more good material. He waits until the economy and practicality of size manage a sound trade-off with the pacing.

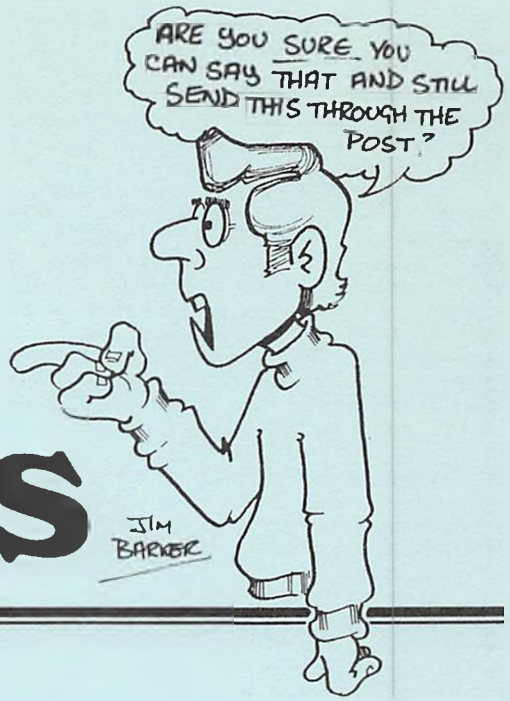
Some editors make the mistake of failing to realize that there are a large number of letterhacks who bestow lavish egoboo on everything that isn't an out-and-out crudzine. That can lead to complacency and stagnation, and fanzine editors should realize that one objectively and helpfully critical LoC is worth twenty of the enthusiastic-but-undiscriminating type. Or, as some anonymous sage once remarked, sometimes you have to be cruel to be kind. A further mistake that can arise from this lack of realization is voluminous and nonselective publishing of this egoboo-for-the-self, something that tends to put off people who are aware of the way many letterhacks work. This was a problem with Alyson Abramowitz's *Alvega* a few years ago, in which indiscriminately edited egoboo in the lettercolumn coupled with in-kind editorial commenting negated, in the eyes of some beholders, much of the worth of an otherwise reasonably decent and enjoyable small genzine.

And it's wrong, unless the editor's local fan community is self-sacrificing and masochistic, for him to continue to depend on others to do the work for him. This has nothing to do with "training sessions" in someone's early efforts, when it's fairly usual for other fans to make available a mimeograph to someone who hasn't one, lend hands in cranking and collating, and give advice. But when work is continually being farmed out to others long past the point where most people of reasonable ability would have achieved self-sufficiency; when advice is constantly solicited to the point of avoidance by the editor of any editorial decisions of his own; when the entire fanzine is much more a product of the surrounding fan community than the editor himself; and he still wants complete credit and all the egoboo; then there is something drastically amiss.

Can these subtle sort of errors-of-approach be avoided? That's entirely up to you. I offer you a simple test: visualize the fanzine you want to produce, in detail—its contents and roster of contributors, its appearance, its general ambience—and then imagine precisely the same thing published by someone you cannot tolerate, someone you find completely despicable. If you could still like it, if you could still enjoy it, if it does not make you gnash your teeth in rage and frustration over schticks and pretentions and phoniness, then you're probably imaging your product honestly. It's a difficult test, and I'd be frankly suprised to see anyone *not* fall short a bit. But it's the key to the whole thing, in whatever you do: you do what the real you really wants to do, the best way you can. Everything else follows. ■




# by Victoria Vayne
## Illustrated by Taral




# Letters

**Grant Carrington**
**North Augusta, SC**
Dear Mike Glicksohn,

I have known science fiction fandom and Tom Monteleone almost equally long: I met Tom at the 1972 Disclave, my second science fiction convention; and I can only say, as far as I am concerned, you are dead wrong when you say, "the great majority of the more talented fans who reach the level of BNF...are pretty well-adjusted, pretty capable, competent people with average looks and a respectable degree of social gracefulness and culture. Much like Tom Monteleone, come to think of it."

Sf fans are *not at all* like Tom Monteleone. Tom has his faults (I will not air them here in public—Tom knows my opinions about his faults—the only one I will mention in public is that he won't listen to me and agree with me when I tell him what his faults are), but they are not those of the people I have met in fandom. I do not feel as hostile to fandom as Tom does; hell, some of our best fans are friends. But they are weird, not very well-versed in the social graces, and pretty clumsy, compared to the average joe I meet in the lab, theatre, race tracks, roadside diners, and strip joints. A few of them (about 1 in 10) would pass as normal on the street, not illiciting strange looks and wonderment. Even most of the writers I have met are not particularly well-adjusted socially, although they manage to hide it better than the run-of-the-mill fan. (Shyness and poor social adjustment seems to be quite common, however, among *all* writers, not just those of sf.)

You will not see Tom walking around a convention in a strange costume or wearing an Australian cowboy hat (although you might get him to wear a lampshade at a party if you get him drunk enough). At a gathering of normal people (for example, a meeting of your friendly neighborhood Mafia), no one would give him a second glance as he sits in the corner calmly cleaning his heater from any vestigial evidence left over from his last contract. But, at a science fiction convention, by contrast to the usual dodos in attendance, he appears as dashing as Erroll Flynn, as suave as Clark Gable, and as debonair as Woody Allen.

No, Mike, although I disagree with Tom's vitriolic opinion of fandom, he is not at all like the average fan, not even the great majority of the more talented BNF's I have met. He is a rare commodity in the world of science fiction and writers—a man who had gone out into that big *mundane* world out there and come back relatively unscarred.

I wish I could say the same for myself.

**Roger Waddington** **5/30/79**
**4 Commercial St., Norton, Malton, North Yorkshire YO17 9ES ENGLAND**

I'd certainly take issue with the thought that one issue of *Knights* could have taken a step backwards. Oh, in the world outside, maybe; where the world of publishing is ruled by bigger and better advertising drives, where it's counted as failure if the number of buyers of actual subscriptions doesn't increase with every new issue, and where it's dog-eat-dog for control of the market, certainly a step back in the shape of a widening gap between issues, fewer and fewer big names, might well count as failure; but in the world of fandom? Surely we're beholden to nobody, need take no account of any praise or blame; we're in fandom because we enjoy it, and we publish our fanzines without a thought of the section of the crowd that we want to please, we publish only for the idea of creating something, and everything afterwards, whether acclaim or criticism is only an added bonus...Well, such are the views of someone who's never published a fanzine!

But all this means take no account of what we might say; it's your fanzine, your own private creation, and as far as guiding it along the way, all of us are just hangers-on, and indeed so fickle that we're just as likely to latch on to the latest fanzine heading in the opposite direction. The only time you need ever think of failure is when you send out a full production, and nothing, but nothing comes back through the mailbox; and then of course, you give it another name, label it the first issue, and watch all the congratulations pour in; and of course, nothing irks we fen so much, nothing invites so much criticism as a fanzine that's been so successful as to keep coming out for five years! So if you feel it's right, do it, is the golden rule to go by.

*((It's odd to think that, of all the issues I've published, last issue was the least understood. I thank you for your thoughts, Roger, and I must say yours were the most well-thought out, and most similar to my own of all the comments I received.*

Knights *has built up a reputation over the years of being a sercon fanzine. It was never seriously intended to be a sercon publication, and last issue, when I used no sercon material, it destroyed the false image that had grown in the minds of many readers. Many of the letters of comment I received about issue 20 chastised me, in various ways, because I had dared to strike out in a direction none of them expected. A great many people in fandom only mouth the words when they say one should publish first for himself, and then for his readers. Many of them were casting stones at me for not maintaining the "sercon" suit I had been wearing.*

*For those people who wish to label the fanzines they receive, I have always thought of* Knights *as being a* genzine, *with articles of general interest. Yes, I do publish sercon material, but I have published humor, personal essays, and a wide variety of other items. And I will continue to publish a wide variety of things. The balance of material in any one issue is highly dependent on my attitude when I am assembling the material, and on the people who submit their work to me. Put bluntly, a reader of this fanzine should be prepared for anything, for they are receiving a slice of my life everytime I publish. And my life is in a constant flux.))*

Now I've been greatly entertained by Grant Carrington's article on the Clarion Workshop, but I'm still haunted by the nagging doubt

as to whether they're all worthwhile, whether they do any more than confirm writers in their choice, and provide much-needed support in the shape of other writers. Which, come to think of it, isn't such an out-of-the-way objective! But I read the great writers of the past (and the present), the Heinleins, the Farmers, the Hamiltons, the Bradburys, and wonder how they could develop their art alone, how long their appenticeship, their struggles without the guidance of a workshop; and the more I read, the more I wonder at their necessity. Maybe I still have the old-fashioned opinion that great writers are born not made; and it's one I'd like to be buried with honor; but what do the editors and publishers think (i.e. those on the receiving end), would they rather have a ms with the degree of a writing school, or one from a writer who's never heard of such aids to authorship, who's produced his work alone and without help? I'd like to know. Of course, they can make good writers better; but what can they do for the rest of the writers?

**J. Owen Hanner** **3/20/79**
**338 Jackson St., Apt. 2, Libertyville, IL 60048**

I get the impression "More Than A Footnote" was a way for you to exorcise some demons and lay your fannish past to rest. There was a decided melancholy air to the article, kind of like me anytime I talk about the last five years. It sounds like you've been going through a lot of changes lately, but you're just now beginning to start on a new phase of your life; setting the record on Fort Bragg Fandom straight, reassessing your attitudes and goals with *Knights*. I hope things work out for you. Maybe someday I'll reach a plateau where I can safely examine what I've accomplished and see it in the proper perspective.

**Steve George** **5/20/79**
**94 Brock St., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3N 0Y4 CANADA**

Grant Carrington's articles were excedingly readable and interesting, and I even enjoyed his requiem for Robert Danek. But it was your own "More Than A Footnote" that I found most fascinating. Your exploits as a high school student and getting out your first school sponsored science fiction magazine brought back clear memories of my own high school years. I, however, was not as lucky as you; the terms on which my English teacher and I related to one another were a bit more antagonistic than your own, I think. When I sprang my idea on her about publishing a magazine she shot me out of the air in a flash. She did, however, allow me to publish a number of science fiction stories in the regular school magazine, so I didn't complain too much. It wasn't until a year later that I published my first magazine, and at the time, like you, I had never had any contact with fandom.

**Harry Warner, Jr.** **4/1/79**
**423 Summit Ave., Hagerstown, MD 21740**

Grant Carrington's article caused me to realize suddenly that someone could produce an interesting anthology of fanzine articles describing Clarion experiences. They've been coming into print at the rate of perhaps three or four a year for what seems to be the better part of a decade now. A substantial percentage of them have been gripping, excellent in prose content, and only a trifle repetitive. The writers' workshop seems to have the knack of making participants react vigorously in ways that would be hard to predict beforehand. Grant's article is one of the best, if only for the fact that it isn't strongly prejudiced either in favor of the workshop as the salvation of science fiction or against it as a total destructor of human beings. I suppose it isn't really necessary to describe the physical appearance of famous pros like Leiber, Ellison, and Knight, when they show up at so many cons, but I find such bits of descriptive material important for future generations of fans. Of course, there will be lots of pictures of those pros surviving into the future, but a photograph doesn't convey the impact that their physical presence made on fans as a word picture can, and around the middle of the 21st century, when hardly anyone is left who can remember such people clearly, they will survive on paper a bit better for the descriptions in fanzines.

"More Than A Footnote" should also be useful to some future fan historian. No matter that you're the only member of Fort Bragg Fandom who hasn't fallen into semi-obscurity. There's always the chance that one of those lost fans will win fame at some future day, and if not, you all by yourself will be important both for *Knights* and for the way you will contribute to the image of the fan of the 1970's in your outlook on the world and your career in fandom. Somehow, I had the impression you'd been active in fandom about twice as long as this article shows. Apparently the agonizing slowness with which my much-desired retirement approaches is also engulfing fandom, making events there move more slowly than they used to.

Gremliana makes Bob Danek seem like a person I've known, thanks to Grant's skill with words and his obvious affection for that man. In a sense, it's depressing to think that good persons like Bob Danek are becoming so scarce that they're destined to inspire special articles. His malady, ileitis, was briefly famous in the mundane world, incidentally. When Dwight Eisenhower was president, he came down with a sudden attack of it which subjected him to a sudden operation, and the newspapers were filled for awhile with tissue-by-tissue descriptions of this physical problem.

The front cover is extremely fine. It's so nicely balanced between realistic depiction and the sort of drawing familiar from playing cards. I wonder, though, if it wouldn't bee even more effective if the staff were in a different position. For one thing, the woman's left arm looks awkward and unnatural in this manner of grasping the staff, and for another, the staff almost separates the widescreen picture into two halves. This is trivial carping which I don't mean to imply is really important, but the first glance at the drawing caused me to think it was a series of two diagonally divided sketches. I can't find a single thing to complain about when I look at the back cover, though. I'm particularly fond of the way those houses huddle together for protection at the foot of that stone tower.

**Jim Mann** **4/17/79**
**5501 Elmer St., Apt. 3, Pittsburgh, PA 15232**

Don D'Ammassa's letter on his teaching experience was interesting. I too don't slow down much for my slower students (I have to slow down a bit or 85 percent of them would get lost) and I also offer unlimited help when they need it, including time before school, during free periods, and after school. I even offer extra credit assignments for students who want to pull up their grades. Most of the students who make use of this extra help are the A and B students. Most of the D-F students don't care at all, and happily flunk all of their classes.

**Don D'Ammassa** 6/6/79
**19 Angell Dr., E. Providence, RI 02914**

I'm compelled to once more point out that Jessica Salmonson uses restrictive definitions of some of her terms, and that misunderstandings of her statements frequently result. For example, by her definition, sexism can only refer to exploitation of women by men. I don't know if she has a specific term she uses to refer to exploitation of men by women. Similarly, racism refers to exploitation of minority races by whites, not the converse.

I fail to understand the practical application of her arguments, since in the broadest interpretation of her remarks, every act commited by every person is prejudicial, in that it somehow deprives someone else of a degree of freedom of choice. Note that I am not necessarily arguing with that contention, only that I fail to see a practical use of making such a distinction, and I doubt very much that Jessica intends this all to be theoretical.

For example, let us suppose that we had a world of a single race, unisexual. If two people of differing ages apply for the same job, is the eventual winner an agist? I have no desire to trivialize this. I fully recognize that in most situations (particularly in the business world) I have an unfair advantage over women in applying for a job. But if my employer chooses me over a more qualified woman, the act of sexism is his, not mine. My obligation is to see that I don't discriminate in any fashion, and that my subordinates don't either. In practice, I can accomplish a lot more that way.

When I took over this position, there were three male supervisors (one gay, if that matters), and no assistant supervisors in my areas of responsibility. I now have two assistant supervisors, one of each sex, and am working toward promoting a second woman to the same position. I managed to get one discriminatory pay policy changed company-wide. I think that this type of activity is a much more useful contribution than refusing to take the job on the basis that the company should have been more willing to consider qualified women. As long as unprejudiced males refrain from moving into higher executive positions, then the field has been abandoned to those who clearly are prejudiced, and I don't see how any woman can gain from that.


**Jessica Amanda Salmonson** 3/23/79
**Box 5688, University Station, Seattle, WA 98105**

Algis Budrys' comments on racism and sf were very interesting. I wonder how firmly Algis applies his idea about "overkill" with politics in fiction, however. The Narnia chronicals are essentially Christian tracts, very political, yet successful and timeless. Lewis Carol's *Through the Looking Glass* and *Alice In Wonderland* were highly contemporary political satires—nowadays the politics mean nothing, but the stories are still good. The student in Algis' class who felt crippled in his work by the demand of his peers to be Politically Correct may only be making excuses. It is *not* necessary to be unfaithful to one's ideals in order to be a good fictioner! Indeed, authors without ideals will probably be writing mush. Of course, Algis is right if he means merely to avoid the recognizable party line, don't let rhetorical statements overshadow plot and character. But there is no such thing as a non-political work—it's just that too many writers are too dumb to recognize their own politics/biases! Writers with a firm *knowledge* of their personal politics are far *less* likely to come across as raving idealogues; their fictions are more likely to have lasting importance. Another point is that "overkill" might be totally subjective. To me, *Lucifer's Hammer* is political overkill—right wing trash through and through, upholding all the worst stereotypes. To the authors of that book, *The Two of Them* may seem to suffer from political overkill. Often "overkill" is equated with what we don't agree with and/or don't want to see, and something far worse will not even be spotted as a political work because the ideals, however absurd, are so contemporary and acceptible they go unnoticed *this* year. A final point is that "most" reading material is not going to last long anyway, and why *shouldn't* it be ultra-contemporary in its political statements? There's a place for that kind of writing too—though I'm not interested in writing it myself.

Whether willfully or out of lack of knowledge, Victoria was leading you sadly astray in her analysis of *Knights* and its relationship to women in your audience. She says if women are never attracted to *Knights*, it's *their* problem—as long as you're amenable to women reading it, it *can't* be sexist. The logic of that is so silly! It would be like saying that just because the Ku Klux Klan now accepts black members, it is no longer rascist! Well, I don't find *Knights* uninteresting at all, and maybe this doesn't apply real strongly to what you do, but Victoria's analysis is in itself just silliness. A better answer to "how" to interest a wider range of people (women, Third World peoples...) is to *acknowledge* the existence of other peoples. Now, if you're not interested in acknowledging them, then sexism and racism are clearly at work. Any group, organization, magazine, Congress, restaurant or employer who "somehow" does not attract or involve women and/or minorities, well, we may with fair certainty assume sexism and racism. None of this means you personally have to make a huge effort to be up on a lot of political, philosophical, or intellectual concepts as conceived by various types of persons. It means merely that you ought to question any activity that fails to acknowledge more than white males. *Knights* interests me right now because you've shown a concern for these concepts. Victoria saying, "Aw, you don't gotta be interested in that shit" is the kind of advice that encourages people like yourself not to grow.

*Knights* has been willfully offensive in the past, as have far too many fanzines. Guest editorials and/or letters which exist wholy to malign a given group or movement are, simply, the product of bigotry. You've published some bigotted, ill-conceived material. I've learned to spot these people and can avoid them; perhaps you can learn that as well. It is often difficult to learn the difference between an attempt at journalistic debate, knee-jerk liberalism, or an out-and-out hateful person attempting to sound objective (and fooling some).

A final comment triggered by Mike Glicksohn. He points out that not *all* fans are pimply, fat and wear glasses. He totally misses the point that *some* people with pimples, fat, and glasses are quite remarkable individuals. The prettiest, thinnest person with 20/20 vision is as apt to be a complete turd. In attempting to knock the wind out of one of your least talented contributor's maniac ravings, Mike only plays into the afore mentioned maniac's bitter, rabid antagonism toward fandom. Oddly enough, I find myself in complete agreement that "most" fans are complete toadies, but it has absolutely nothing to do with weight, complexion, or eye sight.

Also Heard From were: *Sharron Albert, H. J. N. Andruschak, Robert Bloch, Richard Brandt, Brian Earl Brown, Gerald Brown, Linda Bushyager, Gil Gaier, Mike Glicksohn, D. Gary Grady, Seth Goldberg, David Govaker, Denys Howard, Clint Hyde, Ben Indick, Fred Jakobcic, Craig Ledbetter, Laurie Mann, Wayne W. Martin, Mark J. McGarry, Luke McGuff, Sam Moskowitz, J. D. Owen, Andy Richards, Jeff Smith, Mike Stern, A. D. Wallace.* ■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