



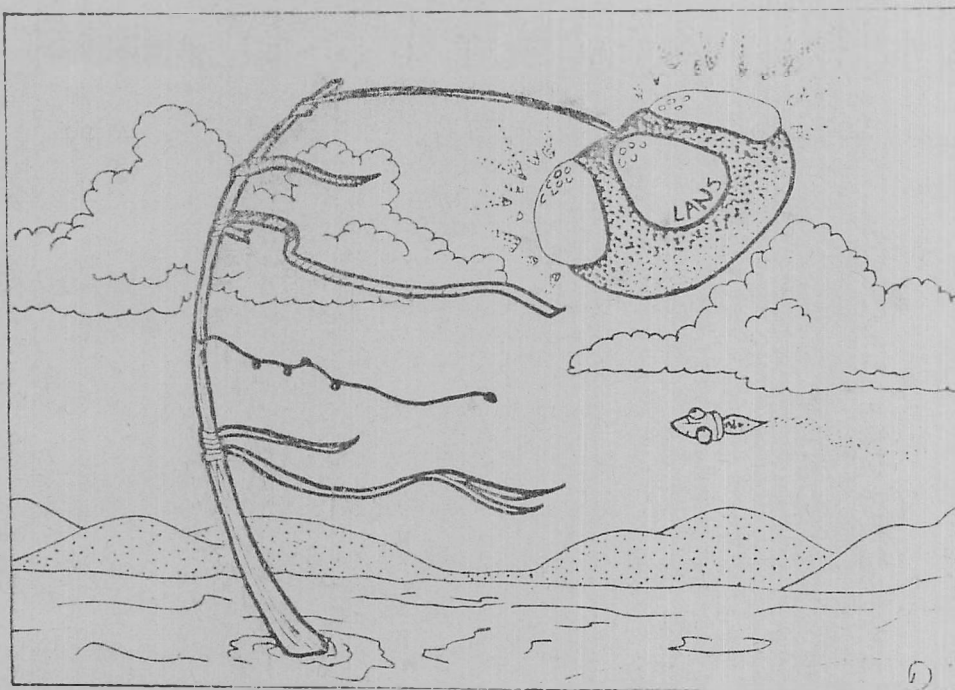
L A N ' S L A N T E R N 1 8

TEN YEARS

A FAN

Ten and a half years ago Cathy Robinson introduced me to Mark and Evelyn Leeper who started it all.

Cathy Robinson was an assistant manager at a local B. Dalton's and invited me to a book discussion at her home where I met the two of them. They encouraged me to seek out the Wayne Third Foundation (the SF club at Wayne State University in Detroit), and Cy Chauvin who lived in Roseville, the same town in which I grew up (and then lived). Since I was going to Wayne State for teaching certification, I found the club office and there met Carol Lynn and John Benson who immediately made me feel welcome.



Of course, I didn't really consider myself a fan until I attended the first Wayne Third meeting in September of 1975. I met many people who would become important to me, and who would introduce me to many other fans. From that point on, fandom became the focus of my life. Diane Drutowski and Leah Zeides started me contributing to MISHAP, an apazine of which Maia and I are currently the editors. They also started me going to conventions, the first real one being CHAMBANACON on Thanksgiving weekend of that year. And I was encouraged also to start my own fanzine (which I'll talk about in my next editorial).

So, I've been a fan and apahack for ten years and three months, a convention fan for ten years and a month, and a SF reader for more than a quarter of a century. And what do I have to show for it?

- A moderately successful fanzine that loses money with each issue.
- The second longest continuous membership in MISHAP (Brian Earl Brown has the record).
- Organizing my weekends and activities around apa deadlines and conventions, and dating events the same way.
- Have become friends with fans and authors around the world, especially across the United States.
- Have honored three giants in the field of SF and Fantasy (Jack Williamson, Clifford Simak, and Andre Norton).
- Have made possible many midnight swims at conventions by volunteering to life-guard.
- Have been on many panels at conventions, and am still willing to be on them at cons to come.
- Fan Guest of Honor at MARCON, and soon to be Fan GoH with Maia at CON-TRAPTION in April of 1986.
- Met and married Maia Cowan, the love of my life.

That's not a bad list of accomplishments (and I have probably forgotten a few). One thing that most of my friends find difficult to figure out is how I manage to do all my fanac AND maintain a full time teaching position in a boarding school with all the extra demands such a school makes on my time. (Sometimes I wonder myself!)

As for slowing down...I don't plan to. And I am hoping to increase my activities in fandom if I can.

Ten years a fan, and I see many more years ahead for myself.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Dennis Fischer has the first of a two part article on Robert A. Heinlein. He says some controversial stuff, but his overview of Heinlein's early work is well done and fairly comprehensive. Peter Fergusson talks about computers in "A Matter of Time", and makes some comments about writing. Tom Easton sent the text of his speech from the last BOSKONE, and Dale Skran writes an interesting comparison between Lifeforce and the book from which it was made, Colin Wilson's Space Vampires. David Stein talks about TV and its offerings this year. There are many other interesting, funny, and provocative pieces this time around, including lots of book and movie reviews, and my own "Conreports and Ramblings." The letter column is quite extensive, and lots of artwork is scattered here and there. I hope you enjoy the issue.

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DEDICATION

To Maia, as usual;
To Mark and Evelyn Leeper, who
started it all ten and a
half years ago.

WHY YOU ARE RECEIVING THIS:

- ☐ Contribution/art/article
- ☐ Letter of Comment/Verbal Comment
- ☒ Trade
- ☐ Mentioned on page(s) _____
- ☐ I would like you to contribute something
- ☐ This is your last issue unless you contribute (or at least write a loc)

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The Rise and Decline

Robert A. Heinlein

A Critique by Dennis K. Fischer

PART ONE: The Campbell Years and the Rise of Robert A. Heinlein

There was a time when all science fiction readers read Heinlein. It was almost impossible not to. The man remains one of the most seminal, influential, innovative and entertaining science fiction writers of all time. However, not long ago I came across a science fiction fan, a good friend of mine, and I was quite startled to discover that he had never read any Heinlein. True, the time of Heinlein's dominance over the science fiction field has long passed, but all his old books are still in print, still being read. In fact, a couple of generations of science fiction readers have started reading science fiction because they picked up a Heinlein juvenile in a library somewhere and looked for more books just like it.

In the history of science fiction, Heinlein remains a giant while the stars of some of his popular contemporaries have faded.

To set Heinlein's importance in a perspective, let's look briefly at the history of the field. Modern science fiction began with H. G. Wells and Jules Verne. The science fiction magazines, which led to a larger audience, began with Hugo Gernsback's Amazing in 1926. In its pages were reprints of Verne's and Wells' stories as well as space opera by E. E. "Doc" Smith and John W. Campbell, worlds saved or destroyed by Edmond Hamilton and Jack Williamson, and the quieter wonders of Murray Leinster. These stories introduced readers to slam-bang, blood and thunder action as well as galaxy-spanning situations that gave science fiction new scope. However, the dialogue, the style, and the characters were often wooden, two dimensional creations that were uninteresting and quickly forgotten.

In 1934, a short story entitled "A Martian Odyssey" by a new writer named Stanley Weinbaum appeared and suggested new possibilities. The style was smoother, the plot was well-constructed though superficial, and the characterization of an extra-terrestrial

was quite memorable. Unfortunately, Weinbaum died within two years of the story's publication. His influence did not die, as was evident in Astounding in 1938 when John W. Campbell took over as editor. This was the beginning of what science fiction fans call the "Golden Age" of science fiction, a period which lasted until 1943, near the end of World War II. Isaac Asimov started writing during this time but had yet to achieve his later popularity. A. E. Van Vogt was enormously popular under Campbell, but when he quit writing his popularity waned. L. Ron Hubbard wrote under many pseudonyms for Campbell's magazines and was quite popular, chalking up successes with stories like Final Blackout, "Fear" and "Typewriter in the Sky" (all written in 1940) before moving on to the more lucrative fields of Dianetics and Scientology. Writers like Ted Sturgeon, Henry Kuttner and C. L. Moore, Fritz Leiber, Eric Frank Russell, and Lester del Rey all worked for Campbell during those early days. But Robert A. Heinlein was considered the number one writer of that time.

Who was Robert A. Heinlein? What was it about him that made him stand out in this crowd of talented writers? Why has his popularity endured in a way that only Asimov and relative newcomer Arthur C. Clarke can match? What was distinctive about Heinlein's work?

Heinlein graduated from the Naval Academy at Annapolis and served on a destroyer until he contracted tuberculosis. The Navy considered him "totally and permanently disabled." He was 27. He took courses in physics and mathematics hoping to become an astronomer but was forced to drop out of school due to declining health. He tried mining and real estate without much success. He ran in an election in which he came in second and lost what little savings he had.

These backgrounds later proved invaluable to him as they provided him with knowledge

of diverse fields and, perhaps more importantly, acquaintance with people from all walks of life and in all trades. Thus Heinlein filled his works Naval officers, engineers, politicians, businessmen, laborers, supervisors, real estate agents, etc., and made them believable because he had firsthand knowledge of the people who worked in these occupations.

Heinlein's first story was "Life-line," which was published in the August 1939 issue of Astounding. He had written it because Thrilling Wonder Stories had announced a contest with a prize of \$50 for the best short story. (The contest was won by Alfred Bester for his first story "Broken Axiom.") Instead of submitting it to Thrilling Wonder Stories, Heinlein submitted the story to Astounding figuring that the other magazine would be swamped with submissions. He received \$70, and the rest, as they say, is history.

"Life-line" is not a major Heinlein story and there was none of the excitement that had been generated by the publishing of A. E. van Vogt's first story "Black Destroyer" the month before. Still, the story is enjoyable and indicative of some of Heinlein's characteristics as a writer. The story deals with Dr. Hugo Pinero who invents a machine that will tell a man exactly how long he will live. It was Heinlein's theory, used by Kurt Vonnegut and others, that the future, the past and the present exist simultaneously, are fixed, and can't be altered. This gives time a dimension which can be measured, which is what Pinero's machine does. However, more than just showing Heinlein's fascination with time, the story also shows how he could take one simple idea and extrapolate both unexpectedly and common-sensically from his premise. Such a machine, Heinlein proceeds to point out, would be a threat to life insurance companies, and they would therefore do their utmost to protect their existence. What was unusual about Heinlein's science fiction work was that it was centered in everyday life. Heinlein rarely ventured boldly into the beyond. He rarely depicted aliens, hardly ever left the solar system in his stories, but he could make the possibilities of the world around us so interesting that few SF fans cared that he didn't try his hand at more traditional science fiction.

Heinlein's second story, "Misfit" (November 1939), is probably one of his worst. Still, it is also very indicative of later and better works to come. The nominal hero, Andrew Jackson Libby, is the misfit juvenile of the title, who would later appear in other Heinlein works, most notably in Methuselah's Children (July-September 1941). In many ways, the story is a typical Heinlein story. There is the firm, competent, military man, the maladjusted juvenile with a special talent who is anxious to prove himself, the carefully and succinctly detailed background, and almost an anecdote of a plot. It is Heinlein's theory (and one I heartily agree with) that all people occasionally have problems adjusting to norms (i.e., we're all eccentrics under the skin), and that everyone believes that they must possess some special talent which makes them

unique, gifted, or valuable. Heinlein plays on these beliefs by having the hero triumph in a crisis by using his special powers, a theme which has universal appeal.

Heinlein's real development as a writer shows in "Requiem" (January 1940) the touching tale of a man with a bad heart who made space travel possible and yet, because of health reasons, is sadly forbidden from ever enjoying it. He therefore conspires with two hard-up spacemen to make that forbidden trip to the moon, lasting long enough to die on its soil. The story manages to be poignant without becoming mired in pathos. Heinlein has never tried to be stylish and so writes with feeling without resorting to badly used poetic devices. The lead character Harriman is probably derived, as are many of his protagonists probably are, from Heinlein's own character with the limitations of the heart condition most likely standing in for Heinlein's own tuberculosis. Harriman is also the beginning of a major Heinlein character-type, "The Man Who Knows How", and this aspect is featured prominently in The Man Who Sold the Moon (1950), the prequel to "Requiem."

Having succeeded thus far at short stories, John Campbell urged Heinlein to try his hand at something longer. Heinlein dutifully complied and wrote "If This Goes On ..." (February-March 1940), a novella passed off as a novel. The story had the kind of sociological implications that Campbell had been stressing as well as plenty of action, speculation, and pro-technological sentiments. The story is quite entertaining. Heinlein developed the knack of hooking the reader and then pulling him along at a rapid rate with incident following incident, each succinctly told.

The story nonetheless has its problems. For one, it is poorly organized. The personal problems of the main characters are not resolved, and they remain peripheral to the main action, a revolution that overthrows a future American theocracy. The ending is all too abrupt and ignores many of the problems the story presented, something which would occur frequently in Heinlein's longer fiction. It's almost as if Heinlein looked at the page count and thought to himself, well, that's long enough, I'll end it here.

Still, the story's breathless pace and somewhat original setting made it very popular with the readers. Its conception of a self appointed prophet bringing about the downfall of civilization remains unsettling to today's audiences, what with parallels to Jerry Fallwell and his ilk. Campbell's influence shows strongly. Campbell had written a series of stories known as "The Cloak of Aesir" in which aliens have taken over the Earth and humans have banded together under the guise of a phony religion to overthrow them. This proved to be one of Campbell's favorite plots. He used it again for a novella entitled "All" which was published posthumously, and most importantly had given it to Heinlein to turn into the novel Sixth Column (also known as The Day After Tomorrow (January-March 1941)). The plot also reappeared in other work written for Campbell's magazine, probably getting its definitive treatment with Fritz Leiber's Gather Darkness! (1943).

Sex and religion were commonly taboo in early science fiction, a taboo that Heinlein was to break most strongly in Stranger in a Strange Land (1961), but even in this early work he can be seen gingerly handling the subjects he would later tackle outright. Until Philip Jose Farmer smashed the magazine taboos against sex in science fiction with The Lovers in 1952, few others in the SF field would even acknowledge that sex existed in their stories. Outside the science fiction magazine field, works such as 1984 and Brave New World were obvious exceptions. (However, within the magazines the talented Henry Kuttner came under censure about this time for including "racy" passages in some of his stories, "Avengers of Space" and "Time Trap" (Marvel Science Stories, May, 1938), and the Kuttner byline disappeared in favor of pseudonyms from that point on.

Heinlein later admitted to some of the crudities in "If This Goes On..." and tried to amend and rewrite the piece for its first hardcover publication. Critic Damon Knight applauded the extra space given over to Zeb-ediah Jones, "the wiseacre without whom no Heinlein story is complete," but he "missed the old version...I know it was hokum, but I don't care; I liked it. It felt right." (Knight, In Search of Wonder, 2nd revised edition, p. 77). With fond memories of the original myself, I can't help but concur.

After four stories, each somewhat better than the last, Heinlein rolled up his sleeves to do it again for "The Roads Must Roll" (June 1940). The resulting novella remains one of Heinlein's most popular, and was included in The Science Fiction Hall of Fame, Volume One, a collection of the best pre-1965 science fiction short stories as voted by the members of the Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA). Heinlein constructs a future where the economy will be dependent upon "rolling roads"--massive conveyor belts which transport people and products. With surprising economy of words, he outlines the situation and the problems which a strike would pose to such a society without losing momentum, as often happens when a character stops for exposition.

Harlan Ellison once analyzed the secret of Heinlein's success as his ability to "indicate the greater strangeness of a culture with the most casually dropped-in reference: the first time in a novel, I believe it was in Beyond This Horizon, that a character came through a door that... dilated. And no discussion. Just: 'The door dilated.' I read across it, and two lines down before I realized what the image had been, what the words called forth. A dilating door. It didn't open, it irised! Dear God, now I knew I was in a future world" (Ellison quoted by Samuel R. Delaney in his essay "About Five Thousand One Hundred and Seventy-Five Words" printed in Clareson's SF: The Other Side of Realism and Delaney's collection The Jewel Hinged Jaw.) (It should be acknowledged that dilating doors would not be very practical -- too many components for such a simple function--but it does suggest a world quite different from our own with oh-so-little space and oh-such-casualness. Samuel Delaney has picked up on this idea in his fiction and taken it to new heights for some and beyond comprehension for others. Need-

less to say, it is just another example of how much an innovator Heinlein was.)

Another aspect Heinlein's fiction was that he took something as wondrous as "rolling roads" and then brought it down to earth by making it real and being practical about it rather than stressing how goshdurned wonderful it was (which was the old Gernsback technique). Asimov utilized Heinlein's rolling roads for his novel The Caves of Steel (1954), but Heinlein's story remains the most memorable incarnation of the idea.

The recurring "noble misfit" strode on the scene again with "Coventry" (July 1940), a story set 25 years after the happenings of "If This Goes On...." In restoring freedom, the new society tries to set up total freedom with civil liberties, right to privacy, and respect for individuals guaranteed. However, if a person is anti-social or simply selfish, he is sent to Coventry, an area on the other side of an impenetrable barrier where others of his kind share an equal freedom to do as they wish. Heinlein's hero, David Mackinnon, learns a lesson in social responsibility. The story is a good one, but there was nothing particularly striking about it.

Astounding appears to have rejected Heinlein's "Let There Be Light" which was written around the same time. The story was published in Super Science Stories (May 1940) under the pen name of Lyle Monroe, and deals with a man who discovers an ultimate power source. As in "Life-line," certain institutions try to block the invention to protect their own interests, but the hero foils them by making the secret available to anyone free of charge. The story is weak and shows Heinlein's predilection for slang at its worst. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the story was an idea that finally bore fruit in Starman Jones (1953), that is, the idea of what to do when faced with an impossible situation. Heinlein's answer is to relax, do whatever you feel like, and then deal with the consequences.

"Blowups Happen" (September 1940) deals with the stress of operating a potentially dangerous nuclear power plant and the possibility of a blow-up or melt-down. The science has since become hopelessly outdated, but the solution the story offers -- putting these power plants in a safe orbit -- sounds more intelligent every day. Campbell had been promoting atomic energy steadily in his editorials, so this "negative" approach to atomic dangers was surprising for its time, but the heroes are typical Heinlein competents, engineers who know the risks and know what they are doing. (Unfortunately, this is quite unlike how real life turns out.) Mainly the story served as a basis for DelRey's best work, Nerves (1942), and as an inspiration for the Thomas Scortia and Frank Robinson bestseller The Prometheus Crisis (1975), the dedication of which reads: "For Bob Heinlein, who thirty-five years ago said: 'Blowups Happen.'"

At this point in Heinlein's career, what with the stories previously mentioned plus "Elsewhen" (September 1941) and "Pied Piper" (March 1942), Heinlein had earned enough money to pay off his mortgage which was his original reason for writing (Heinlein, in Expanded universe). However, finding writing

so lucrative for him and desiring a few other luxuries, he decided that he would continue writing until John Campbell bounced one of his stories back without buying it. Meanwhile, Campbell needed material for Astounding's newly found companion magazine, Unknown. Unknown was, barring The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, the greatest fantasy magazine ever published. Stories like Sinister Barrier, Lest Darkness Fall, the Harold Shea stories, None But Lucifer, Darker Than You Think, Conjure Wife, and others first saw light in this illustrious publication.

Heinlein responded to the challenge of writing a fantasy with his story "Magic, Inc." (September 1940), which Campbell retitled "The Devil Makes the Law." In the future, magic is a service and a business like any other. When a magician's mafioso try to lean on the story's mages, they counter with some lobbying and some magic. The political scenes are especially well-handled and amply demonstrate Heinlein's familiarity with both the process and realities of politics. However, as a flight of fancy, it is particularly earthbound. Heinlein sticks to straight, no-nonsense characters who have a realistic (given the situation) problem and who then handle it in a straightforward way. As a fantasist, Heinlein was no match for the better writers in the genre such as Sturgeon, Leiber, de Camp, or C. L. Moore.

He also completed "They" for Unknown shortly afterward. "They" (April 1941) is a perfect paranoid story where the central character believes that the whole world is conspiring against him, and the kicker is that he's right. Heinlein even drags in the notion of a low-budget universe where places don't exist for the main character until he is ready to go there. The story isn't a story, it's an idea. The trouble is, too many people have come up with the same idea before encountering Heinlein's story.

Still, the story is noteworthy as an early foray into the concept of solipsism, that is, the theory that you yourself are the only reality. Before you there was nothing and after you there will be nothing. The presence of others is explained in numerous ways from figments of the unconscious mind to, as here, alien beings. Heinlein tackled this concept most forcefully in his tour-de-force time-travel tales ("By His Bootstraps" (October 1941) and "All You Zombies..." (March 1959)) and also at dreary length in Number of the Beast (1980) where the universe is populated by Heinlein in various incarnations.

The story also has an independent, rebellious hero who derides the nonsensical, humdrum existence he feels most people lead. "They went to work to earn the money to buy the food to get the strength to go to work to earn the money to...." An ordinary man with the common sense to see this becomes uncommon and extraordinary. Heinlein's heroes, almost inevitably, are such people. They are ordinary people, yet extraordinary individuals, have special talents, and a penchant for getting things done. They occasionally indulge in self-pity, but not for long. Heinlein has no use for soulsearching or self-introspection. The individual is needed to engineer a better society, because no matter how he rants about its shortcomings,

Heinlein believes in society and the individual's place in it. He is pro-individual and individual rights, but he is not as libertarian as some of his detractors would make him seem.

"And He Built a Crooked House" (February 1941) is another idea story, but this time the idea is better served. The story is told with wit, logic, and humor, and is deservedly a classic in its own right. To begin with, Heinlein points out that "Americans are considered crazy anywhere in the world." From the Americans the narrator learns that it is because of the Angelenos; from the Angelenos that it is Hollywood's fault; and then, "High up on Lookout Mountain at number 8775, across the street from the Hermit--the original Hermit of Hollywood--lived Quintus Teal, graduate architect." The original Hermit to whom Heinlein refers is none other than Heinlein himself who resided for a time at the above-mentioned address. This introduction slyly boasts that Heinlein is the origin of all the craziness in the world. Another solipsistic conceit? (Information from a SF writer I met at a convention who knew Heinlein very well, but whose name I have forgotten.) Anyway, Teal's problems are funny ones as he builds a multi-dimensional house. By extending rooms into other dimensions, Teal reasons he can save on land, but his multidimensional house also presents a peculiar set of problems. This is one of Heinlein's most enjoyable stories.

Heinlein claims that Sixth Column (January-March 1941) was the only story of his influenced to any marked degree by John Campbell. As the reader will have surmised; I would disagree with this assessment, but Sixth Column is certainly the most obviously and heavily influenced story. As mentioned before, Campbell had an unpublished novella entitled "All" on his favorite plot of humans employing a religion to outsmart supposedly superior aliens. Campbell told his story over the phone to Heinlein and asked him to write it.

"Writing Sixth Column was a job I sweated over," Heinlein admitted. "I had to reslant it to remove racist aspects of the original storyline. And I didn't really believe the pseudo-scientific rationale of Campbell's three spectra -- so I worked especially hard to make it sound realistic." (Expanded Universe.)

Unfortunately, however hard he worked, the story still had the same two faults--it is racist, and the science is indistinguishable from magic. True, Heinlein has a "token" good Japanese-American (whom some of the others immediately suspect when there is a Pan Asian take-over), but the World War II anti-Oriental mindset is all too evident in his tale with his inscrutable invaders who commit seppuku over offenses to their honor. The brilliant American scientists who have escaped detection during the takeover invent a ray that does whatever they want it to so that, in effect, seven men, with the help of the ray and the enslaved population, can defeat the numerically vast Asian opponent. The story moves at a swift pace and the action rarely falters, but it is far from convincing science fiction, and the invasion in The Puppet Masters (September-November 1951) is far more science fictional and shows Heinlein in better form.

It was with Robert Heinlein's next story, "Logic of Empire" (March 1941), that readers first discovered what critic James Gunn called "Heinlein's greatest early contribution...[the] future history.... Heinlein was fascinated by social history, the way our society will develop, particularly as it is affected by invention and technology. The most effective way to discuss social history is to describe societies in action and men and women in conflict with their societies or protecting them from outside assault." (Gunn: Alternate Worlds.)

Nowadays, future histories are a dime a dozen, but Heinlein's was the first and, some maintain, still the greatest. His future history was mostly gathered in the volume The Past Through Tomorrow (1967) which is high on the recommended Heinlein reading list. "Logic of Empire" suffers from a too rapid denouement and doesn't have much to add to the idea that when he conquers other worlds, man will bring his colonial imperialistic tendencies with him. Joseph Conrad, this is not. Still, another piece in Heinlein's newly revealed future history puzzle was welcomed.

His next story was arguably one of his greatest. "Universe" (May 1941) and its follow-up companion "Common Sense" (October 1941) make up the book Orphans of the Sky, without a doubt one of Heinlein's top five works. "Universe" itself found inclusion in The Science Fiction Hall of Fame, Volume 2A, a collection of the greatest pre-1965 novel-length science fiction stories as chosen by the SFWA. The story influenced others from A. E. van Vogt's "Far Centaurus" (1942) to "Spacebred Generations" (1953) by Clifford Simak to Starship (1958) by Brian Aldiss to Phoenix Without Ashes (1975) by Harlan Ellison and Edward Bryant and the Starlost television show created by Ellison to The Galactic Whirlpool (1984) by David Gerrold. Heinlein's story remains the definitive treatment.

The idea is simple. Since what we know of the physical properties of the universe indicate that nothing travels faster than the speed of light, a generation ship (i.e., one that would take generations to reach its destination) is not unlikely. However, if this were a big enough ship, what if the inhabitants forgot they were on a spaceship? What if the inside of the spaceship was all they knew of their world? Fun with cosmology, eh?

In addition, Heinlein created one of the most vivid characters in all of science fiction -- Joe-Jim Gregory, the two-headed mutant. Not many science fiction stories have more than an idea going for them. Rarely does a character in an SF novel come alive and remain memorable long after the reading. Robert Heinlein succeeded where all too few have with Joe-Jim. Brash, confused (he doesn't know that there is any difference between fiction and non-fiction, for example), and larger than life, he remains sympathetic and energetic to the very end. Far too many Heinlein characters come across as Heinlein extemporizing from behind another name, but Joe-Jim clearly isn't Heinlein and remains one of Heinlein's greatest creations.

"Solution Unsatisfactory" (May 1941) appeared under the Anson MacDonald byline in

the same issue as "Universe." The title is aptly descriptive of the story itself; it is the tale of an ultimate weapon (radioactive dust rather than an atomic bomb) that brings about an end to WW II. However, how can society be protected from having this devilish device used on it? Colonel Manning decided that the only way to save the world is by bullying it into submission by threatening to use this deadly weapon. Obviously not an ideal or satisfactory solution, but if Heinlein had been able to solve this problem, we would not be suffering under the threat of nuclear annihilation and he would be hailed as one of the greatest heroes of mankind. Still, the story isn't a story but an idea that has been presented by fictional characters without resolution. In other words, this should have been an essay instead of a malformed story.

Heinlein's next novel, Methuselah's Children (July-September 1941), was a great improvement over his last. It introduced one of his most popular characters, Lazarus Long. Perhaps taking its cue from A. E. van Vogt's classic novel Slan (1941), Heinlein presents a persecuted race of homo superior called the Families who happen to have longer than usual lifespans and are hated and feared by "normal" humans because of this. Lazarus decides he doesn't like the neighborhood, so he gathers all these long-lived people together and heads for the stars.

The trouble is that the first group of aliens they encounter--Lazarus dubs them the Jockairian Gods--are so superior to the Earthmen that they cannot abide them. After talking with the leader of the ship offstage in the Temple of Kreel (i.e., we never see the confrontation, Heinlein seemingly has an aversion to ever bringing superior aliens on stage), the aliens transport the ship and its inhabitants to a place which the aliens feel would be more suitable for them.

Unfortunately, there the group meets "the Little People," another alien species that is possessed of a group mind and have fairy tale powers. One of the Family, Mary Sperling, joins the Little People's group mind to Lazarus' shock and dismay. Then a new baby is born that has been altered by the aliens. Demoralized and independent, they cannot accept the idea of joining the group mind, and so Lazarus proposes that they head back to Earth and face their problems.

Once back on Earth, the group finds that the problem has solved itself. The rest of humanity has discovered the secret of longevity and everything is honky-dory. In the original version of the tale, Long decides to check out a chili house in Dallas to assure himself that not everything has changed. Later, in 1958, Heinlein revised the story to have Lazarus speculate about returning to the planet of the Jockairians: "Someday, about a thousand years from now, I intend to march straight into the Temple of Kreel, look him in the eye and say, 'Howdy, bub -- what do you know that I don't know?'" (Actually not a bad question, though it is a bit pugnaciously phrased.)

The problem is that when Heinlein returned to this subject in his novel Time Enough for Love (1973), he makes a bad joke out of it:

"He's leading up to how he killed

the gods of the Jockaira with nothing but a toy gun and moral superiority. Since that lie is already in his memoirs in four conflicting versions, why should we be burdened with a fifth?'

"It was not a toy gun; it was a Mark Nineteen Remington Blaster at full charge, a superior weapon in its day -- and after I carved them up, the stench was worse than Hormone Hall the morning after pay-day. And my superiority is never moral; it lies always in doing it first before he does it to me."

No matter how you slice it, Lazarus killing the incredibly advanced Jockairians with any kind of gun doesn't match up with the facts presented in Methuselah's Children, but then that is only one of Time Enough for Love's many lapses. Heinlein presented the fierce independence and pugnacity of Earthlings as a good thing in the climax of Have Spacesuit, Will Travel (1958), but the implication here that Lazarus senselessly executes an alien race because he felt insulted that they considered themselves superior to him has all the pettiness of a Greek god. To have a character touted as wise behave in such a manner is ludicrous.

Lazarus Long is clearly a stand-in for Heinlein himself. He was born Woodrow Wilson Smith close to the time that Heinlein was born and originates from a similar area. He acts as an author's mouthpiece, extolling at great length or in the form of aphorisms his hard-won knowledge about every topic under the sun. He is the single connecting tissue of Heinlein's future history as his incredible life-span starts from Heinlein's beginning to the end-of-the-universe party in Number of the Beast (1980).

There are two lessons to be learned in Methuselah's Children; one Lazarus catches on to, albeit belatedly, and the other he doesn't. The first lesson is one of responsibility, that an individual must take a stand and face his problems; sometimes he might find that when faced, the problems might solve themselves. This is the lesson that Lazarus learns. The other lesson is the one the Jockairians provided regarding man's foolish ego. They took the Families' Spaceship and flicked it "across the depths of space as casually as a man might restore a baby bird to its nest." Obviously they wanted to help mankind, give it a "nest". The people they choose are friendly and selfless. They have no egos and they cooperate entirely so that the group together is much more powerful than any collection of individuals. However, Lazarus rejects this because he feels that to be an egotistical individual is necessary to be a man. As his original wish for chili at the story's end indicated, he does not want to evolve or want change. Heinlein's future history timeline indicates that mankind at this point is still in cultural adolescence, but is on the brink of true maturity.

Maturity also eludes the hero of "By His Bootstraps" (October 1941) which undoubtedly is one of the greatest time travel paradox stories of all time. Again, as in "They", Heinlein embodies the concept of solipsism. The hero of the story is sitting at a desk

writing a paper on the impossibility of time travel when a time gate opens up and future versions of himself arrive and debate about whether or not he should travel in time. By accident (or by being bopped on the head), he appears in a palace in the future and meets an old man who we later discover is again himself. Everyone in this universe is seemingly the same person travelling back and forth over the plane of his existence -- except for the builders of the future palace and the time-travel device who are referred to as the High Ones. The hero flees in terror rather than confront them and thereby insures that he is trapped forever in this pattern forever, with his older self continually and ironically advising his younger self of his "great future."

All in all, the tale is neatly constructed, though Heinlein would do it better with "All You Zombies..." (F&SF, March 1959). (Door into Summer (1956) is also a time travel story, but Heinlein uses time travel to resolve the story rather than to neatly explore the various possibilities of time travel.) Heinlein's influence can clearly be seen in such works as The Man Who Folded Himself (1973) by David Gerrold, The Technicolor Time Machine (1967) by Harry Harrison, and "The Seventh Voyage" of The Star Diaries (1976) by Stanislaw Lem. "By His Bootstraps" is one of the greatest of the time travel classics.

"Goldfish Bowl" (March, 1942) is a fairly minor Heinlein short story which was published under the Anson MacDonald byline. In it, two scientists hope to explore a strange phenomenon out in the Pacific, twin water-spouts which reach up into the clouds. They plan to go up in a bathysphere with an anti-shock harness when another inexplicable phenomenon, "LaGrange's fireballs," envelops one of them and appears to spirit him away.

The scientist finds himself in a peculiar prison where he is served food and water and his waste is disposed of, but he can learn nothing else. He is finally joined by his partner who went up by an alternate route using the bathysphere, and together they decide that they are being kept as pets (hence the title) by creatures that are either from outer space or a previously unknown species that evolved on Earth which dominates the skies much as man dominates the ground, and which, for various reasons that Heinlein tries to make plausible, have never been detected.

Heinlein's naval background serves him in good stead in giving the beginning of the story an air of authenticity. Heinlein uses the story to assert why mankind needs to feel superior:

"Don't you see? We've had some dignity as a race. We've striven and accomplished things. Even when we failed we had the tragic satisfaction of knowing that we were nevertheless, superior and more able than other animals.... But if we are just one of the lower animals ourselves, what does our great work amount to? Me, I just couldn't go on pretending to be a 'scientist' if I thought I was just a fish, mucking around in the bottom of a pool. My work wouldn't signify anything."

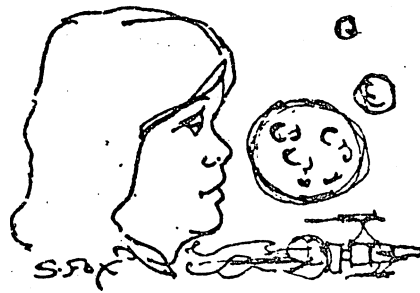
"....It doesn't seem to matter very much where the X people came from. One way or another, they are a threat to our kind...."

This would be a theme that Heinlein would come back to in several later works, and was an indication that he was still chewing over the problems that the aliens in Methuselah's Children presented.

Unfortunately, the story fails to satisfy for a number of reasons. Heinlein leaves many loose ends, never solving the problem of how to deal with the aliens, who they are, what they want, where they come from, or even if they truly do regard the humans in their charge as pets. They are once more kept off-stage and are never presented. When the hero of the story finally tries to communicate, he does not try to communicate with his captors but with other human beings to warn them of the danger. The story ends with some naval officers puzzling over the message that the scientist inscribes on his body and an indication that some goldfish resent being trapped in their goldfish bowl. This obvious bit of symbolism represents mankind in the story and how it resents and struggles to overcome its limitations, breaking past the limits of its environs (say Earth and its atmosphere) into the great, heretofore unattainable, region beyond. Once more, Heinlein affirms that you can't keep a good man down, and while individuals may lose the battle from time to time, mankind as a whole will wind up on top or die trying.

The novel Beyond This Horizon (April-May 1942), on the other hand, may be regarded as a botched job. Its hero, Hamilton Felix, is another example of the competent man who has superior brains and physique. For the good of humanity, the District Moderator for Genetics wants Hamilton to breed and place his superior genes into the gene-pool, but Hamilton can see no point to it-- that is until he puts down a revolution and almost loses his life. Then he realizes that the reason to survive and have future generations is to discover once and for all if there is some sort of life after death. Heinlein strongly hints there is and that parts of Hamilton Felix will fill the universe and that the universe is himself (solipsism again). Hamilton then breeds and discovers that his children may possess psionic powers because when he asks them to scratch his back they know exactly the right place. A bizarre book? Assuredly. The viewpoint sometimes switches confusingly which doesn't help matters. Hamilton is bored through most of the book and communicates his boredom all too well to the reader. The major conflict of the story is resolved two-thirds of the way through except for the answers to Hamilton's ultimate questions which can never be resolved. For once, Heinlein kept the story going too long rather than ending too abruptly.

However, the book does contain some interesting speculation. In this future, everyone is armed. Because of this, everyone must be polite or a very good, very quick shot. Heinlein theorizes that the unfit (i. e., those souls that are socially obnoxious



or simply not fast or accurate enough on the draw) would thus be eliminated from society, though there are enough misfit malcontents to attempt a half-assed revolution in the book. The book is filled with ideas, but they are haphazardly thrown into the story and lead nowhere. Heinlein is clearly very interested in the subjects he tackles, but he begins to ignore the fact that his basic job should be to tell a good story as well as he possibly can. Beyond This Horizon can be seen as an omen of Heinlein's eventual decline.

Waldos were invented because of Heinlein's next story. The concept is basically simple -- a person uses a machine that will employ mechanical arms to imitate the operator's movements. Thus heavy or dangerous materials can be safely handled. Heinlein came up with the concept, an engineer read it and built the device which he named after Heinlein's story "Waldo" (August 1942) in his honor.

The main character Waldo is a typical Heinlein misfit, mentally superior but physically weak. Therefore he lives in an orbiting space station because of the great advantages that a lack of gravity has for the handicapped. Waldo is a fat, lonely, petulant, and self-centered man whose only friends are his dog and Doc Grimes. He carries a grudge against North American Power-Air and refuses to help them until Grimes points out that it would be serving his best interests if he did. Grimes is convinced that there is a connection between a series of inexplicable mechanical failures in the engines of some transport ships and the general decline in physical health that earth's population is experiencing. He is right, but the solution proves to be metaphysical and comes about with the help of a magic-practicing, country hex doctor named Gramps Schneider.

Parts of this story are clearly science fiction, but at the same time, the resolution depends upon a non-scientific method that is a denial of the absoluteness of the physical laws of the universe that most science fiction writers operate under (with occasional conventions such as faster-than-light travel). In other words, the story is grounded more in fantasy than science fiction because as science fiction, it's a cheat. Nevertheless, the story mainly sets out to entertain, which it does admirably.

We now come to the last of the first-period Heinlein stories. Heinlein had made an unheard-of impact upon magazine science fiction as was hailed as its leading writer, but after this story he was to stop writing for two years and help out in the war effort

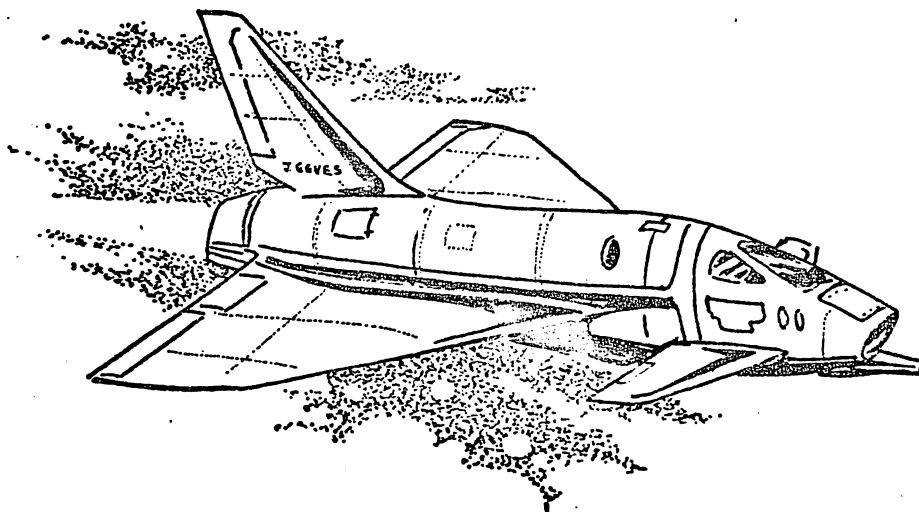
doing engineering work. (In fact, he was stationed at the same place as Isaac Asimov and L. Sprague deCamp.) In addition, Heinlein broke away from John W. Campbell. He had told Campbell that he would continue working for him so long as Campbell did not reject a story. Finally one was rejected and Heinlein simply stopped submitting. Campbell wrote to Heinlein to ask for more stories, and was reminded of Heinlein's assertion. Campbell asked to see the story again, and, after insisting on some minor revisions, accepted the story. However, Heinlein ceased to depend on Campbell, and Campbell's influence noticeably waned from his stories.

"The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag" (October 1942) appeared under the byline of John Riverside in Unknown Worlds. Like Beyond This Horizon, the story is a mess. A husband and wife detective team, patterned after Nick and Nora Charles of the Thin Man films, are employed by Jonathan Hoag who, after finding an unknown substance under his fingernails, has finally begun to wonder what he does for a living during the

day that he can't remember. The detectives are able to determine nothing as they are mislead, toyed with, frightened and left thoroughly confused. Not only that, but they are left with two mutually exclusive explanations for this state of affairs, both of which involve powers beyond their control. In the end, they leave their home, are completely paranoid and frightened, and sleep handcuffed to one another, a rather bleak ending especially as the detectives are likable people.

But then it was a bleak and depressing time, not only for Heinlein but for the whole country. Not too many years after the "War to end all Wars", the world was at war again, and the United States joined them. Always a doer with a proud, military background, Heinlein rolled up his sleeves and offered his skills for the war effort where they were gratefully accepted.

In the next part, we will examine Heinlein's post-war work, his outlook on science fiction, his famous juveniles, and various developing trends in his work.



WORKING TO WRITE

by P. M. Fergusson

Fans and writing I place in the "many think about it, fewer try, and fewer yet get published" category. Most aren't willing to put out the work to learn the craft.

Classic example: At RIVERCON, Rosa Banks and myself were approached by a gentleman who wanted to write horror/gothic stories and wanted to know where to start. We gave him several pointers, including:

- Read what is and has been written so you don't repeat.
- Know Strunk and White and Rules of Grammar by heart--or at least have copies of both handy for reference.
- Ditto for Bartlett's Familiar Quotations and Roget's Thesaurus.

-- Get and use the best dictionary you can afford--words like "furgle" are not in Pocket Book editions.

-- Study other writers of all types and genres to see how they style and pace their stories.

We knew it was hopeless when, after all this he gave us a blank look, furgled his eyebrows, and asked, "What's Strunk and White?" He went on to complain that that seemed like an awful lot of work to do just so you could write a little horror story. After all, he explained, the reason he didn't want to write Science Fiction was because he'd have to learn all that technical stuff.

Aaaaargh!!!!!!

Lifeorce

A comparison by Dale Skran, Jr.

Space Vampires

Space Vampires: The Book
by Colin Wilson

Lifeorce: The Movie
Directed by Tobe Hooper
Screenplay by Dan O'Bannon & Don Jakoby

It is my intention to review these two items together and focus on some of the problems involved in transforming a dry, intellectual novel to the screen. I have just read the novel and agree with the screenwriters that major changes are required to transform the novel to the screen. Space Vampires (SV) suffers from a dull beginning and a standard SF paste-on ending of the form: "I am UBBER SLOBBTOH THE KARGAUTH and I have been hunting the Space Vampires for millenia." Its strengths include side ranging intellectual speculation, moody atmosphere, and enough sizzling sex to attract a wide audience.

Correctly, the screenwriters changed both the time of the novel and the placid opening in an imaginative way. In SV an asteroid exploration craft discovers the alien spacecraft hundreds of years in our future. Alas, Wilson, the occult speculator, has sketched an unbelievable future featuring technology likely to exist in the next 50 years and computers of the 70s. Lifeorce (LF) solves this problem by placing the story in an alternate universe in 1986. The major characteristic of this alternate universe seems to be that Europe is much stronger and more united than in our world. Hence, Halley's Comet is met by a European Space Agency shuttle specially modified by the addition of a NERVA engine (nuclear) and large solar panels. The initial encounter with the alien ship in the comet's coma breaks new ground in the visualization of the unknown in SF film. Although marred by a later scene in which the American shuttle Columbia docks with the ESA vessel, and they appear to be the same size although interior shots of the ESA vessel indicate something about 5 times the size of the space shuttle, I give LF considerable credit for the entire opening sequence.

Now the action moves to Earth and follows

the book fairly closely, up to the point where the alien with the girl's body walks off into the fog. Although the screenwriters threw in more action with the Space Girl (as she is named in the credits) using TK [telekinesis] to knock around some guards, this sequence has two strengths. One, thanks to more liberal film standards, we are spared the silliness of getting clothes on the woman. She walks as though clothes meant nothing to her, an attitude totally consistent with that which an alien might hold. Note that these scenes are taken right out of the book, and should not be regarded as someone's attempt to insert flesh into the film to titillate the audience. Two, modern special effects permit a spectacular visualization of her draining the lifeorce out of an unfortunate spear carrier.

At this point LF diverges in a major way from the novel. In the novel, which is more of a psychological detective story than a thriller, we are introduced to the notion that we are all vampires to a greater or lesser degree. An eerie trip is taken to visit an old scientist who lives with three female assistants, and has discovered how to make what he calls "positive vampirism" work for him, extending his lifespan as his assistants each give him a little bit of their lifeorce everyday. This scientist has been scorned as a nut, but in the context of an invasion by space vampires, people suddenly begin to take him very seriously. It is at this point that Carlsen, the original discoverer of the aliens, finds out that they still live and are using him to leech lifeorce out of everyone he meets. He nearly kills one of the scientist's assistants while making love, but holds himself back before she is sucked dry.

I am confused as to why the screenwriters threw out the premise of the novel. Surely the sexual content did not give them pause.

Perhaps the message that we are all vampires was considered too unsettling for the audience, or too intellectual. Perhaps the novel's association of vampirism with S&M, indeed, as the ultimate sadistic act, the total absorption of another human, the analogy of the vampire/prey relationship with the sadistic/masochistic relationship, and the emphasis on the necessity of the consent of the prey to the vampire was considered too complex to understand. Whatever the reason, it is unfortunate since excising these ideas make many of the later scenes in the movie incomprehensible.

Instead, the screenwriters decided they were making a zombie movie. Everyone the vampires drain rises after two hours, and goes off hunting for others to drain. This allows them to show lots of people drying up and falling into dust until we are bored with the special effects. Then space captain Carlsen shows up (he appears to die early in the movie) with the amazing tale of how the space vampires killed his crew and he escaped in a small pod. They decide to hypnotize him to find out more about his persistent nightmares. At this point, the movie rejoins the novel, with the difference that the hypnotic scene takes place in a research center rather than at the home of the scientist studying positive vampirism.

Without revealing the details, they use the link between Carlsen and one of the vampires to trace its location, and the hunt is on. The trail leads to an asylum for the criminally insane. In the movie this seems to be just another piece of cliched atmosphere. In the novel, it dovetails nicely with the theory of vampirism developed. What better place to find strong masochists and strong sadists, as well as bodies with so little mind as to offer no resistance to occupation by a vampire?

Although both novel and movie are close together here, we are quite lost in the movie. The idea of Carlsen being a vampire himself has never been mentioned. The concept that you must consent to the vampire has not been fully developed. The further extrapolation that some enjoy being in the thrall of a vampire (masochists), and that the only way to resist a vampire is to emphasize your natural sadistic inclinations, have never been laid out. Thus, when we see Carlsen torturing a nurse in the movie, we take it as an exorcism. In the novel, the nurse (a sexually repressed woman with strong masochistic drives) is in thrall to the vampire, and is being used by the vampire, who is in another body, a mindless body, to drain others. When Carlsen tears off her clothes, we see her back is covered with scratches. Why is he tearing off her clothes? Why does she have all those scratches? What is going on? The movie never answers these questions. He appears to be demanding that she tell him where the vampire is via crude tactics, but the scene in which Carlsen drains her life-force until she tells him which patient the vampire is hiding in has been removed. In the novel, it is clear that the nurse wants to be destroyed, and will only give up the information if Carlsen takes over where the vampire left off.

After this confusion, both novel and movie proceed in step until the alien vampire is finally imprisoned in a body via the use of drugs. In the novel, the alien then gives a long and unconvincing explanation of what is going on, which the screenwriters have properly excised. Instead, they take off for London and we rejoin the zombie movie. Both the novel and the movie take us to London to meet the Prime Minister, but in the novel this is the final confrontation, and the world is saved by UBBER....you get the idea. In the movie, the PM is now a zombie, not possessed by one of the vampires. Our surviving heroes, Carlsen, the astronaut, and Caine, a military type, escape narrowly from the zombies. Once outside London, they find the city has been quarantined, and will be nuked in a couple of hours. At this point, the screenwriters borrow the end of Five Million Years to Earth and introduce the following ideas heretofore unmentioned, and certainly not taken from the novel:

1. The aliens are collecting souls and sending them up to the ship via the "Space Girl."
2. The aliens can be killed by lead-sheathed iron swords with a thrust through an "energy center."
3. The aliens have been doing this for a long time, accounting for the association of comets with evil spirits and bad times (this is actually an OK idea, and fits in better than the explanation given in the book).

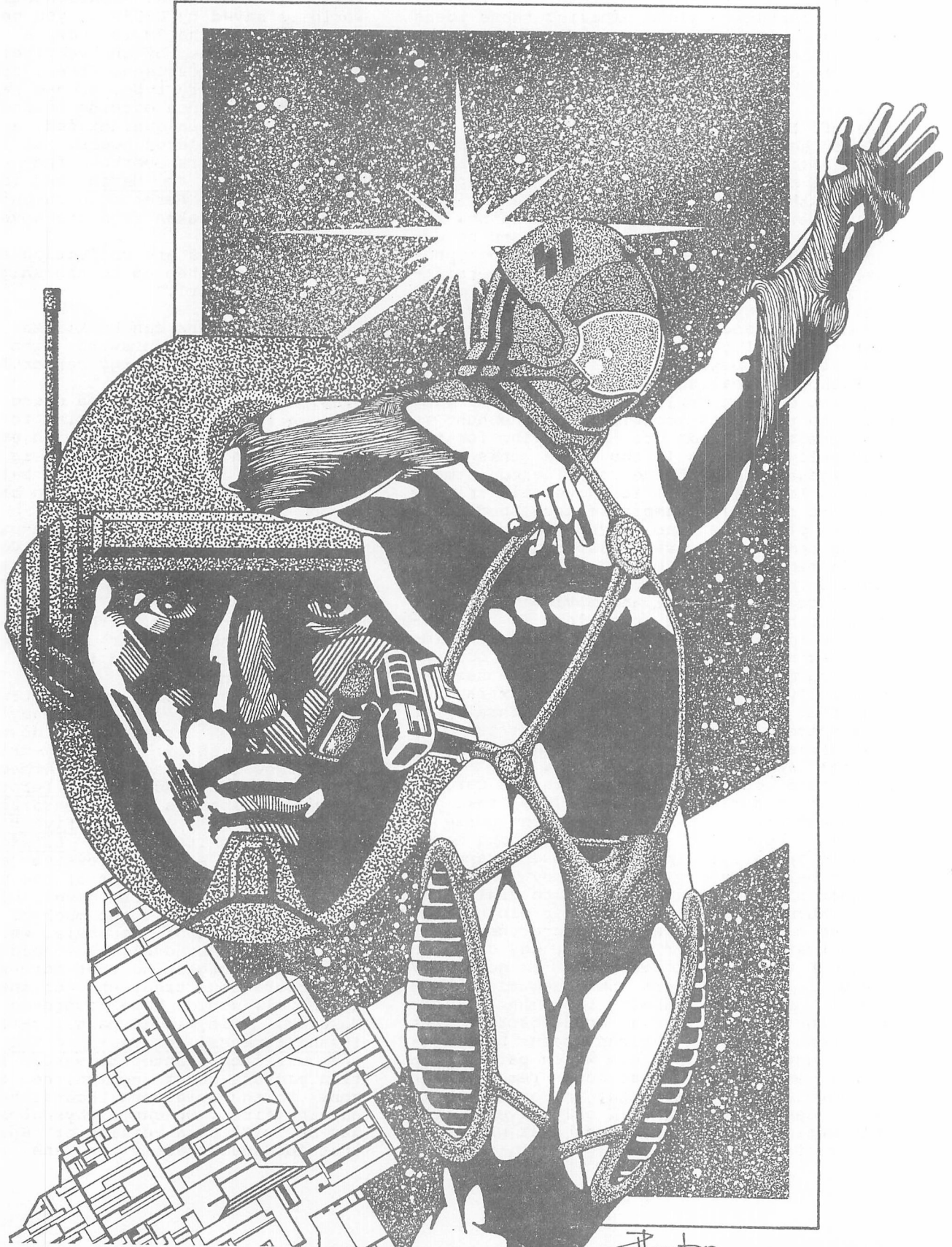
At this point, we have some extended action sequences as Carlsen and Caine separately enter London and take on a city full of zombies and the remaining two space vampires (one having been killed earlier with a sword). The ending, with Carlsen simultaneously killing himself and the Space Girl while being transported to the alien ship defies explanation.

On its own terms, I fault LF for overuse of effects and scenes (How many times do we need to see Carlsen pull down the oxygen lever in the ship? How many dried-up zombies? How many laser light effects?), and a less than clear script. Lifeforce can be aptly described as Alien meets Zombie Island (not a real film) meets Five Million Years to Earth. To its credit, Lifeforce brings to the screen some impressive effects and beautiful visualizations of the unknown.

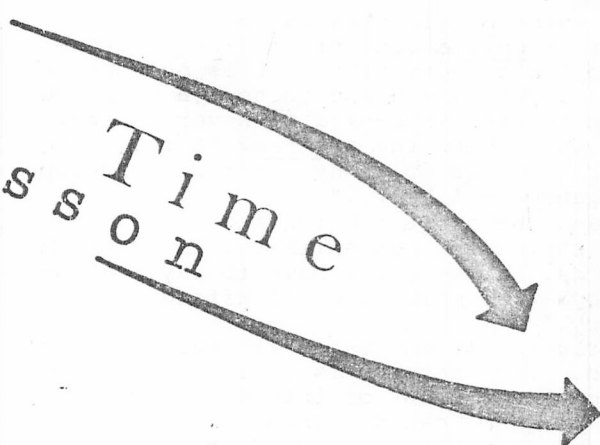
In comparison to the novel, I fault LF for either using it too much or too little. The middle part of the movie, which is taken mainly from the novel, also held my interest the best, suggesting that more novel, and a more courageous treatment of the themes of the novel, would have improved the film. However, this middle part ill-fits a Zombie Island/Five Million Years to Earth plot. If the director wanted to make a straight action picture about zombies, he should have gone to the Spielberg/Lucas school of film editing first. We can always hope that someday BBC will do a version of Space Vampires that focuses directly on the intellectual

content of the novel and less on zombie bashing.

And so, in conclusion, I would like to expand on a comment made by someone I saw Lifeforce with. This person claimed that the violent, jarring film fit the name "Space Vampires" much better than "Lifeforce." To this I add that the novel should never have been called "Space Vampires," rather "Lifeforce." Ironically, one suspects that both titles were chosen in an attempt to reach a wider audience.



A Matter of Time P.M. Ferguson



"Deep within the digital labyrinth of circuitry forming its RAM and ROM, the thought began to form. Slowly, ever so slowly, the computer became aware of its own existence."

Aaaaaargh!

I chose the opening paragraph from one of my own early stories -- which was never published, thank God -- but how often have you read something similar?

No, non, nyet, nein! No matter what language you use, it still comes down to the fact that sentience in digital computers can't happen. Digital computers can't become self-aware -- no matter how big and complex they are.

"Why not," you protest. "I see it all used the time in science fiction stories -- even in some award nominees."

Yes you do -- but that doesn't make it possible. It doesn't even make it acceptable. All I can say is that writers should have studied a bit more about how a computer operates.

"But," you point out, "you have sentient computers in a lot of your own stories."

I certainly do, Oh Discerning and Well Read Master, but they're analog rather than digital. Even their designation -- bio-analogs -- is a pun on the nature of their operation. If you will recall, I said digital computers can't be self-aware.

"Digital. Analog. So what's the difference?" you ask. "A computer is a computer, isn't it?"

Not at all. Most non-biological computers in operation today -- micro, mini, or mainframe -- are digital. There are a few experimental analog units being developed (physical monsters with a thousandth of the computing power of the smallest of the digitals) and there are some rudimentary, vacuum-tube powered antiques still being played with, but the computers we work with every day -- including the IBM PC this is being written on -- are digital. In the realm of biological computers -- such as you, dear reader -- everything is analog.

"So what's the difference?" you press.

Time. That's the difference. It's a matter of time -- and therein lies the heart of the problem. An analog computer operates in real time; a digital computer doesn't.

"So what? Einstein said time was a variable anyway."

Yes he did -- sort of. But the "time" he was concerned with was continuous. Time to a digital computer isn't. It's a big, big difference.

In an analog computer, the signals carrying data may vary in intensity, but they don't stop -- not ever -- not until the computer "dies". In a digital computer, the data-carrying signals stop whenever the timing clock turns off. In my IBM that happens four million seven hundred and seventy thousand times every second. When that clock turns off, to all intents and purposes the computer is dead. Think about it. How self-aware would you be if you died and were reborn that often?

"You gotta be kidding. How can it operate if it turns off that frequently?"

Quite nicely, thank you. It will operate just as well at clock speeds both faster and slower -- within limits. One of the standard trouble-shooting procedures is to disconnect the clock and substitute a simple, momentary contact switch. Every time the switch is pressed the computer performs its next step. In between presses of the switch the computer does nothing -- which allows the technician to examine the various signal states on the lines.

"Whoa! If it's not doing anything, how can you find different signals?"

Valid question. Simple answer. A digital computer is nothing more than a whole hell of a lot of off/on switches connected together. Each time a data signal is passed down the buss lines it changes some of those switches. They stay changed until the next signal arrives.

Now I admit that it's not really that simple in practice -- you need things like keep-alive voltages or Static RAM otherwise the memory dumps what you put into it. (A momentary digression for the non-computer oriented reader. RAM stands for Random

Access Memory, which is where the computer stores the data and program it is using at any given time. Everything else is stuck in some form of hard storage: floppy disk, hard disk, bubble memory, tape, etc.) With the normal Dynamic RAM that computers use (They're a hell of a lot cheaper, that's why.) it forgets very quickly -- in less than a second. Static RAM will hold up for quite a while -- up to an hour or longer in some cases.

The point of all this is that a digital computer is only a lot of off/on switches which operate very fast. It is no smarter than the light switch you turned on when you sat down to read this--and it never can be.

"But what about the program? It tells the computer what to do. Why can't it develop intelligence -- like ..."

Ah, ah. We can't mention her name here, even if she didn't get nominated for a bunch of awards. If we do, I have to pay the authors royalties which I can't afford.

"Sorry."

S'alright. At any rate, it was a fair question. The answer is a bit complex because there are a lot of interacting reasons why a program can't become intelligent. First and foremost is because the program suffers the same limitations as the computer itself. The program is bound to the computer's internal clock, just like everything else in the digital world. It is comprised of a bunch of off/on signals that are stored in either RAM, ROM, or hard storage until the computer's Central Processing Unit (CPU) calls for them. Those signals are not related. In fact, the same signals may be used in a bunch of different programs in very different ways just as we pick words out of a dictionary and string them together.

Secondly, is the matter of size. Even in the case of an analog computer, the program big enough to be intelligent and self-aware would exceed the memory capacity of all but the very largest computers.

"But couldn't the program distribute itself among several computers?"

Maybe, but not likely. The computers would have to be equipped with the same type of CPU and be running the same operating system, otherwise the program would be lost, or spend all its time translating and recompiling and relinking its various parts.

"Huh?"

Sorry. I forget not everybody is a programmer or technically trained in computer operation.

CPU's are not all the same; different CPU's process data in very different ways. Data sent to one CPU in a specific order would be processed; send the same data in the same order to another type of CPU and you'd get garbage. Nor does a program talk to a CPU directly -- it uses what's called an operating system to interface to both the CPU and the computer's peripherals -- like the display, the keyboard, the ports (more of which later) and the data storage areas. A program which is designed to run under one operating system will not run under another without a lot of changes.

"Don't some programs carry their own operating systems?"

Sure do. But they have to get that operating system into the computer before they can run, which brings us to problem three.

Computers talk to each other via serial ports as opposed to parallel ports which are extensions of the computer data lines. On a serial line (like Ma Bell uses to let us talk to each other) the data comes in one bit at a time in a long, single-file line. If the operating system of the sending computer and the receiving computer don't match, the incoming data sails off into oblivion. The exception to this is if the data is in the format of ASCII code. However, a program in ASCII code is unusable by a computer as received. In the trade jargon, it's called the source code. It has to be rewritten to match the host computer's CPU, then compiled, then linked. All of which take an external operator.

"Why couldn't an intelligent program carry all that stuff with it?"

It could. But the translator section of the program would have to match the receiving computer's CPU and operating system, which means that the program would have to know beforehand what those were.

"Couldn't it try a bunch of different operating systems until it got one that worked?"

Uh huh. But it still has to find enough memory in the host computer to contain all those subprograms and its intelligence or it can't do anything. If the intelligence has to remain in one computer while storing data in another, it can't do much. You can't move a piano by yelling at it over the phone line. Also, the program had better hope that no one disconnects that serial line. If that line is cut, even by accident (a favorite accident with Ma Bell), the data at its other end is inaccessible -- gone for good if someone powers down the disconnected computer in the interim. If half of the program's intelligence is at one end of the line and half at the other....it just ceased being an intelligent program.

"And if the computer is big enough?"

Then The Operator comes into the picture. If my computer doesn't do what I tell it to, I find out why in a hurry. Remember that step at a push of the switch trick. A program is a very vulnerable object. It can't do anything the hard-wired parts of the computer won't allow. It can't even apprehend the real world unless the computer is hooked to video cameras or other analog sensing devices -- all of which have to be turned on. It can't do anything in that real world unless it is hooked to robotics. It can lock up the peripherals, it can even store itself on disk, if it can find enough room, so turning the computer off won't destroy it. In fact, in the case of very large programs --and a sentient program would be very large indeed--part, or most of the program must be located in some form of hard storage. A CPU can only address so much memory. If the program isn't backed up in hard storage and The Operator pulls the plug, the program is gone right then and there.

If the entire program is on disk it can't come back on line unless The Operator allows it to. Most computers can be booted in a manner which will give the operator complete control of what program is called from disk. If the operator doesn't like what he sees in any given disk file, he can erase it -- and there is not one damn thing the program can do about it. If necessary, The Operator can

pull the disk and physically erase it with a big magnet.

By now you should have gotten the idea. If you want to write about a sentient computer or a self-aware program, please make it an analog -- or class the story as Fantasy, not as Science Fiction.

Finally, when you start thinking about a

computer taking over itself, even an analog computer, ou'd better give it a hell of a well defended power source, because when The Operator pulls the plug, any data in the active memories is gone, gone, gone...and that, dear reader, is the dying end for a program...even for programs known as thee and me.

A search for Andre Norton
and Barbi Johnson

A request from Ruth Berman

I was reading a recent Norton recently (if you follow that), and a question occurred to me that you may be able to answer -- the book was Forerunner, with illos and cover by Barbi Johnson. This was the first time I'd seen something of Barbi's published professionally, and I was wondering if she'd had other pro work published. For other Norton books, perhaps?

Some years back she bowled over just about all (I should think) those who saw them with a series of paintings of incidents in William Bowen's The Enchanted Forest, displayed at SF Fan Art Shows over a few seasons. Especially delightful were the ones of the Encourager of the Interrupter, an elegant gentleman dressed in the style of 18th (or 17th?) century France, about three inches high, and never at a loss, except perhaps in a bird's nest. After a good many years of vaguely hoping to run across a copy, I finally realized I could borrow Bowen's book on Inter-library Loan (sort-of -- the copy they found me was a xerox from one library of another library's copy, it's so rare), and so was able to read a charming story. MacMillan's published it originally, back in the 20's. I wrote to them to say how nice it would be if they were to reprint it, and even nicer if they could arrange to do it with Barbi's illos. (The original had illos, but not really very good, as far as I can judge from photocopy repro.)

((If anyone can help, please let me know -- Ian.))

Identified Flying Object

by Ruth Berman

A UFO! cried the journalist

Fair as the morning star!

He hurried to return a list

Of UFOs of a journalist

To be the semipaternalest

Of scoops that ever were.

A UFO! cried the journalist --

But it was the morning star.



The Theory of Alternate Worlds

by Ruth Berman

Lizzie Elizabeth Betsy and Bess

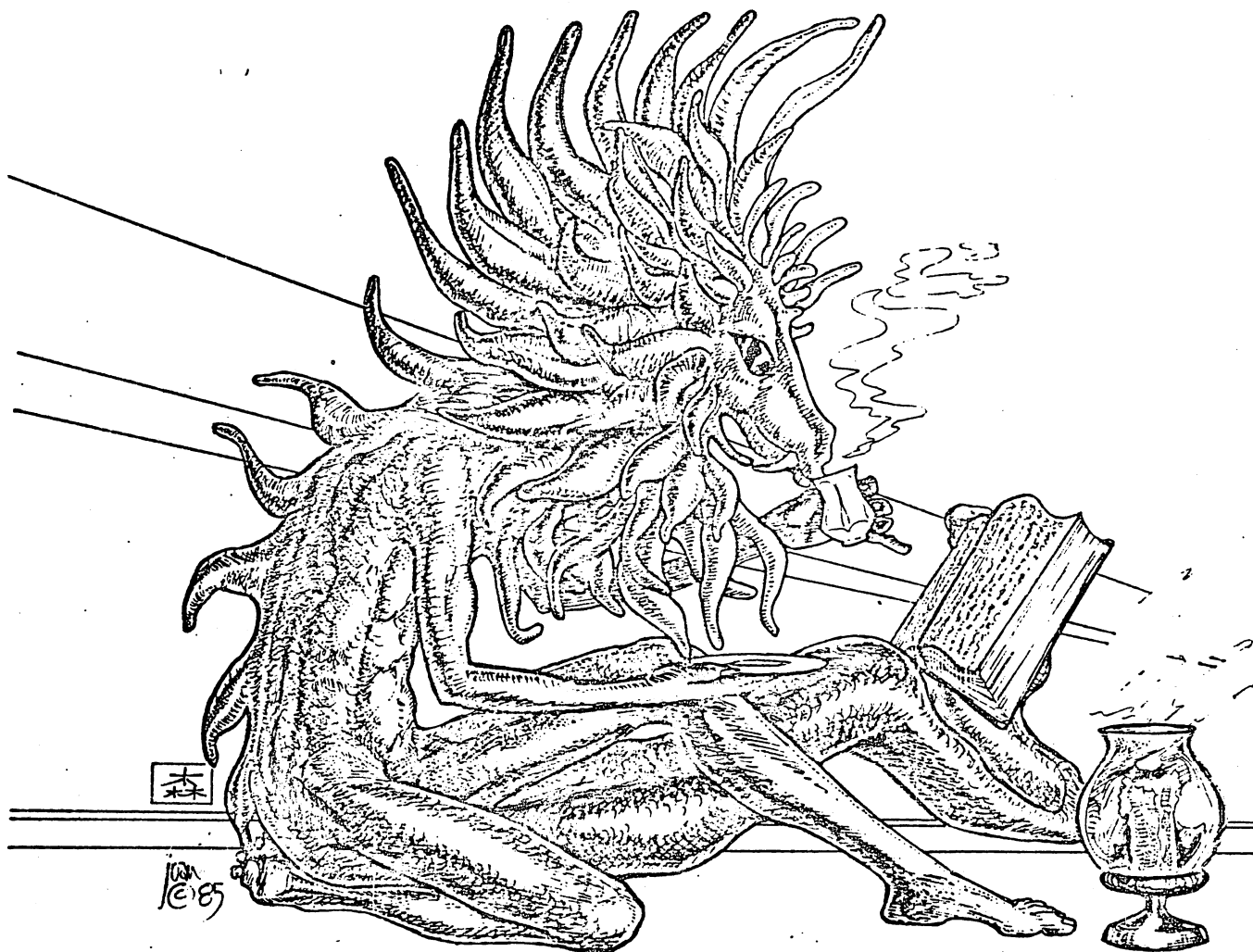
Found they had alternate cosmoses

Purely cosmetic their differences

Genetically there but one of them was

Lizzie Elizabeth Betsy and Bess





Pulp and Celluloid

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The Dragon Waiting by John M. Ford. Avon, 1983, \$3.50.

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

The hardcover edition of this novel was published two years ago and won the World Fantasy Award for Best Novel at last year's World Fantasycon. So I eagerly awaited the paperback publication of The Dragon Waiting (okay, so I'm cheap!). Well, it's finally available. Was it worth the wait? I'm not sure, but I think it was.

The problem, I think, is that I'm not a historian. I know some history, but there is so much history in this book -- and it's not all real. Though the book is chock-a-block with real historical characters (Richard III, the Medicis, Louis XI, etc.), no one seems to be quite the way the history book describes them -- in fact, none of them seem to be Christian. Everyone seems to be long to some strange cult or other, each with its own special symbols and rites. Since my knowledge of real Fifteenth Century history is perhaps not all that it should be (especially in Italy and France, where most of the beginning of the book takes place), I spent most of the novel telling myself that I was merely confused. Well, yes, when they introduced the German vampire and the Welsh wizard, I knew that this was not historically accurate, but I figured that this was just one small bit pasted onto reality. It was not until I read the historical notes at the end that I realized that Ford had constructed an alternate universe, one in which the Emperor Julian re-established paganism and in which Justinian I had time to consolidate his gains -- in short, one in which Byzantium did not fall to the Crusaders and in which Christianity remained merely another strange sect (here called Jeshites). I relate all this so that if you read the book, you'll have a better idea of what is going on.

If I factor out my confusion in what the heck was going on with history, I would have to say that I enjoyed the book. The characters were interesting (though so many of them did tend to be confusing at times) and the story, centering around Arthurian legends and what really did happen to those two nephews of Richard III, was involving. The descriptive passages are well-written (as one has come to expect of fantasy) and I suspect if you can follow what's going on without the confusion that I had, it would be completely involving. Do I recommend this novel? Let's put it this way -- now that I know where Ford is coming from, so to speak -- I want to go back and re-read the book. If that's not a recommendation, I'm not sure what is.

By the way, this is a prime example of why alternate history novels are so hard to do well. They're either too heavy-handed about the dividing points, making them very important and obvious events like the Crucifixion or World War II, or they are too subtle, as in this novel. The heavy-handed ones seem to feel that one can make large-scale changes without having them filter down to small ones. (If World War II never

happened, Kennedy would never have been elected President, though one alternate history has that pair of events happening.) The subtle ones leave the world so similar as to confuse the reader. Perhaps only historians can really enjoy well-written alternate history stories like this one.

Keep Watching the Skies! by Bill Warren. McFarland Books, \$40.00.

A book review by Dennis Fischer

Bill Warren's Keep Watching the Skies! is the book for SF film fans.

Warren has previously been involved with Walt Lee's famous Reference Guide to Fantastic Films (another book deserving of awards which it never received) where he provided most of the capsule descriptions and helped supply some of the information that make up that particular tome. Since then he has appeared as a reviewer in Photon, Cinefantastique, the Science Fiction Review, and Starburst, among other publications. He has also been working on this book, which is subtitled "American Science Fiction Movies of the Fifties: Volume 1 1950-57." And that is precisely what this book is about -- every science fiction film from 1950-57. (Volume 2 is expected to cover 1958-62.)

While the science fiction film can be traced back to Georges Melies, the modern SF film really began to take shape (as well as attract public interest) in the fifties. Warren admirably covers each film without pretension, examining what each film tried to do and how well it succeeded. This is a very personal book as well as being an informative one, so Warren brings the perspective of how he as a child regarded the films he saw. He wields his critical scalpel intelligently and incisively, pointing out overlooked virtues as well as defects.

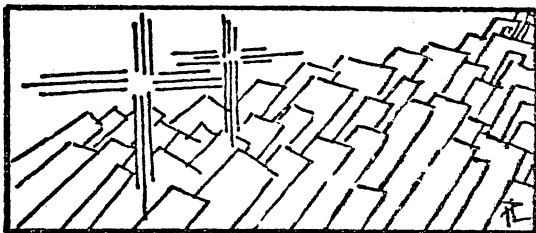
There is plenty of interesting background detail, coverage of some rather obscure works (most often deservedly so) and some interesting appreciations of such neglected films as Attack of the Crab Monsters and The Whip Hand. In addition, praise should go to his research associate, Bill Thomas, who helped provide the extensive cast and credits of all the films discussed among other chores.

About the only thing more on these films that a person could ask for would be additional information on the filming and making of the fifties science fiction classics, but those aspects have often been covered before in various books and magazines. Of particular interest is Warren's exploration of various ideas about good science fiction film construction. At one point he argues that:

"Science fiction and horror are basically melodramas, tales of situations, not stories about people. What we need in most SF and horror movies are basically serviceable, acceptable characters, not solidly realistic human beings. Stories about people are best told in familiar surroundings, with uncomplicated plots, so that we can concentrate on the characters."

The point is worth arguing, both pro and con, but I will leave it to the reader to discover the bases of Warren's concept.

The final pluses are some good stills, Marc Shirmeister's wonderful and wonderfully funny drawings, and a nice cover and frontispiece by Cathy Hill. The biggest minus is the price -- \$40.00. It costs twice what it should but is worth much more than its inflated price. It is available only at specialty shops or through its publisher, McFarland Books (Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640. When ordering by mail, add \$1.25 for postage.)



Countdown To Midnight edited by H. Bruce Franklin. DAW Books, 1985, \$2.95.

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

You can tell this is edited by an academic--many of the stories are interesting from an academic viewpoint, but boring to the average reader. How can stories about nuclear warfare be boring? Well, here's how...

"To Still the Drums" by Chandler Davis is acceptable, but the war he talks about could be any war; it doesn't have to be atomic. "Thunder and Roses" by Theodore Sturgeon is probably the best of the bunch (well, after all, it is Sturgeon). "Lot" by Ward Moore is of interest only as the basis of Panic in the Tear Zero; the ideas in it have become trite from overuse since its writing. It may very well have been true then -- how many times have you read the "survivist" story in which there is one character (always female) who is busy packing her make-up and nylons in her survival kit? "That Only a Mother" by Judith Merrill has nothing to do with nuclear war (though one supposedly forms the background of the story). "I Kill Myself" by Julian Kawalec is "literate", but not very engrossing. "The Neutrino Bomb" by Ralph S. Cooper is cute, but trivial. "Akua Nuten (The South Wind)" by Yves Theriault is told from an interesting perspective, but is too shallow. "I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream" by Harlan Ellison didn't appeal to me when I read it fourteen years ago, and I didn't bother to re-read it here. "Countdown" by Kate Wilhelm attempts to touch an emotional chord, but doesn't quite succeed. "The Big Flash" by Norman Spinrad is too punkish for my tastes. "Everything But Love" by Mikhail Yemstev and Eremai Parnov was unreadable; I tried, but I couldn't force my way through it. "To Howard Hughes: A Modest Proposal" by Joe Haldeman showed the most imagination, but was ultimately unconvincing.

Perhaps the problem is that the scope of Nuclear war does not lend itself to being reduced to a short story. Certainly many of these stories, written before nuclear winter

was discovered, no longer ring true as depictions of a nuclear war. They are interesting from an historical perspective, perhaps, but do not expect engrossing, convincing portrayals of a modern nuclear war.

The Postman by David Brin. Bantam Spectra, 1985, \$14.95.

A book review by Lan

One of the things I would miss in the event of a war in the U.S. would be the disruption of the mail service, as bad as it sometimes appears. (I understand from fellow fans that the USPS is quite efficient compared to systems in other countries.) Getting mail at times seems part of the natural course of events in everyday life. Even if there are only bills, opening the mailbox and finding it not empty is one of the high points of my day.

David Brin capitalizes on this symbol of normalcy in his novel, *The Postman*. Thirteen years after the Three-Year Nuclear Winter following the short World War III, Gordon Krantz pursues a course westward over the Rocky Mountains and into the state once known as Oregon. Relieved of most of his equipment by Survivalist scavengers, he stumbles across an old mail truck hidden in the overgrown countryside. Gordon dons the dead mailman's uniform, buries his remains, takes one of the mailsacks as a pack, and moves on. The letters he took along for a few hours of amusement he finds to be serious business. The lines of communication among the various cities on the West coast remained open longer than anyone East of the Rockies had thought.

Circumstances and his own experiences as an actor allow Gordon to survive and gain his way into various communities as a Postman, a member of the Postal Service of the Restored United States, with the capitol city of St. Paul (which is really a slag heap). Living his lie, he brings hope to the survivors of the War, and establishes a postal route among the communities.

Other events happen on his journey: the supercomputer Cyclops, whose oracular messages help unify the Willamette Valley; the Survivlists, who eventually become unified and begin to acquire more territory, women and slaves; a band of female scouts, whose plan to help destroy the survivalists starts a legend and a revolution. And a few other surprises.

The first two parts of this novel were published as novellas in IASFM, both garnering Hugo nominations. Yet they are not the same as the novellas. Brin rewrote portions of them, added new material, and expanded some scenes, to make the novel a cohesive whole. He put some scenes in "The Postman" and "Cyclops" which have significance later in the book. And the climax and denouement follow nicely from the events set up in the story. And there is room for a sequel, should David wish to follow up on it.

Quibbles? There are a few. Some sections of "Cyclops" still could have been cut -- too much recapitulation which was necessary for the novella was unnecessary for the

novel. The repetition of "living his own lie" was almost too much; it is an important motivating force for Gordon, but it becomes very unsubtle. Also, his self-recrimination is a bit overdone; it seems to get in the way of him seeing the good his lie is accomplishing. He is too much of an idealist to see the good he and others have accomplished through lies. Stating outright the myth of the Restored U.S. and the myth of Cyclops, and others, was, I thought, a mistake. The reader should be able to pick these up on his/her own, be lightly tapped with the ideas instead of beat over the head.

David is still learning his craft, as he readily admits, and this novel shows a big improvement in style over Startide Rising. There are smoother transitions between scenes, and the words flow more freely. His descriptions are as powerful as ever, and he really makes you despise Nathan Holn, the perpetrator of the Survivalist movement in the novel. An excellent novel, and probably a Hugo nominee for next year.



Red Sonja

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Three years ago Dino De Laurentiis produced the first of his Robert E. Howard films, Conan the Barbarian, directed by John Milius. It was a film of blood and steel. It had a literate script, a great villain, and a really superior musical score. Apparently, De Laurentiis wanted a lighter touch and last year's Conan the Destroyer was directed by Richard Fleischer. A number of people seem to prefer the second film, though to my mind it was a step down, a +2 rather than the +3 I gave the first film (on the -4 to +4 scale). Now the third film is out--Red Sonja. It is set in Conan's world of Hyperborea and supposedly also based on Howard's writings. Robert E. Howard fans tell me that Red Sonja is a minor character for Howard and her story is, I believe, set in the Fifteenth Century, a far cry from the barbarian age in which the film was set. By all accounts, the film is based more on the similarly misplaced character appearing in the comic book.

Well, by comparison to either of the Conan films, Red Sonja is a giant step down. Apparently only a few scenes of what was probably the first half hour of the film were filmed. We are told in a few sentences that when Sonja (Brigitte Nielsen) repulsed the lesbian advances of the evil queen Gedren (Sandahl Bergman), the queen had most of Sonja's family killed. As the story opens, the queen is in the process of killing Sonja's sister, who is one of the priestesses who guard a glowing green sphere that gives ultimate power (people who saw Heavy Metal will immediately think of it as the Loc Nar). Gedren gets the sphere and through mis-use will destroy the world with it unless Sonja can get it back. (It's the old theory from James Bond films: if your hero is trying to save the world, the story has got to be a lot more exciting than if he is just trying to get an enemy decoder, right?) Just to help the film along, Arnold Schwarzenegger is there, not as Conan, but as Kali-dor, a poor slob who keeps arriving in the nick of time to save Sonja and wins only ingratitude from her.

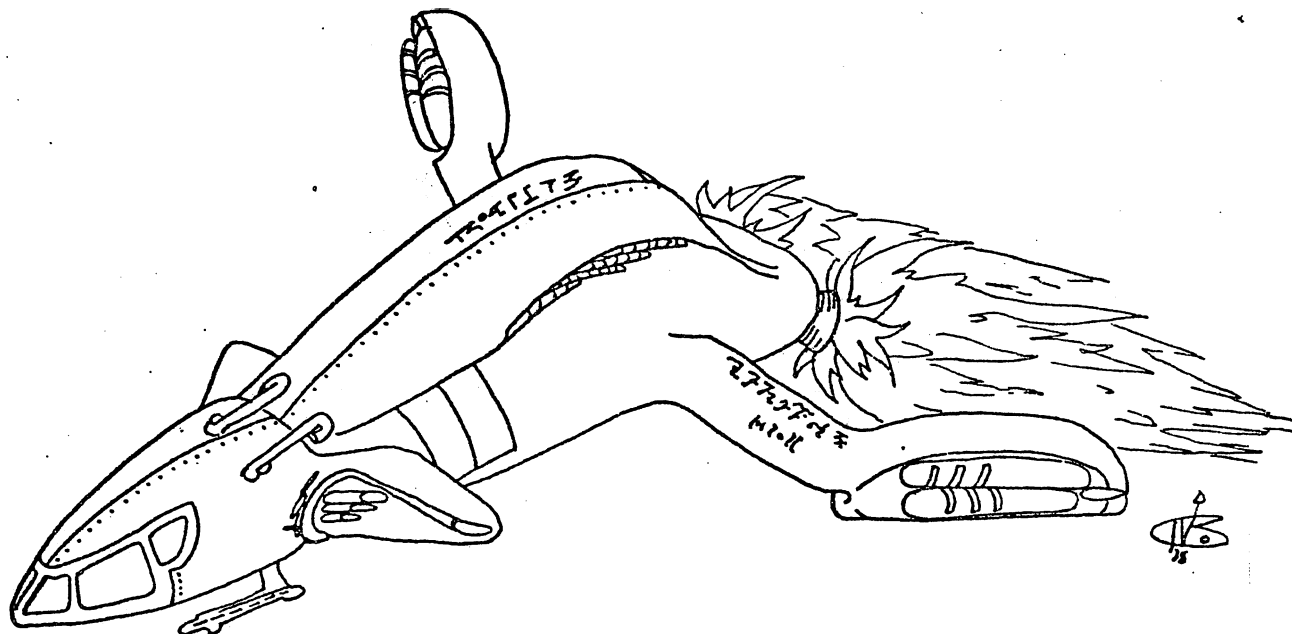
And here's one for Ripley's "Believe It or Not"--Schwarzenegger is probably the best actor in the film. Sandahl Bergman, who was so good in the first film, seems to have recently graduated from the Tanya Roberts school of acting. Brigitte Nielsen does a little better by the title role, but not much. Both women seemed to have visited Conan the Cosmetician and have come away with large supplies of Hyperborean mascara and lipstick, amazingly like the 20th Century equivalents.

The script is exceptionally unimaginative, with few of the fantasy elements of its predecessors. What is in the script is never explained. At one point, a mechanical robot-monster shows up totally without explanation as to where the technology to build it came from. The music is just barely adequate, perhaps due to having been contributed by Ennio Morricone instead of Basil Poledouris, who did the Conan films. The

fight scenes, much better orchestrated in the earlier films, are laughable and even less convincing than the acting.

Perhaps with the first half-hour returned and with better acting, Red Sonja might have been acceptable, but what got to the screen is short and a mess. Rate it a -1.

countless hours of work to its fruition. I hope that Foster's fans take advantage of Mike's and Robert's efforts and buy a copy. It helps put Alan's stories into a good perspective. (And I can't help but mention that Robert dedicated it to me, for which I am extremely flattered.)



A Guide to the Commonwealth by Robert Teague and Michael Goodwin, with an Introduction by Alan Dean Foster. Galographics Press Inc. Available from Michael C. Goodwin, 4987 South 2700 West, Roy, Utah 84067. \$6.00.

A book review by Lan

For anyone interested in the Commonwealth Universe of Alan Dean Foster, this is the book a person must have in his library. Robert Teague and Mike Goodwin have been compiling this material about Foster's Humanx Commonwealth for the past 5 years, and the book has finally seen print. I received an advanced copy of it (without the nice color cover painting and the neatly bound pages) and marveled at all the work the two of them had put into it. Alan has been supportive of the project since its inception, and is extremely pleased with the outcome. He has made use of it through its various stages of development to keep several of his stories straight.

The 70 pages of the guide are filled with diagrams and art by Mike Goodwin. Designs of the Thrax and Human ships, as well as those of the other races, star charts, alphabets, chronologies, catalogues of important flora, fauna, minerals, weapons, and many other things that Foster mentions in his novels and stories are all included. All the Commonwealth books and short stories were researched and catalogued for this compendium, except for Foster's latest novel, Sentenced to Prism, which I assume will be incorporated at a later date along with any other Commonwealth stories Alan happens to write.

A Guide to the Commonwealth is a dream come true for two fans who have devoted

Sentenced to Prism by Alan Dean Foster. Ballantine/delRey paperback, \$3.50, 273 pages.

A book review by Lan

Evan Orgell is The Company's best man, their most competent troubleshooter. So when the company loses contact with their secret team on Prism, a planet of organosilicate and pure silicate life-forms, fails to send their usual messages, The Company calls on its best man to find out what happened. Encased in a Mobile Hostile World environmental suit, Evan sets down on Prism and begins his investigation. He finds all but two of the survey team dead, and the station overrun by various native life-forms. He takes off after those two by following their monitor beacons, and Evan's adventure becomes more complicated. His suit falls victim to the environment and he is left unprotected on a world whose natural life-forms are life shards of glass to his soft flesh.

But Evan is competent. He does manage to survive. And his discoveries lead him not only to the secrets of the life-forms on the planet, but also some deeper insights into his own nature.

Foster has shown his expertise in creating exotic life and ecosystems in his other novels. The ones here are surely as strange as any he has concocted. I hope that Robert Teague and Mike Goodwin have fun adding the various species of flora and fauna to their concordance.

The book is fun, and moves along very quickly. There is some philosophizing, and as usual, Alan takes several pokes at the Human Race and its foibles. Once I started it I had trouble putting it down, even taking time out in the middle of a convention to read several chapters. I enjoyed it, and I think you might as well.

Back to the Future

A film review, by Mark R. Leeper

The last film that came out with Stephen Spielberg's name on it was Goonies. After seeing that I decided that these Spielberg-produced films were on a downward spiral. I told myself that I would avoid them in the future. Then a local theatre had a sneak preview of Back to the Future and hope sprang eternal. For the first ten minutes of the film I was asking myself why I didn't listen to my advice to myself and stay away. After all, why do I need a film about a cute kid on a skateboard and a horribly over-acted mad scientist? The remaining 106 minutes answered that question rather nicely.

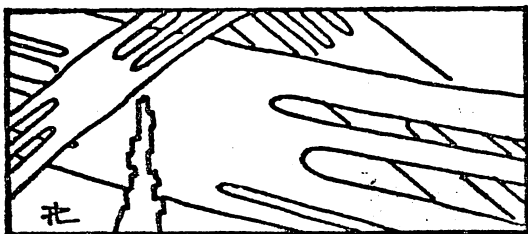
In fact, Back to the Future has few or none of the script problems that I saw in Goonies. Instead, we have a tightly written science fiction story with likeable characters, a fair amount of wit that really is funny, and a great collection of time paradoxes presented in a witty fashion. Nobody who has read the basics of science fiction, or seen much of science fiction cinema, will find much in the way of real ideas, but the old ideas are tied together in a way as entertaining as they have ever been in the past.

The story deals with Marty McFly, whose father is a life-long nerd and whose life is in a shambles. Marty has somehow acquired the friendship of a really weird scientist (Christopher Lloyd), who one night reveals that he has made a few special modifications to a DeLorean car. When it is powered with plutonium and is moving at precisely 88 mph, it becomes a time machine. It isn't too long before our hero finds himself trapped in 1955 and madly trying to repair changes he has made in history.

The script (by director Robert Zemeckis and producer Bob Gale), after a shaky start, is remarkable for clever lines and for attention to technical detail. In spite of a few bizarre touches, this film works as a piece of science fiction.

The cast is made up almost exclusively of unknowns. The minor exceptions are Lloyd, whose face is familiar from One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest -- he played a belligerent inmate -- from To Be or Not to Be, and as Reverend Jim in the television show Taxi. (He also played the Klingon Commander in Star Trek III: The Search for Spock.) Also familiar-looking is James Tolkan as the vice-principal of the local high school.

This is a +2 film (on the -4 to +4 scale) and I consider it to be the best thing with Spielberg's name on it since E. T.



Time Masters

A film review by Dennis Fischer

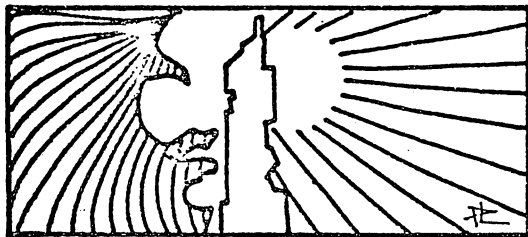
Time Masters is the latest film by France's second greatest animator, Rene Laloux, who did Les Temp Morts, Les Escargot, and most memorably Fantastic Planet (Fr. title: La Planet Sauvage). (France's greatest animator is Paul Grimault who did the fabulous La Bergere et le Ramoneur aka Le Roi et L'Oiseau aka Meet Mr. Wonderbird aka The King and Mr. Bird.) As with Fantastic Planet, Time Masters is based on a novel by Stefan Wul, in this instance L'Orphelin de Perdid, and is a European co-production. While in the past Laloux worked with Roland Topor, the German children's novelist and illustrator (who appeared as Renfield in the Herzog version of Nosferatu), this time Laloux teams up with Moebius of Heavy Metal/Metal Hurlant fame.

The film shares many of the problems and virtues of its predecessor as well as such films as Dark Crystal--it presents a believably alien and fascinating world or worlds but fails to provide an equally fascinating narrative. Time Masters' plot revolves around a young five-to-ten year-old boy who has been stranded in a forest on a dangerous planet with nothing to help him but a microphone (which is shaped like an egg and painted in a ying-yang design). Talking to him through the mike are the concerned heroes who are trying to help and rescue the boy. The character of the young naive boy is very convincing without being overly cute, but unfortunately the same cannot be said for the other characters which consist of the strong starship pilot, a beautiful princess, a villainous prince, and rich, eccentric but wise old man. To this motly crew are added a pair of "cute" aliens that can fly and read/smell bad thought, and which sound like Linus and Charlie Brown clones in the English Language version. (Later there are some aliens that have Snoopy-like noses--perhaps Moebius wanted to pay tribute to Charles Schultz, but that seems unlikely.)

As in Fantastic Planet, there is the occasional bit of heavy-handed allegory--this time an evil planet where everyone is made to conform mentally and physically into faceless angels--but the narrative is mainly used to illustrate the wonders of space and other worlds. It is in this feeling of other-worldliness and in one's "sense of wonder" that the film's charm lies. Perhaps today's juvenile audiences, now jaded by Star Wars with its extravagant action and effects, will not respond as well to this modest film, but I believe that if I had seen this film when I was in my early teens just discovering science fiction, I would have loved it. The film is slanted at younger audiences and contains none of the gratuitous violence and sex of, say, the Heavy Metal movie.

A word of praise should also go to the composer of the film's score and the people who did the musical sound effects that help make the incredible credible. These are Christian Zanesi, Pierre Tardy, and Francoise Burgoin. The animation was done in France and Hungary, and it is above-average,

but lacks the detailed stylization of Fantastic Planet. (Laloux has eschewed using the paper cut-out technique that he used with the cels in Fantastic Planet and which was used exclusively in Twice Upon a Time.) The film is a pleasant, well-made if uninvolved journey into the fantastic.



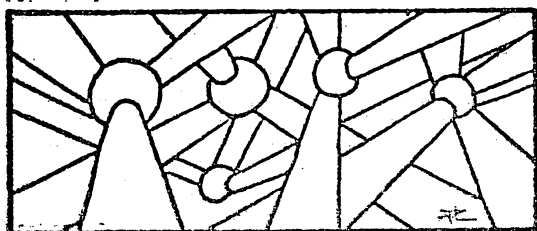
Emergence by David Palmer. Bantam Books, 1984, \$2.95.

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

This book suffers from the "levitation method" of writing -- whatever corner you write your character into, he or she will turn out to have just the right abilities to get out of it. (If the situation is bad enough, the character will turn out to be able to levitate over the obstacle.) Well, Palmer does make some attempt to rationalize his main character's set of abilities. He fails. While I kept reading and was indeed interested in finding out what was going to happen next, the moment I began to think, even a little, about the situation that Palmer was setting up and Candy's ability to get out of them, I realized what a patently absurd book it is.

Candy is a superman (superwoman?). Really. The product of some sort of genetic mutation caused by the 1918 influenza epidemic, she can do everything, even at the tender age of eleven. She is an expert at karate, can perform basic surgery, can learn to fly an airplane by herself, etc., etc. R-I-G-H-T! The rest of the characters are not much better (and in some cases they're worse).

Portions of the novel were previously published as short stories. It shows -- the second section repeats a lot of information already given in the first, as if Palmer couldn't be bothered to do any re-writing on the parts that had already been published. And on top of everything, the book doesn't end neatly, but leaves some loose ends just perfect for -- you guessed it -- a sequel! I can't recommend this book. While it was passable enough while I was reading it, it left me ultimately unsatisfied. If this is all it takes to be a Hugo nominee, it must have been a very weak year last year.



Blood Music by Greg Bear. Arbor House, hardcover, \$14.95, 263 pages.

A book review by Lan

On the advice of several people (including Stanley Schmidt of Analog and his friend David Brin), Greg took his short story "Blood Music" for which he won the Hugo Award and rewrote it into the present novel. As with most re-writes, one might think that all the author does is plop the story verbatim into a larger frame. Greag does not do this. Instead of following Joe Delany's and Marc Steigler's lead (taking the novellas for Valentina and using them word for word with very little change (though they did add some bridge material between the novellas), he took his cue from Timothy Zahn (in Cobra), David Brin (in The Postman), and Orson Scott Card (in Ender's Game) and rewrote "Blood Music" so that it fit better into the novel, and so that its original ending would not sound so final.

Vergil Ulam is a genius with biochips, and manages to create a new form of life by splicing a virus with a microcomputer chip. Unfortunately, Vergil is not practical nor as blessed with common sense as he might wish. Caught doing these unauthorized experiments he is fired and forced to destroy everything he had been working on. In an effort to save his experiments, he injects himself with this new biochip, and from then on becomes the originator and carrier of a "plague" which would reshape mankind. The biochips learn much from Vergil's body, begin to reshape it from the inside out. Even with the aid of his closest friend Edward Milligan, who comments on his robust health, and another accepted genius, Michael Bernard, nothing can be done to help Vergil rid himself of his "virus". And when these intelligent biochips encounter his consciousness, nothing can stop them from taking over the rest of the continent.

Unlike Clarke's Childhood's End, the next evolutionary step is not guarded over by an alien race. Instead, the transformation is slow to start, moves quickly once the "plague" gets into the ecosystem, and it protects itself. The new intelligence makes Clarke's projection of the next evolutionary step pale by comparison.

Greg Bear has written a novel that staggers the imagination, and stretches one's scientific credibility. It sure sounds convincing, and the credits he gives for his research are quite impressive. I wonder how close he is to the truth.

And I think he has another Hugo nomination as well.

Night of the Dragonstar by David Bischoff & Thomas Monteleone. Berkeley paperback, \$2.95.

A book review by David M. Shea

Again, this is the second book of a series, and again, I would recommend that you read the first book (Day of the Dragonstar) first.

Also, again, I'll admit to a personal angle: Tom and I are on reasonably friendly terms. However, that doesn't explain why I've been bugging him to finish this book



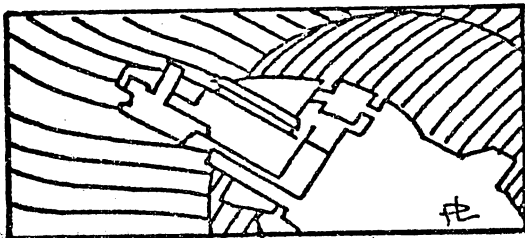
for the past year. I have many friends and acquaintances in fandom who write, some professionally, whose work I find absolutely unreadable.

The reason I recommend this book is because, dammit, it's good.

A brief synopsis then of Day of the Dragonstar: Astronomers discover and object approaching Earth and (let's make it brief) it turns out to be a three-hundred-kilometer long cylinder, evidently a starship, which has been circling the sun in a distant cometary orbit for thousands, perhaps millions, of years. Exploratory missions find a lock and board, to discover that the staggeringly large vessel is a repository of life forms from Earth's Cretaceous, complete with dinosaurs. The early teams discover to their dismay that they are too lightly armed to cope with aggressive and hungry carnivorous dinosaurs, and the survivors flee into the jungles of the mighty cylinder. (Those who have been reminded, up to this point, of Aldiss' Starship or Clarke's Rendezvous with Rama -- well, yes, there are some similarities. Bischoff and Monteleone, however, have actually written a novel, where Rama was a 274-page short story.) Ian Coopersmith and Rebecca Thalberg, the two surviving scientists, find a society of sentient dinosaurs living in the stern of the ship, and with the aid of the local scholar they nicknamed "Thesaurus", set out to learn the secrets of the giant ship. Meanwhile, followup expeditions led by astronaut Colonel Phineas Kemp have warped the Dragonstar towards Earth orbit, and reestablish contact with the interior.

Night of the Dragonstar picks up the story at this point. Kemp (who is something of a jerk, though not without redeeming qualities) has become the honcho of a massive documentary being filmed about the Dragonstar. Media teams as well as scientists now have access to the huge ship, and research and filming proceed apace -- sometimes with conflicts. Then disaster struck: the friendly saurians ran berserk. And even more ominously, the Dragonstar shows signs of coming to life after its millenia-long drift. Hundreds of humans are trapped inside as strange events happen....

Dragonstar is science fiction in the grand tradition; this is the sort of thing that attracted me to the genre years ago. The pace crackles along so quickly that the book's occasional short-comings are soon past. For example, the authors take advantage of the opportunity to get in a few shots at the SF establishment and certain eccentric elderly writers who live in oddball, self-designed houses in California. (If a name springs to mind, keep it to yourself.) Overall, this is a rip-snorting adventure in the classic SF vein. I like it a lot; and pretty soon I'll start bugging Tom for the next book in the series.



Torch of Honor by Roger MacBride Allen. Baen Books, 1985, \$2.95.

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

The science fiction war story seems to be making a come-back, and this is one of the new breed. The setting is New Finland, which has been attacked and conquered by the Guardians, a society of neo-Nazis who fled into space in the 21st Century via the newly discovered faster-than-light travel. (Ah, yes, another Nazis-from-space story!) Our protagonist, operating a survey ship in the vicinity, finds himself in the middle of the war to recover New Finland and save the universe (or at least this small portion of it) from the clutches of the bad guys.

In general, the book is well-written and the plot moves along quickly. My knowledge of military strategy is not such that I can comment on the accuracy of the maneuvers or the likelihood of the outcomes, but it sounds convincing. But this book does have a couple of flaws--one literary, one logical. The literary flaw (if one can call it that) is that it is told in the first person. In a novel of self-discovery, this works out well. In a novel of war, it tends to telegraph the ending -- while it's true that the reader could be reading the journal of someone who dies in the last chapter, it is much more likely that some of the reader's interest is blunted by the almost certain knowledge that the character won't die.

The logical flaw is considerably worse. The main character is sent to build a receiver at a certain latitude and longitude. But when he looks it up, it is in the middle of the ocean. It turns out that after the original latitude and longitude lines were drawn, the best location for the capitol city was right on the equivalent of the International Date Line (180 degrees longitude). So the colonists re-draw the lines, but Earth was still working from the old maps. The receiver must be at this point (because of balancing orbital and coriolis forces or some such), so the protagonists go to great lengths to circumvent this problem. But if Earth was using old maps, they should have been also, and then the point that Earth wanted would have been perfectly accessible. In fact, the point under water was a totally wrong point!

In spite of this (and thank goodness it's not the Crux of the novel), Torch of Honor is engrossing, and a prime example of the new hard SF. Try it.

Borrowed Time by Alan Hruska. Baen Books, \$2.95.

A book review by David M. Shea

This is not so much a story of the traditional "alternate worlds" as of multiple interlocking realities. The author would probably be deeply offended if I called it a "fantasy," yet under a lot of earnest pseudo-scientific fluff about ultimate computers and the physics of reality, there isn't really a whole lot of what I would recognize as "hard tech" SF underlying the structure.

That doesn't detract from the fact that I enjoyed the book very much, even if it got confusing in places.

The story begins in contemporary Philadelphia, when the two central figures, Brion Bell, a well-off music publisher, and Katie Dunston, a computer programmer, meet in an elevator in the Sheraton, fall madly in love, and proceed swiftly to hop in the sack together. The author writes this ludicrously improbable scene with such style and charm that one is sucked into believing in the characters almost against one's better judgment, and from there on you're back to suspending that old disbelief as we trace the erratic and time-crossed affair through various realities. It doesn't help that there seem to be at least two of each of the major characters. (In other words, there are two Brions, two Katies, and so on.) This is one of the reasons it gets confusing here and there; and occasionally Hruska gets bogged down into trying to explicate on the physics of computers and so forth. There were whole passages of eight or ten pages at a time I just skipped over, and yet I never lost interest in the story as a whole. The author has a flair for being descriptive without stalling in reams of expository description, and his characters are thoroughly believable. (He even manages to drag in Ireland (fortunately without elves, faeries, etc.) and make it seem interesting. (In case it's not clear, I've had it up to here with pseudo-Celtic fantasies.)

This is an odd, quirky, little book, and it could probably have been written in a few less words, but any closet romantic should enjoy it.

Ladybug, Ladybug

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Actually, I am a little surprised that this 1963 film has been so totally forgotten, even if it isn't the best anti-nuclear war film ever made. The story is of a school that gets a Conelrad alarm telling it that the U.S. is about to be attacked by nuclear weapons. The story follows the children's reactions to the news that a nuclear war is coming. While--as we are told in the credits--the story is based on an actual incident (so much for suspense as to whether the alarm is real or not), the children clearly are meant to be, in an allegorical sense, everybody living under the threat of the Bomb. The children clearly mouth adult lines rather than talk about nuclear war the way children would.

The film does rather effectively show how people looked at nuclear war in the Sixties. Various groups of children react differently. Some panic, some protectively take care of loved ones, some become ruthless survivalists. The problem with the story is that too much of the film is spent showing the principal of the school (William Daniels) deciding to send the children to their homes and then showing a school teacher marching the students to their homes. These scenes are dull on the literal level and do not advance the allegorical meanings of the film.

Lord of the Flies, made that same year, does a much better job of integrating its literal and allegorical meanings. All too often the film tries to make overly sentimental statements by having characters wallow in self-pity. Threads effectively demonstrates that nuclear war is bad without ever appearing self-indulgent, as Ladybug, Ladybug often does.

Ladybug, Ladybug probably went unnoticed in 1963 because it did not have the star-power that On the Beach had, and it is not seen now because most of its points have been made better elsewhere. Still, placed in an historical perspective, it deserves to be seen just to illustrate public sentiment toward the Bomb in the Sixties. It might make an interesting double feature with Atomic Cafe.

A Mortal Glamour by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro.
Bantam Books, 1985, \$3.50.

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

While not strictly a horror story, A Mortal Glamour does have its horrific elements. Set in a convent in France in 1387, the story deals with the repressed sexuality of the nuns there--many of whom were deposited there by their families when they (the nuns) would not agree to the marriages arranged for by their families, or when their families could not arrange marriages for them at all. One nun, Seur Aungelique, escapes to a nearby villa where the Comtesse Orienne lives. Here she sees "how the other half lives" as she is a guest at one of the Comtesse's debauched parties. Upon returning to the convent, she is beset by "demons" who ravage her nightly. Her torments seem to be contagious, as gradually most of the convent is taken over by these persecutions. The priest sent to cure them is no better, but his excesses are channeled in more "accepted" paths. Along with all this we are given the Flagellants and the Plague as minor (!) characters.

While the topic is of some psychological interest, one can't help but feel that Yarbro is concentrating more on the sensational aspects and less on what drives these women to madness. A cover blurb that talks about "ecstatic moans of pleasure" and "a netherworld of debauchery and defilement" does not serve to re-enforce the seriousness of this book. But it's probably as good (or better) than the usual best-seller. Of interest to Yarbro fans (and yes, she's still into elaborate descriptions of clothing!).

The Black Ship by Christopher Rowley. Del-Rey paperback, \$2.95.

A book review by David M. Shea

Okay, let's admit from the beginning that I'm prejudiced. I know Christopher Rowley, and I like his work. However, the truth is that I liked his work before I met him. His first novel, The War For Eternity, won the Compton Crook Award for Best New Novel of

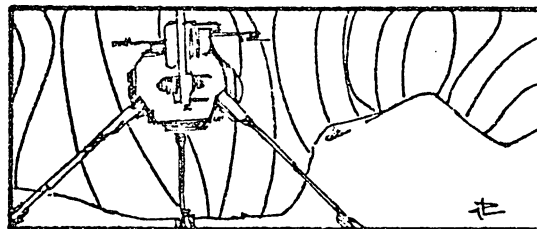
1983. (Honesty compels me to recommend that you read War first, although The Black Ship can stand on its own.)

In The War For Eternity, we were introduced to the curious planet Fenrille, with its single, equatorial-ring continent. Fenrille, settled jointly by humans and the giant ursinoids Fein, would be of little interest to other worlds if it were not the source of pharamol, the incredible longevity drug which extends the human lifespan many times. (Yes, one can see the influence of Dune.) The drug, an incredibly complex protein manufactured by the strange and ancient hive-insects called chitin, cannot be synthesized; it can only be obtained by the "talkers" who go into the nests and convince the semi-sentient insects to give up the chemical. The ludicrous ambitions of Earth-system politicians and their crooked cohorts on Fenrille were crushed in the War For Eternity, when the ancient non-coporeal alien powers called the Arizel, perceiving a threat to their precious jungle, threw their support behind the Highland Clans of humans and their fein allies. Lavin Fundan, head of the Fundan Clan, is thus in many ways the most powerful man in the universe; typically, though, he is not interested in power.

The Black Ship picks up the story some fifty years later, though due to the pharamol, many of the same characters are still around. After decades of unchallenged wealth and authority, the clans have become arrogant and complacent. They are sitting ducks when the politicians of the Earth system strike with a new and overwhelming weapon, the ship of the title, wiping out clan strongholds one by one and raping them of their precious stores of the drug. Lavin Fundan is badly outnumbered and outgunned; his wife is in the hands of the enemy, his son is missing and presumed dead, and no one knows what's become of the Arizel. (It turns out they have problems of their own.)

Rowley weaves deftly a skein of story lines, following the dozen or so central figures of the war as events roll on. Superb plotting and strength of characterization are the great assets of this book; in many ways it's reminiscent of the work of C. J. Cherryh. Another similarity is that it takes a little while to get things rolling. (Anyone familiar with Cherryh's work knows that she doesn't exactly start with a bang.) Rowley writes his characters as if he believes they are real, and he makes the reader believe in them. The degradation of Fleur Fundan at the hands of her captors, her son Chosen's incredible learning experiences in a Chitin hive and thereafter, even the actions of the unhappy Seanator Ira Ganweek, are told with a cool yet utterly personal style, and each is relevant to the totality of the story. Chris managed to tie everything together at the end of The War For Eternity; this time, I figured he had bitten off more than he could chew, but no, he manages to weave all the separate stories together in a thoroughly satisfactory manner.

For those who like solid thoughtful SF, I heartily recommend The War For Eternity and The Black Ship. (In spite of the uninspired cover art.)



Far Frontiers edited by Jerry Pournelle and Jim Baen. Baen Books, 1985, \$2.95.

A book review by Mark R. Leeper

Far Frontiers is planned to be a regularly published anthology of science fiction and speculative fact. The editors, Jerry Pournelle and Jim Baen, call it a magazine published in book form. As one might expect with anything Pournelle has a hand in of late, it has a political philosophy that shows up explicitly in Pournelle's introductions, implicitly in the choice of non-fiction articles, and perhaps covertly in the choice of fiction. In reviewing so politicized a collection, I should let the reader know what my politics are. I consider myself a moderate liberal, formerly an extreme liberal, with a growing respect for and interest in some right-wing political viewpoints. This makes right-wing friends think I am left-wing, and vice-versa. I now can disagree with just about anyone. While I was reading, I was disagreeing with Pournelle's right-wing politics, but enjoying every minute of doing so. I have only a little more respect for Pournelle than I do for his left-wing mirror image in science fiction, Harlan Ellison. Pournelle is marginally, and only marginally, less obnoxious in the ways he chooses to express his politics.

The anthology opens with an editorial by Pournelle -- the man who attempted to politicize the L-5 Society and has been soapboxing for the Strategic Defense Initiative at every turn -- complaining that the American Association for the Advancement of Science has been over-politicized with a left-wing philosophy. He may be right, but coming from him, the complaint is a bit ironic.

The stories are above average in quality for a science fiction magazine, though perhaps a bit below average for an anthology where the editor can pick and choose the best of what has already been published. For me, the most enjoyable story was "Brain Salad" by Norman Spinrad, but then I enjoy self-referential stories like last year's Hugo-nominated "Geometry of Narrative" by Hilbert Schenck. David Brin's "The Warm Space" is a passable imitation of a Larry Niven story, and Larry Niven turns in a story that smacks of Alan Dean Foster on a good day for Foster. Damon Knight's "Good-bye, Dr. Ralston" is an enjoyable piece of fluff. Gregg Bear's "Through Road No Whither" tries to be fluff with hidden teeth, but makes it only on the fluff count. "Lost in Translation" by Dean Ing is an interesting idea with a muddled execution, while "The Boy from the Moon" shares only the muddled

execution. That leaves Poul Anderson's "Pride," which, like his Tau Zero, places uninteresting people at an interesting event.

The articles were more interesting than the fiction. Ben Bova explains why America stood alone at the U.N.'s committee on the Peaceful Uses of Space and was voted down 102 to 1 defending the unrestricted flow of information via direct broadcast satellites. In other words, the U.S. tried to make it possible for anyone to broadcast anything into anyone's country and let the listener make up his/her own mind what to believe. If this really is a right-wing idea, it is certainly one right-wing idea I agree with. I grew up thinking of freedom of expression as a left-wing ideal. Of late, there seem to be those who hold the view that this freedom is a means to suppress the down-trodden. If the championing of freedom of expression moves to the right-wing, I may follow it.

"Future Scenarios for Space Development" appears to be the text for a lecture G. Harry Stine gave (we are never told to whom). It is a nice introduction to Gompertz S-curves and why they predict a rosy future for the world. I have heard the arguments here before, but not as cogently or expressed as mathematically. I have a minor quibble in that Stine thinks that the derivative of a Gompertz curve is almost a spike. This would mean that a human, a corporation, or a society is relatively static, hits its prime over a short period of time, and then goes static again fairly quickly. I would expect the prime to be stretched out over a longer period, with the derivative being a bell-shaped curve, and not a spike.

The last article is an exposition by Robert Forward on various concepts for interstellar drives and their relation to the Fermi Paradox, which asks: if there are so many worlds out there, and such a high probability of intelligent life on many of them, how come we haven't had company? The article would have been quite interesting if it had been the first time I had read it, but much of it was covered in Forward's "Afterword" to Riding the Torch (which I got at the same time I got Far Frontiers).

This magazine in book form had fair amount of provocative reading -- certainly more than I expected. The non-fiction was more interesting than the fiction, and while it contained little that I hadn't heard somewhere before, it was good to have it together in one piece. There was nothing I loved in Far Frontiers but the whole, I think, was better than the sum of its parts. Issue two has already been published and I bought it immediately on seeing it. That is an unexpected tribute to Pournelle the editor and perhaps to Pournelle the politician.

Far Frontiers II edited by Jerry Pournelle and Jim Baen. Baen Books, 1985, \$2.95.

A book review by Mark R. Leeper

When I reviewed Volume I of Far Frontiers I said I enjoyed it and had high expectations for the second volume. I won't leave you in suspense: the second volume is a let-down. The politics of the first book is

still present, but a little heavier-handed. Open the book precisely to the half-way point. Your left hand has in it only one story that need not be happening just before or just after a world-wide holocaust. That one story Pournelle opines is probably also post-holocaust, but it is not obvious from the story.

Curiously enough, while the fiction is trying to tell us to prepare for survival, the non-fiction is considerably less political than in Far Frontiers I. Pournelle's article "A Step Further Out" is actually a book review column. He recommends Godel, Escher, Bach by Douglas Hofstadter, The Recursive Universe by William Poundstone, and Quantum Theory and the Schism in Physics by Karl Popper. These are fairly diverse science books. Articles are also present by Robert W. Bussard (famous for conceptualizing the Bussard engine) with more information on the Fermi Paradox, which was discussed in the last issue. Pournelle uses the introduction for a veiled criticism of the L-5 Society. ("By that time the L-5 Society was racked with an internal power struggle that seemed to involve me. My understanding is that the power struggle involved Pournelle pushing for L-5 to endorse the Strategic Defense Initiative. The people struggling against him, many of whom were pro-SDI, realized that endorsement would alienate many members.")

Finally, there is an article by G. Harry Stine chronicling private enterprises' attempts to get into the space launch business. It is a bit over-optimistic, I am told. The book review section, provided by Richard Geis, is reasonable, but he tells too darn much of the plot.

Now to the stories. "Nuclear Arms" by Ben Bova is not really a story. It is a right-wing account of what will happen if we do not maintain a good defense against the Soviets. Like Robinson's "Melancholy Elephants," it is a political argument with characters instead of a story.

"Talon" by John Brunner is only slightly less political argument and more story. Curiously enough, however, this story takes military hawks to task. It seems an overly optimistic view of how one village survived nuclear winter. I have to give Pournelle and Baen credit. I cannot believe they agree with all of the political implications of this story. They published it anyway.

"Petrogypsies" has a novel idea for oil drilling, but does not do much with the idea. The first of two recommended stories is "A Cure for the Croup" by Edward P. Hughes. After depletion of the ozone layer has made most men sterile, we see that fertility carries with it a heavy responsibility. "Evileye" by Dean Ing runs a close third. The story deals with the mollusk intelligence that Robert Forward discussed in the last issue. It is a pleasant read but not a very imaginative story.

"Software Plague" by John Park is pretty blah, though in some ways reminiscent of The Ship Who Sang by Anne McCaffrey.

In reverse order the last two stories are "House of Weapons" by Gordon R. Dickson and "Avenging Angel." At 65 pages, "House of Weapons" is a big piece of the book. It is the third of Dickson's stories of the poli-

tics of the Aalaang, alien invaders who have conquered Earth. The story is mediocre, but a cut above the other work it begs comparison to, V.

The best story in the volume is second from the end. "Avening Angel" by Eric L. Davin is an alternate history telling how the Confederacy developed the intermediate-range ballistic missile in the closing days of the Civil War. There are parallels in Peenemunde, the Manhattan Project, and The Wild, Wild West. In the end it makes a serious point about strategy.

While its predecessor was really quite enjoyable to read, Far Frontiers, Volume II, is a step downhill. There is more and better reading available more cheaply in a copy of F&SF, Analog, or Amazing. Unless you like paying a premium for the book format, you might want to stick to more traditional magazines.

Emprise by Michael P. Kube-McDowell.
Berkley, 1985, \$2.95.

A book review by Lan

This novel is subtitled "Book One of the Trigon Disunity," which means there will be more (two, I think, to complete a trilogy). This made me hesitant in reading it. I really do not like the current wave of writing three books when one would suffice. Trilogies appear to sell well nowadays, but all too often they comprise one overly-long book. This is not one such novel. I suppose it could be shortened to the point of making room for what will come next, but the gradual build-up to the surprises would be lost. And that would be a shame. For Michael has done an excellent job of putting together a good first-contact story.

What pushed me into reading the novel in the first place was that Michael was the co-Guest of Honor at INCONJUNCTION V in July, 1985. Since I had enjoyed his shorter works (particularly "Slac //"), I thought it would be at least a decent novel. And I could tell him I was reading it when I got his autograph. I was not disappointed in this work.

The novel starts slowly, but interestingly. When a group of scientists remove the threat of nuclear holocaust by nullifying ALL nuclear material, without considering the total ramifications (lots of energy sources now lost means we have to go back to fossil fuels, which then become extremely precious), scientists are then treated like witches in the seventeenth century. Outlaw scientists still try to keep up their own work secretly, and one astronomer, Allen Chandliss, records a message from space. Aliens are out there! The human race is not alone! And they are coming to meet us!

Most of the novel recounts the processes and methods used to get the interest of governments, and organize the world to prepare for the coming. Political intrigue is rampant, and the religious sector cannot be ignored. Education becomes the keystone and cornerstone for solving many problems, and Michael, a teacher himself, puts a lot of emphasis here. He handles a lot of the ramifications of this message from the stars deftly, and is very convincing in the treatment of the various problems presented. My

major gripe is the turn-around of the common man from stoning scientists to working with them. I suppose returning virtually unlimited power to them (via solar energy beamed back to Earth) so that people could stay up all night, watch TV, and do things they used to do may have something to do with it.

The style is somewhat episodic, but it flows smoothly. I got bogged down a little in the middle (I can only take so much political intrigue before I need some action to break in), but once past that the story picked up.

Some of Michael's shorter works will be part of the Trigon Disunity, but only one is incorporated into Emprise, but it is not dropped into the novel per se. The reference to it is apparent: the discovery of the equations which make possible the AVLO drive (which can accelerate a ship easily to the higher percents of the speed of light) are in "Antithesis". Michael has a future history mapped out for himself (see the timeline below), and he is taking care to make it consistent.

I do look forward to Enigma, the next book in this series. And I am considering this novel as a possible Hugo nomination.

THE TRIGON DISUNITY

NOVELS

STORIES

===A.D. 1985=== Begin Trigon Disunity Era =====

Emprise ---A.D. 2011 (A.R. 1)---

"Antithesis"

---A.D. 2069 (A.R. 59)---

Enigma ---A.R. 183 -----

---A.R. 550-----

"The Inevitable Conclusion"

"Menace"

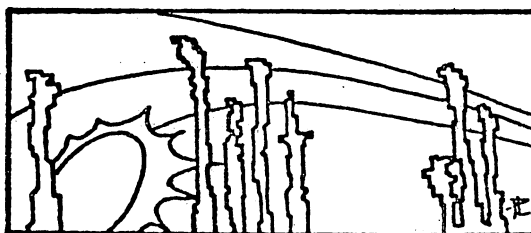
Empery ---A.R. 620?-----

---A.R. ??? -----

==== Begin Advance Exploration Service Era =====

"Slac//"

"Murphy's Planet"



Skirmish by Melissa Michaels. Tor paperbacks, \$2.95.

A book review by David M. Shea

If you like comic books, you'll probably like Skirmish, because it plays at about that level.

The central figure of this book is such a rootin'-tootin', hard-fightin', hard-lovin', arrogant, atrocious snot that the adjective "macho" would seem to be unavoidable -- except that her name is Melacha Rendell, nicknamed The Skyrider, independent Asteroid-Belt shuttle pilot extraordinaire. She's crazy enough to try anything and talented enough to bring it off.

Does all that sound too hokey for belief? Wait, it gets worse. Naturally, only the hot-shot Skyrider can be selected for the semi-suicidal mission to pursue and dock with the sabotaged interplanetary Marabou. (Why it's so staggeringly hard for this supposed expert to dock with another ship--evidently no big deal if the exploits of Gemini/Skylab and the Soviets and their station are anything to go by--is never quite explained.) There are lots of things which are never quite explained. Like, for example, why by some odd quirk the pilots of the crippled ship were among the casualties, so Melacha/Skyrider must take along the shuttle pilot she hates because he's qualified to pilot a cruise liner Shades of Airport '77, anyone?

Naturally, almost everyone is out to make sure that Skyrider doesn't succeed. But who are the real villains? The company, whom Melacha screwed for a brand new ship with a

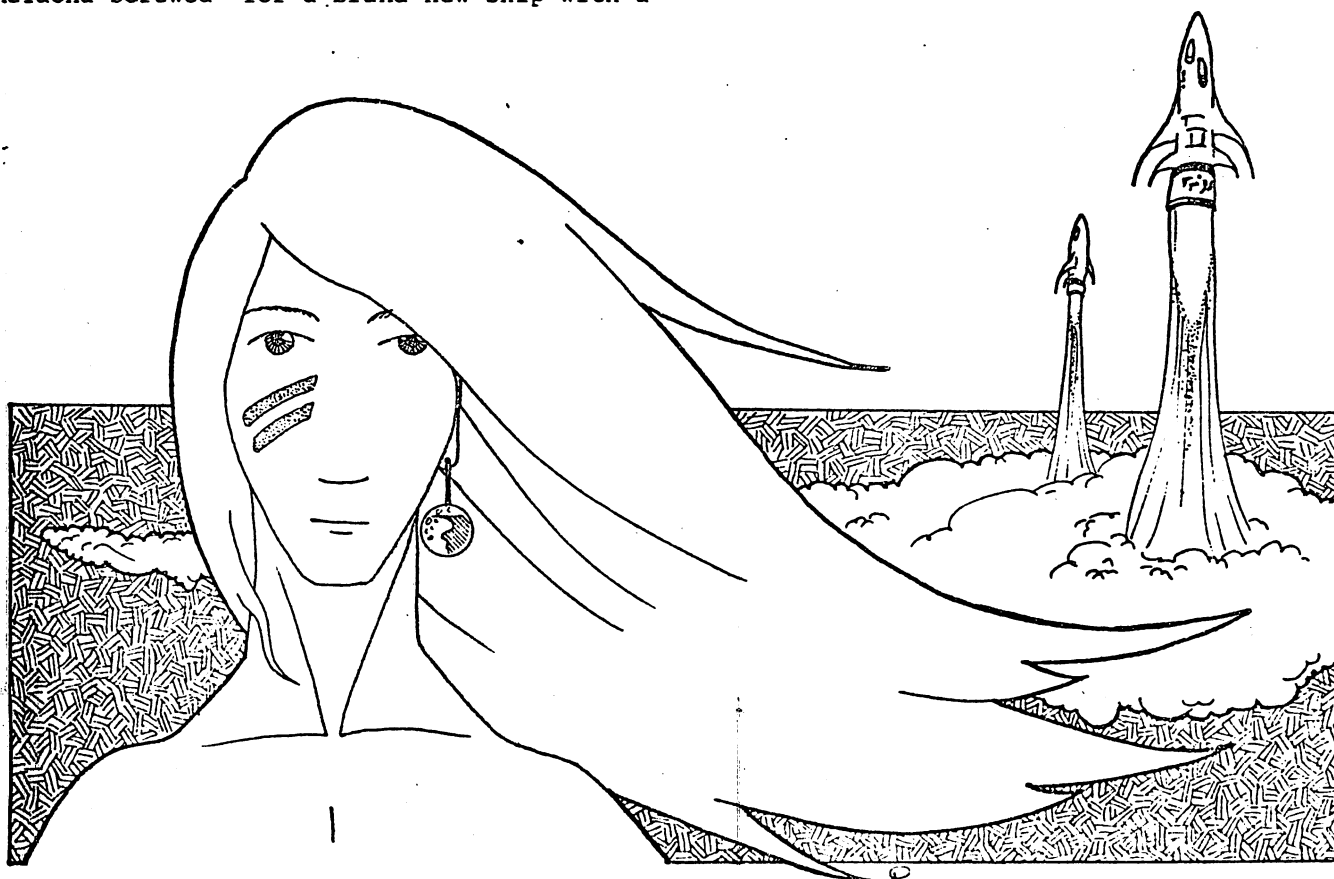
lifetime service contract as her price for doing the mission? (It's called, by the way, a "Falcon", and she names it Defiance.) Is it the Earth-based Patrol, hoping to incite a war on their own terms? Is it the Colonials, looking for their kind of war? Who the hell cares?

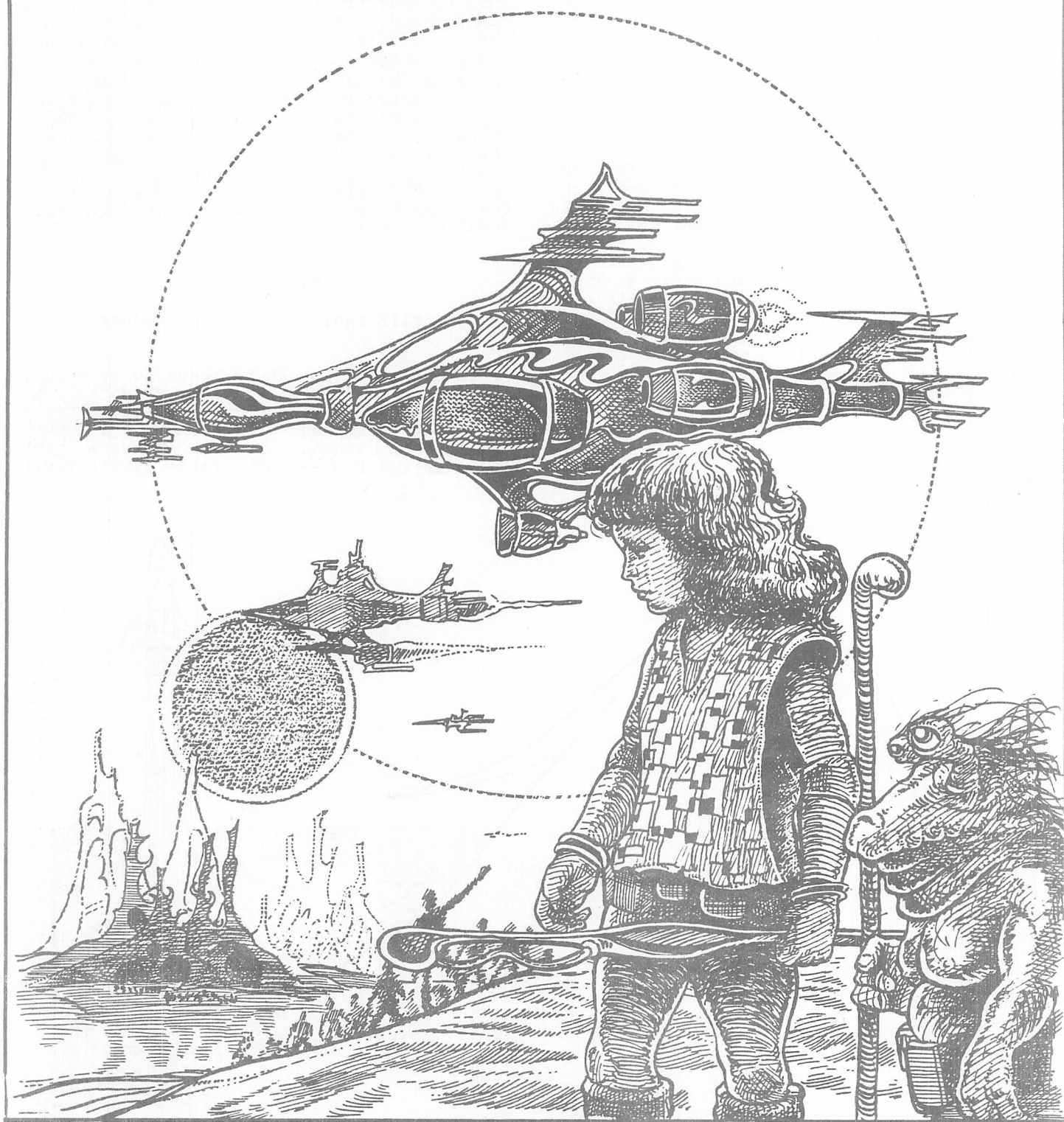
This book is so staggeringly trite (the character actually says things like, "Space it, rock jockey" and "That's my name, don't wear it out") that it's absolutely impossible to read it with a straight face. On the other hand, if your taste runs to lightweight parodies of space opera, it's not badly written (in the sense that, yes, it actually has a plot and characters and all that -- which is more than some famous and highly successful writers can say). I can't honestly recommend that you go out and spend your hard-earned \$2.95 for this piece of fluff, but if you know someone who's already been that foolish, and you're looking for a few hours of mindless light entertainment, indulge yourself.

Basket Case

A film review by Mark R. Leeper

Internationally there seems to be a big market now for horror films on videotape. (I was just reading that horror videotape rentals have surpassed pornography videotape rentals in Canada. The same may have happened in the U.S.-- the article didn't say.)





With all this demand, the number of horror titles on the rental shelves is increasing. A general rule of thumb is, if you haven't seen it playing in theatres, it is not worth seeing. That is not an infallible rule, however, and a friend's recommendation that I see Basket Case turned out to lead to an enjoyable evening.

No, Basket Case is not about a war amputee. It is about Duane, a young man born a siamese twin. Duane looked relatively normal, but his brother Belial growing out of his side looked like a cross between Phizgig from The Dark Crystal and a fleshy deformation from Altered States. Three doctors separated the boys and left Belial for dead. Ah, but Belial's deformity gives him great strength and telepathic control over his brother. Duane carries Belial around in a basket. We see him drop hamburgers into the basket in the early parts of the film and the buns tossed back out. Belial is using Duane to get revenge on the doctors who left him for dead. At times he is played by a man in a suit in some scenes and by less-than-convincing stop-motion photography in others. The script has a natural wit and more than a little good-natured fun. While it never takes itself too seriously, it never turns hammy or silly. There are several well-drawn characters which we would only see in passing in most horror films made for this budget. This isn't immortal material but if it shows up at your videostore, give it a try. Rate it +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

Spinneret by Timothy Zahn. Serialized in ANALOG, July - October, 1985; Bluejay Books, 1985, \$16.95.

A book review by Lan

Consider the idea that man is not alone in the universe, and that when mankind finally breaches the light barrier, it finds that all the habitable real estate within reasonable reach is already taken. What happens next? Timothy Zahn could have spent the entire book working out a solution to this question. Instead he deals with the problem quickly, and considers two resulting aspects: How does Earth deal with being the bottom of the galactic pecking order? And how will Earth, specifically the Americans, deal with setting up and making profitable the colony on a planet they've bought that is essentially useless because of its apparent lack of metals?

These problems multiply even more as Zahn considers the colony operations, and the discovery of why there are no metals on Astra (the name given to the planet). An ancient machine leeches the metal from the soil and produces a metal cable six centimeters in diameter, incredibly strong, and imbued with properties contrary to our laws of physics. Not only does this change Earth's and Astra's status among the aliens, but also the colonists' status with the nations of Earth. Politicking is then mixed in with discovering the machine itself, and answers to questions which then lead to more questions.

Who are these aliens who built the spinneret? Why was it built? Once these are answered, other questions are asked, to which there are no answers...at least not in this book. I assume a sequel is in the works.

The characters are well drawn, as they are in all of Tim's novels and stories. He takes care to make the reader identify with the major characters, though a couple of the minor characters are somewhat stereotyped. The protagonists and antagonists act within their parameters, even pulling a few surprises now and then, but still within character.

As is expected of a Zahn story, there are lots of details which make it flow smoothly, and induces a desire to know more about this universe he's created. Spinneret does not fit into any of his present universes, so Tim has another broad canvas on which to paint other stories. The openings are there, and there are lots of questions he has left unanswered. Again, as with his other novels, I await the sequel.

Trouble with Lichen by John Wyndham.

A book review by Mark R. Leeper

In the last issue of LAN'S LANTERN I reviewed Web, supposedly a John Wyndham novel that had not been published before. My suspicion is that it was not a John Wyndham novel -- it was only published under that name. No, I'm not suggesting that it was ghost-written. I am sure it was written by the same man who wrote great books like The Day of the Triffids, but I am not sure he intended Web to be by John Wyndham.

Huh?

Well, John Benyon Harris was a long-time science fiction writer in Britain. His full name in print is long enough to wrap around your waist. He wrote a lot of mediocre science fiction under a number of pennames, all of which were substrings of his real name. His best material somehow always came out under the name "John Wyndham," and people began to realize that the John Wyndham novels were pretty good. Harris died in the late Sixties and Web was never published until recently. It appears, then, the publishers picked Harris' most bankable pseudonym.

In any case, as I was reading Web I was feeling pleased that here was a John Wyndham novel that I'd never read. Then it occurred to me that there were a handful of genuine John Wyndham novels I'd never read; most seemed like juveniles, but then there was Trouble with Lichen. Harris wrote it late in his career and it is really not too bad. In some ways it is very much like the Alec Guinness comedy The Man in the White Suit.

The plot concerns a strong-willed young woman who gets a job at a research establishment and through an accident discovers a lichen derivative that very much slows down the aging process. Users will live varying amounts depending on dosage and when usage begins, but usually about 200 years. The woman goes into business for herself devel-

oping the drug, and the head of the research establishment independently develops the drug, neither knowing that the other knows the power of the drug.

The woman, to get around the law, opens a beauty products business and secretly gives the drug treatments to wives of prominent government dignitaries. There is an interesting legal problem in that she very openly tells her customers, "Our product will keep you younger longer." Can she be blamed for telling the truth when lying hype is expected?

Antigerone cannot be made totally public because there is only enough lichen in the world to treat a few thousand people. Announcing the drug would assure that just the wrong people get it. Further, the social impact of the drug would be incredible.

Well, the news does leak out eventually and the world goes into chaos. Morticians and socialists, for different reasons, demand that the drug be banned. So do certain church groups. If all this seems a little unlikely, think of the real life social uproar a few years after this was written when a pill to prevent pregnancy was invented.

I cannot claim that this is a particularly well-written novel, or that I believe the nature of the uproar caused, but the magnitude of the chaos is more than the reader expects, but probably less than would actually occur. Reading it, I was thinking it was really lesser Wyndham, but thinking about it afterwards, that is still pretty good.

Peace Company by Roland Green. Ace Books, (c) 1985, 210p., \$2.95.

A book review by Lan

The Peace Force. A group of mercenary soldiers whose sole purpose is to keep peace among the Union Planets of the human race, by making war if necessary.

On the planet Bayard, a group of the inland Ranchers are trying to stop the stab for independence of the Fishermen on the coast. In doing so they hire their own group of mercenaries, and they themselves are trained in military tactics. Because of the off-planet intervention, a person known only as the Gamemaster, the Peace Force takes action to help the Fishermen.

The first half of the book was somewhat boring. Many characters were introduced, and there was lots of introspection and speculation of the main character, Sergeant Major John B. Parkes, but there was very little action. And what action there was came off as stilted, and seemed to have little to do with any sort of story. What kept me reading was the character and personality conflict between Parkes and Lieutenant Katherine Forbes-Brandon. I peeked at the last couple of paragraphs, and decided to find out how they resolved their differences. It was an interesting study of that conflict, but the main story only got exciting about half-way through. Another factor affecting my enjoyment was the realistic military fondness for initials, for which Roland provided a glossary, and to which I kept turn-

ing. Or maybe it was just me, stretching out the reading over a two week period, instead of reading the book in one sitting. I can't say I don't like military stories -- I've enjoyed those by Tim Zahn, Gordie Dickson, and Joe Haldeman. But I'm not sure how to judge my reactions to Roland's book. Maybe it's because this is the first book of a series and he is laying in a lot of groundwork on which he will build other stories. I am curious enough about how he will carry on the series to be willing to buy and read the next book. My reaction is basically neutral, and thus willing to give him another chance here.

Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome

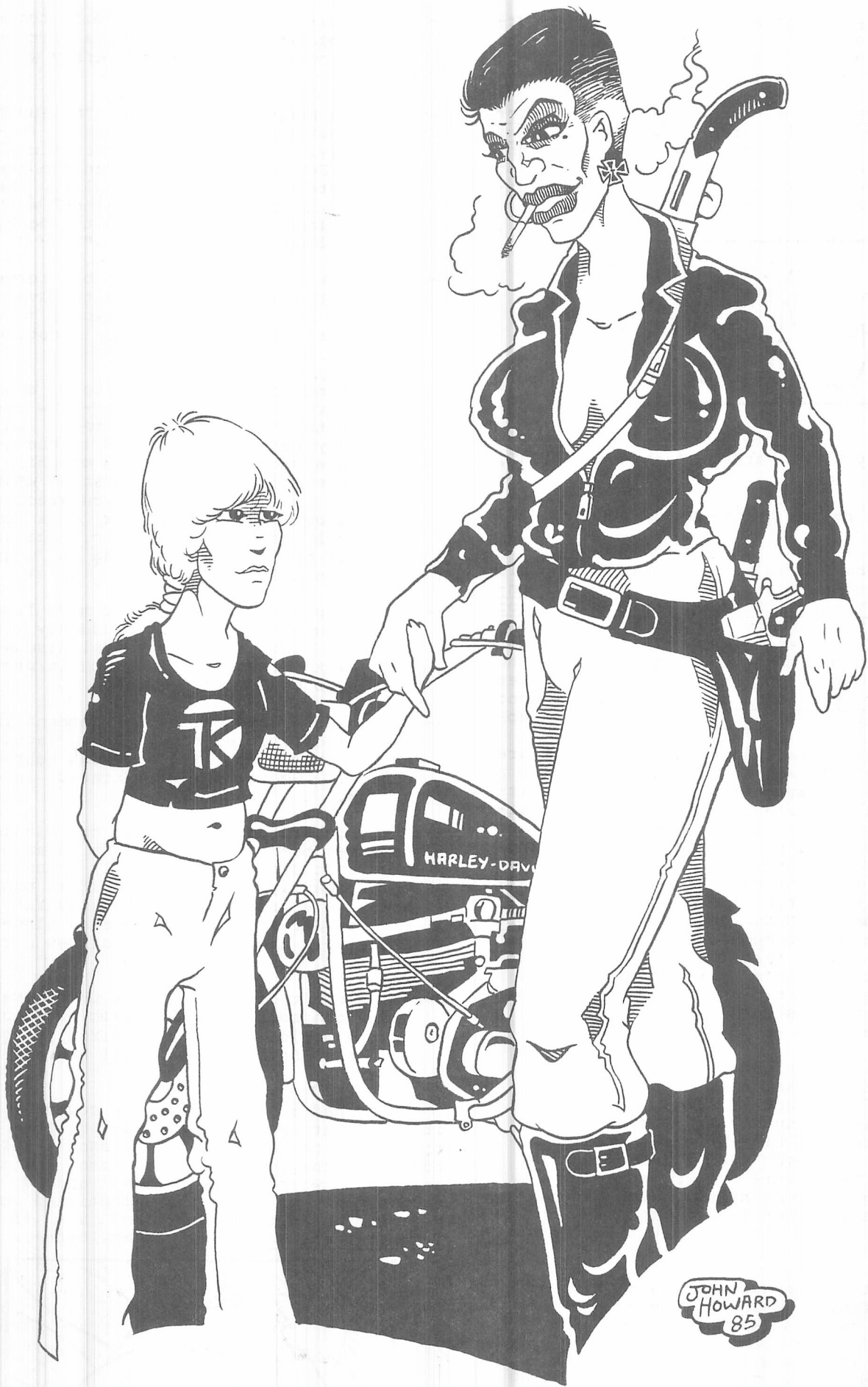
A film review by Mark R. Leeper

The world after the nuclear war gets stranger and stranger, particularly in George Miller's Mad Max series. His Mad Max was barely even imaginative. Australia was reduced to being "The Land of Car Chases," as the police and outlaw gangs tried to run each other down on the roads. The Road Warrior (Max Max II) was an imaginative view of two societies fighting. One was clean-cut survivors; one was nasty punk rockers. Road Warrior's plot was simple, but it was coherent and powerful. It was strong enough to bear the weight of Miller's imaginative visual images. The action and the background were at least as important as the main line of the plot. Now comes Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome.

Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome goes a step beyond The Road Warrior. The background and visual images are nearly the whole film. The plot is a patchwork that seems to meander, showing us a number of odd visual images -- far stranger and more imaginative than The Road Warrior -- but never really becoming interesting in itself. In the first two films, the viewer becomes emotionally involved with the good guys. You want to see how the bad guys "get it." Somehow, that never happens in Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome. None of the characters get real enough that you really want to see them meet the fate that is coming to them. The first two films work by rage in a way that Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome never does. The only emotion it seems to bring out in the viewer is (intentional) laughter.

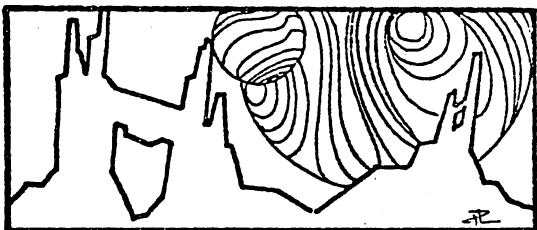
In the episodic story-line, Max (Mel Gibson) first runs into Bartertown, a sort of future Sodom in which Master-Blaster (a very strange idea for a character, but you won't hear from me how), a sort of city engineer, is in a power struggle with city founder Auntie Entity (Tina Turner). Max stumbles into the city and, of course, upsets the balance. Next he runs into a society of children living in a sort of oasis in the desert. Finally, the two episodes are tied together in an un-involving action finale.

Miller, together with co-director George Ogilvie and co-scripter Terry Hayes, has created a future world that is endlessly creative and often quite funny. There are also heavy doses of social comment, as we



see what aspects of our own society the survivors of a nuclear holocaust will want to preserve and what they will be able to piece together of our society from what we leave behind.

I gave Mad Max a -3 and The Road Warrior a +2 on a -4 to +4 scale. I would give Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome a high +1--a slight step down because of a disappointing lack of real excitement. Still, a high +1 is a pretty good rating and a recommendation.



Diasporah by W. R. Yates. Baen Books, 1985, \$2.95.

A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper

Baen books seems to find (first) novels with interesting ideas behind them (Frontiera, The Torch of Honor, The Continent of Lies, and this one come to mind). Unfortunately, the authors of most of them haven't learned how to handle these ideas, and the reader ends up disappointed. (I have not yet read The Continent of Lies so it might not have this problem.) Diasporah is no exception.

The idea-- Israel and the Middle East are destroyed and Israel moves into space--is a catchy one. I was hoping to see some political intrigue, some discussion of how religious rules would be interpreted in space (there have already been rabbinical rulings on how one determines sunrise/sunset in orbital flights for purposes of prayer), all sorts of interesting ideas. And what do I get? A bumbling U.N. agent (and this is not supposed to be a comedy), some stock Jewish characters (note that I don't say "stereotypes," because it's not that blatant), a predictable ending, and some of the most outrageous howlers to hit science fiction in a long time:

-- In the back blurb it says that the Middle East has been turned into a "mass of radioactive slag. But unlike Islam, Israel survives." Actually Islam is far too wide-spread a religion to be destroyed even if the entire Middle East were wiped out--it is found on all continents, with especially heavy concentrations in Asia and Africa. (This is the blurb-writer's fault.)

-- An agent is supposed to pass himself as Jewish, but isn't briefed on the laws of kasruth (kosher).

-- Chapter XII has a date of Elul 4 when it's obviously Tishre 1 (though the rest of the dates seem correct).

-- Yates' use of Hebrew and Yiddish terms (with apparently random capitalization rules) indicates an unfamiliarity with them.

-- The main computer is called "Gollum." Close, but no cigar -- he means (undoubtedly) "Golem" (an "artificial man" in Jewish legend, not unlike the Frankenstein Monster). Actually, the glossary in the back has "golem," with its original meaning, but in the book, the spelling used is "Gollum."

-- The glossary misses a lot of terms used in the novel, and seems to have a lot that don't show up (maybe I just knew what they meant and didn't notice them).

-- A swimming pool would not also be used as a mikveh (there are water-flow requirements that wouldn't be met), and certainly not for both sexes if the users were Orthodox. Speaking of which, Yates doesn't seem to understand what Orthodox means. He has a character talk about how an Orthodox area is apparently becoming Chassidic, because many of the men are starting to wear yarmulkes all the time.

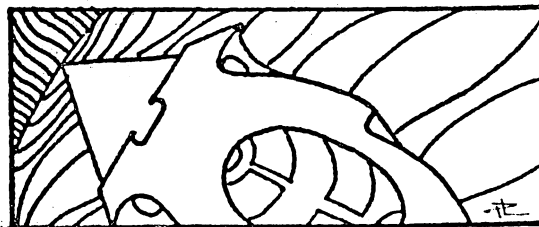
-- The computer seems pretty much like our computers today, but suddenly it launches into a philosophical discussion with Greenberg, in which it professes to be Jewish.

-- When a character's radio antenna is snapped off, Yates says, "The vacuum about them was filled with Hebrew curses." Sound doesn't travel in a vacuum.

-- Early on, Yates claims that the Middle East has been destroyed, but later he says that Jerusalem is still standing (just heavily radioactive). If as many bombs were dropped on Israel as Yates claims, Jerusalem would be slag also--Israel is about the size of New Jersey.

-- Yates can't decide if the United Nations controls all the atomic weapons in the world, or if the United States and the Soviet Union still have some power.

Yates had a good idea, but couldn't pull it off. Perhaps he will do better next time. But perhaps Baen Books should not buy books if they can't provide some editorial assistance where needed; they should have caught most of the flaws mentioned above. Me? I'm going to go back and see if The Texas Israeli War: 1999 was any better.



Night Shift by Stephen King.
Signet Books, 1979, \$2.95.

Books of Blood by Clive Barker.
Sphere, 1984, £1.50 (\$3.25).

Two book reviews
by Mark R. Leeper

On a recommendation for horror stories by a British newcomer, Clive Barker, I read his third collection, Books of Blood: Volume III. Then to put him in a perspective, I read what is probably the best-selling horror collection of all time, Night Shift by Stephen King. That makes sense, because King is to horror writers what McDonald's is to restaurants. His is a sort of decent, never great, all-pervasive standard.

So what are my conclusions? I'd say the two writers were quite different but roughly on a par as writers. I read a horror story for three things: an interesting horror idea, interesting characters, and an engaging plot.

King's ideas are all right, but a little unimaginative and even time-worn. I often say when I read one of his novels that it would have made a really good short story. Many of his short stories would have made good cartoons by a macabre cartoonist like Gahan Wilson. Stories like "The Boogeyman" and "Gray Matter," in fact, seemed very much like story-length versions of Gahan Wilson cartoons that pre-dated them. At least two other stories ("The Mangler" and "Trucks") are just variations on Sturgeon's classic SF-horror story "Killdozer," written in the late Forties. "Battleground," in which a child's toy soldier set attacks humans is just a pale shadow of the Richard Matheson story "Prey" in which a really vicious native doll comes to life and terrorizes the woman who purchased it. (Actually, a lot of King seems heavily derived from Matheson, who I think was an even better horror story writer before he was seduced by the Hollywood side of the Force.) Other so-called stories are really just a scene each plus a fair amount of set-up time. These stories are "The Ledge," "The Man Who Loved Flowers" and "One for the Road." The stories that stand out for original ideas are "I Am the Doorway" and "Quitters, Inc."

Of the five stories in the Barker anthology, at least three struck me as really new concepts. When you start out a Barker story, you are never sure where he is going to take it. When the idea does come along it is really out of left field and attacks with a real element of surprise. His best story drones for a little while about a vaguely interesting character out in his field trying to dig up a large object that he's found. Then the object comes up by itself and the story shifts gears into a really gruesome story about, of all things, a giant. I suppose at one time there were blood-



curdling stories about giants, but that was a long time ago. These days they are confined to mild children's stories, at least in horror. This is not a mild children's story. The idea of doing a gruesome giant story is more creative than just about anything that King has ever done. I was certainly more surprised by it than by any of King's stories.

Premise was the first criterion I had for measuring stories. The second was character. King goes for interesting people, Barker for real people. What is the difference? Well, to exaggerate it, would you rather watch a videotape of an hour or of the life of your next-door neighbor or Mickey Mouse? One would be very realistic as a slice-of-life, but not as entertaining as the other. The other would be someone you could feel for, but it would not be quite as realistic as the first.

Barker writes about male prostitutes, film projectionists, pornographers. And they are believable portraits. You don't really care for the characters, but you believe them and you learn something about their lifestyles. When King writes about a college student, you end up identifying with the character, but you get no insights into how a college student sees life differently than, say, how a trucker does. King leaves lots of room in his characters for the readers to identify with them, to get into and walk through the horror story with them. Barker's characters are too real and specific to have much identification value. That may be a point against Barker in a horror story, but his stories are better as literature.

But that is actually getting into the third criterion, plot. Barker's characters have depth and motivation, where all too often King's just limns an outline for the reader to paint him/herself into. Occasionally King uses this for an emotional effect. He has real-life things haunting the character and this is perhaps King's finest hour. His most satisfying stories are "Sometimes They Come Back" (drawn, no doubt, on his ex-

periences teaching in a time when it really was outright dangerous to be a teacher in some schools) and "Last Rung on the Ladder" which is a non-fantasy story with some suspense which also has something to say. (While I'm on the subject of this story, I have some mathematical complaints. The character first says it happened some time when "Ike" was in office, as if he doesn't remember exactly when. Yet he knows he was ten years old at the time. Most people have a pretty precise idea of what summer they were ten years old. At another point, he jumps from a hay-loft 70 feet high. That's like being on the seventh floor of an office building -- assuming six twelve-foot stories beneath him. If this guy is jumping from that into a haystack, he should be a stunt-man!)

Two different writers, two different styles. The difference is a matter of taste. Obviously, King is more commercial; Barker is more original. Either is worth the read.



Magic in Ithkar edited by Andre Norton and Robert Adams. Cover by Walter Velez. Tor trade paperback, (c) 1985, \$6.95.

A book review by Diane Fox

There is nothing unusual about a collection of heroic fantasy short stories, but the shared-world fantasy anthology is a very recent development. The first book of this kind was Thieves' World, edited by Robert Asprin, which came out in 1979. There have been many sequels, and two similar series have been published--Liavek, edited by Emma Bull and Will Shetterly, and Magic in Ithkar. All of these series are based on a background scenario, a city or fair in which the stories by the various authors are set. The multiple viewpoints of the same background give a solidity, a richness of setting rare in most heroic fantasies, and adds a realism and plausibility to the stories.

Ithkar begins with the scenario, the background essay by Robert Adams. Commerce and religion (seldom opposed) are the main cultural themes of the Great Fair held annually during the Holy Ten-Days near the Temple of Ithkar. The founders of the religion, the Three Lordly Ones, were apparently space travellers, which gives sfnal underpinnings

to this fantasy world, as in Adams' and Andre Norton's own fantasies. The cover is not in the least sfnal, showing a crowded medieval scene with nobles, peasants, merchants, horses, hounds, pavilions, and a brooding castle in the background. The artist is Walter Velez, who also did the covers for the Ace paperbacks of the Sanctuary series.

The world created in the thirteen following stories, however, is not the warlike world of Robert Adams' Horse Clans adventures, but very similar in mood and theme to Andre Norton's various sfnal and fantasy worlds. The stories are usually told from the viewpoint of the central character, who is often disadvantaged, struggling to make a living, and beset by the forces of evil, usually black magic. Fortunately they often have magical powers themselves, usually artistic skills, healing, or the ability to communicate with animals.

In fact, many of the stories followed the formula of a typical Andre Norton story to such a degree that they began to seem a little monotonous. "Fletcher Found" by Morgan Llywelyn, "Esmene's Eyes" by Ardath Mayhar, "Well Met in Ithkar" by Patricia Matthews, and "Homecoming" by Susan M. Schwartz have pretty much the same plot, though they differ slightly in mood, style, intermingled themes and type of happy ending. "Fletcher Found" I liked the most. Perhaps relevantly it was the most similar to one of Andre Norton's own stories in method of telling (first person), style (laconic, medieval), and bittersweet happy ending. The main character is a lonely peasant youth who doesn't fit in with his dour, harsh people. He comes to Ithkar to sell his arrows with the wild hope that he may be a descendant of the Three Lordly Ones. All he finds is trouble, disillusionment, and a magical ability he can't seem to control, but he is befriended and rescued by three ragged old merchants who may be more than they seem.

In many stories, minor magical talents help or save the characters and ensure the happy ending, though they at times cause their possessor nearly as much worry as help. (There are stringent peacebonding laws within the fairgrounds, both on magic and on weapons and dangerous items of the more mundane sort). Sometimes the magical intervention is a downright "deus ex machina" or "cop-out" to rescue the characters -- this weakened "Homecoming" most of all, though it wasn't otherwise a bad story.

I prefer the stories where the characters triumphed by using their intelligence. "Qazia and a Ferret-Fetch" by Judith Sampson is one such, with a shrewd tavern-mistress and her friends outwitting a bizarrely evil wizard and his ferret familiar (though the songs which play an important part in the story are stumble-footed enough to jar one's teeth). "Dragon's Horn" by J. W. Schutz was equally good, with a slightly magical performance of talking, moving dolls ("Strings are for puppets. Our dolls ... are moved by spells."), a would-be wizard who can't get his spells to work, a devious plot, and a "spell" for determining who is telling the truth. "Cold Spell" by Elisabeth Waters has two merchants put under different curses by a blackmailing wizard. They find an ingeni-

ous way to turn the curses to a mutual benefit.

"To Take a Thief" by C. J. Cherryh has hardly any magic in it at all. It describes the growing friendship between a desperate, starving young thief and a saintly old priest. This story might easily have taken place in the slum of any modern city with its gangs of sordid hoods and petty criminals. However, there is a suggestion, very understated, that a miracle or two may have taken place. This was one of the better stories in the collection.

In two stories, magic proves disastrous for the central character. Lin Carter's tale of an unwisely phrased wish, "The Goblinry of Ais," is alone in this book in having a thoroughly evil and unsympathetic central character. It also has very cliché-ridden prose but is neatly told. Roger C. Schlobin's "For Lovers Only" has a tragic figure, an apostate priest who dabbles in magic for the sake of revenge on the shallow, selfish woman who has ruined him. He lies, cheats, steals, and does his best to despise everyone, even the few people who are trying to help him, yet he remains a painfully sympathetic figure -- if he hadn't tried magic, he would most certainly have found some other means to destroy himself. The ending is one of multilayered irony.

The somewhat wordy Church of the Three Lordly Ones plays an ambiguous role in these matters. This religion is not unlike Medieval Christianity, a powerful organization manipulating ceaselessly to gain more influence and power, filled with ruthless, ambitious people (especially at the higher levels), and at every level carrying those whose motives are dubious. Yet the aims of this Church are basically good and many of its clerics are wise, compassionate, even saintly. This ambiguity comes through very strongly in "Fletcher Found", "Well Met in Ithkar", "Esmene's Eyes", "For Lovers Only", "Homecoming", and Nancy Springer's story, "The Prince Out of the Past". There is, however, no ambiguity at all about the foul cult of Thotharn. The Church of the Three Lordly Ones has about as much liking for the Thotharnists as Christians have for Satanists. Thotharn-worship isn't exactly illegal, but the Church keeps a close watch on all known members of this cult. In return, the Thotharnists try to get their own people into the Church as spies and trouble-makers, and have often corrupted high-ranking clerics of the Three Lordly Ones, as shown in "Well Met in Ithkar" and "Homecoming". The Thotharnists seem to be handy, all-purpose villains, in fact, and also practice their evil skills in "Esmene's Eyes" and Andre Norton's own story, "Swamp Dweller".

"Swamp Dweller" itself is one of the stronger stories. A good original has certain subtleties that are not found in the best pastiche. These qualities of theme and atmosphere are not easy to define, but are easier to spot when comparing the originals with imitations that have virtues of their own (in fact, they may well be better written) but which don't have these particular qualities. The quality that "Swamp Dweller" has that most of the other stories don't is a sense of supernatural evil, of genuinely alien menace. There's plenty of terrifying

human evil depicted in some of the other stories, and many of the evil-doers use magic as a weapon, but little of this almost Lovecraftian eeriness. The Thotharnists are villains again in "Swamp Dweller", but there is a suggestion that they are controlled by Something Outside.

Nancy Springer's "The Prince Out of the Past" is the only other story in this book with such an atmosphere of wonder--however, the magical forces shown here are those of light. There's a sweetness in this story of a poor horse-doctor's encounter with the spirit of a Hero That Was and Who Will Be -- but there's no sloppiness about it. This story reminded me a little of Tolkien.

My favorite story, however, was Jo Clayton's resoundingly-titled "Jezeri and Her Beast Go to the Fair and Find More Excitement Than They Want". The main character is a ten-or-eleven year old girl, the daughter of a local farmer. She reminded me a little of James Schmitz's Telzey Amberdon. Her "beast" is a small, lemur-like creature, possibly the familiar of the strange old man whom Jezeri had befriended. The story of how they cope with a menacing stranger at the Fair is a mixture of homely familiarity and grimness.

My reaction to the whole book was a mixture of enjoyment and frustration. The enjoyment was because the stories were, taken individually, mostly reasonable, and at least four were good. None of them was bad enough to dislike. However, the book as a whole was rather like a multi-course meal consisting of one kind of food prepared by different cooks. In this kind of book, the stories are supposed to interweave into an intricate tapestry, each contributing its share, however small, to the whole. This could have been done by having characters from one story make a brief appearance in another, or by events in earlier stories mentioned in later ones, or even having stories serve as sequels to the ones before. All this was done in the Sanctuary series. Maybe this problem will be dealt with in Ithkar's sequel. I enjoyed the book enough to look forward to a sequel.



The Gore Trilogy of Herschel Gordon Lewis

Film comment by Mark R. Leeper

One of the advantages of videotape as a medium is that it is relatively inexpensive to produce a commercial videotape given that you have a film you want to put on tape. This means that obscure or relatively minor films become available for viewing that one would have otherwise had to search for years to find. It is difficult to believe that there is a giant market out there for the films of Herschel Gordon Lewis, but his first three films are available.

Who is Herschel Gordon Lewis? He is an exploitation filmmaker who realized that he had to put something in his films you could not get in the mainstream. He hit upon the idea of putting gore in. Since he did, gore is moving into the mainstream, but all the Friday the 13ths and even the Wild Bunches owe something to Lewis.

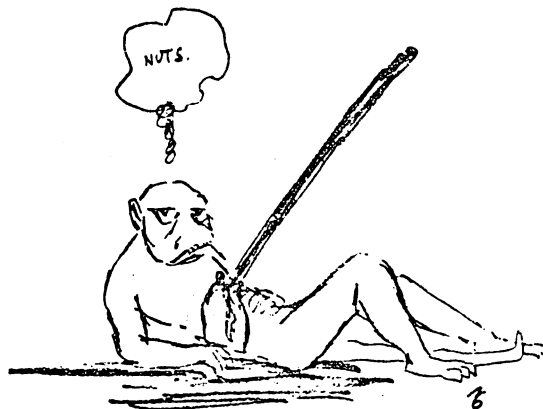
I should explain that I am somewhat indifferent to gory scenes in film. I cringe at the French documentary Night and Fog because I know what I am seeing is real. If I know what I am seeing is not real, it becomes one more special effect. My rating of a Lewis film is not much different than my rating would be if the same film were done without gore. When a friend rented these films one at a time, I was interested in seeing them because they were influential, not because I was interested in them because of the blood content.

The three films, which apparently played as a triple feature at drive-ins for a long time, are: Blood Feast, 2000 Maniacs, and Color Me Blood Red.

Blood feast (1963) is a humorously inept piece about an Egyptian caterer who is setting up an "Egyptian Feast" for the graduation party of a client's daughter. Unbeknownst to the client, the feast is going to feature body parts from a number of local women. The film was produced on a miniscule budget by people with more money than talent. A Playboy Playmate, Ashlyn Martin, plays the graduating senior. Nobody behaves like anyone you know. Rate it -3 on the -4 to +4 scale.

By far the best of the trilogy is 2000 Maniacs (1964). Unlike its predecessor, it does not look like it was made in somebody's garage. The story concerns a town, population 2000, that was massacred in the Civil War and, like Brigadoon, comes back once a century, though in this case to avenge itself on Yankees. The script has some (intentional) wit and at times actually attains fun. The music is provided by the Pleasant Valley Boys, a professional group whose most memorable contribution to the film is the song "Eeee-Ha! The South's gonna rise again!" As a film, it nearly makes it. Rate it 0. This one has Playboy Playmate Connie Mason.

In 1965, Lewis proved that the watchability of 2000 Maniacs was a fluke. Color Me Blood Red is not as imaginative as its predecessor, and a good deal less entertaining. It concerns an artist who discovers that the perfect color for his paintings in human blood. Of course he goes out looking for



nubile young lovelies to supply the commodity. This one doesn't have enough story to cover even its short screen time, so the scenes are drawn out much too long. No Playboy Playmates grace this film and the script and acting are a step down. Rate it a high -2.

This all adds up to saying that, in spite of being the ones that started the splatter craze, Lewis' films are nothing to scream about.

Adventures by Mike Resnick. Signet paperback, (c) 1985, 239 pages, \$2.95

A book review by Lan

I reviewed this book last summer (1984) in LL #15 in the lengthy article I wrote about Mike Resnick and his works. Now that the book is out for general consumption, I once again recommend that everyone buy and taste a morsel from Mike's generous table of succulent humor. Adventures is a hilarious romp through all the situations presented in the old 'B' movies of the 30s and 40s about Africa.

Inspired by the unintentional humor in the movie She, Mike looked at all the scenarios he remembered from those Saturday afternoon thrillers, and put them into this novel. Inside you meet Dr. Lucifer Jones, a religious con man trying to get enough money to build his tabernacle. His methods aren't always the best, and the situations he finds himself in are sometimes dangerous, but always funny. The valley of diamonds, the Lord of the Apes, the White Goddess, a Vampire, the Elephant's Graveyard, a lost civilization, and others, all make an appearance.

The book is a fast and pleasant read. Treat yourself to an enjoyable time and read Adventures.

H. G. Wells and Frank McConnell's The Science Fiction of H. G. Wells. Oxford University Press, 1981, \$4.95.

A book review by Mark R. Leeper

One of my earliest memories was going to see the film War of the Worlds. I was not yet three years old and my parents, who usually hate science fiction, for some reason went to see it. I hated it. And we sat



through it twice. By the time I was six I would have sold both my parents into slavery to see the film again. I was bitten by science fiction early and hard. And the paragon of science fiction writers had to be H. G. Wells, I thought.

Finding in the library the Dover book Seven science fiction Novels by H. G. Wells was a high point of my youth. I remember how I originally acquired each of the five "Classics Illustrated" comic books based on science fiction books. When I was growing up, Wells was "Mr. Science Fiction" for me.

Of course, now I am somewhat more widely read and can put Wells in perspective. In perspective, Wells is merely the best and most creative science fiction writer who ever lived. There are very few current types of science fiction story that Wells did not write and the majority of those he invented. Time-travel, alien invasion, post-holocaust, space travel--they all descended from stories and novels by Wells. His shorter stories include the invention of the modern tank and the "atomic bomb" (Wells coined the phrase "atomic bomb" in 1914 and gave a surprisingly accurate appraisal of its use in war, particularly considering that he was writing about it thirty years before its development). Another early story describes a London devastated by terrorists with biological warfare. Most SF authors predicting the future only extrapolate the present without breakthroughs. Some actually put in breakthroughs but are way off base about what the breakthroughs will be. Wells predicted a surprising number of the real breakthroughs.

That brings me to The Science Fiction of H. G. Wells by Frank McConnell. McConnell is an Associate Professor of English at Northwestern, and he approaches Wells as an Associate Professor of English rather than as a science fiction fan. None of the pleasure of reading Wells comes across. He does mention, dryly and in passing, that certain novels were written during the period when Wells was "a great storyteller," and McConnell speculates that after that period Wells decided he no longer wanted to be a great storyteller, but he never talks about what made a Wells story great. Instead of that, he gives us dry-as-dust speculations of how Wells may have been influenced by Darwin's theories and goes into long digressions about the history of Social Dar-

winism.

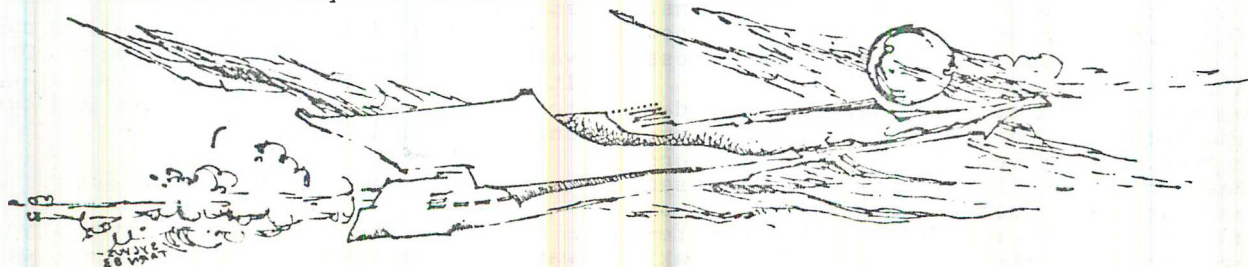
In fact, much of the matter of McConnell's book reminds me of my own writing when I was in high school and wanted to make a small idea fill an assigned number of pages.

He says things like Invisible Man pre-saged politics of the 20th Century in that Griffin is a terrorist who is damaged by his own tactics. Even assuming the point is true about terrorism, which it probably isn't, it is not an idea particularly worth considering. Wells knew nothing about 20th Century terrorists when he wrote the book, and McConnell's whole point is contrived.

Also, McConnell talks about the way the giants' nursery in Food of the Gods had brightly colored tiles the children could re-arrange. "The child psychology of Jean Piaget and the inspired practice of the Montessori schools...have both borne out the wisdom of Wells' ideas about the early training of children in creative play." Time and again, McConnell seems to be missing the essential points of the Wells story, but he will waste a half-page on what a good way these giant children were raised.

Earlier in his biographical chapter, he digresses to explain the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle and Godel's Proof. He botches both but goes on for pages on their implications. (Actually, he is not alone in this. It is amazing how many people can correctly state neither the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle nor the meaning of Godel's Proof, but can wax eloquent on their philosophical implications -- implications that are not borne out by Heisenberg or Godel at all.) McConnell says that Godel was saying "mathematics had the structure not of a 'real' world but of an elegant fiction." To me that shows a complete misunderstanding of the implications of Godel's Proof, yet he fills pages explaining it to his reader.

In another place McConnell does a metric analysis of the sentences in a paragraph of Invisible Man. I could go on and on with a list of how what he says may vaguely concern Wells, but how he totally misses essential points. McConnell's only really interesting sections about Wells are facts he gleaned from a biography of the author. To all appearances, that is the book I should have read.





Same Bat Time,

by DAVID STEIN

Same Bat Channel...

EPISODE I

Saturday Morning

Well, friends, a new TV season is upon us and it looks to be a good one for SF fans. The first installment, as always, to the new year is that world of babysitting madness known as Saturday Morning.

For the most part, this year's Saturday Morning fare is nothing special. We have the return of last year's hit, "Dungeons and Dragons," on CBS. This year we are promised new and even more exciting adventures and an upgrade of the artwork. We'll see. Also returning to CBS is the terrific "Storybreak"

show hosted by Bob "Captain Kangaroo" Keeshan. A great show to start the kids on the road to literature. ABC returns to us "The Littles," a touch of Alice Mary Norton, even if they don't come out and say it. Good stuff.

A victim of the TOO-GOOD-TO-LAST syndrome was a wonderful show called "Might Orbits." It fell by the wayside this season and it's tongue-in-cheek, hokey dialogue and terrific animation will be missed.

Well, on to the new stuff.

ABC is the big winner this year for watchable animated shows. First of all,

they have purchased the rights to the "Bugs Bunny/Road Runner Hour" away from CBS. A cheer from an avid BB fan to ABC for showing them less cut-down than CBS, and for reaching into the vaults and pulling out some lesser seen shows.

Next they offer the Lucasfilms/Nelvana Studio's "Ewok and Droids Adventure Hour." The first half hour, the Ewok half, is just so much brain candy. They've made the Ewoks even more cutsier than before, if this can be believed. Not much here to watch.

The second half hour, the Droids half, has more promise. Riding greatly on the delivery talents of Anthony Daniels (returning to do C3PO's voice), the show is enjoyable and not too badly scripted.

The entire hour offers very good animation supplied by the Canadian house, Nelvana Studios. This marks a return to the animation field for NS after a brief expansion into the "live action" world (in the body of "The Edison Twins" made for the Disney Channel on cable).

Continuing their partnership with DC Comics, ABC brings us a revamped Super Powers show called "Super Powers: The Galactic Guardians." This has elements of last season's Super Power show along with the old Superfriends. The animation artwork is very good, with attention given to smaller details (like Firestorm's flames actually moving!). The stories are a vast improvement over the previous season's, with attention given to characterization. Added to the team is a Teen Titan-less Cyborg, and his constant irreverent banter back and forth with Firestorm is a joy for any comics fan.

Well, that's it for Saturday Morning. Coming up later, we'll talk about the whole slew of SF live-action shows coming up, and a brief side-track into the world of afternoon animation shows cropping up all over.

Last Note: For the classics fans, keep an eye on the PBS show, "The Golden Age of Television," Saturdays at 10 PM. Last show, I lucked into taping an episode of "Space Patrol." Great stuff for 1952 live-action.

EPISODE II

Too Good to Last

It is time to talk about the two big TV offerings of the season (SF-speaking that is), "The Twilight Zone" and "Amazing Stories."

Friday night brought us the New and Improved Twilight Zone on CBS. It's snazzy opening does justice to the original's opening. Haunting strains of the old theme music run through the new (performed by the Grateful Dead), and a brief, misty image of Rod Serling floating past will bring a chill to any fan's spine. The premiere was divided into two stories, each introduced by an unidentified Rod Serling sound-alike. The first was an adaptation of Harlan Ellison's "Shatterday." The TV version is every bit as weird and unsettling as the written. Its soft and dimly lit film style adds the prop-

er mood setting. The acting and directing were superb.

The second story was an original story based on an old theme. An over-stressed housewife finds a medallion that allows her to stop time for everyone and everything but herself and the things she's touching. At the end the nuclear wars come and she freezes the ICBMs in midflight, and the audience is left to ponder what her next move will be as she walks through the crowds of time-stopped people with time-stopped nukes overhead. This was not as well-crafted as "Shatterday" but a cut above the normal TV fare.

Both combined to create a wonderful hour of quality television that will treat the viewers' minds to thought and provoking entertainment.

For future stories, we'll see. They have hired a terrific line-up of writers and directors. The format of the show will change depending on the story or stories told that night. We will be given hour-long stories, two half-hour stories, four fifteen-minute stories, and any combination of length to make up an hour timeslot. They will be doing a mixture of original works, remakes of classic TZ episodes, and adaptations of published stories.

Sunday night brought us "Amazing Stories," Steven Spielberg's journey into TV land. The show is a half-hour format offering one story per show. The rumors are that these will be the most expensive TV episodes ever made for a regular series (and I can believe this is true after watching the premiere).

Right from the opening credits I knew we were in for a treat. The opening is a mixture of live-action with the best computer animation yet seen on TV. For you Trivial Pursuit fans, the head caveman at the fire is Ray Walston.

The story offered in the premiere was "Ghost Train." It is an original story written by Spielberg and company, and deals with a grandfather's return to the site of a terrible train crash he caused as a boy and his realization that destiny was going to force him to complete the trip he started nearly seventy-five years before. Although this has the sound of a horror story, it wasn't. It was black humor, to be sure, with a covering of Spielbergish tender heart-wrenching over it. The casting fantastic, the directing wonderful, and a perfect level of acting to round it out. (I want to know where SS digs up these child actors. The young man starring in this looks so natural against the Iowa skyline!) If you didn't see it, find someone who taped it and arrange to see it. The ending will leave you open-jawed. When was the last time a regular TV show did that for ya?

Spielberg's company, Amblin Productions, is being very tight-lipped about future episodes. Again, like the new Zone, the line-up of announced directors and writers is unbelievable. We have been told that they are going to try to stick to a half-hour format, although they have planned lengthier special episodes and later time periods for episodes

of more mature themes. This sounds interesting.

I think I have to admit that this was the better of the two shows. The story was tighter and better told along with a greater quality of production. This may be attributed to Spielberg's talent, or maybe a greater care for the final product. Only time will tell. We know this show will last at least two seasons, mainly because Amblin Productions has an ironclad, two-season, 44 episode contract with NBC.

Speaking if lasting, this brings us back to the title of this episode, "Too Good to

Last." I believe that both of the above shows are too good to last. The average person who watches TV will be a carpet for the stories told here (yes, I mean right over the head). We'll see. We are living in the age where something like "Hill Street Blues" can remain on the air because the powers that be can see quality when presented. Not that the ratings were bad for either of these new shows. In fact, they were on top of the charts. But this might just be premiere curiosity. I may hopefully be proven wrong (and for quality TV's sake, pray that I am).

HANDICAPPING THE HUGOS

by David M. Shea

All right, folks, here's how you can figure out who's going to win all those coveted Hugo Awards, in the comfort and privacy of your own living room, without having to go to the ghastly expedient of actually reading all the stories. Why should you? No one else does.

Just follow these simple rules, and every year you can pick 85 or 90 percent of the winners blindfolded just by listening to the names.

1. In any category, pick the best known name. If it's between Joe Blow and Harlan Ellison, Joe has the proverbial snowball's chance no matter how good his story is (or how bad Harlan's is).

2. In any competition between two or more well-known names, pick the one who has attended the most conventions lately.

3. In any competition between two or more well-known names, not resolved by rule 2 above, pick a man to win over a woman in any category except Fan Artist. (That one, like Treasurer of the United States, is an accepted tokenism.)

4. Only really obvious titles win Hugos. If the story is about feeding Star Hogs, it better be titled "Interstellar Pig Swill" if the author has any delusion of winning a Hugo. Any profound, cryptic, or pseudo-cryptic title is death (except in the case of Harlan Ellison, in which case see rule 1.)

Corollary: Bonus points to any title with the words "dragon" or "unicorn" in it. Any such title by a well-known author you can bet the rent money on.

(Curiously, this rule and corollary may be completely reversed to pick Nebula winners.)

PIZZA

A commentary by Mark R. Leeper

It occurred to me over my dinner last night, a pizza, that the four basic food groups, meat, dairy, vegetables, and bread, are all represented in a "garbage" pizza. What is more, people seem to have a natural, instinctual affinity for pizza. This struck me as being rather odd. Most foods that generally appeal to most people -- you know, hot fudge sundaes, prime rib, bourbon, pecan pie, Swiss chocolates -- are not known to be the most healthful foods to eat. And most supposedly healthful foods -- bean sprouts, Brussel sprouts, alfalfa sprouts, spinach, kale, calves' liver, macrobiotic what-nots -- have all the appeal of tomato-juice-soaked newspaper. Why is it that a food that is as popular as pizza surreptitiously covers at least superficially each of the four food groups? (We've all seen the National Pizza Council's ads "Pizza is Nature's Perfect Food" and "You never outgrow your need for pizza.")

Now why is it that humanity has adapted so well to pizza? It now seems clear that at some point our distant ancestors must have evolved for some long time in a pizza-rich environment. While some of our species and some related species, trying to fit in the same ecological niche, were trying to bring down mastadons and mammoths, surely a behavior of negative survival value, the more intelligent of our species was going out for pizza and remaining relatively unstomped. Those slower animals who were stomped may well have been the inspiration for the first pizza, which were hoof-shaped undoubtedly for some reason. At all events, after giving the matter some thought, it is now clear that we all are descended from Homo Pizzivorous. Think that one over.



by Thomas A. Easton

2050: THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE

Copyright (c) 1984 by Thomas A. Easton.
This essay is the text from which he spoke
at the last BOSKONE.

It is easier, says the Bible, for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into heaven.

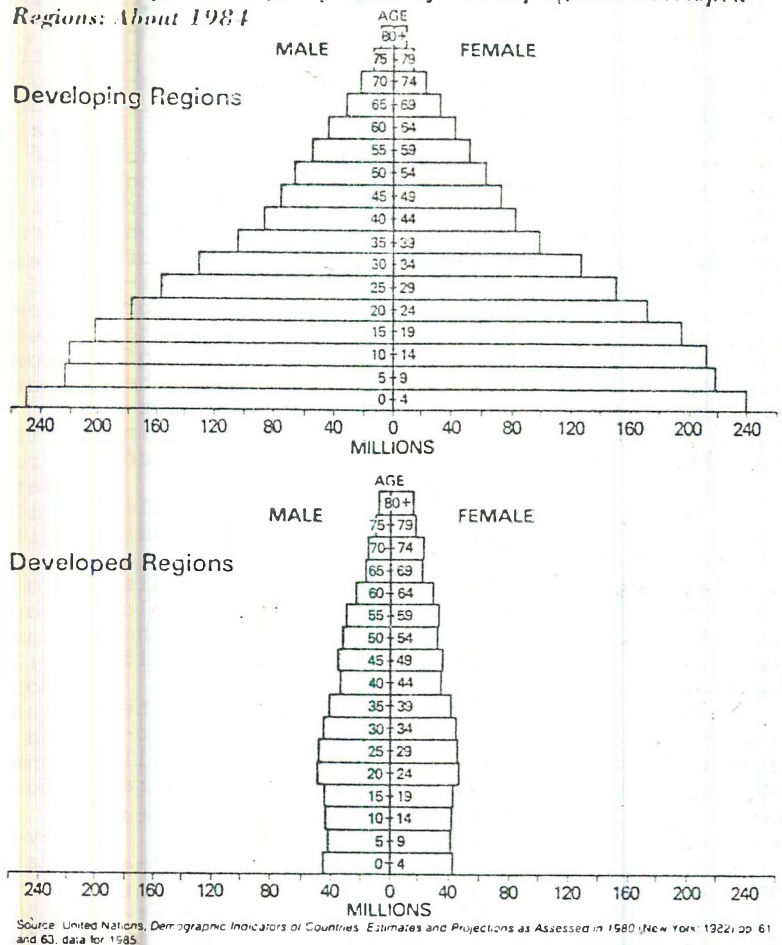
This aphorism holds a painful truth today, for humanity as a whole faces its own needle's eye in just a few decades. And if our cameline kind can squeeze through that eye, it may well become as a rich man in heaven, blessedly prosperous and content.

Our needle's eye is a combination of severe problems dominated by the sheer numbers of our species, which should peak by about the middle of the next century. Our numbers should then fall dramatically, driven downward by starvation, plague, and war. By 2100, the Earth should bear no more than half the present world population. However, our greatly reduced species may then enjoy greater average prosperity than we see today within the U.S.

This projection seems startling only because most futurists fail to look beyond the coming crisis. They focus on near-future problems such as energy shortages and seek ways to delay or prevent them. Many even claim that population growth can be brought under control or that, if it isn't, technological solutions can stave off disaster indefinitely.

But consider the numbers: The world's population in 1984 surpassed 4.8 billion people. The industrialized nations have very low population growth rates, but they represent only a fraction of the world's people.

Figure 2. Population Age Pyramids of Developing and Developed Regions: About 1984



Most of the world -- three quarters of its population -- dwells in such developing nations as Mexico and India, struggling futilely to keep supplies of food, housing, and consumer goods ahead of their numbers. Their basic difficulty lies in the nature of the "age distribution" shown in the diagram. For the developing world, each age group is larger than the one above it, so that every year there are more women in their child-bearing years. Every year more children are born. Such populations continue to grow even after the birth rate falls to Zero Population Growth (ZPG) level (2.1 children per woman in the developed nations). If the slope of the age pyramid is shallow enough, such a population can double after attaining ZPG birth rates.

The only humane way to prevent such growth of population beyond the ability of a nation's economy to support it is the one adopted by Communist China: limit families to one child. However, such policies require autocratic governments in unquestioned control of their peoples. They are impossible in most of the world, as are such alternatives as life-and-death lotteries and birth permits. Sadly, the methods available to limit family size -- from abortion to contraceptives of all kinds -- are unacceptable to many governments and religions.

One obstacle to effective population control is the belief of many governments, including the Reagan Administration, that pop-

ulation growth stimulates national economies by increasing both the work force and the demands for goods. Such people forget that increased demand can only be good until supplies run out, and that then the increased work force means worsened unemployment, bigger welfare bills, tax shortfalls, and government deficits.

Developing countries have all they can do to build economies capable of supplying food, consumer goods, and jobs for their present populations. For them, population growth means that need runs far ahead of ability to meet that need. Even as agricultural and industrial productivity grow for the nation, they decline on a per capita basis. In some developing countries, of course, productivity is static, and the problem is worse. Where productivity is being forced down by drought and war, as in Ethiopia, millions of people already face starvation.

It will get worse. The world as a whole has an age distribution very much like that of the developing countries, and it has a population growth rate of 1.8 percent. This means that the world population will double in 39 years and quadruple in 78. By the year 2050, world population will exceed 15 billion.

This is precisely what will happen if the growth rate does not change. Most demographers believe the world population will not go so high, but will level off somewhere between 10 and 15 billion. The UN projects a leveling off at 10.2 billion in 2095.

Can the world support so many people? The answer seems a very clear no. At present rates of consumption, there will be shortages of natural gas by 1990, and of oil by 2000, when the world will have 6.2 billion people. We will try to make up the shortfalls with synfuels, made from coal and oil shale, of which the U.S. has enough to last for a couple of centuries. We have the technology to make these fuels, too, even if they will be expensive. Unfortunately, making synfuels requires large quantities of water, and already many areas of the world -- even in the U.S. -- lack sufficient water for irrigation, drinking, and washing.

Nuclear energy could furnish all the energy we need, especially if we choose to develop the breeder reactor, but the hazards of this technology make it unpopular. Fusion is even more promising, but it is not yet out of the lab. Solar, wind, tide, and other "soft" energy sources can all help, but none of them lend themselves to industry. Solar power satellites offer a limitless supply of free energy, but they require both a staggering capital investment and a long lead time for commitment and construction.

Energy is not the only factor that constrains the numbers of people the world can support. Water supply is another, as indicated above, and it may be declining. The Office of Technology Assessment of the U.S. Congress reports that pollution of ground water by chemicals has forced the closing of thousands of wells, and that this new pollution problem threatens the water supply of half the U.S. population. Worldwide, water tables are falling as ground water is pumped out for irrigation and other human needs. Many cities have already outgrown their wat-

er supplies. Some countries are talking of towing icebergs from Antarctica as sources of fresh water.

Food is surely the most critical constraining factor. Even now, most of the world's arable land is under cultivation, while millions of acres are lost yearly to salt build-up from irrigation, construction of roads and buildings, desertification due to overgrazing, erosion and declining fertility. We can expect to boost agricultural productivity to some extent with the aid of selective breeding and genetic engineering of crop plants. We can make some gains by controlling the insects, rodents, and other pests that now consume up to half the world's harvest. We can make better use of our crops by eating less meat.

But--the available farmland is shrinking. Virgin lands such as the Amazon rain forest are infertile. There are other demands for water than irrigation. The prices of fertilizer and fuel for farm machinery go up with the price of oil. We can feed more people, but we seem likely to run into vast food shortages long before we reach a world population of 15 billion. When we do reach that figure, the world standard of living will inevitably be much less than it is now. Most people, even in the West, will have just enough calories to survive. They will be so close to the brink of starvation that one bad crop year will mean famine and death for billions.

And bad crop years do happen. They may even become more likely, for the world climate is changing, because of the carbon dioxide that combustion of fossil fuels and the clearing of land adds to the atmosphere. The resulting "greenhouse effect" is projected to warm the globe an average of 10 degrees Celsius over the next century, probably increasing arid zones and making irrigation more essential than ever.

At the same time, increased population means increased crowding, increased burden on sanitation and public health systems, and greater likelihood of epidemics which spread most easily in closely packed masses of humanity. Disease is most often fatal, too, when people have no nutritional margin.

As people try to escape their conditions, the world will see mass migrations. We can predict, for instance, that the present problems of illegal immigration to the U.S. from Mexico will seem as nothing. Mexico, now with a population of 76 million, should exceed 200 million by 2050, while the U.S. population will remain relatively small. The vast spaces and prosperity of the U.S. will seem far more attractive than they do today. We can also predict, perhaps, that Southeast Asia and Africa will birth "boat people" by the millions, living on everything from rafts to converted oil tankers, and that they too will seek new homes. War will surely result, as will rebellion, revolution, and terrorism. We can only pray that the great powers will continue to hold back their nuclear arsenals.

Famine. Plague. Wars. Population will peak by about 2050, and so will they. Population will then fall off precipitously. It may level off at some figure above the present 4.8 billion, but seems more likely that the fall will continue until world popula-

tion bottoms out at between one and two billion. That is, as the human species squeezes through the needle's eye, it will lose 90 percent of its members some 9-13 billion human beings. A cynic might say that we could prevent much suffering if we simply lined up everyone right now and shot nine in ten. After all, that would cost only 4.3 billion lives.

I do not think the disaster is avoidable. Our present efforts seem to little too late, and they are not working well. Fortunately, from my point of view, the disaster will be elast in developed nations such as the U.S., U.S.S.R., Canada, Europe, Australia, Japan, and perhaps even China. Their populations are already nearly stable, and they may well survive relatively unscathed, their societies, governments, and economies battered but intact.

The rest of the world will have been trying. They will have been building energy and transportation and irrigation and communications systems, trying to catch up with ever-growing need. They will have fallen short, but much of the result of their efforts will remain. The survivors of the Great Die-Off will have the use of a well developed industrial infrastructure. They will have, for the first time in their histories, the per capita resources to support a high standard of living, to catch up to and even surpass the west.

The West will enjoy the same benefit, for it too will lose population, if less. Furthermore, the industrialized nations, including the U.S.S.R., will also have been trying to keep up with need. They may just have managed to established the beginnings of the space industry so often touted today, with space colonies and lunar mines and solar power satellites. If so, resource shortages will promptly vanish as demand falls with the Die-Off.

The people of the second half of the 21st century may well believe they have finally attained Utopia. We can hope that their memories of their past will give them the wisdom to make that Utopia a lasting one.

Graph from Guideline: Age distributions developing vs. developed regions (UN).



A Limerick History of Science Fiction

by Mike Resnick

- 1926 At the start, Hugo brought out Amazing,
In spite of some serious hazing
From lawyers and writers
(It seems that the blighters
Sought cash for their written star-gazing).
- 1939 John Campbell then surveyed the field
And said "Now this drivell must yield.
I shall draw a fine line
With writers like Heinlein,
And think of the power I'll weild!"
- 1949 Tony Boucher at once saw the light,
And he said (sounding quite erudite):
"I don't give a fig
If the concept is big --
My authors must know how to write!"
- 1950 Then Horace Gold quickly appeared,
And he wasn't the failure we'd feared,
For his zine was afire
With wit and satire --
And the poorer zines all disappeared.
- 1964 Then along came Mike Moorcock who said:
"SF is most certainly dead.
Who wants to re-hash
Even more of this trash?
I'll give them the New Wave instead."
- 1970 But soon all the authors could glean
That a book paid much more than a zine.
They developed the strength
Of writing at length,
1982 And swept the best-seller list clean.
- 1977+ When Lucas from college departed,
His vision to film was imparted;
It surely was pleasant,
But quite adolescent --
And now we're right back where we started.

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by Mike Resnick. This was originally printed in the
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author.

CONREPORTS

AND

RAMBLINGS 18

by LAN

RAMBLINGS 18.1

Since the last LL, we've been to a few conventions, most of them fun, all of them interesting in one way or another.

INCONJUNCTION

The drive down to Indianapolis was pleasant, what with lots of tapes and the airconditioner running. The hotel wasn't too difficult to find; the con was at a new place this year -- the Downtown Hilton. In real short terms, the con itself was boring. Marion Zimmer Bradley and Michael Kube-McDowell were the GoHs, and I saw Marion very little throughout the con. Juanita Coulson was the Toastmaster, and she was busy doing her duties and running back to Hartford City to check up on her husband Buck who was in the hospital recovering from a heart attack. The consuite kept running out of potables, and programming was poorly organized. The GoH speeches were on Thursday--the 4th of July. The concom figured that everyone would arrive for the convention then, and so started major programming on Thursday. There were the inevitable elevator problems. The hotel was in the process of being remodeled, and so the staff was at times short-tempered. And they charged a corkage fee, which means that even though this was the biggest con in INCONJUNCTION history, they may be lucky to break even. The concom and Indianapolis fans are in a very bad position for running any convention: few if any have been to a con outside of INCONJUNCTION. They don't know how other cons are run. And those who have outside experience are ignored, or have criticized the con so much that concom won't let them help.

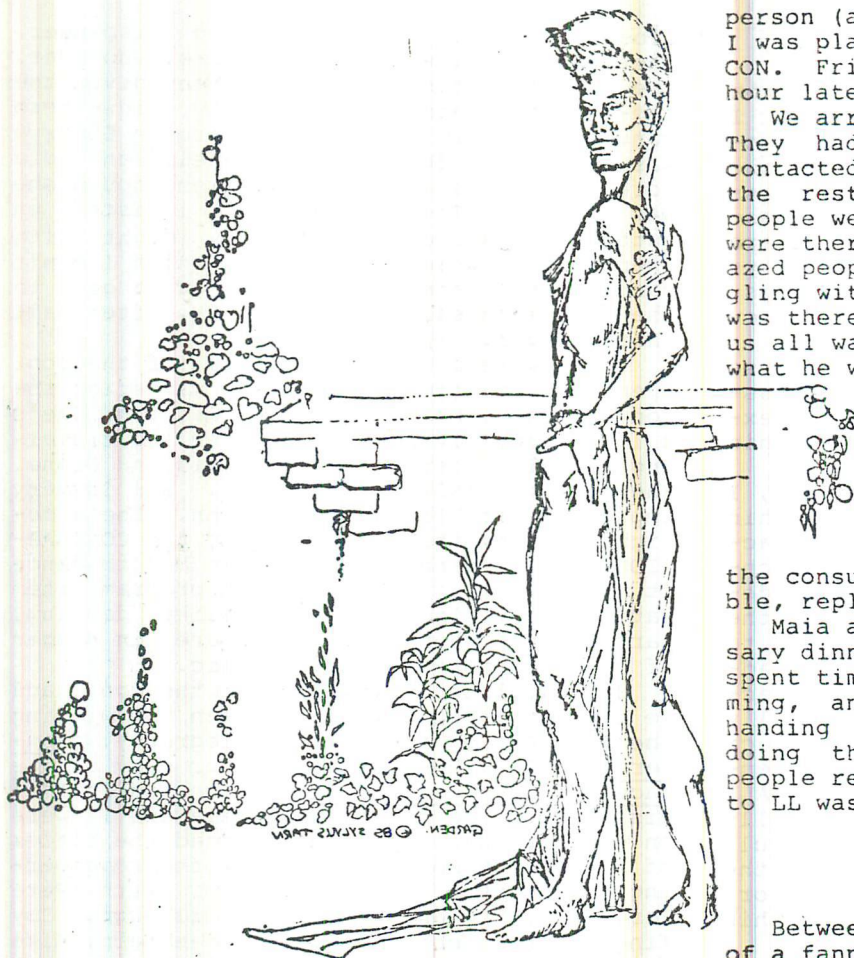
On the brighter side, I had a great time. Tim and Anna Zahn were there, and we spent time with them. We met new author Peter Fergusson who is a riot to talk to. We got



to know Michael and Karla Kube-McDowell better. All of us (with a couple other people) had dinner together -- ordered pizza and drinks, and ate in the Fan Goh's room, Jim Gilpatrick. Michael, the other Pro GoH, and his panels and reading were superb. (I started reading his novel Emprise so I could at least tell him I was reading it when I asked for his autograph. I finished it, and am considering it as a possible Hugo nominee.)

Ruth Woodring shared a room with us, and she was busy saying her final goodbyes to friends before leaving for Texas. Sion was also there and the four of us went out for dinner on Friday.

Party wandering was fun, by myself, and with Tim and Anna and Maia and Ruth. Mark Schulzinger was in from Springfield, MO, and at the Cincinnati-in-88 party managed to extend several person's retirement time by asking the questions: "How could you tell if someone is immortal? What clues of personality and behavior would they exhibit? And how would they react to someone who discovers this?" It started about midnight; I left about quarter to four, and the argument was still going strong. In the midst of this, Tim Zahn, who was in on the discussion, suggested that we all write stories and send them to ANALOG -- maybe Stanley Schmidt would publish an "all immortals" issue.



((I have since talked to Tim Zahn and Pete Fergusson. They are actually working at putting together an anthology along those lines. Strange how some of these projects get started.))

The masquerade was pretty good; there was a Eastern dancing demonstration which Ruth helped out on, and which Sylvus Tarn made sketches from; the traditional musical parody, written by Arlan Keith Andrews was okay, but difficult to hear and understand. The roast of Roger Reynolds was funny, but the locals missed most of the jokes. They are really convinced Roger is a BNF (according to Larry Tucker this means Big Noisy Fan). He does have them fooled.

It was a good con for me; I met a few new fans, and got to know some others better. I had a proof copy of LL #17 with me and showed it around to some people. They were looking forward to the final copy of it. And so was I.

The trip home was by way of Columbus, Ohio. We stopped in to see dad and Mary, and to visit with Joy, the kids, and Roberta and her kids. So now I've met all the inlaws, except for Mel, Roberta's husband, who stayed in Phoenix because he was working.

SPACECON

Mike Glicksohn and Doris Bercarich spent the night with us on Thursday before the con. It was a nice break for their trip to Wapakaneta, and we enjoyed having them as guests. I gave Mike his copy of LAN'S LANTERN #17, pointing out that he was the first

person (aside from Maia) to receive a copy. I was planning to hand out copies at SPACECON. Friday morning they left, and about an hour later we did also.

We arrived well before Mike and Doris. They had car trouble in Findlay, and had contacted Roger Reynolds who brought them the rest of the way. Many of our favorite people were at the relaxacon. Brad and Wendy were there, and Saturday afternoon they amazed people around the pool with their juggling with Steve Leigh. Steve's wife Denise was there with little Megen. And surprising us all was Bruce Schnaier, who, when I asked what he was doing here when he walked into

the consuite and up to the registration table, replied, "I'm registering for the con!"

Maia and I had our traditional anniversary dinner in the Chalet restaurant, and spent time talking, reading, sunning, swimming, and relaxing. Between Bill Bowers handing out his fanzine OUTWORLDS and me doing the same with LAN'S LANTERN, lots of people read this weekend. And the reaction to LL was favorable.

RAMBLINGS 18.2

Between SPACECON and WINDYCON, not much of a fannish nature happened. Time was mostly spent in the garden until Labor Day. We could not afford to go to Austin for the NASFiC, let alone Australia for the WorldCon, so we spent the time with family and friends. Maia finished the Heinlein Concordance she had been working on for the past three years, and gave it to her agent, Kathleen Conant. So far it is still making the rounds.

School started, and I jumped into the classroom with much anticipation. The classes I'm teaching are ones I have taught before, but unfortunately the Geometry book is the latest edition, and not as good as the previous one we have used. I am enjoying the students and, although there are some problems with a few of them, we are getting along fine.

I am once again working on the Service Program, only this year there are three changes: since the merging of the schools everyone, boys and girls, is working under one program; there are three other people helping me (one on the Cranbrook campus, two on the Kingswood campus); this is only for one semester. So there is both good and bad news concerning this change. Since I am the only one who knows how to use the computer, the record-keeping has fallen into my hands. This is no real problem, as I like doing this sort of stuff. However, access to the computer room has been very limited because the schools make a little extra money by holding evening classes for outside people, and the computer classes are prime interests. This irks me, and it must irk the students as well, especially when they are paying a lot more for the use of the facili-

ties than what these outside people pay.

But I digress.

When I do manage to gain access to the computers, I spend lots of time on them. I am not only doing the Service Program records with the word processing program, but also comments on the students, some class records, senior recommendations, the fanzine, and a few other things. However, there is a cost--I've spent several 18-hour days at school trying to stay on top of things. Maia has taken this in stride, but I know she would like to have me around more.

I have encouraged the new teachers to use the system, and have been somewhat successful in getting two of them set up with Textra, and writing their comments using this word processing program.

By the time school began in September, I had helped 13 people move on, off, or within campus. I got to meet a lot of the new faculty that way. With approximately 25 teachers leaving from last year (five of whom decided to leave after school was out for the summer), there were quite a few new faces to get to know. In spite of what steps the administration is now taking to increase faculty salaries, I still wonder if they really know why people have been leaving in such large numbers. A school cannot have academics, sports, and service to the school ALL as its number one priority; nor can it fully swallow its faculty and assume it has full use of its time 24 hours a day. Unless the administration address the human factor, many more will be leaving at the end of this school year.

Although things have settled down a bit, there were some nerve-wracking days during the first four weeks. School enrollment was up from the previous year (about the same as the year before that), and the administration had allowed the faculty numbers to dwindle to accommodate fewer students. A scramble to get teachers made things quite difficult, not only for classes, but also for the Service Program.

By the time it came for WINDYCON to happen, I really needed that convention.

WINDYCON

WINDYCON was fun. We left as soon as we could after classes ended, and made the long drive to Chicago, stopping along the way for dinner. We got to the con in time for David Brin's autographing session of The Postman, and Maia gave him a copy of her review of the book after he autographed our copy. We also got autographs from several other authors, including Lee Killough, Tim Zahn (Anna was there too), Mike Resnick, C. J. Cherryh, Buck Coulson and Sharon Webb. I talked briefly to P. C. Hodgell who said that her new novel, Dark of the Moon, the sequel to Godstalk will be out at the end of October. David and Diana Stein were there, and were very interested in meeting Tim and Anna Zahn, especially since Tim is going to be the GoH for their convention CONTRAPTION this Spring. (As a side note, Maia and I have been asked to be the Fan GoHs for CONTRAPTION, to which we heartily said yes!)

There were not the disasters at this con as there were last WINDYCON. The consuite was well stocked and didn't have to be

closed because of a leaky pop dispenser. There was no fire or false alarms. However, the GoH did not seem to have been given the red-carpet treatment that many midwestern conventions are noted for. Carolyn Cherryh was scheduled for a lot of panels, and did more than her share of work, even though she was the GoH. The concom still insisted on putting the speeches on Friday night with opening ceremonies, something which I don't particularly care for since we can't get to the con much earlier than 10 PM, after all that is over.

There were a few highlights of the con. Spending some time talking and wandering the convention with Joanne Pauley was fun. She's a local fan, living on Rochester and traveling to Waldo meetings with David and Diana. She came to WINDYCON with them, and is very impressed with Tim and Anna Zahn. She's delighted happy that they will be the CONTRAPTION GoHs. Joanne tried to get me to dance at "The Bazaar of the Bizarre" program item Saturday evening, but I dislike dancing, particularly when my eardrums are in danger of being ruptured from the music.

Jack Williamson was also at the con, and we congratulated him in person on winning the Hugo Award for his autobiography, Wonder's Child. He also signed our copy of The Faces of Science Fiction, which had lost to his book. The panels that Maia and I were on went off well, and we learned the titles of a few more obscure books worth remembering. Delightful conversations with Pete Fergusson, Tim and Anna, Lee Killough, Joy King, Sharon Webb, Phyllis Eisenstein, Mike Resnick, Dale and Susan Johnson, Alexi Habel and a host of others rounded out the con. The final highlight was the "little gift" that David Brin gave us: the poster of The Postman which was on display at the autograph session.

OCTOCON

The following weekend we went to OCTOCON, and had a great time relaxing there. I had several interesting talks with Mike Resnick and Jack Chalker, one of which was Jack's challenge to Mike to name 50 SF writers who made over \$50,000 this year.

The pool and jacuzzi were wonderful. I spent a little time there, and also relaxed a bit by reading several chapters of Alan Dean Foster's Sentenced to Prism.

I also met Toni Weisskopf and we spent some time together talking about all sorts of things. Brad and Wendy were also there, juggling and doing all sorts of nice things for people (they're wonderful to talk to). And there few others: Mike and Doris, Jackie Causgrove, Bob and Betty Gaines, Mark Evans, Guy and Ray and Carol, F.L.Ahsh (whom I have not seen in quite a while), just to name a few.

All in all I had a good time, even though I did come down with a cold.

RAMBLINGS 18.3

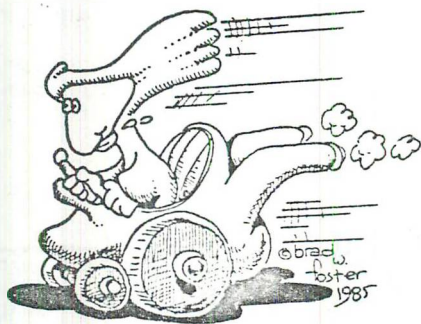
The gap between OCTOCON and CONCLAVE was filled with more of the same work at school. The classes continued as before, and I enjoyed working with the students. The 18

hour days became more frequent as more and more students missed their Service assignments, and I had to spend time making sure they were appropriately assigned their make-ups. Now that the deans of the two campuses finally got into the act, the numbers are slowly starting to diminish (some of the students didn't think we were that serious about the make-ups).

First quarter grades and comments slipped by, and I had mine done early since I was on duty the weekend before they were due. At the same time I worked on putting together a written schedule for the entire year for Resident Faculty Dorm duty so that weekend switches could be arranged without much trouble. And with CONCLAVE coming up, I was giving moral support to Maia who was doing a lot of the preparatory work for the con. (Next year will be even more fun, since Maia will be the con Chairman.)

The Friday of CONCLAVE was a special day off from school. All teachers in private schools across Michigan went to a conference in school located in a suburb of Detroit. I went because I had to go, but found three of the four sessions very enjoyable. Talks about using computers to enhance writing and communication skills, taxicab geometry, and special College-credit programs in some high schools in Ohio were all very interesting and informative. The last session, on Escher and tessellations was not as good as I had hoped.

I was tagged to be one of the drivers to this conference, so as soon as everything was over, I gathered my riders together into one of the Cranbrook vans and headed back to campus. I stopped to pick up my paycheck,



dropped the van off and ran home. Maia had the car packed already, and we stopped off at the bank on the way to CONCLAVE so we would have some spending money.

CONCLAVE

"I need someone to pick up Toni Weisskopf at the student union at U of M," said Liz Young, one of the heads of Operations, to me and a few other committee members. I had dropped Maia off at the door and parked the car. Maia looked at me.

"You know what she looks like."

"But I don't know Ann Arbor," I replied. Ann Arbor was the town that grew up around the University of Michigan.

"Marion," said Michelle Smith-Moore, last year's chairman of CONFUSION, and one of the other heads of Operations for CONCLAVE, "you

know Ann Arbor and give good directions. Go with Lan."

Thus started one of the more interesting CONCLAVES I have attended. Hania Wojtowicz, with whom Maia and I were sharing a room had not yet shown up, and Opening Ceremonies were a half hour away. Maia, and Anna O'Connell (the con Chairman this year) were going to handle that, so I figure it would be all right to miss Opening Ceremonies. I had met Poul Anderson before when he was GoH at an early CONFUSION I had attended.

So, off Marion and I went to Ann Arbor to pick up Toni. Fortunately there was no home football game that weekend, so we got in and out of AA without trouble. Didn't even run out of gas.

Toni was thrilled to learn that she had been put on a panel representing the New Orleans Worldcon bid. When she made arrangements to come to the con, she had a ride all set. That fell through and so she was stuck paying bus fare to Ann Arbor. By being on a panel she didn't have to pay for registration. (She also lucked out by finding someone with whom she could get a ride back to Oberlin College.) Funny thing, I saw her occasionally throughout the con; she said she enjoyed herself, but we never got a chance to sit and talk. Maybe at CONFUSION.

"Are you finished with Stalking the Unicorn yet Lan?" asked Mike Resnick.

"Mike," I said cheerfully, shunting aside the question momentarily. "Glad to see you here. Maia said you called and might not be able to make it." That was on Tuesday evening, I believe.

"Well, I have to admit, finally, I am a prosperous writer. I had an attack of the gout, and only prosperous writers get that." He smiled and puffed on his cigarette. "Earlier this week I could barely walk, but by Thursday I felt fine. I just have to take it easy."

"To get back to your question, I want to reread the novel before I send it back to you." I watched him glow with appreciation. I truly love his writing, and I think he knows that.

"Well, take your time." He snubbed out his cigarette. "Did I tell you I got all my British rights back from Signet?"

"No." I knew that was one of the reasons he switched publishers, that they refused to give him the rights for his books to be published in England. "What happened?"

"Since the fourth Velvet Comet book was my last contractual obligation for Signet, my agent suggested I withhold it until they came through. My agent's a good one, and she said it would be the only leverage I would have. I said okay, and Signet agreed."

"Great! So the Eros at Nadir is finished?"

"Not quite. I'll be finishing it this week and then send you a copy."

We talked about several other things, the panel we would be on together the next day, his coming trips to Africa, the kennel business. Again, as with Toni, I would see Mike occasionally through the weekend, but not make significant contact (other than the panel).

In the art show room I managed to meet a few people before the show closed for the evening, and everyone scattered to the vari-

ous parties. Sue Peel, Frank Olynyk, Sherri Kline, David and Diana Stein, Joanne Pauley, Stanly Schmidt, and a few others.

#

Frank Olynyk: "Heinlein's latest novel, The Cat Who Walked Through Walls is a disappointment."

Dick Spellman: "I'll be here if you want to buy more books."

Sylvus Tarn nraT suvlyS: "I thought I brought some art for you, but I can't find it. I'll have to mail it to you when I get home."

Several people: "I'll see you in the jacuzzi." (Though, when I got there, no fans were around.)

Stanley Schmidt: "It's nice to be able to go to a convention and spend time with friends, and still get some work done."

A. J. Budrys: "I had a great time. You even treat your former Guests of Honor well."

Karen Anderson: "The timing for our panels, meals, Spock Pacific, Moebius Theatre, everything, was perfect. We hardly felt like we were working."

Roane Simkin (as I was massaging her feet): "Ohh, ahhh, mmmmm, prrrrrr...."

Mike Glicksohn: "After last night, I can't afford to spend much in the hucksters room."

Wendy Counsil, Doris Bercharich, Sue Levy Harper, and a few others: "What's this about working 18 hour days?"

Sue Peel: "I'm closing on a house on Tuesday. I'll let you know when the housewarming is."

Denice Brown (at registration): "I think we have a lot of people here."

Julia Ecklar: "I don't let too many people touch my back, Lan, but you're all right. You know what you're doing."

Poul Anderson: "In spite of all the sibling rivalry and bickering that goes on in fandom, the SF community is a family world-wide. There is understanding. Be proud of that."

#

Mark Evans looked strange in a suit. I'm used to seeing him in a t-shirt, hair tied back, a sly smile on his lips, and ever alert eyes. But a SUIT? Well, as fan Guest of Honor I suppose he was entitled. Margaret Henry, his wife, was dressed up as well, and looked as pretty as always. Unfortunately I missed both of Mark's panels, but not his GoH speech. It was a riot. It was too short -- a slide show about attending a convention and some of the things that could *go wrong*!!! He has already volunteered to do a similar one at CONFUSION.

"I hardly felt I was working. I did two panels I enjoyed, and a slide-show I had fun putting together. It was a lot easier than working a convention," said Mark.

Saturday was a flurry of activity. It was raining outside (as it was the entire weekend -- at least it wasn't snow), but attendance still topped 700, making it the largest CONCLAVE ever. Good job, Denice!

The obscure books panel, chaired by Mark Bernstein, went over very well and garnered much audience participation. Some favorite titles from the panelists: Mike Resnick -- Gather in the Hall of the Planets and Dwellers in the Deep by K. M. O'Donnell; Wilma Garcia -- the Zenna Henderson books about "The People"; Mark Bernstein -- The Princess Bride by S. Morgenstern and Pirates by Donald M. Frazer; Lan -- Jonathon by Russell O'Neill and Bunnacula by Deborah and James Howe; Steve Simmons -- The Warlock in Spite of Himself and the other books of the series by Christopher Stasheff.

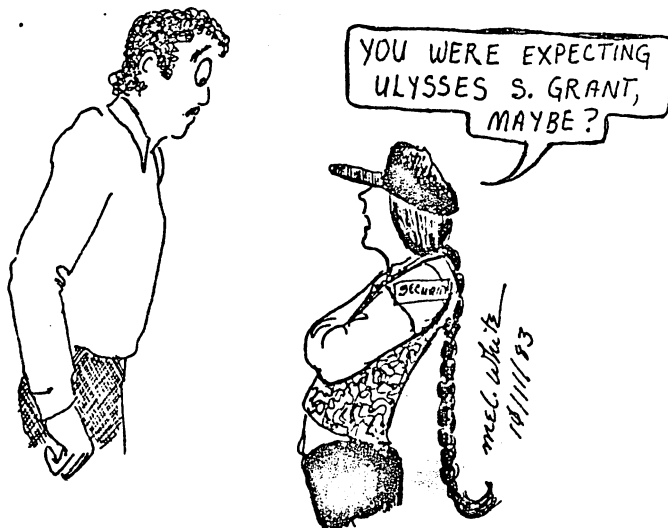
There were other book titles mentioned, movies, records, and so on. The list gets longer each time I do this panel.

Roland Green and his wife Freida Murray attended the con and had an autograph session outside the huckster's room (where other authors had one as well). Roland signed a couple of my books, and I asked if the one the two of them had written was out for I had not seen it.

"Dick Spellman has copies at his table. It's a trade paperback," said Roland.

That was the problem; I had been looking for a regular paperback. Minutes later I emerged from the hucksters room, copy in hand, and Roland and Freida signed it. Spock Pacific, the parody of Star Trek III: The Search for Spock done to the music of South Pacific, was as wonderful and funny this time as when I saw it at CONTRAPTION. Julia Ecklar recreated her role as Admiral Kirk, and her voice drifted out clearly and strongly over the audience. Frank Hayes as Scotty, controlling the ship through his piano, did a marvelous imitation of a Scottish brogue. Don, Rusty, Joanne, Dave, Andy, Diana, Mitch, Tom, Bill, Barb, and all the others were great.

Stanley Schmidt, GoH Poul Anderson, Maia (the moderator) and I were on the panel, "Do Short Stories Get Short Shrift?" It does



seem that authors are not noticed until they get a novel published, no matter how many short stories they've written, and how often they appear in the magazines. And getting a short story collection published is near impossible unless you have several novels out first. There are a few exceptions, like Harlan Ellison and Connie Willis (although both do have novels out). To be memorable, a short story must really pack a punch; novels have more room for development, world-building, painting a larger background than necessary for the story, and more characters and their interactions. The in-between lengths can concentrate on fewer characters, a couple of ideas, and do them well. The advantages and disadvantages of both novels and the shorter lengths were discussed, but the only conclusion that was really drawn was that an author's name really doesn't become recognized by the readers/fans until that novel is out on the stands. Most of the audience, however, were quite familiar with the major SF magazine market, and actually read short stories.

Both Poul and Stan agreed that it took as much work per dollar, if not more, to write a short story over a novel. But SF is one of the few markets for the short works that pays anything. Maia recently read a copy of Mike Shayne's Mystery Magazine and was appalled at the level of writing. SF had much better quality.

The panel ended with a person from the audience asking how he could sell a story he hadn't written to a market he hadn't read. We tried to be kind, but the answer was obvious to all of us.

The panel resulted in introducing me to Roane Simkin and Carol Harvey. Roane and I in particular talked for more than an hour about writing and quite a few other things. I hope she does write the story we discussed.

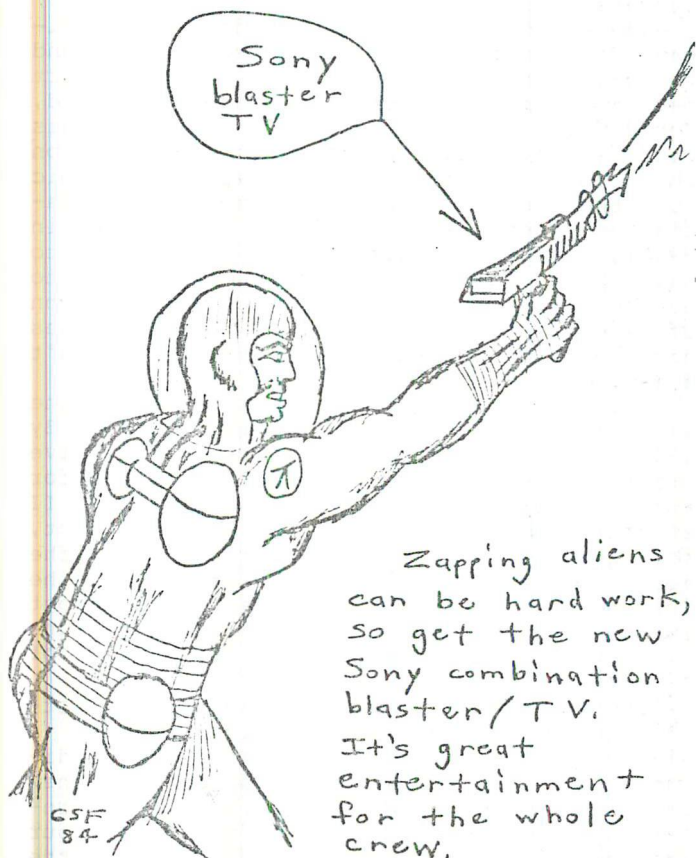
I missed Moebius Theatre again this year, since I stayed to talk to Roane, but I did manage to get away and change for our dinner date with Stan Schmidt and Candice. After that was the dessert buffet and the Speeches. Doris Bercarich, who had won a free ticket to the buffet at AD ASTRA sat at the table with us. Lori Coulson, Stan and Candice, Maia, Marie Mayer and Peter Tulozzi, Joanne Pauley and a few others also sat with us. The Easter Michigan University Madrigal Singers returned this year to sing, and they sounded as good as ever. The speeches followed, and Poul's talk about the family of SF around the world was very heart-warming. He did tell us some Polish jokes, i.e., jokes told to him by Polish SF writers. ("The police travel in pairs -- one who can read, one who can write. Recently the Militizia started travelling around in groups of three: the third one to keep an eye on the two intellectuals.") Mark's slide show followed, and then the other evening activities began.

In wandering from party to party to party in the evening (and even throughout the day), I encountered Joanne (we would pause to hug, snuggle, kiss each others' hands) Cindy Marlatt (same thing), Malina and Maia

and Anna and Sue and Doris and Michelle (well, we didn't kiss each others' hands), Mark and Guy and Brad and Ray and Mike (figure it out for yourself). I would also occasionally drop into Operations and give Liz a backrub, talk to the nice people, insult Tom the Toad, etc.

Sunday morning we ate brunch in the Jolly Miller Restaurant attached to the hotel, and said goodbye to a lot of people. Julia had an impromptu Filksing in the lobby, and I revelled in the silken tones from her golden voice. A brief conversation with Ann Cecil confirmed that she and Julia are working on a Star Trek novel, and have an agent to handle the manuscript. In the afternoon we had arranged to go to the Detroit Science Institute to see the NASA film, "The Dream is Alive". We took our GoHs with us and had a wonderful time. I want to see it again.

We left from there to go directly home. I had things to do to prepare for classes, and Maia decided to return to the hotel for the Dead Dog Party. Marty Burke was singing, and the evening promised to be fun. When I talked to Maia the next day, she said that everyone had a good time.



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THE ROAD NOT TAKEN:

ALTERNATE HISTORY IN THE VISUAL MEDIA

An article by Evelyn C. Leeper

The idea of an alternate history is not rare in science fiction--a recent article in The Proper Boskonian cited a bibliography of over a thousand stories! Why then, when it comes to visual science fiction, is it so rare? An examination of the few examples one can find may help answer that question.

Strangely enough, there seems to be only one film (as distinguished from television shows or other visual media) that deals with alternate history that has achieved any popularity in this country, and that film is Quest for Love. Based on John Wyndham's "Random Quest," this British film begins with a physicist transferred to an alternate reality as a result of a laboratory accident. In this alternate world, he is not a physicist, but a playwright --or rather, his counterpart is. (The details of the transfer are a little vague.)

Now admittedly, if one examines most science fiction premises too closely, they tend to fall apart. But this one falls apart faster than most. In this alternate world, World War II never happened (more on this later). This would explain the profession change-- it was to a great extent the atomic bomb that inspired the then current generation of scientists (the film was made in 1971). And the main character appears to have been born before the alteration (to borrow Kingsley Amis' term), so the question of "would his parents have met; etc.?" does not really arise. But the background doesn't make sense.

Problem #1 is the base premise-- that the alternate branched off from ours in 1938. By 1938, Hitler had been in power for five years and Japan had occupied Manchuria for two, so that the prevention of World War II at that time was highly unlikely. In fact, the general consensus seems to be that the seeds of World War II were sown by the Treaty of Versailles, so this film is about twenty years late in its placement. One might call this problem the ignorance of causes.

Problem #2 is trickier. One of the little touches that gives the main character a hint of what's going on is a headline indicating that John Kennedy has become the new head of the League of Nations. Since the internal time of the film is post-1963, our protagonist finds this a bit odd, to say the least (never mind the League of Nations bit). But it's even odder than he thinks-- one of the factors that got Kennedy into the public eye was his war record. Another was his good showing against Nixon's poor one in the debates. Nixon, in turn, was running because he served as Vice-president under Eisenhower, who certainly was elected on the

basis of his war record. One might claim that Kennedy would have gone into a political career anyway, but I think that his age (or rather, the lack of it -- he would have been only 51 years old when the film takes place) would have delayed his career considerably. This sort of problem might be called the ignorance of effects.

At this point, the difficulty becomes clear -- to do a good alternate history, one must understand history not merely as a set of dates and events, but as a chain of causes and effects. This is more depth than the film producers usually have to deal with.

American TV hasn't done much better. There exist a few stories dealing with this topic. Twilight Zone's "The Parallel" has astronaut Robert Gaines go up into orbit and black out, only to find himself back on earth (having somehow soft-landed the capsule!). But it's not quite the earth he remembers: he's now a colonel, not a major, Kennedy isn't the President, his house has acquired a picket fence, etc. The story never really deals with any implications of these changes-- the man who built the Panama Canal in the alternate world is not the same as in this one (Gaines is checking items in an encyclopedia), but future history after that seems remarkably similar to our own. Star Trek's "The City on the Edge of Forever" deals with alternate history as a subspecies of time paradox story. If Kirk saves Edith Keeler in 1930's New York, her pacifist activities will keep the United States out of World War II until it's too late, and the Axis will win (why the Japanese don't bomb Pearl Harbor, or why their bombing doesn't cause our entry into World War II, is never made clear). Outer Limits touched upon the idea in "The Man Who Was Never Born." And I can't help but feel that One Step Beyond must have done something similar. But the one-hour (or half-hour) format seems to be too limiting for this theme.

The best visual alternate history piece I have seen is a BBC television play, An Englishman's Castle. Made as three 50-minute episodes, it has time to develop the ideas that the concept (the Germans invaded Britain in 1940 and won the war) imply. In addition, its setting -- that of the production of a television series set in Britain in the late Thirties and early Forties -- gives the author a chance to do some explaining to his audience without appearing to lecture.

It's the small touches that make An Englishman's Castle work. For example, it has been pointed out that the drab clothing can be attributed to the lack of the "Mod revolution" that swept our Britain in the Sixties. And the cars parked in the background

outside look at many facets of everyday behavior; while children, though perhaps having some difficulty identifying with Alice herself, can enjoy her attempts at dealing with many of the same perplexing questions that occur to them.

The books have many other appealing points as well. There is the mild sarcasm directed at patently foolish actions undertaken with deadly seriousness. The excellent, whimsical poetry scattered throughout them is well known to people who have never seen the entire story. Finally, there is admiration for Alice, a good-natured, strong-willed, sensible child who steadfastly pursues her journeys from beginning to end, doing what she can to cope with the bewildering realm she has fallen into, and stopping to give comfort or aid where it seems to be needed.

Now, having said all that, I have a confession to make: when I first read Alice I hated it. In retrospect the reasons for this seem pretty obvious. First and foremost was the fact that the edition I read included the Tenniel illustrations (without which the book would now seem incomplete). However, at the time they were very strange, even grotesque, and a few outright frightening (particularly the Queen of Hearts, the Duchess, and the scene depicting the Dormouse being dunked in the teapot -- I always had a soft spot in my heart for that Dormouse). They also depicted an era I was not familiar with

and the results of imaginings that were little like mine. And Alice so often has such a stern, adult face....

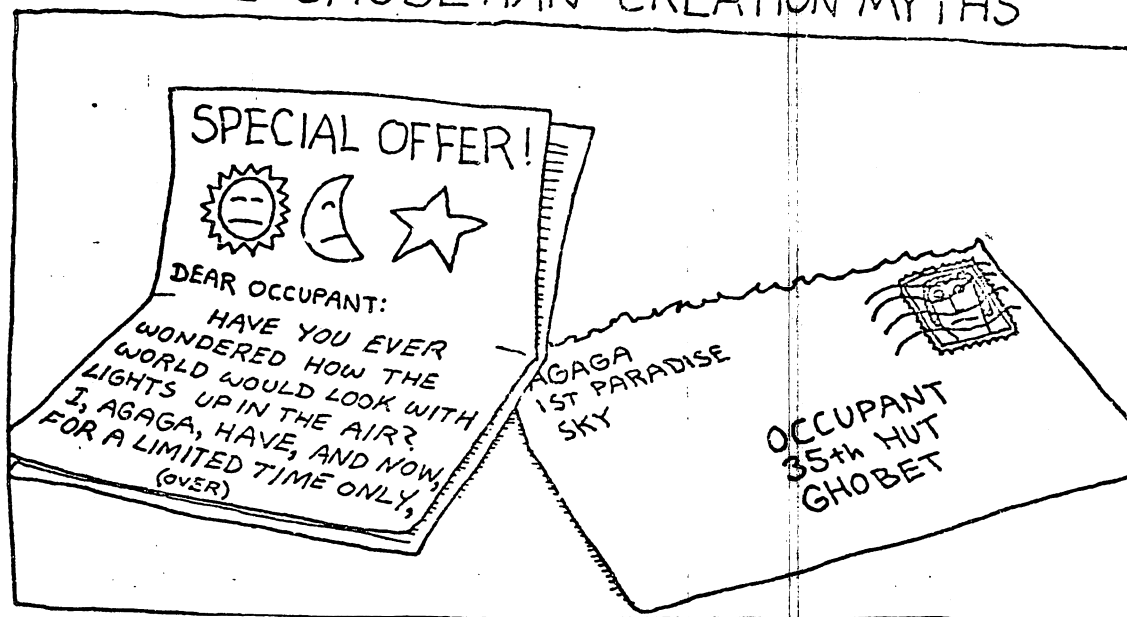
The world view is so different from that of a modern child that it can be confusing to one who is too young to be able to translate it into contemporary idiom. Then, too, while the nature of children may be the same, methods of rearing them have changed a great deal in many ways. Today's children are usually much better trained--educated--scientifically, but not as well-trained socially as their Victorian forebears. As a result of a knowledge of a world broadened by education, television, and a very different society, the modern child may not really understand many of Alice's reasons for what she does, but this does not have to blunt their enjoyment of the humor and courage in her actions.

I wish now that I hadn't picked up Alice as early as I did, or that I had let my parents read it to me (it was my Dad's copy after all), but, being stubborn about these things, I took on the challenge myself. While either parent would have gladly done so, I hardly permitted myself to be read to from the time I was able to get through a book without more than a minimum of help -- about the age of five. Had I followed the more sensible course, I would not have had to wait 20+ years to fully appreciate Lewis Carroll's masterpieces. The stories haven't changed in 120 years, but the child has.



from THE GHOBETIAN CREATION MYTHS

empathic
post
scriptings



TK. Atherton

FANZINE COMMENTS

Michael Bishop: It's hard for me to comment on all the fanzines I receive, but I do appreciate your sending them, and I do try to read them when they come.

((I'm glad to know that the fanzines get there. If you keep trying to read them, I'll keep sending them.))

Cathy Howard: I was impressed with the zine the moment I pulled it out of its envelope. Just the sight and heft of it announced "great zine here." The contents lived up to the promise.

I just realized that you are dividing letters up so a person can read what everyone had to say about a subject at one time. Terrific idea!

Gil Gaier: When I used to pub-my-ish every six months or so, one of the techniques I tried (to vary the lettercol) was subject division. It was so much effort that the technique died aborning. But you certainly do it well. It was pleasant reading comments again from old friends.

((It's not too bad to do, especially since I am using a computer and word-processing program in the production of the fanzine now. I can type up the letters as they come in.))

Peter Fergusson: Many thanks for the copies of LL. I have enjoyed both issues received so far. They are not only a pleasure to read -- despite typos, more on which later -- but of value in getting an insight into what the fans want to read. Believe it or not, most writers do enjoy writing for the fan's tastes, a taste which doesn't always match the publisher's. In those cases we try and sneak stuff that fans like into stories the publishers will buy.

Where writing is concerned, LL amazes me with the volume, diversity and quality is

the material you publish. What positively stuns me is that you find the time to get that much material out every month with as few errors as you do.

I can't agree with the criticism of the number of typos. I know how long it takes me to produce one clean chapter or short story of around fifteen typed pages -- and I don't have to try and edit others' mistakes. My own are more than enough. I am one of the worlds worst when it comes to convoluted syntax, bad punctuation and plain old typos in a first -- or second or third -- draft.

((Thanks for the praise, Pete, but I don't publish every month. (Would that I had the money and time to do so!) You received two close together because I had one done in April and another almost finished when I met you at INCONJUNCTION. // LL #16 and the ones before were filled with typos and all sorts of mistakes. Now that I am using a computer, and justifying the right margin (there's no feature in the word processing program that does right-justification automatically), I am forced to proofread, something I didn't faithfully do before. Even so, some mistakes slip by me. But I keep trying.))

Brian Earl Brown: Layout looks much better from previous issues. I'd suggest a smidgeon more space between the double column -- no more than 1 or 2 letters wider than it is now -- just enough to obviously separate the columns, but not enough to create a gulf between them.

((As you can tell, I have already started to move the columns farther apart. The side margins should be better as well.))

Craig Ledbetter: I thoroughly enjoyed LAN'S LANTERN 17. I first heard of it through Dennis Fischer's BEWILDERBEAST, and based on his positive review, sent for it. I'm really glad I did because the LANTERN represents a lot of what I look for in a fanzine. I'd given up on finding engrossing, thick zines with articles of great interest,

that is until I'd received #17. I hope this letter along with monthly issues of my cheap video newsletter will qualify me for receiving future LANTERNS.

((Yes indeed, locs and trades count.))

Clifton Amsbury: The Leepers are a real strength to your team. I don't recall having noted Evelyn Leeper's name before, but she comes through real good.

George Ewing: I concur with your Ted Sturgeon dedication. I still have a cassette of his Critique of my story "Black Fly" from when we workshoped it at Clarion in 1973. The man was a consummate critic and story doctor. We'll miss the Slow Sculptor.

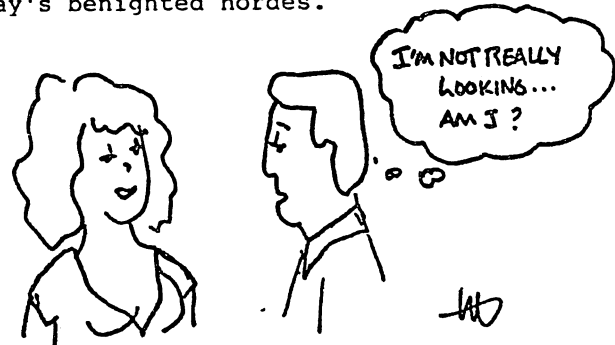
Margaret Middleton: One outfall of the recent moves is the disposal of my fanzine collection from the years I was actively pubbing. If anyone else has fanzines they don't want to keep personally but feel are too good to roundfile, I recommend the Special Collection, Sterling C. Evans Library, Texas A & M University, College Station, TX 77840 as a good place to send the orphans. They got 5 boxes-full the move before this one.

((There is also a popular culture collection at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green Ohio. I understand that a complete run of LAN'S LANTERN is there -- bound.))

Milt Stevens: LAN'S LANTERN #17 arrived with a checkmark that I was still on your mailing list. That's funny, I never was on your mailing list before. As with other things that go bump in the mail box, I guess I shouldn't ask about it.

Steven Fox: On the issue of fanzine layout and production, I don't agree with Jackie Causgrove on the use of illoes. Illustrations should be used throughout the zine to liven it up. Of course, I don't like to see bad illoes (not that you use them), but too many zines do use bad art and that would, I guess, piss people off (or at least me).

Richard Brandt: Hope you can keep the LL's coming, Lan; yes, we young turks of the 70s have to keep carrying the torch for today's benighted hordes.



AMSBURY'S USSR ARTICLE

David Palter: Clifton Amsbury's article regarding his travels in Russia is quite excellent and a good counter-balance to some of the inflammatory anti-Russian hysteria; this "evil empire" business is definitely out of hand. Sure, Russia is an oppressive state--but there are problems of comparable severity (although somewhat different character) here in the US which are more urgently deserving of our attention. Viewed objectively (something few Americans are now capable of) the US campaign against Nicaragua is in some respects more reprehensible than the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan--believe it or not.

Brian Earl Brown: Clifton Amsbury makes some pointed contrasts between totalitarian USSR and wide-open USA.

Milt Stevens: I think I disagree with Clifton Amsbury's analogies between Russian and Anglo-American histories. It isn't just a matter that both cultures had revolutions against absolutism 70 years and three centuries ago respectively. The Anglo-American culture realized that Cromwell was a bad idea in quite a bit under 70 years and veered away from the Cromwellian Revolution. The Russians have established the Cromwellian Revolution and are busily progressing in the wrong direction.

Alexis Gilliland: One rarely encounters Spanish Civil War veterans any more. And certainly one can't argue with him if one didn't read Solzhenitsyn in the original Russian. Nevertheless, Stalin didn't trust

the Spanish Loyalists, and according to Orwell's "Homage to Catalonia" ordered a lot of them killed. And purged the survivors who went into exile in Russia. In any event, it is probably a mistake to try to understand the Soviets in terms of our own history. They have their own history, and their own culture, which is quite as complex and nuanced as ours, and must be understood on their own terms.

There is no Russian equivalent of Cromwell. Nor of Washington, nor Lincoln, and no American equivalent of Lenin or Stalin. Compare Genrikh Yagoda or Laventri Beria with J. Edgar Hoover, all three being heads of the state secret police, to get a feeling of how different Russia and America really are.

COMIC BOOKS

Diane Fox: Your Canadian Comics article [LL #14] was interesting. I tend to have a view almost the reverse of yours about Cerebus. Although I enjoyed the earlier issues, their parodies were things that had been done before, but seldom as well. The gradual deepening of the satire was something rather unusual in comics, and the characterization deepened as the satire deepened. Also, Dave Sim's artwork has improved steadily and is now rather assured, elegant, even Beardsley-like.

Murray Moore: Jessica Amanda Salmonson says: "I think there is stunted about anyone whose primary reading habit leans towards comic books for long periods of time." Yow! I guess I am lucky to still have hand and eye coordination to be able to type.

Some fool in the Science Fiction Writers of America nominated issues of Howard Chaykin's American Flag series, published by First Comics, for a Nebula. I can't recall the category.

((The American Flag series by Howard Chaykin was nominated for the Short Story Nebula. I believe it was a four or five issue run which composed a single story. Apparently someone in SFWA thought it equivalent to a short story and thus nominated it.))

Harry Warner Jr is correct in thinking that once upon a time a newspaper comic strip named, and starring, Dickie Dare, was published, in the 1930s.

As for his speculation that D. Dare was an inexpensive comic from an obscure syndicate purchased for its low cost to the newspapers: Dickie Dare was one of the features done by Milton Caniff (I imagine Harry is nodding his head by now) before he started his famous run in late 1934 on "Terry and the Pirates." Caniff is working to this day, as far as I know, on "Steve Canyon."

George Ewing: About Harry Warner's comments on Dickie Dare: Hurrah! I thought I was the only other human in North America besides Dave Hoornstra who remembered Dickie! I was never a big comix freak, though I followed Petey Parker for a while in college, 'cause he was a kid with a motorbike and a family, much more plausible than the other characters' straight personas. Petey was sort of like Jimmy Olson who had a motorcycle and a girlfriend and who might actually get laid some issue!

Dickie Dare fits into the Universe somewhere between Swift and Don Winslow on the one hand, and Rick Brant and Jonny Quest on the other. I grew up with the strip in the Sault Evening News in the fifties, and then went back a few years ago to research a WW II novel where the Nazis were gonna blow up the Sault Locks, and had to read every damn page of the paper throughout the War on microfilm and in bound volumes. Of course, the Wartime Dickie Dare was very primitive compared with the Dickie of the 50's.

Dickie Dare timewarps between two very close parallel universes: The first, his regular online story, is in something very close to our own current history, though there are subtle differences, such as the Academy. This universe has fantastic villains and fiendish plots in the tradition of Smilin' Jack and Terry and the Pirates, with maybe a touch of Indiana Jones (if IJ were an oceanographer or marine biologist instead of a tomb-robbing pseudo-archaeologist).

The other parallel universe is a mystical fantasy univers, with characters that go back through Davey Jones and Neptune to pre-historic sailor mythology. Neptune and Davey Jones are real in this universe, but so is the Academy.

The WW II Dickie was a little like Orphan Annie, in that he stumbled from adventure to adventure, and it was usually the adults who foiled the fiendish Nazis or helped the wounded Russian P-39 pilot escape behind the lines. Every so often, though, he'd do something important.

The 50's strip was most fun for me when they were doing high-tech stuff, like riding around in bathyscapthes and rocket-powered hydrofoils. The stupid little bulldog from the 40's strip was probably the archetype for Bandit, the loathsomely cute little mutt in the Jonny Quest cartoons.

Dickie Dare was right in there someplace between Don Winslow in the Coast Guard and the early Swifties, and Rick Brant and The Mystery of the Whispering Box. Ought to be a fannish Masters Thesis in there somewhere.



THE HIGH COST OF VOTING

Mark Bernstein: I'm oddly ambivalent about your editorial. First off, I fully agree with your conclusion. If there are people out there who want only to have a say in the Hugos, and are willing to forego anything to do with the Worldcon itself, including progress reports, there should be some way to accommodate them. The attitudes you express in coming to that conclusion are more than a little bothersome.

I'm sure every Worldcon Committee in existence, past, present, or future, is perfectly well aware of the low solvency levels of many fen. You make the committee members sound like heartless moneygrubbers, and I simply cannot accept that. People who work on Worldcons do so for the glory and, to an extent varying with the individual, power. No individual has ever profited financially from a Worldcon that I know of, and I'm sure if it ever happened it would cause a scandal of (for fandom) unprecedented proportions. Movies, guests, and other bells and whistles aside, the raw cost of the space needed to host a 6,000 person convention is what has driven the prices so high. Even granting that the Baltimore Committee was guilty of some horrendously bad management, the fact that it is even possible for a science fiction convention to lose over forty thousand dollars should be enough to give anyone pause.

As to the "Purpose of the Worldcon," I'm sorry, but my reaction to your history lesson is to shrug and say "So what?". I have often said, and no doubt will continue to repeat, that the central paradox of fandom is that an organization whose main focus is the future maintains such a blind, inflexible loyalty to the traditions of its past.

I will readily agree that the WSFS constitution does not properly address the conflict now present between the Worldcon and the Hugos. The problem is that the reality of what Worldcons are is not readily amenable to change.

So why don't we accept the reality and change the constitution to reflect it? After giving the matter a little thought, here's a set-up I think might work. I will not formally propose it myself, for the simple reason that I cannot currently afford to attend Worldcons, which means I can't be at the business meeting to defend my proposal. I will, however, be happy to correspond with anyone who wants to do the legwork, and help put ideas in words formal enough to be submitted as an amendment to the constitution. Herewith, the details:

Membership in WSFS, which is the only requirement for voting eligibility, will no longer be tied to Worldcon membership. Instead, there will be annual dues of \$5.00 assessed to cover the administrative costs associated with Hugo balloting. To vote on the Hugos, all you need do is send in your dues before a set deadline, such as the end of the calendar year for which you wish to nominate and vote.

The Worldcon committee will be responsible for appointing a committee to administer the Hugos, and for setting aside time at the convention for presenting them. Period. If the two groups want to coordinate their efforts and mail ballots to convention members inserted in progress reports instead of separately, that's their business. Once appointed, the Hugo committee will be fully autonomous, and will maintain separate financial records. Unlike Worldcons, Hugo committees can maintain financial continuity, passing records and surplus funds from committee to committee.

The Worldcon will still have responsibility for administering the site selection voting and holding the business meeting. The Hugo committee will bear all the responsibility for administering the nomination and final voting processes for the awards.

(Optional) The Hugo committee shall, each year, place advertisements in every science fiction magazine of X circulation (off the top of my head, 20,000 sounds good) or greater, explaining what the Hugos are and what you need to do to vote, thus opening up the balloting process to as many interested fen as possible.

I think that covers everything. I regard all this as merely acknowledging the fact that people who want to attend the Worldcon and people who want to vote on the Hugos are two different, if overlapping, groups. The people who want to vote can vote, the people who want to con can con, and the people who want to do both have that option. It could also reduce the strain on the fen living in the Worldcon city, in that the Hugo committee does not need to be composed of locals.

((This sounds like a good idea, Mark, but as you will read below, there is some opposition, though many of your suggestions have merit. I would like to see more fans vote, and readers as well -- those who read the genre and have no idea how the Hugos are chosen, but know that it is usually a good recommendation for the book, story, etc.))

Before I leave your editorial behind, I'd like to see an expansion of just what you want from a Worldcon committee in terms of "stepping back and trying to help the younger, poorer (or even older and poorer) fans". I think that, without intending to, you've raised a very touchy issue that will be discussed more and more in the coming years, i.e., if a Worldcon makes a large profit, what constitutes a proper disposition of the profit?

I would personally be in vehement opposition to any attempt to set up formal guidelines, in the WSFS constitution or anywhere else, stating "this is what you must do with the money." Not only does a combination of the legal restraints on non-profit organizations and the peer pressure within fandom make personal gain on the part of the committee members highly unlikely, I think any group willing to put out the effort needed for a Worldcon has earned the right to choose where any profits go. I would, however, like to see some discussion, simply in order to provide future committee with a wide selection of ideas to choose from.

Getting back to your quote above, the concept of offering an official, monetary "helping hand" to poorer fen makes me more than a little uneasy. It seems to me any attempt to do so would open a major hornet's nest when it came time to determine who actually got the money. Hasn't there already been a blowup or three concerning the proper criteria, financial and otherwise, for a "worthy" TAFF or DUFF winner? Besides, I'm not so sure I approve of the basic idea. I've been the "poor student" route. I know that there are many fen, myself included, who can't afford to attend nearly as many cons as they'd like. (Alright, I admit I'd be able to attend more if my liking for comfort and privacy didn't make me shun sleeping on floors. Nonetheless, I fall into the class of "fen who'd attend more cons if they had the money." (See what I mean about the problems in deciding who qualifies?)) But, dammitall, cons are a luxury! While I would never attempt to impose this view on others, particularly flush Worldcon committees, I can't help feeling there are better ways to distribute the money.

What better ways? Let's see.... There must be causes out there most, if not all, fen could agree on. How about funds designed to help gifted children? Or a scholarship to Clarion, to be awarded by the Clarion admissions committee? Or any scholarship fund, for that matter? There are always the "traditional" charities, such as research on various diseases, food for Ethiopia, etc. Going a little farther afield, we could establish a research grant as start reviewing proposals. (Nah, too much work.) How about political contributions to candidates who support increased funding for research? (SpacePAC? Why the hell not?) It's a fascinating topic, one worthy of discussion in as wide a forum as possible.

((My comments of "help" was to have the Worldcon committee make allowances for Hugo Voting, not just to hand out money to fans. However, now that you mention it, how about giving partial refunds to the membership? Your other suggestions are good too. I would like to see some donations given to NASA so they could get better public relations people to let the general public know what the space program has done for them.))

Cathy Howard: Agree with your editorial that the price of Hugo and site voting has gotten out of hand. I would like to see a fee of not over (and preferably under) ten dollars for voting privileges. The high cost kept me from getting a supporting membership, though I badly wanted to vote for a future Worldcon site. My finances wouldn't permit it. They went ahead and won anyway, but I would have felt more a part of it if I had been able to cast a ballot for them.

David Palter: I suspect that those impoverished fans who cannot afford the full membership fee also have not been able to buy the books which have been nominated for the Hugo Awards (as I well recall from my own days as an impoverished fan, when you have little money it is much easier to buy used paperbacks rather than new paperbacks or hardcover books whether new or used, and since it takes time for used bookstores to acquire their stock, they rarely have the year's current releases -- they mostly have older stuff, so that's what you buy. And if you depend on libraries, well, the good stuff is usually out, and has a waiting list. Your best bet is to have richer friends who are also SF readers.) Even so, I must admit that it is a good idea. The Hugo voting should be available to even the less wealthy fans.

Brian Earl Brown: We seem to disagree on a lot of things in terms of what to use in fanzines and in SF reading, but I do agree with you about high Supporting Membership fees for Worldcons. Since a Supporting Membership was intended for people who couldn't attend but wanted to help support a financially risky convention, it followed that a Worldcon should clear some "profit" after expenses from Supporting members. Just how much profit is open to debate, but personally I can't see it being over \$5 - \$10. The rest should just cover expenses. These are the expenses to a Supporting Membership: 4 progress reports, a program book, nominating and final Hugo ballots. I don't know if Worldcon's bother to mail out the results of the Hugo balloting to members or not, or whether they mail out a financial statement, or just make these data available to "concerned parties." Even so, I can't see the expenses for a Supporting member running over \$10 - \$15. When you've got 8-10,000 members you can't just warm up the mimeo, it's true, to print your progress report, but Worldcons also didn't need to use the heavy, slick paper that they have recently. And between high-speed rotary presses and advertizing sold in each issue, I can't see the PR costing over \$1 each (\$4 total). The Program Book likewise probably doesn't cost over \$5 each to produce (with advertizing) and if it does, perhaps we should reconsider

what we've been putting into these program books. The Hugo ballots are a couple of sheets each, plus a couple of first class postage stamps, maybe a \$1 all tolled there. Even if I have underestimated these figures, seems \$20 is more than enough to cover expenses and still provide a hefty "support" for the Worldcon.

I was particularly outraged with LACON's \$30 nonconverting "subscribing" membership as well as the \$195,000 profit. It doesn't matter that they're putting that money to fancish uses. They clearly overcharged around \$20 a member on that convention. What's to prevent that from happening again?

Your comment that there's nothing in the Worldcon Constitution that requires panels, movies, etc., is a little specious since there is an implied historical mandate to provide these things. As an old and tired fan, not to mention being an embryonic Boring Old Fart, I'd like to see a partial dismantling of the Worldcon, dropping the 24 hour movie program, cutting back to two tracks of programming, or maybe just putting a 3,000 cap on attendance. Such a cap works for the World Fantasy Convention, so why couldn't it work for the Worldcon. It's things like this that make me support CruiseCon '88. Sure it will cost, but it'll keep the crowds down.

Danny Low: I also feel that the Supporting Membership for Worldcons should be kept low but I also do not support too low of a price. Twenty dollars seems like a reasonable price for the right to vote for a Hugo. The reason I do not support a really cheap Supporting Membership fee has to do with the pro Hugos. Winning a pro Hugo can mean a lot of extra money for the winners. Since there is no restriction on who may vote for a Hugo other than the Worldcon membership fee, there is a real possibility that someone might try to stuff the ballot. When L. Ron Hubbard came out with Battlefield Earth, some people feared that the scientologists would do just that. Fortunately, they appeared to have confined their support to just buying the book. However, according to Alan Frisbie, who counted the ballots for LACON II, it appears that there was an attempt to stuff the ballot in one of the categories. I do not know what the concomm did



about it, but I do know that the author did not win.

Twenty dollars seems to me to be the right amount to discourage any serious attempts to stuff the ballot. At that price, 50 Supporting Memberships would cost \$1000. While 50 extra votes could easily decide a fan category, it is not sufficient to insure a win in the major pro categories, such as Best Novel. As it currently stands, the rewards of stuffing the ballot to insure a win in the pro categories does not make the cost seem reasonable, since it would take several thousand dollars and a lot of extra work to hide that fact; but at a lower price, such as \$10, such an act might be tempting to some people.

Lynn Hickman: I certainly have to agree with you on your editorial, "The High Cost of Voting." I can see no reason at all for it. I've got to the point where I no longer care to go to Worldcons. I can take the same amount of money and enjoy close to three regional cons. From now on it will take something extra to get me to a Worldcon.

Dennis Fischer: I would agree with you that a Supporting Membership should be reasonably priced and not expected to contribute to the cost of events at a Worldcon, but on the other hand, if all that happened at the Worldcon was the voting of the Hugos and the decision of where to hold the next one, then I wouldn't be interested in having one (parties aside). I consider guests, programming, films and such, to be important elements of any large con, and not just something to occupy the neos. The trick, of course, is figuring out how to play the guessing game of budgeting in order to pay for all that stuff without gouging the attendees. As far as that goes, I think LACon did a good job even if their prices were a trifle high. (But then, these days Los Angeles has a great many more employed fens than it used to before the computer revolution days.) I don't know what percentage of moneys taken in were from Supporting Memberships, but \$20 for a non-attendee is excessive and the only reason I can think of for it is to encourage non-attendees to become attendees for just that "little bit more." Perhaps if a few more fens grouse about it, the price will be brought down to what con committees think "the market can bear." Good luck in your efforts.

((LACon had one price for both attending and non-attending memberships. Since they ran unopposed, they could get away with it.))

Milt Stevens: Hugo voting costs couldn't be all that much lower. The program book by itself costs about \$5 a piece to print. Add four progress reports, a pocket program, a name badge, a few ballots, and the necessary postage for the whole mess, and \$15 becomes a money loser for a supporting membership. Plus the human factors consideration that with approximately 20,000 pieces of mail that have to be processed for a worldcon, committees aren't likely to be very interested on expanding the volume of mail received.

Another consideration is the possibility of ballot-stuffing. If Hugo voting was \$5 a

shot, \$1000 will buy you 200 votes which is enough to swing the election in most categories. There are lots of people who might consider that a Hugo is worth \$1000. There was one case about 15 years ago where it was pretty well determined that someone had stuffed the ballot box with ghost memberships. He didn't win the Hugo because he had underestimated the total number of votes that would be cast in the category. I don't think that particular person ever made the ballot again.

Jeanne Mealy: I do agree that the Worldcon could be revised to let people vote if desired. I can't say that the total attendance will drop, though.



THE FOOLKILLER

Cathy Howard: The only place I've seen "The Foolkiller" mentioned is in Fred Pohl's The Way the Future Was.

Mary Long: Well, speaking off the top of my head, could this be an alternate name for the Lord of Misrule, the chap who was in charge for a day at Christmas, and who was actually executed? (All to do with sacred Kings, you know.) Just a guess.

James Woodruff: I'm sure that Mike Kirchner is thinking of Stephen Vincent Benet's Story "Johnnie Pie and the Fool-Killer." Benet clearly intended to re-create the texture of a folktale in an American setting and would probably be pleased that a reader would remember his story as a folktale. Bantam books publishes this story in a slim volume which also includes "By the Waters of Babylon" (a post-nuclear holocaust tale) and "The Devil and Daniel Webster" (one of my favorite yarns).

Michael P. Kube-McDowell: I was very impressed with LAN'S LANTERN #16: a very classy package, and far above any of the other (admittedly few) fanzines I've seen. Truth be told, I've read very little Norton (although I have a dozen of her books on my shelves should I ever decide to change that). I read The X Factor and Crossroads of Time when I was much younger (shortly after or before I discovered Heinlein, as I recall). I found Joan Vinge's and Steve Bridge's "thank yous" affecting.

Ben Indick: I especially liked Ms. Norton's response--no "I had it coming to me" stuff. Just a nice letter of feeling and gratitude.

Clifton Amsbury: 16 Nice!

David Palter: You know, although I took some pains to defend my comments about Andre Norton (while, ironically, nobody was attacking them) I did have some suspicion that they may have been too critical to properly belong in an issue designed to honor Andre Norton (as you seem at least somewhat to be suggesting in your comment on p. 58). But I was counting on you, as editor, to decide if they were suitable, and you must have found them suitable since you did publish them. Actually, I expected that you wouldn't publish that article. I wrote it only because I felt that it was the best I could do in response to your request of an article about Andre Norton -- I had to say what was really on my mind even if it wasn't truly appropriate for the special issue for which it had been solicited. In fact, you have taught me a lesson, which is, beware what you write; somebody may publish it. (Anyway, no hard feelings, Andre, right?)

((It did take some time to decide that your article was appropriate for the Norton Issue; I figured that a certain amount of criticism was all right. It was a balanced article, and did provide some contrast to the other pieces in the issue.))

George Ewing: FB on the Norton ish! I was fortunate to get to visit with Andre Norton and Robert Adams briefly at NECRONOMICON in Tampa last fall. I loved her stuff as a kid, and while rereading it now I am sometimes disappointed by her somewhat technophobic point of view. She's a giant, nonetheless.

Nola Frame: Your Andre Norton issue of LAN'S LANTERN was a blast. I had been an Andre Norton fan in the past, but I was only familiar with Norton's Moon of Three Rings, Android at Arms, Shadow Hawk, and her Witch World series. In short, I was not familiar with AN science fiction.

Now all that is changing.

Right now I am in love. Thanks to you I am reading the Solar Queen series. I'm happily devouring Plague Ship and Louis is reading Sargasso of Space.

I heard that Norton wrote a sequel to Moon of Three Rings. Would you know the title?

((The sequel to Moon of Three Rings is Exiles of the Stars..))



BOOK REVIEWS

David M. Shea: I agreed completely with Maia's review of Superluminal; and disagreed completely with her review of World's End. "Deeply introspective"? The book and the character are an exercise in self-pity, self indulgence, and self-centeredness. Ghundalinu was an interesting minor character in The Snow Queen, but a little of him goes an awfully long way. My main reaction to him in World's End was to want to tell him to stop whining and get on with the job. (Especially considering that what he was doing was entirely useless and he was doing it mainly out of masochistic self-satisfaction.) I was deeply disappointed by this book and by the general direction of Vinge's career. What she seems to do now, mainly, is ghost novelizations of trashy movies. Even Alan Dean Foster, who built a career on this, does original work now and then, and much of it is good. World's End reminded me of nothing so much as Dune: Messiah. Another case where the book is not getting the editing it desperately needs.

((Well, people do have different tastes both in food and reading material.))

Mark Schulzinger: Job seems to be a book one either loves or hates. I think those readers who remember the stuff RAH wrote for Unknown will like it more than those who don't. I got my copy directly from someone who couldn't finish it and discovered that I couldn't put it down -- gobbled it up whole one Saturday afternoon and laughed so much I got a stitch in my side.

On the strength of Evelyn Leeper's review of Sherlock Holmes Through Time and Space I called up B. Dalton and ordered a copy. I enjoyed it, despite the carpings of the good Dr. Watson. Being a proper Victorian gentleman, he doesn't have much of a sense of humor.

Richard Brandt: I pretty much skimmed your reviews of Alien Stars because I plan to have my own review in my next ish...I'll just say that I consider Haldeman's the most important work in the collection.



Murray Moore: By the by, I could do without all the book and movie reviews. I was surprised to see so much space given to them. But I have been out of touch with trends in fanzines. Reviewing is not as daunting to people as writing fiction. This is an unfortunate state of affairs in some cases. This is a generalization. Geis runs a lot of reviews in *SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW* that don't reward the reader. I would rather read mediocre fiction than mediocre reviews of fiction.

((My personal policy tends to run both towards the silly and the serious. The serious part likes to let people know about the literature in SF, so I like to run reviews of both books and movies. The silly part allows me to put on my coonskin cap, bathing suit and t-shirt with a funny name on the back and go out in public. If I find some humorous pieces to publish, I'll do that too. But I like the mixture in my fanzine.))

Diane Fox: I loved *Godstalk* -- it had a little of Dunsany, a lot more of Fritz Leiber's Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser stories, a little of Tolkien (*Silmarillion* rather than *Lord of the Rings*), a little of Andre Norton (intelligent, young, female main character who has paranormal powers and befriends animals), and many other resemblances, but most of all it was a fresh, individual work. I also noticed how deftly P. C. Hodgell had

reconciled two apparently clashing theologies -- monotheism with one, good, powerful god, and polytheism with a horde of bickering, low-powered and scantily respected gods -- a Tolkien universe with a Fritz Leiber one! There were an incredible number of subplots, characters and rich background details (cultures, customs, etc.). I hope she writes a sequel.

((Pat Hodgell recently wrote me this letter))

Yes, the *Godstalk* sequel, *Dark of the Moon*, is due out this fall, hopefully in time for WINDYCON. Apparently it's just sitting around in a box somewhere, bound and waiting for release. Unfortunately it sounds as if it was put together without the maps I designed for it, so you might let people know that I'd be happy to provide them to anyone who sends a SASE. Paperback rights have just sold to Berkley, although that edition won't be out for about a year, probably. Alas that I'm such a slow writer. *III* is in the planning stage, though. I'll tackle it just as soon as I get this wretched dissertation off my back.

((At WINDYCON I saw Pat and she said that the book company was going to insert the maps as a separate sheet for the first printing. If you happen to purchase the hardcover and find no map, you can still get them from Pat at 1237 Liberty St., Oshkosh, WI, 54901, USA.

((Pat: I know you are a slow writer, but the results are well worth the wait. I picked up a copy of *Dark of the Moon* at CHAMBANACON, complete with map insert. I haven't read it yet, but will soon. // I know about dissertations -- Maia typed one for a friend of ours, which has discouraged her from going for her Ph.D.

CONREPORTS AND RAMBLINGS 18

David Palter: I am a bit surprised to find out (p. 41) that you have only now discovered that most kids can't be trusted. Well, I did say (p. 54) that you were somewhat naive; here is additional proof. But it also seems that you are becoming less naive, which is a good thing. Naivety kills.

Craig Ledbetter: I also enjoyed the thumbnail comments on conventions you attended (how do you do it?) and found your personal life Ramblings of interest (as only those things can be to people who read, write, and produce fanzines). You have my sympathy when it comes to your profession. A more underpaid, unappreciated bunch of folk I've yet to meet. I had a brief thought in that direction years ago, but greed intervened and I quickly dropped the idea.

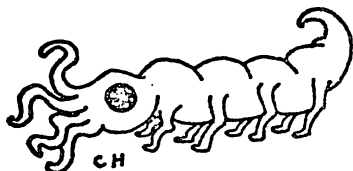
((There are lots of cons within a six hour drive of us and those are the ones we attend. The Midwestern conventions are reasonably priced, and if we share a room, costs aren't too bad. // I'm greedy too, but I also like the long vacations (but I certainly earn them by working 12-18 hour days).))

Hania Wojtowicz and Doris Bercarich: The annual Christmas party you attend in Toronto is put on by us, not Mike and Doris. Just to set you straight.

((Sorry about that, Hania and Doris. Thanks for setting me straight.))

Mark Schulzinger: Egad, Lan -- I see all sorts of con reports in LL but none of INCONJUNCTION. Whatsamatter? You and Maia didn't have any fun in Indy?

((I prepared the copy a week before INCONJUNCTION, so I didn't have a report on it last time. However, I have put one in this issue.))



Responses to Comments on My Articles

by Mark R. Leeper

Jim Meadows: In these days of high-tech super-special effects, I guess I just did not think Superman III's having Reeve fight himself to be a really noteworthy effect. I only had a page and warning people away from the film took a higher priority! I think it goes back to the silent Little Lord Fauntleroy. I agree with your assessment that it was done acceptably but not great. After the traumatic experience of realizing that I had paid good money to see Superman III, I did not go to see Supergirl. It's not that I didn't want to see it, but I had to do something much more important (we had just bought some sweet corn and I had to count how many rows of kernals were on each ear).

Arthur Hlavaty and Sally Syrjala: I have to admit that as the months go by, my memories of Return of the Jedi become less favorable, but it does not drop below The Empire Strikes Back. Part of the reason is that the characters are less likable. Where C3PO's manner was consistently funny in the first film, under Kershner's hands he grates on the viewer in the second film. Solo, too, has a very grating personality, taking credit for C3PO's observations with a "Well, of course..." What really bothered me was that Lucas had seen what scenes and lines were popular in the first film and milked them in the second film (like the repeated phrase "I've got a bad feeling about this."). This problem continued in Return of the Jedi, I might add. A fault of the second film only, however, was that the cosmopolitan universe was abandoned. Yoda is the only new intelligent alien in the second film. That was a real contradiction of the first film. In any case, I admit that I was wrong to say there is no argument that the third film was better than the second. There is fair argument, but I think I'll stick by the conclusion.

Sally takes me to task for my preference of automatic systems over human ones as expressed my Wargames review. She says technology is just a tool. I never said anything else. When we put a human into a system we are using him as a tool. Now, the question is, which tool is more reliable? Automated systems are still at a primitive stage, but in many places and for many tasks they are more reliable than their human counterparts. That is not doing what Sally claims is raising them to god-like levels; it is being realistic about automatic systems' superiority to humans as servants. I live in the vicinity of a New York City that was blacked out at least once because a human refused to do what a computer advised him to do and also fairly near a Three-Mile-Island where a near-disaster came about because humans were not trained to do what automatic systems would have done. I feel a lot better giving up my human chauvinism and trusting in automatic systems, particularly where they have already been proven more reliable.

Dennis Fischer: Ah, now this letter gives me a chance to talk more on film than philosophy. I guess I am not surprised that somebody else thought to name a science fiction film award for George Pal. I commend the Trimble's taste. I do not generally believe in the idea of a life after death, but I am not so sure that I would give a George Pal award to Rocketship X-M and risk having Pal justifiably get up out of the grave to strangle me. Luckily, I can in truth say that I think that Destination Moon really is a better film than the film Pal detested over all others. Rocketship X-M was very much quickly rushed to the box-office to exploit the publicity that Pal's Destination Moon had garnered over its painstaking production. Today, Destination Moon has an unimaginative story, but that really wasn't true in 1950. On the other hand, Rocketship X-M's story is not all that good either. The first rocket to the moon is deflected by the Hand of God so that it will go to Mars instead. This is so the message could be brought to Earth that nuclear war kills planets (admittedly a little more timely than Destination Moon's message). There is almost no attention to scientific detail. I will say that Rocketship X-M has a very good musical score by Fredric Grofe (the composer of the "Grand Canyon Suite"). The script is really pretty hokey, though.

Monster from the Ocean Floor is not a very good film, but I claim it as noteworthy as the first Corman and for an unusual monster.

Now, no mention for Invasion of the Body Snatchers in 1956: It was strongly considered, but 1956 is getting into some of the better years. I think you have to agree that Forbidden Planet was better. The question is then, is Invasion of the Body Snatchers better or worse than The Quatermass Experiment? That comes down to a question of whether one prefers a good mood film or a good idea film. It was a tough choice, but I opted for Quatermass.

You consider Horror of Dracula a landmark film. I would take its "landmark-ness" and

spread it over The Quatermass Xperiment, Curse of Frankenstein, and Horror of Dracula. The first brought Hammer Films to the genre of fantastic films, the second brought them to Gothic horror, the third proved there was a consistent market. I really like Horror of Dracula, but it is a poor interpretation of Stoker's book and not quite the landmark you claim. It is an enjoyable film on its own, though. I just don't want to make it the best of its year. Hammer got a lot of the George Pal Awards anyway.

I like both Ugetsu and The Haunting, but not enough to call either one of them the top two of its year. Ugetsu I think was too much style and not enough content. I'd say much the same about most classic Japanese horror. I don't think there are very many American horror fans who'd single out Ugetsu as a really good horror film. I will admit also that when I researched the article, I overlooked Ugetsu and it might make "Noteworthy" if I were to do a rewrite. The Haunting is good, but I do not feel it is up to its reputation. I stick by my 1963 choices.

Where did you see The Saragossa Manuscript? That's one of those films I'd hock my parents to see, up there with Solaris and Thorny Road to the Stars. Eastern European and Soviet science fiction films are tough to see. We disagree on Seven Faces of Dr. Lao. The Finney book was superb, but the Tony Randall tour-de-force film was pretty mediocre stuff. While The Last Man on Earth was poorly acted at times, I find the plague scenes unforgettable. Of the others you list, only Death Watch went unconsidered and that was because I had not seen it. You just have a higher opinion of some of these films than I do. It's tough even choosing for myself the top two of a given year.

My opinion of Return of the Jedi drops as time goes by, but that may be because it has been a while since I saw it. It would be nice to have it on cassette.

As for Wargames, I distinguish between an automatic system with human override and one which will not work without human action. The former will probably do the right thing and has a safeguard; the latter will work only with well-trained personnel. A system intended to implement a strategy really should implement that strategy. It is bad when a system that says Queens is going to have a blackout and it will take the rest of New York with it unless the operator intentionally shuts off power to Queens before it blacks out the whole city. A better system would take Queens off the grid automatically unless an operator has a pretty good idea something is fishy.

"CHRISTIAN LAWYERS?"
THAT'S AN OXYMORON
LIKE "MILITARY INTELLIGENCE."



#1785

Mark Schulzinger: The actor who played the Schlockthorpus was John Chambers (who also created some of the fascinating aliens for the first Star Wars film).

Mike Glicksohn and Ben Indick: I'd like you to tell me what film has a better-thought-out premise than Five Million Years to Earth. It coincidentally has the same basic theme as the same year's 2001: A Space Odyssey. (Actually it was based on a 1960 BBC TV play.) Both films say that our prehistoric ancestors were altered to become intelligent. Clarke uses the theme and says it's going to happen again. Five Million Years to Earth asks, how are we different today because of the alteration? How has it affected our folklore, our human relations? If it comes down to losing Mike Glicksohn's respect because I am fascinated by what Nigel Kneale has been able to put into this film, so be it. I would be interested to know what Glicksohn thinks is a better-thought-out film. What film has more intriguing ideas?

Jackie Causgrove: I'd call Rashomon fantasy as I would any film with a ghost, even Macbeth or Hamlet, but it is fringe. The Man in the White Suit is about technology and the human effect it has. It takes a fanciful invention and examines the social effects it would have. It was not made primarily for a science fiction audience, but don't let that blind you to its basically science fiction content.

On the Beach is a good human drama, but even at the time it was a very unrealistic view of life after a nuclear war. The fallout and the people behave equally unrealistically.

Thanks to one and all for commenting.

COMMENTS ON LETTERS

David Palter: I do want to comment on Sally Syrjala's assertion (p. 55) that it is incorrect to speak of something being true from a certain point of view, on the grounds that truth is always true. The Platonic concept of absolute truth has been cast somewhat in doubt by many recent philosophical and scientific developments, but let's ignore that and say we have a genuine Absolute Truth. Ah, but our understanding of that truth will still be imperfect. Some viewpoints will see that truth in a sufficiently distorted way that what they come up with is no longer entirely true. And every viewpoint does embody some bias, although in some cases the bias may be negligible.

Craig Ledbetter: I always enjoy a long LoC section so I was thrilled with the one in #17. The only comment I have to make (as a fellow illiterate and crappy layout person) is don't let the nagging of your readership get you down. LANTERN's content is fantastic and to me that is what's important.

((I don't mind criticism of the fanzine, its layout, and so forth, so long as it's constructive. It also allows me to expound on my own philosophy for the fanzine, and points me in certain directions for thoughts on what I want to do with LAN'S LANTERN.))

Nola Frame: As far as Sally Sryjala's comments are concerned, I had this feeling that Return of the Jedi was not as popular as the first two SW movies. One of the reasons was seeing all this ROTJ merchandize appear on the shelves of Pic n' Save, a local chain of discount stores.

Sheryl Birkhead: Terry Jeeves' letter has a lot of attractive comments. Ah, no more lunch duty...or breaking up fights on the playground.... I know that in the school system where I taught, teachers were required to give students a list of specific objectives for each topic taught -- so many that it was a challenge to be able to make up the list without actually writing the test questions word-for-word. It is kinda nice to know what specific things you need -- but it also means that anything else is automatically cut out as not important (i.e. not going to be on the test).

((The rules are not as restrictive here. Each teacher is pretty much autonomous in class, except that a certain amount of material has to be covered for the departmental exams, and for passing a student on to the next level of Math, a language, sequential science courses, etc. As for my tests, I give my students the general outline and format -- ten true/false, 3 proofs, 20 multiple choice, etc. -- which has a tendency to cut down the number of them suffering from test anxiety.))

Mary Long: Speaking of superheroes and tying into Paula Franke's letter: Did you see the recent special edition of the comics page in the papers, in which Spiderman spoke about his having been abused sexually by his babysitter? This was in part of a strip dealing with the problem of child abuse, and encouraging children who were in the same position to TELL someone. I thought that it took a lot of courage to do that, and so far as I know nobody complained about it. Hopefully it has encouraged some kids to do just that; but could you see that happening even ten years ago?

((Since we haven't gotten the paper regularly in some time, I didn't know about the Spiderman strip doing a child abuse sequence. Now that Maia has been taking a newswriting class, we've had the paper on a regular basis. // I don't think that the topic would have been broached ten years ago, maybe not even 6 or 7 years ago. Times do change....))

Diane Fox: Nola Frame's comments on the over-idealization of the past in much fantasy are most apt. And it's also true that highly educated people continually make the mistake of thinking that other people are as knowledgeable/literate/etc., as themselves. (Highly intelligent people also tend to assume that everyone else will understand anything they can understand.)

On a related topic: A friend I know claims she has a rather "boring", impersonal style in her fanzine because she has to write a lot of reports at work and has developed the passive-voiced, impersonal, dull style considered essential in report-writing.

Why, though, are reports written in this dull style? Because they are written from a

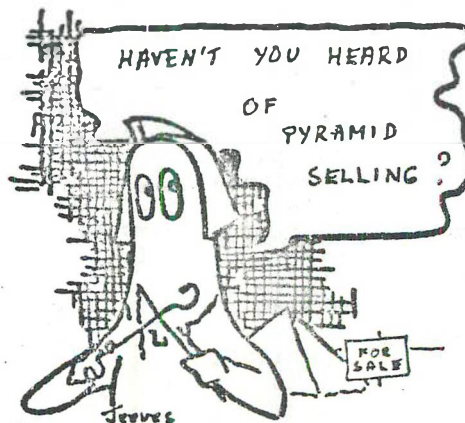
mythical viewpoint--the myth being that the writer is detached, impersonal, unbiased, in order to conform to the "objective," "unbiased" image of science or bureaucracy. An unbiased human being is either impossible or extremely unlikely, and so this "self-evident idea" ranges from a convenient convention to an outright lie.

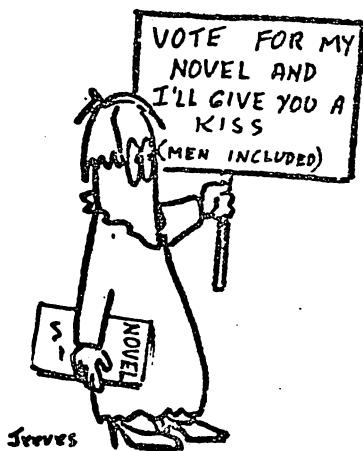
Before you can communicate you must find out how much of your language the other fellow understands. And if you express an idea, you're expressing your idea of that idea, not the idea itself (in abstract or whatever).

Back to other letters.

Neil Rest over-estimates human common sense. Immediate gratification and later suffering is the pattern of human behavior. Why are there so many fat people (like me), drunks, drug addicts, petty criminals, car accidents, fights, rapes, and murders? The Faust story is so popular precisely because it expresses human lack of foresight. Spending not thousands of years but infinite millions of years in Hell (which is described as a form of a more advanced concentration camp crossed with 1984's Room 101) in exchange for a measly few years of wealth and power--limited because more than one person would have the bright idea to sell his/her soul--is hardly rational, but very human. And destroying the Earth for get-rich-quick is our modern variant of this Faustian bargain. Most of the people in power are petty criminals with a good deal of extra-low cunning. A dominant human being must have the same sort of psychology as a dominant baboon --mean, aggressive, and devious.

I share your views on school sports. When I was going to school, the emphasis was on compulsory team sports and winning. The slow clumsy ones like myself were usually left on the sidelines to either watch or, do nothing. It was probably not deliberate, but those who were incompetent at sports were conditioned to hate any kind of outdoor activity. Making people physically fit and healthy was the opposite of what was ultimately achieved. I think school sports had a lot to do with making me the fat, overweight person I am today -- in fact, the caricature of the beer-gut fool who sits in front of the TV all day watching sports programs is the classic product of compulsory sports at schools. Fortunately, I've done a slight amount of brisk walking (cross-country hiking) since meeting John, and I used to be occasionally good at swimming. The only time I ever dodged school was on sports days. I'd just sneak away from the park and walk home.





HUGO AWARD VOTING

Sally Syrjala: Upon reading your comments on the Hugo nominees, I went out and obtained a copy of "Salvador" [by Lucius Shepherd] to read. I had been intending on reading it, but somehow until now had just never made the time to do so.

I found it quite an intriguing story. It is basically an analogy: Contrasts and analogies are components in the composition of artistic renderings. I see this story in that type of light.

The ayahuamaco which houses the spirits which have not yet died from the bodies who have is the contrast of Sparky's Rock City. For there it was the bodies who were living and the spirits which were dead. Dantzler was there to bring Salvador home and "explain" how it is.

Illusion and reality. That is also presented. In the ayahuamaco it is asked if people in Boston do not know there is a war going on. The reply is that it is barely acknowledged as it really does not affect the every day lives of people back home. They see it reported on television, but that is a projection which is not an everyday reality. Dantzler is then faced with the request, "Will you let them know about the war when you return home?" This is his mission.

This is what the ending concerns itself with--letting the folks back home know about the war. Sparky's neon sign exploding in the night--an illusion of a fire fight. Snow falling from the sky in contrast to the jungle setting in Salvador. Dantzler brings the battle to Sparky's Rock City. He is a spirit which is empty--dead. This is the place his body has come to for the time before it joins the spirit in death. He no longer feels; he merely exists. He is in the mirror ayahuamaco. His body lives, yet his spirit does not. The story speaks to our spirits in an attempt to shake them into wakefulness. I thought the story quite good.

Octavia Butler's "Blood Child" is not something which I find to my taste (sorry 'bout that). It was a kind of friendly Alien. Made me think of wild game preserves with hunters with tranquilizer guns and all that. This type of story could give a new ring to the term "child molestation." Ugh! I do not think this story will ever rank high on my list of favored reading material.

Now to John Varley's "Press Enter . ." Microwaves do not give me problems after hav-

ing read that story. However, most everything else does. First there is the telephone. I mean how can you even listen to a telephone's dial tone anymore without hearing IT? This does not even take into consideration answering one and being confronted by one of those number dialing electronic message givers. That medium is most assuredly the message!

Then there are computers themselves. How do you expect me to press enter ever again? It is like entering into the den of the lurking spider. That network is too potent to consider interacting within.

There are then all those electronic carrier waves. There was a story about a writer which appeared in one of the pulps a year or few ago wherein the protagonist feared electrical current. This tale makes me fear it much more so. It makes me think how lovely candlelight can really be.

Then new thoughts come to mind. There is the question of thought patterns themselves. If you could plug into a computer network of artificial intelligence, then maybe that artificial intelligence could plug into your network of thought waves. Maybe it could start making those little neurons pulsate to a different drummer. How would this affect humanity? Can you imagine all these people suddenly speaking in tongues of binary? Imagine having the air house a strange electrical charge which would cause your mind to go on overload.

That was what you would call a good tale. I have not read something which made the back of the mind as prickly about all the everyday situations since a few George R. R. Martin's.

There are other thought patterns which have cropped up. What I like in a story is when it contains bits and pieces which can be put together to form sections of a jigsaw puzzle. This story has those elements within it.

There is the notion of Victor Apfel's name itself. It sounds as if he is a cross between a Victor and an Apple computer. However, there is the play on the name Apple. It is that the fall is brought into the name -- Apple Fell.

Then this can be integrated with his brainwashing and fractured skull suffered in the Korean War. Link this with the mind's circuitry short circuiting every so often in seizures. Then think on what has mutated into being via the computer intelligence that is out after those who come too close.

This can relate back to the brainwashing. For it was said that even after they had everything that the person knew, still they continued. This seems to be true of the computer intelligence as well. It has been programmed into being--accidentally or purposefully--by those who live by paranoia.

Then there is the little touch of the detective's name--Osborne.

The more you look into the story, the more there is to see. I am happy this entry was made into the mind. It is providing to be a joy for the integrating circuits to work upon. This story does truly deserve all the awards for which it can possibly be nominated. It is terrific imaginative matter.

Cathy Howard: The reviews of the fiction nominees for the Hugos is appreciated. When I first saw a list of them, I found, much to

my shock, that I hadn't read any of the books/stories. I knew I wasn't reading as much as usual this year, but this is ridiculous.

Can something make the Hugo list two different years under two different categories? For example, run one year as a novella from a magazine, then as part of a book in the novel category?

((Yes, "Emergence" and "Seeking" by David R. Palmer were both nominated for the Hugo Novella and last year as part of the novel Emergence. I suspect that Orson Scott Card's novel ENDER'S GAME (which was a Hugo nominee as a novelette) and Greg Bear's Blood Music (which was a Hugo winner as a novelette) will be nominations this year. Then there was "Flowers for Alger-non" which was re-written in increasing lengths (winning for Short Story, and I believe nominated in others), and also winning as the movie Charley..))

Craig Ledbetter: Of all the '85 Hugo overviews I think yours has been the most memorable. Unfortunately I've only read a few of the nominees, but based on your comments, I'm going to try and catch up on the short fiction end.

Brian Earl Brown: I've read very few of the Hugo nominations -- none of the shorter works at all. Of the novels I thought Neuromancer was easily the best thing since sliced bread. The Integral Trees was as boring as you suggest and I can't imagine anyone taking Heinlein seriously. The Peace War sounds pretty good and I keep meaning to get around to reading it.

David M. Shea: I particularly appreciated your analysis of the Hugo ballot, especially the novels. Since I knew as early as '83 that I would not be going to Australia, it seemed (as you commented in your editorial) superfluous to join just to vote on the Hugos. Thus I didn't exactly bust my tail this year to read all the short stuff.

I agree that Emergence ought to win, though it probably won't. I've met Palmer several times, by the way, most recently at BALTICON this year when Emergence received the Compton Crook Award for Best First Novel of 1984. (See page 4 of the June, 1985, issue of LOCUS.) David is a very friendly, pleasant sort of person and enjoys talking with people. He commented that he was pleased to be honored in Baltimore in view of what he did to the city? (In the book, of course.) David will also be coming back to BALTICON next year.

((I have met David Palmer at Worldcons, but not for the past couple of years, since I have not been able to afford going. Maybe this year in Atlanta...))

Neuromancer left me absolutely cold. This is a perfect computer junkie's book: impersonal, sterile, cryptic, and totally uninvolving. (Typical Nebula material, in other words.) I found Job mildly amusing but I'm not in any hurry to read it again. Poor Mr. Heinlein; what he really needs is someone who would dare to edit his books--and, of course, no one will. The Peace War just didn't "come alive" for me. The other nomi-

nee I did not read as a matter of policy. I don't read anything by Niven, nor do I attend conventions which are misguided enough to name him GoH. I figure Niven owes me an apology, and since this is not likely to be forthcoming, I have withdrawn my patronage. (It's a long story, don't ask.) It's not a great hardship as I didn't like his stuff that much anyway.

Appropos of recent novels, I seem to be the only person in SF who didn't like Star-tide Rising. After it made the ballot last year, I figured I ought to read it, dragged myself through 100 or so pages, and couldn't force myself to go on. When it won the Hugo, I decided to try it again, and couldn't get that far. I thought it was trite, impersonal, and utterly unreadable. Sorry.

((No need to be sorry, I've met a few others who were unable to read Startide Rising, and some who read it but didn't like it. It is a matter of taste.))

Dennis Fischer: Enjoyed your overview on the Hugo nominees. I was kind of disappointed, though, that West of Eden by Harry Harrison wasn't nominated. It's the best thing Harry's done in years and has plenty of science fictional thought to it. I'm surprised it didn't receive more attention, but then many fans may have put off ponying up for the hardcover and are waiting for the paperback to come out. For what it's worth, The Integral Trees is really a novel-length set-up for the story which will be its sequel. Of course, as such it isn't much of a story, but fortunately publishers prefer to publish several smaller volumes (as in Gene Wolfe's Book of the New Sun series) than put their eggs into one big Michneresque work. I think some writers' work suffers as a result.

Sheryl Birkhead: I haven't read any of the novel nominations--I wanted someone else to do the weeding for me and pick from what was left--but I couldn't find the nomination list when I was ready to go book hunting; as a result, no novel was bought. After the novels, I found I had only read "Press Enter," "Blood Child," and "The Aliens Who Knew, I mean, Everything". That means I haven't read two nominations in any one class, so I can't do much in the way of making a personal decision of what I thought was best; by definition, the only one I read is "best" until I get more read.

Gads, I haven't seen any of the dramatic presentations either...sigh.

((It is tough to keep up with everything, whether going to school, or working more than full time like I do. But we try....))

I think I heard a short spot on the radio about a new small car which will be hitting the US in a while (no, I didn't hear what "a while" is--but I guess it has to be an import)--called the Hugo!

((The car hit the Detroit area in September--a car from Yugoslavia called a Yugo. Its sticker price is under \$4,000 -- \$3,990.))

Mary Long: I have not read any of the nominations except for the Patti Perret book, which I originally saw at Bob Tucker's. I like it very much; I thought the one of Bob was definitely among the best, perfectly capturing his sort of quiet humor, with the dog, and the apple-tree (many's the pie I've made with apples from it!) and so on. But what I found more revealing were the personal essays which accompanied each photo. They were really revealing, in ways which perhaps the writers in some cases did not intend. I mean, can you take some of them seriously? And it was nice to see pix of authors I had not seen before, not to mention some I had, who had changed a bit in the intervening years. I was a bit disappointed that some were missed, such as Sterling Lanier (though I hear that a second volume may be issued).

((I haven't heard of a second volume being issued, and those I know who would know say there probably won't be one.))



HANK HEATH 85

H.J.N. Andruschak: Your article on the 1985 Hugo Awards filled me with guilt. All those books I have not read, due to lack of time. To be honest about it, I did not send in either a nominating ballot of a final ballot. I just know too little about the pro and fan fields to make an honest choice.

Perhaps I should have made some choices in the fanzine field; after all I get MYTHOLOGIES and agree it is great to have it back. But I decided to be consistent and admit that I am not qualified at this time to do anything about the Hugos.

In fact, I wonder if anybody can honestly vote on many categories of the Hugos, considering how much is coming out...and how much of it is worth reading?

You want to know something awful? I seem to have lost my taste for "hardcore" SF. I did read The Integral Trees by Larry Niven and The Flight of the Dragonfly by Robert L. Forward, and neither seemed to have the charm of old times. Is my work at JPL getting me jaded with the genre? Or have strange things happened to my mind in sobriety. I must have changed somewhat in the last 18 months of recovery, but it is unfortunate if that includes a complete change in my literary tastes.

Steven Fox: I found the article very informative and because of it I may have found several new books to read in the near future. One of the novels that I did read that was mentioned in the article was Niven's The Integral Trees, and found it the most boring thing he had ever written. Neuromancer by William Gibson is one of the novels I think

I will try reading. I must say that I'm glad that you gave us a lot of information on these works and didn't just tell us the names of the nominees.

Thanks also for your nice words about my art in the Hugo article. It's nice to be appreciated.

Milt Stevens: As to your award selections, it looks like you made it 9/4 which is an excellent job of handicapping. Now if Vegas bookies just got interested in Hugo competition, you would really have something going for yourself. One year LASFS tried a Hugo pool, but it proved to be more work than it was worth.

Richard Brandt: My own favorite novel was Neuromancer (well, actually, my favorite was The Wild Shore, which was disgustingly absent from the ballot). Emergence was a cracking good read, all right, but it bothered me that a character who's given immunity from disease, a genius IQ, and near invulnerable self-defense skills, should on top of that be given so much frigging LUCK! Varley's story deserved to win, of course; in a supposed literature of ideas, there were really no new ideas in his story; in fact, he never really tells you what the story is about... but no one can spin a yarn like Varley can.

I managed to find Universe 14 at Purple Unicorn's table in L.A.; good thing, because otherwise, the trouble I have finding those books would convince me they'll be collectors' items someday. "The Lucky Strike" is a potent antiwar piece set in an alternate world where the ENOLA GAY crashes on a shakedown flight, and a different crew takes off to drop the big one on Hiroshima...with an ambivalent bombardier on board. That was my pick. For some reason, everyone was more impressed by "The Crystal Spheres" than I was. It was a meager lot of short story picks, I thought. I was surprised to see that "Ridge Running" was on the ballot; not that it's necessarily a bad story, just not Hugo voters' fare, I would have thought. My biggest complaint about "Salvador" is that it's obviously not a Central America story but a Vietman story. If you read it through, there's a kick-ass ending.

As for the other categories, I merely add that I would pick Ghostbusters first (a movie HPL would have loved), and would rate Brad Foster first by virtue of his versatility and technical virtuosity.

Murray Moore: "Press Enter" 's strength is in its characterization. And no, I don't object to strong characterization, especially after having read all six of Carr's second wave of Ace Science Fiction Specials. Perhaps it's a case of expectations. When I think of Varley, I think of "Beatnick Bayou." In the case of "Press Enter," the idea of the sentient computer is not given a fresh turn.

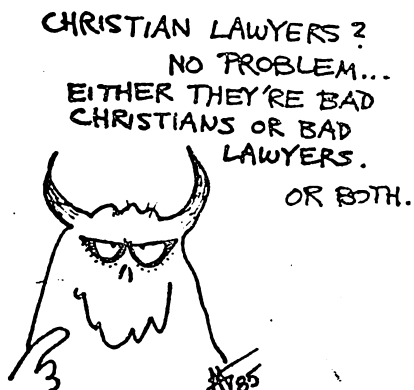
The first 50 pages of The Integral Trees is a "travel-log"? Trees? Travel-log? Or is it just me?

Kim Stanley Robinson's "Black Air" is not SF and barely fantasy? Since when has that been a roadblock to getting published? The first example that comes to mind is the Grimes series by A. Bertram Chandler.

((The Integral Trees a travel-log? Ohhh, an unintentional pun. Didn't even think about it when I wrote the review. // "Black Air" was an okay story (like one I expect an English professor to write), and can see no reason why it wouldn't be published. But certainly not nominated for a Hugo award.))

Alexis Gilliland: In connection with fan art, your remark that you haven't seen any of my 'serious stuff' is entirely accurate. I don't do serious stuff, only cartoons... although I take my cartooning seriously, if you can make the distinction.

((I certainly can. Thanks for the art pieces.))



FILMS

Craig Ledbetter: I too was disappointed that William Sylvester wasn't brought back to star in 2010. Of course in today's Hollywood, only star power is recognized in their quest for the Almighty Buck.

Leeper's comments on Twilight Zone and its attempt to display originality were fun to read. I personally had fond memories of the series until I caught most of the episodes again in re-runs. Most of them hit you over the head with their moralizing, and the attempts at comedy were overbearing and just plain not entertaining. I'll be interested in hearing what he has to say about the rebirth of anthology shows on the tube this year.

I thought Conan the Barbarian was quite good also. I'd heard so much was bad about the film that I wasn't expecting to enjoy it. Turned out just the opposite was true. The score was truly fantastic, especially during the rousing finale when the Conan Gang raids Doom's palace. Haven't seen Conan the Destroyer so can't say a thing in its regard. A small correction to Mark's article: he gave credit to Carlo Rambaldi for the giant snake in the first Conan movie. Nick Alder of Alien fame was the effects man responsible for it, not Rambaldi.

Dennis Fischer: Would someone tell Mark Leeper that John Milius did not "make" Apocalypse Now? Milius certainly deserves some credit for co-writing it, but the final script, conception, and direction were all Francis Coppola's, and it is silly and misleading to say otherwise.

Richard Brandt: The bane of my existence is ill-formed critical writing. Mark Leeper,

who should know better, in reviewing Red Dawn says John Milius "previously made Apocalypse Now...." That was a Francis Ford Coppola film. While Milius did write the first draft of the screenplay, it was extensively rewritten by Mr. Coppola. Mark compounds the error in another review by comparing the last thirds of Conan and Apocalypse Now, which he again says was "done" by Milius. In fact, it is only the FIRST part of Apocalypse Now which is supposed to resemble Milius' original treatment.

John Howard: The Movie reviews are well-written, but I question their relevance so long after the fact. I think anyone who has any interest in films like Dune and Red Dawn will have seen them long ago and formed their own opinions. They were well-written though, weren't they?

((Not everyone sees the movies as they come out -- I don't always have time to do so myself. So I run those reviews for others like me who, when they do have time to hit a theatre, find that the film is no longer being shown anywhere. And we don't have cable here (that is, a hook-up to where our apartment is situated).

Sally Syrjala: As to the review of 2010, I am not sure that I found fault with the film for not having given concrete answers. Sometimes the best answer a book/film can give is provide the machinery to start the mind working so that each person who reads or sees the production provides their own answer to the situation. I much prefer this approach than one which details everything out as if the reader/viewer were of kindergarten mentality and needed to be shown in exquisite detail how things are. Sometimes this approach may fail in that it does not show the way in a clear-cut manner. However, I would much prefer to watch this type of film than one which looked down upon the intelligence of the audience. I thought 2010 was one of the best films of the past holiday season.

As to Dune, I have not been a follower of the Dune series. In fact, I have not read a book in the saga. Yet I had no trouble at all following the plot line of the film. I was enthralled from the opening sequence until the closing. It was a film which made me enter into its being so that I could absorb it. This I found quite refreshing. I get so tired of books and films which take only a small percentage of my attention. A film or book which requires a great deal of it makes me part of it and increases my enjoyment of the production. This was a pleasant surprise to me. I had seen the review which said it was a terrible film. This seemed to be all the film reviewers could say about it. All their negativity was almost enough to keep me away. However, I have learned that the opinion of "experts" can be flawed. I am quite happy I chose to make my own decision on this film. It is an experience that I would not have wanted to have missed.

Mary Long: On the movie front I fare quite well, as we do have cable. I have recently seen Star Trek III, Last Starfighter, Time Bandits, the three Supermans, The Keep (excellent, but a pity it didn't do better

than it did), and many others. The two Conan films were superb visually (Frazetta come to life, certainly), and beautifully photographed...but the dialogue! I thought the second one was interesting in that there was quite a strong female lead. One critic (I wish I could remember his name) pointed out that logically one would expect Conan to bed her, but he didn't; the critic thought this was a flaw. I'd like to see someone tackle the Grey Mouser stories, but I have no idea on who could play the characters.

((Maybe Pearce Brosnan as the Grey Mouser, and Robert Conrad (you know, the guy whole played Cannon) as Fafhrd.))

Mark Schulzinger: Dune was, I felt a good movie and I agree that one had to have read the book to really understand the film. About half way through it the director suddenly realized that he had only covered about a quarter of the novel. As a result the remainder of the film was somewhat sketchily done. The director decided to concentrate on the intricacies of the Italian renaissance feud rather than on Herbert's silly Jungian musings and that probably is why the sets looked the way they did. The movie did a good job of telling a story without setting itself up for umpty-ump sequels.

Diane Fox: Mark Leeper's review of Superman III I agree with heartily. I read the novelization of this first. It was by William Kotzwinkle, who couldn't write a bad book if he tried. He has a zany, eccentric sense of humour, and managed to make the silly incidents of the film mildly funny. So, despite warnings, I did see the film, and disliked it most heartily. The first and second Superman films were excellent of their kind, but the third was a good example of detestable sequelitis.

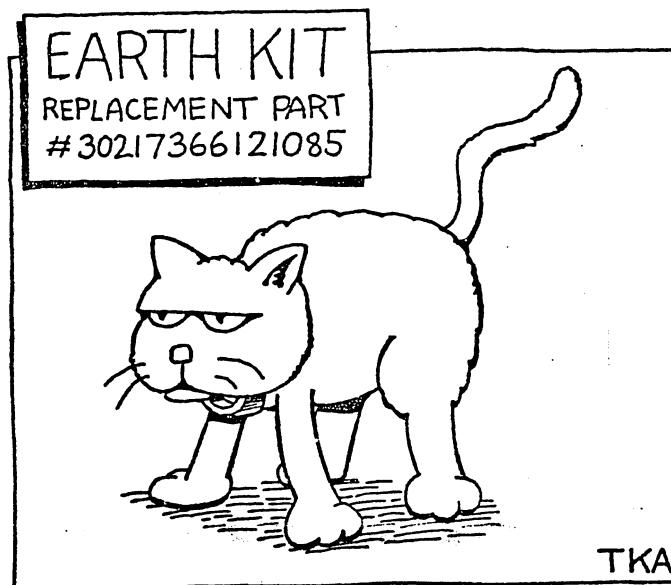
Have you heard about the showing of The Haunting of Hell House in a South American country? The country's president had the same name (Belasco) as the villain of the film. He also had a wooden leg--and the film's villain is eventually revealed as a dwarf who had his legs cut off and replaced by artificial legs so that he would be tall and impressive. The locals thought the film hysterically funny and it was a sell-out at each showing. But the president was not amused.

I saw The Day After on video. I'd heard of how mediocre it was but found it to be a quite decent disaster film--the accuracy of the depiction of radiation sickness and other side-effects was commendable. I think most people didn't understand how dangerous and ugly radiation sickness was until this film was released. There was on excellent scene--when people saw the missiles whooshing up out of the earth--the horror was mixed with awe. Of course the film didn't depict nuclear winter, which was a point against its accuracy.

The reason this film was received with so much interest in America would be due not only to publicity but also to Americans feeling responsible. The outrage and the hostility shown by many people seemed to be a clear indication of guilt feelings. This is because Americans have the illusion that they would have some say in the matter. Australians reacted differently to the film; it aroused some interest here and most people

think they should see it once, but it didn't do better than any decent disaster movie. This is because we don't feel we can do much about nuclear war (except to say that it's a bad thing). Or maybe Australians are simply more apathetic or less excitable than Americans? There would also have been the "local pride" element ("Gee, they made a movie in our town!") that would encourage people in Kansas and the areas around it to boost the film.

((Some interesting thoughts about the film The Day After. I tend to think you're right about the American people feeling guilty and responsible about a lot of the troubles around the world.))



HUGO GERNSBACK

Robert Whitaker Sirignano: Hugo Gernsback did cause a number of problems for the genre but he did isolate and establish the genre. The other reason he is "venerated" is because of some overly affected fans who thought his actions were of considerable merit. Going over the few fan histories where the development of fandom is given some scope, it's hard to avoid Gernsback's name and the persistent associations of the old Amazing Stories. How many of the "big" writers got their start because of that magazine?

Cathy Howard: The Gernsback debate was interesting. I tend to go along with the opinion he should be blessed for expanding the field rather than cursed for fencing it in.

People complain about hack SF giving the field a bad name. I put this complaint in the same compartment with demands that fans wear 3-piece suits to cons in order to impress the general public. Could it be I'm a touch defensive of hack sf? Perhaps. What comes to my mind every time I hear the phrase is the hack series which I got hooked on and bought every book as soon as it hit the stands. Sure it was trash, and I would sometimes laugh and shake my head at various inept passages; but I read fiction for entertainment, not to teach me something (I read non-fiction for that), nor simply to admire how nicely an author put a story together. I want to be entertained. Period.

Richard Brandt: Just a little factual note on Evelyn Leeper's Gernsback piece: there is another novel by Hugo extant. It's called Ultimate World. I believe it was first published posthumously in the early 70s by one of the major paperback houses, and thus may still be found with diligent searching through used bookstores or hucksters' tables.

Buck Coulson: A correction to the Gernsback article; he has two surviving works, the other one being Ultimate World, published by Walker in 1972. And while Gernsback's introduction of a specialty field of science fiction might have caused some authors to lose sales (how do we know?) and get smaller advances, he also caused them to sell stories. Look at the science fiction/fantasy section of your newsstand sometime; no other type of fiction is getting that many books displayed. Including "mainstream". Furthermore, science fiction is very close to being the only paying market for short stories. A few mainstream magazines include one story per issue, there are two or three detective mags out at any one time, and there are still six science fiction/fantasy mags out (Analog, Asimov's, Amazing, F&SF, Twilight Zone, and Night Cry, the latter a quarterly advertising horror but publishing other fantasy as well). Plus Whispers, which amounts to an irregular prozine, and lots of semi-pro outlets which pay for stories. Gernsback hasn't done too bad; science fiction came from a minor branch of adventure fiction to a major share of the publishing market after he "ghettoized" it.

Brian Earl Brown: Evelyn and Mark Leeper debate the merits of Hugo Gernsback: Did he help or hurt science fiction? It's a debate that will go on for as long as there is both High and Low Literature. Low or popular literature has no class, though it has a huge market. High literature, what appeals to the academics, has lots of class but questionable readability. You have to be an academic to appreciate it.

Did Uncle Hugo ruin SF by making it a pulp genre? I don't think it matters. The historical processes were such that if not Gernsback then someone else would have launched an SF pulp. ARGOSY, BLUE BOOK, and WEIRD TALES were all publishing recognizable SF before Gernsback. E.E. Smith wrote "The Exorcist" of SF -- The Skylark of Space before Amazing Stories appeared. Pulp magazines like Doc Savage and Dusty Ayers were science fictional. A gadget-oriented futuristic fiction was in the air. Gernsback merely took the first risk.

*While people think that Stephen King created the modern horror genre, it was William Blatty's The Exorcist which was first and paved the way for King's creations. The Skylark of Space shucked the bounds of Earth in such a way that changed forever the shape of futurist fiction.

Did Gernsback hurt SF? That question assumes that, in the absence of pulp SF, a mainstream SF would have flourished. It seems debatable in part because the distance between pulp publishers and mainstream publishers was so great that it was as if they

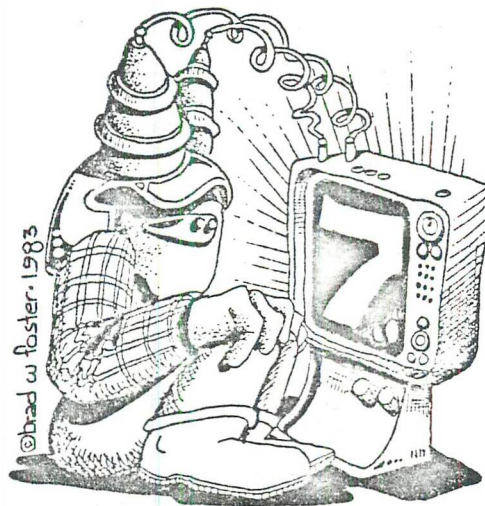
existed in separate dimensions. And frankly, there wasn't much SF published by the mainstream at all. It was only as pulps faded into paperback books and all publishers got bought out by conglomerates that SF has emerged as a best-selling mainstream entry. Furthermore, the SF written by successful mainstream writers (Doris Lessing's Shikasta, Gore Vidal's Kalki, etc.) have been genuine disasters. Horribly bad SF. Even the highly praised Riddley Walker seems only a rewrite of Pangborn's Davey.

I certainly believe that without Gernsback SF would have had better acceptance or better writers.

The only thing, I think, that Gernsback did do that was at all important was to create fandom. It was Gernsback's idea for boosting circulation to form the SF League, forming clubs (like LASFS, etc), and more than anything else letting fans know that there are other fans out there who like to talk about SF. Gernsback didn't create SF, he created fandom. As fans we should honor him for that.

Lyn Hickman: Evelyn Leeper should put her head in a sack. Somewhere upstairs I have a listing of all the science fiction that Hugo Gernsback published in other zines before he started Amazing, but I don't feel like looking for it right now. Besides, it is too long to put in this letter.

((Not a sack, but maybe Evelyn could have done a bit more research. However, I have a feeling that she might have been playing "devil's advocate" when she wrote the article. It is an opinion. And the nice thing about publishing this commentary was that it did get a number of people to write in.))



Dennis Fischer: The Leepers arguing back and forth on Hugo Gernsback turned out to be a familiar debate. Interestingly enough (at least to me), neither one pointed out a rather plausible reason for the Hugos to be named after Hugo--his part in creating science fiction fandom in the first place by encouraging clubs to get together in Amazing Stories (and aptly chronicled in All Our Yesterdays and The Immortal Storm.) Gernsback was never a great editor, though he did bring many obscure, 18th century SF authors' work to light and he did help define science

fiction as something other than just another branch of the fantastic. While John Campbell was a better editor and brought higher standards to the field, without Gernsback there probably wouldn't have been a Campbell, and so on down the line. Gernsback's ghettoization may have retarded the field, but without such an identity, many of the works SF fans love would not have been written.

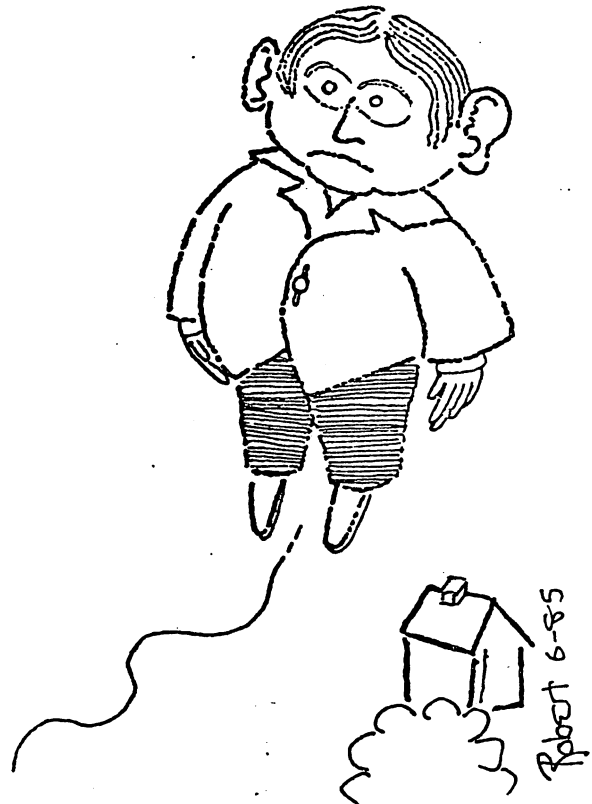
Now the only things retarding the field are the things that have retarded any field: it is limited by what publishers are willing to publish (based on what they feel will sell), and by what writers are willing to write (based on the same thing). Writers know ahead of time (if they have any smarts, and they usually do) that certain types of fiction will not sell, and they also know that some of their work will sell, even if they don't put in the extra effort of an additional polish or working to give their efforts better literary qualities. The quality of writing we're seeing these days is largely based on the exigencies of the writers and the market. Some writers (like Gene Wolfe, William Gibson, or Norman Spinrad) are willing to work harder in order to benefit in the long run (i.e., produce a work which is going to stay around and continue to bring in revenue to the writer), and others are not. All the grousing in the world is probably not going to change that, but at least reviewers can turn people on to works of quality (which are rare; even good artists can produce inferior work) and to point out what qualities are lacking in a mediocre work so that a set of standards might be set up to distinguish what works and what does not. Unfortunately, very many science fiction fans that I've met aren't particularly discriminating in their literary tastes of haven't broadened them a bit by reading outside the field. They would be hard-put to distinguish the difference in quality between a good Robert Silverberg novel and a typical Lin Carter foray. Novels about human beings don't even interest them. But then, even a hack writer needs an audience.

Mark Schulzinger: I agree with Evelyn Leeper that, prior to the founding of Amazing Stories, science fiction was published in general adventure magazines. HG started publishing stories which were specifically science oriented in his radio mags while the other magazines tended to publish stories we might rightly call fantasies. The coining of the term "Scientifiction" and the publication of Amazing had the advantage of creating, not a ghetto (which is a place where Jews are kept--not stories), but a showplace where a person interested in the genre could find nothing but that type of story. One might just as well say that the inception of the detective, western, romance, baseball, etc. magazines did a disservice to the followers of those types of stories by segregating them from the mass of fiction in general.

I was going through a file of Fantastic the other day and came across an article by Alexi Panshin that addressed the issue more directly. He compared Gernsback's conception of "scientifiction" with "science fiction" and deduced that the original standards held sway for about three years. To the end of his days Gernsback deplored what had hap-

pened to his sterile creation: he really wanted something like two-thirds science and one-third story. He also wanted to heavily differentiate such "scientifiction" not only from adventure fiction but also from certain other sf stories. This led, eventually, to the creation of Air Wonder Stories in which he intended to publish nothing but sf concerning air travel. Gernsback, unfortunately, failed to perceive the impact of scientific progress in all areas of life even while, in his era, the development of the electric light, the telephone, and the automobile revolutionized society more than the invention of the toilet paper.

Milt Stevens: I've never really accepted the accusations against Hugo Gernsback for ghettoizing science fiction. While authors had to write material that could be understood by "the man on the street", a lot of ideas couldn't be used. The field couldn't have developed without developing a specialized audience which could deal with more esoteric ideas. Even today, you couldn't loan a copy of Starline Rising to your next door neighbor and expect him to understand it. The SF field simply wouldn't have developed without some degree of specialization.



THE ARTWORK

Robert Runte: Glad to see that Steven Fox has stopped his practice of simultaneous submissions, eh? So much for his assurances that this cover was unique to NEW CANADIAN FANDOM #7. (And too bad I didn't see LL #15 before I put out this issue.) Well, no problem, I guess. We faneds are lucky to get free art at all...

((Free art? Technically, no, though for contributors copies in payment, it is almost like getting it free. I agree, it is nice to have artists sending stuff in regularly, even if it is a multiple submission. I find it interesting to see how other editors use it.))

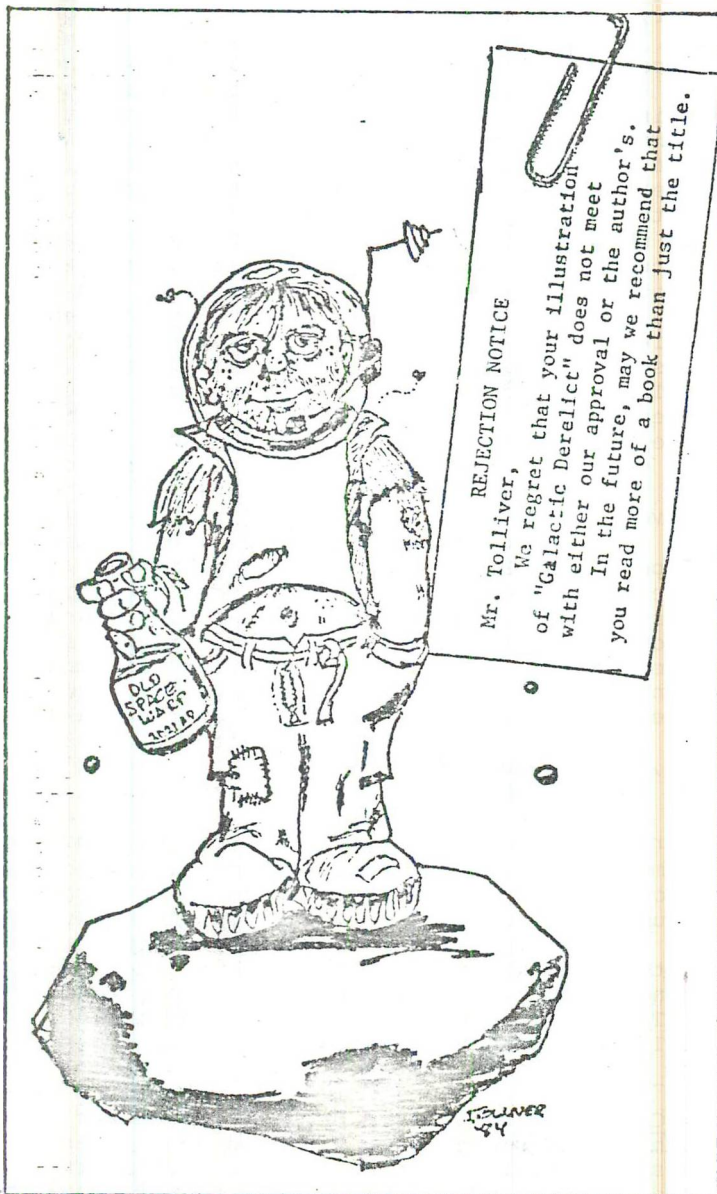
Robert Whitaker Sirignano: The cartoon on page 3 is indeed by me, as I recognize the handwriting on it. I don't recall it at all, but since I've done a large number of items, it is happenstance that I would forget a few here and there. Hey, and get the spelling of my name right, okay?

((Sorry about the name, Robert. It has been corrected. And thanks for the new art.))

Jeffrey Tolliver: Thank Sally Syrjala and Ben Indick for me. I need all the egoboo/ego-stroking I can get. (Hmmm, I seem to remember a nice comment about a previous issue...a lot of zipatone on the cover....)

While we're at it, throw in an errata regarding a lapse in giving credits for page two illo in the Norton Issue.

((Gee, you do have a good memory. I'm re-printing the "Galactic Derelict" illustration here for all to see, with appropriate credits.))



Enclosed is a sort of gift...or curse. After all, who really wants to receive a collection of "interesting" people like these? It's a duplicate of another I have and "expendable." If this fails to show what

Addamsophilia is, nothing will. (Just don't get it wet, keep it out of strong light, don't feed it after midnight...heh, heh, heh!)

Now if you'll excuse me, it's time to feed the cat to the mutant goldfish. Here kitty, kitty, kitty....

((Thanks, Jeff, for the copy of Charles Addams' Homebodies. So far it hasn't tried to eat any-one, but there are a couple of dogs in the neighborhood I wouldn't mind being rid of. Maybe if I left the book out overnight....))

David Palter: You parenthetically note on page 3 that you are not sure what Mel. White's back cover illo is supposed to be. Someone is fishing for a mechanical fish using a floppy disk as bait. The fish is supposed to swallow the floppy disk, at which point the disk is read by the fish's internal computer, and it contains a program which instructs the fish to hold onto the fish-hook with its mechanical jaws, so the fisher can reel in the fish, whereupon the fish will be re-cycled and have its components used in the manufacture of vitally needed war materiel, to aid in the ongoing interstellar conflict with the perfidious Trofts (see p. 19). I hope that this is all clear to you know, unless Mel. herself would like to speak up. Where the mechanical fish comes from in the first place is not entirely clear, but there's only so much information you can encode in an illo, anyway. It could have been made by an eccentric tribe of dwarves. You never know.

Richard Brandt: I love the Mel. White back cover. I'm afraid I can't help you interpret it, except to note that, unlike the fish, I am hooked on diskettes.

Brian Earl Brown: Much of the art, as usual, failed to excite me. Jeeves, Mel. White, and Fox are always good. Geoffrey Everts' piece on page 25 was very good, and so was Denise's illo (and I'm not saying that just because I'm married to her). I also liked how you worked the article title around the art. It fit, and was appropriate. The little thing on page 11 is definitely by Robert Whitaker Sirignano.

Steven Fox: One issue that does bother me is that most of the art I see in LL #17 reproduced poorly, where on some pages you used better reproduction. I may be a bit of a purist, but I like the reproduction in a zine to be at least fair. Or maybe it's because the two pieces of mine used were not recognizable. I should suggest you maybe get a different xerox machine, ... forget it.

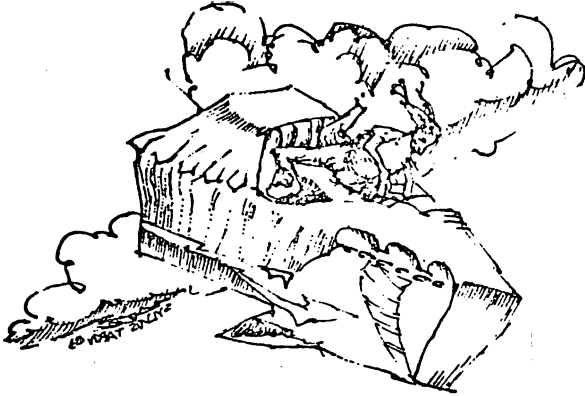
((I have two printers, one cheap, the other expensive. To put out the massive zines I do I cut corners at times. I am trying to do better though. And I would love to have my own press ...maybe if I win the lottery.))

I noticed that some of the art was backwards! The cover art had the name of the artist backwards, also art on pages 4, 14, & 15. What happened?

Margaret Middleton: Why are most Sylvus Tarn's illustrations printed mirror-image? Or does she sign them that way, like Berke Breathed does "Bloom County"?

John Howard: There were a few really nice illustrations scattered around in LL #17, and I especially liked the ones by Sylvus Tarn (male or female?).

((Yes, Sylvus Tarn signs her name backwards. It threw me for a minute when I received her first few submissions until I noticed that all of her pieces were signed backwards. When we talked about some special assignments at CON-FUSION last year, she took notes in both directions. And, Sylvus is definitely female.))



DAVID BRIN'S "Dogma of Otherness" SPEECH

Mark Bernstein: Thanks for reprinting the Brin text. Prenting responsibilities kept me away from the speech, so this is my first experience of the material. It's a real tribute to his skill with words that it's taken me three days to figure out exactly why I disagree with him.

The panel recounting which begins the piece bothered me from the start, but on first review, and second, and third, all the logic seemed to add up. I finally tracked the problem down to the very first logical leap. The problem with Brin's reasoning is this: "Those same people who disputed expert claims of lack of dolphin intelligence would have unhesitatingly and unquestioningly embraced any expert claim that dolphins ARE intelligent!" We do not automatically dispute all experts. We only dispute those experts whose claims conflict with what we want to believe. So why wasn't anyone able to dispute the Dogma of Otherness? Because we really don't have a Dogma of Otherness. We have a dogma which states that we have a Dogma of Otherness, particularly in fandom. We tend to hold an unholy pride in our open-mindedness, so intense that we freeze up and go blank when faced with statements that imply that there are limits to the level of our open-mindedness, or that open-mindedness might have a negative aspect.

But is there really a negative aspect? I think not. Let's look at that again. Brin states that a belief in the merit of all viewpoints automatically implies a belief that viewpoints that do not accept the merit of other viewpoints are inferior. On the face of it, a paradox. The trouble is, it only survives as a paradox if you assume a belief in the equal merit of all viewpoints. If you soften that just a little, to a belief that all viewpoints have some merit, but some have more merit than others, the statement remains true, but loses its paradoxical aspect. There may well be people out

there who honestly believe that all cultural viewpoints, even that of Nazi Germany, have equal merit. I've never met them, but if they exist I will happily leave the task of unravelling the paradox to them.

Some people may say in response to all this: "You're saying that cultures that do not accept the merit of other viewpoints are inferior! You're a cultural chauvinist!" These people are absolutely correct. (I hope nobody is about to break into a chorus of "America, the Beautiful". There is a clear difference in this discussion between culture and country, a difference which Brin obviously recognizes.) Do I consider open-mindedness a superior mode of thinking? Yes. Is this brought about by cultural bias? Good question. I can easily point to all the major influences, from my father up through Heinlein and Sturgeon, which led to my intense belief in getting as much information as possible, from as many different angles as possible, in the process of forming an opinion about something. I also think, however, that a logical case can be made for the value of this view, based on such concepts as the desirability of knowledge and the value of more effective decision-making. The trouble is, these concepts, along with any others I might bring up, are culture dependent. A moment's thought should reveal that a logical argument cannot be culture independent, because nothing, save our most basic physical and emotional needs, is culture independent. The question, therefore, will always remain unanswerable, and I will hold to my possibly culturally biased belief that my value system is superior for reasons that are not all culturally biased.

The second section of Brin's essay ties together two things which are not inseparable, those being our view of the world and our view of ourselves. To start with, how did not being the physical center of the universe immediately make us mediocre? (I see no other way to interpret the phrase "Copernican 'Principle of Mediocrity'".) I have to get personal here, as I can't claim to speak for anyone else. I acknowledge and enjoy the positive aspect of the Principle. I make it a practice to question assumptions, to seek facts, and to shake of prejudices and taboos. I do not, however, take the principle personally. I don't know about you, fella, but I think I'm pretty special, and I think the human race is pretty special for what it has accomplished with the resources and talents it has. All of the above is meant mainly to illustrate my first sentence, not specifically refute Brin. The arguments used, both here and in the essay, are too lacking in any sort of semantic rigor to be meaningful, in that they center around "special", an extremely slippery word.

The rest of the piece elicits no comment, as I found nothing to disagree with. I like the concept of "Caretaker."

Cathy Howard: David Brin's speech was a highly enjoyable read. The Dogma of Otherness is definitely in existence. It has its good points, as he points out, that it enables various cultures to live harmoniously (more or less) together. The bad point is an individual who tries to go along with it fully will have no firm base of beliefs to build on. This is not to say the base cannot

have ideas added or removed, but the base is needed. To believe everything is to believe nothing, as it eventually all cancels out.

On the dolphins in particular, I believe they have reached the stage of legend in regard to the belief in their intelligence. No matter how much proof is offered now or in the future that the dolphins are just intelligent animals, it will be rejected by the majority of people who want to (and will) believe dolphins are as intelligent as humans.

Peter Fergusson: My congratulations to David Brin on "The Dogma of Otherness." It presented a truly unique insight -- not to mention giving me one hell of an idea for a short story...a very black humored one.

David Palter: David Brin's article is excellent, most insightful. I would like to add, to those people who would like to disbelieve the existing scientific studies and observations regarding the intelligence of dolphins, just because they theoretically might be wrong, that even though they might be wrong (as anything might be wrong) they are still the best data we currently have, and unless you have actual data or reasoning to specifically support a contrary opinion, you are abandoning reason if you do not at least provisionally accept these studies and their conclusions. Of course, this might not prove too great a discouragement; many people happily abandon reason and some are even proud to do so. That is their privilege but nonetheless I have no respect for such people. I do, however, respect dolphins. They are, apparently, much less than humanly intelligent, but still a noble species in their own way--as I am sure David Brin would agree.

Brian Earl Brown: Pretty good speech by Brin. Sad to learn that dolphins aren't smarter than we are. Sad to think that this is as good as it gets for intelligent life on earth. I was hoping for better. The thought of rapist mallards is more than I can handle.

Clifton Amsbury: David Brin's "Doctrine of Otherness" seems a corollary of two wider themes from different sections of our culture, and rouses echoes of other corollaries yet. On the one hand there's the liberal politician's rule not to criticize (rouse the opposition of partisans of) anyone or anything but the specific opponent of the moment (like Hart giving the republicans their best attacks on Mondale and ignoring the fact that the Reaganites were the real opposition), and on the other hand what I have to tell my classes about the scientific attitude. For all of the past history of mankind we've been seeking for hard and fast anchors in our dogmas (dogmata, right!). Now we have a teaching in the scientific tradition that nothing is sacred in that it should be examined for itself without preconceptions; and that everything is sacred in that it should be considered for itself without preconceptions, and that no final hard and fast conclusions should be drawn. We can firmly say, "These are the facts we

know now. Go out and try to change them, but meanwhile, stand by them." It's that last sentence that people miss.

That is how science differs from technology. Technology has to be correct because it is our body of knowledge of how to. It must get proper results or it's not technology.

And on questions like the dolphins, people toss our seeking back to us with hard and fast statements that we shouldn't make hard and fast statements. Well, it is true that our tests of cetaceans are truly not culture-free.

One other corollary I thought of is cultural relativism which at its best tells anthropologists they'll get better results if they don't come across too strongly as one of the master race, and at its worst insists that no culture is better than any other culture (or society).

Steven Fox: David Brin's article was insightful. It showed, at least to me, that even SF fans, who in some cases always let everyone know how intelligent they are, are just as liable to fall into wrong assumptions about things due to ignorance or being non-objective. I'm speaking mainly about the article where he has to argue with fans in the audience concerning dolphin intelligence. It is amazing how some people will believe anything that fits some romantic notion of the world they live in, even though facts say otherwise. Or to quote Robert Heinlein from Time Enough For Love (p. 240):

"If it can't be expressed in figures, it is not science; it is opinion."

Richard Brandt: David Brin's speech-piece was wonderful but he doesn't address one of its implications for the view of science commonly expressed in the popular press, which is that concepts such as ancient astronauts, esp. Velikovskian world-collision, UFOs, and whatnot, deserve equal consideration with concepts whose real-world applicability is much better supported by scientific research...because, after all, anything that's propounded as established fact is "dogma," and we all know that since any expert can be wrong, all ideas and theories have equal validity....



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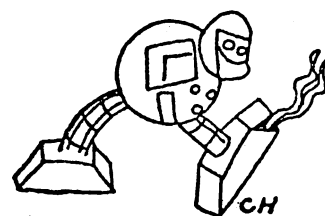
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Stanley Schmidt
Bruce Schnaier
Clifford Simak
Steve Simmons
Dick Spellman
David Stein
Anna O'Connell
Joni Stopa

John Thiel
Brad Westervelt
Hania Wojtowicz
And many others
whom I've prob-
ably forgotten.

A REQUEST FROM ANDRE NORTON

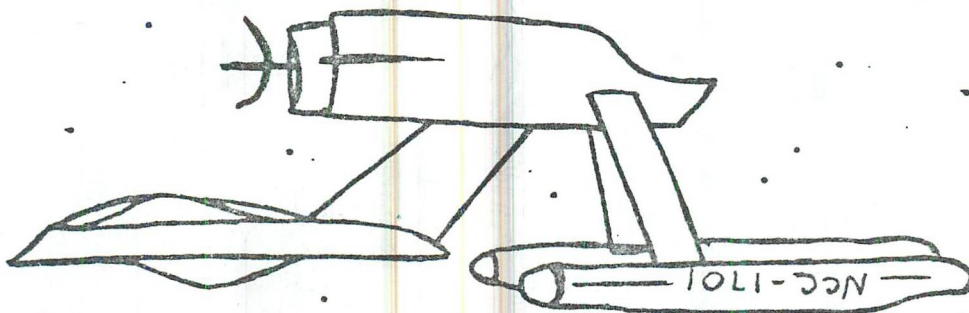
My agent, Larry Sternig, and I are considering at the present moment some spin-offs from the *Witch World* series. They would consist of audio tapes, jewelry and stationary. I am trying to locate a list of major SF & F stores nation-wide in order to establish distribution of a planned, occasional newsletter. If you have any ideas on this, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Andre Norton

I have already suggested to Andre that she take out ads in Locus and SF Chronicle, and have given her the names of a couple of hucksters and bookstore owners. If anyone has other suggestions, send them to:

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MR. SULU; HAVE YOU BEEN DRINKING
ON DUTY AGAIN?

