

# NIEKAS

## 35









# NIEKAS

THE QUARTER CENTURY FANZINE

ART

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## PLEASE HELP

We are re-evaluating our layout and want to make it more easily readable and, as long it does not interfere with the first, make it better looking. We are trying to decide between typefaces (san serif like Letter Gothic vs. serif like Courier), two column vs. three columns, and justified right hand margins vs. ragged ones. Please write to indicate your preferences.

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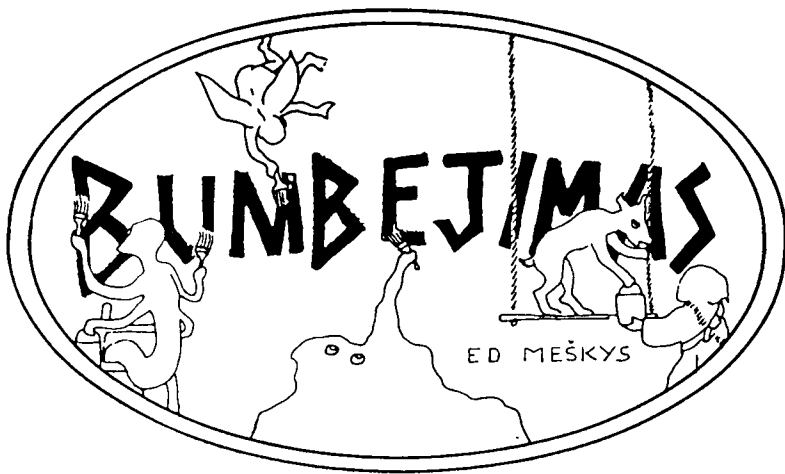
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# NIEKAS





GN AND AP

I just finished reading Marion Zimmer Bradley's Survey Ship, which had been published about five years ago.

The initial premise of the book struck me as incredibly stupid, but once you got past that the story itself was excellent.

We have had interstellar travel for a short time and mankind is in desperate need of habitable colony worlds. Virtuoso explorers, like virtuoso concert musicians and ballet dancers, must start training at the age of five and must devote virtually every waking moment to their training. A special international academy is established and every year the best one hundred children from all over the world are recruited.

The pressure and attrition are very high and only a few of the hundred survive to graduation at about the age of 19. And even then only a fraction of the graduates are sent out.

Each student picks about three specialties in which he or she becomes super proficient. Game theory goes into the selection. Each bases his or her choices on aptitudes and trying to guess which combination, when meshed with those of the other students, will buy him or her a billet on the survey ship. Specialties include such fields as geology, navigation, astrophysics, computer technology, surgery, and spaceship maintenance. At least two crew members are proficient in each specialty.

It is from this point on that I really question the premise of the story. Each survey ship has room for at most ten crew members, so

that is the maximum number that can be selected no matter how good the class. Those graduates who don't get to go are qualified for top administrative jobs on Earth. On the other hand, a number like four or five, I forget which, is considered the minimum to crew a ship. If not enough survive the selection process no ship goes out that year. Classes are not mixed because only those who studied together for 15 years can work together in the tough conditions of the ship.

The successful candidates are selected only the night before graduation, and learn whether they made it only at the ceremony itself.

The next day they are bundled off to their ship in orbit. They have never visited it, a prototype, or even a mockup before, and have only book knowledge of the ship. They are given no guidance on where to look for possible habitable worlds, or even told where the last few crews went to look. They only know where colony worlds have been found. Once they leave Earth orbit they are totally on their own to select a direction in which to search and to solve any problems they might encounter. Two way communication could well be impossible, but in the story they do not even send back one way signals or automated report capsules, so that Earth would know why they failed and where they found no planets. After all, such negative information would be valuable by showing future crews where not to look.

The ship is very poorly designed from the human engineering perspective. The direction of artificial gravity changes abruptly as they go from room to room,

causing extreme disorientation. The ship is not at all designed for safe maneuvering by the crew, especially in an emergency situation.

The story begins the night before graduation. It covers the selection of a crew of six and their problems getting started on their trip. It ends when they successfully leave the Solar System.

They decide to explore the sector where colony worlds have already been found. They find out they are drastically off course when a meteor causes major damage to one room of the ship. As they try to figure out what is wrong, more and more equipment malfunctions. Even though they are still well within the Solar System, they have no communication with home Base and can get no help to solve their problem--or warn next year's crew of the malfunction of the ship!

The cause of their problem is plausible. Due to a design flaw in the ship computer, or its operating software, the computer cannot handle fixed point numbers but treats them as floating point numbers. Thus it gives input data totally wrong values.

When I was doing scientific programming at the Livermore Lab 20 years ago, I had to be very careful to distinguish between the two kinds of numbers. By the time of this story people normally do not have to worry about the distinction, but due to a flaw in the package provided they suddenly find themselves having to distinguish. I find it hard to believe that such a major flaw could escape detection for so long, but it is certainly possible. But, as I said, I was really bothered by the fact that they couldn't turn to Base for help or even tell Base of their problems so as to warn later flights.

If the book has so many flaws in logic, why am I bothering to write about it? It is because the six characters are fascinating people and their interactions make the book very rewarding reading.

And the character Ching is an interesting precursor of Heinlein's Friday. Ching is referred to as a GN, short for Genetically Engineered. I found this term more appropriate than Heinlein's AP, for Artificial Person. Like the AP, the GN is created by combining several people's germ plasm, and further modifying it. The resulting egg is returned to the host mother rather than being brought to term in an artificial womb. The process is

initiated at the mother's request and begins with her germ plasm. Also the GNs are not property but are considered the children of the mothers who bore them.

They are intellectually superior to normal human beings and have none of the minor imperfections that plague all of us. Thus their bodies operate at peak efficiency and they are not plagued by any diseases. They are not, however, the supermen that the AP's are.

GN's are the products of a new technology, and Ching is the first to come through the pipeline of the academy. Each succeeding class has more of them, however, and it is expected that eventually all of the Academy students will be GN's.

Ching is feared and mistrusted by the rest of the crew. As a result she is extremely shy and has never made any friends. Again, would this be possible in a closed society of fewer than one hundred over a period of fourteen years? It seemed very plausible while I was reading the book, but now in retrospect I worry about this point. It is interesting to note that Marion wrote this book several years before Heinlein wrote Friday.

Another product of genetic engineering, who proceeded both Ching and Friday, was Spock. His parents, coming from two different species, could not crossbreed but could have offspring only with the help of a laboratory. He too is superior to normal human beings and is alienated from human society. Thanks to Anne Braude for pointing this out to me.

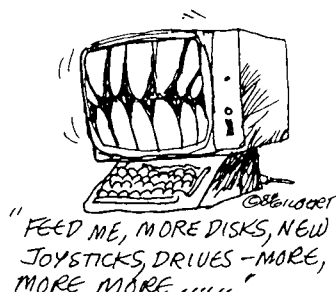
As in much of Heinlein's and Bradley's fiction the society is one in which casual sex of all types is routine. Strong pair bonding is discouraged by the Academy, and in fact normal practice is to accept only one member of any such pair. Thus one of the characters is separated from his male lover and has to come to terms with the fact that both other males on the ship are strongly heterosexual and not likely to satisfy his sexual needs. Marion did such a good job of portraying him that I could almost understand his attraction for males and his inability to relate to females.

One very good touch is the characterization of Peak, the tall surgeon. He realised that while he had excellent training in surgery he had no real experience and would be hard pressed to cut up his friends in a emergency. Moira, who had some esper talent, also had to come to

terms with that and make use of it to learn why certain machines, like the gym's gravity control, were failing.

Making music together is a major form of recreation and spiritual uplift for the crew. But in this future, computer composition is so advanced that human composers have become obsolete. When one of the characters decides to try composing a new chamber work, he has grave doubts about being able to create something as good as the machine-composed works in their library. Even tho I yield to few in my admiration for the computer, I find it hard to believe that a machine could ever surpass a Bach or a Mozart.

In short, while I find the logic of this story to be seriously flawed, the book itself is definitely worth reading for its excellent characterization. All six characters are very likeable and their interactions are fascinating. I especially liked Ching. While Friday is sharp, tough, yet loving when appropriate, Ching is also sharp, but is very hesitant and unsure of herself. I suppose it is a streak of male chauvinism in me, but while I find Friday admirable I find Ching lovable.



#### HUBRIS MORTIFIED

Last ish I bragged that we had our production problems worked out and were back on a regular semiannual schedule. And the ish with that statement was 7 months late! \*sigh\* I will no longer predict frequency tho my real goal is three a year. #34 was available at Boskone tho it was not mailed until the first week of May. I hope to fix that problem, too. But watch the Ghods strike me down again!

I said that I finally made the decision to go ahead with a computer. Well, it came to pass after #34 went to bed but long before it was distributed.

I first saw a talking computer at the 1983 National Federation of the

Blind convention. It was an Osborn modified by Avos Systems of St. Paul MN. The package included a specially written talking word processing program, a screen reading program which would make most CP/M software (a large body of commercial software designed to run on any computer which had a CP/M operating system, virtually all personal computers of the generation that preceeded the IBM PC) talk, a seven-cassette tutorial to get you up to speed, and a couple of games you could play to get practice on the machine. Avos also sponsored a users group which was already generating talking software such as spelling checker and a checkbook manager. The cost was \$3k and I had almost enough saved to get it. I saw it in July and it was going to be demonstrated again at the NH state con of the NFB in September. I planned to take one last look at that time and probably buy it. Then a few weeks before the con Osborn went belly up!

By next July, in Phoenix, when I saw Avos again, they had transferred the adaptations to something called the Zorba. They said it was made by a large corporation which supplied NASA with many of its computers and was very sound financially. It was a good portable machine, several pounds lighter than the Osborn, and with 5 ports built in. They said it would handle any CP/M software. Since it was from an unknown company with little or no software of its own I was afraid to buy it. Before I could decide whether or not to go ahead with it, the manufacturer discontinued the Zorba!

Avos bought up a large quantity of Zorbas, and meanwhile the Osborn came back on the market. Their system was available on the Osborn, the Zorba, the KayPro and perhaps another machine but the price had crept up to \$4k.

I understand that Avos is still there and they are selling off their stock, but some key personnel have thrown in the towel and left. I believe that the company is no longer innovating. I never see it mentioned in the magazines which deal with technology for the blind. It is a shame that the gods were so against them because they had a very good system, even if it was a bit overpriced.

After two years of dithering I was desperate to get a computer. I could see what Mike Bastraw was doing with his and I needed something to make my work for NIEKAS, the NFB, and my Lions Club more efficient. But I had to choose

which system to buy. There are two approaches to making a computer talk. I could either buy a series of special talking programs, such as a talking word processor, a talking data base, a talking spreadsheet, etc., or a "screen reading" program which would work with most off-the-shelf software. I wanted the flexibility of the latter so that I could get into new applications without waiting for someone to write special software. Also I heard that you could buy a laser disk reader, and then get a complete encyclopedia on a single disk. You could use your computer to search for any info in the encyclopedia. The reader was expensive but I figured the price would come down, and other reference works would come out on laser disks.

A scanner was also too expensive to buy now but some day I could have my computer read out loud anything that could be fed in one sheet at a time. The scanner would also allow me to enter submitted manuscripts directly, read and edit them on the computer, and print out them in the format needed for pasteup.

Several companies had systems to make the Apple II series talk but none were the screen reader type and I didn't want their limitations.

Mike Bastraw bought a Macintosh and hoped I could get one too, or at least an Apple II, so that we could transfer files easily. I bought a program called "Smoothtalker" for his Mac but it would read only a complete file, and could not be used for editing. Also it could only be controlled by the mouse, which is useless for me. As far as I am concerned this is a piece of useless crap, and I am very sorry I wasted my money on it. And the vendor never provided the backup copy that was supposed to come when I registered it.

At the 85 NFB con in Louisville I searched the huckster room. There are now at least a half dozen systems available for IBM compatibles, all screen readers, varying from \$500 to \$4000 plus the cost of the computer and voice synthesizer. I studied the machines and when I got home read magazines like SENSUS and books from the National Braille Press surveying the field. I finally selected the "Enhanced Talking PC Program" from Computer Conversations of Columbus OH.

Next I had to decide between an IBM and a compatible, and if the latter, which one. I finally settled on the Leading Edge Model D, and the Type N Talk synthesizer. When Mike got his Mac it came with

its own printer and Mike no longer needed the Smith Corona TP 1 printer which we had used on his TRS Model 1. Since I was part owner, I took the printer and hooked it into my machine.

Mr. Hutchinson of Computer Conversations recommended the "PC-Write" program from Quicksoft in Seattle WA. You get the disk, which includes the manual and tutorial, for \$10. If you like it you can register for \$75 and get the help and updates. It is not copy protected and you are even encouraged to make copies for friends.

Computer Conversations, unlike Avos, provides almost no tutorial material to get you started. Mike helped me set up the computer and start printing out the PC-Write manual, and Rafe Folch-Pi helped me make a little more progress. I slowly struggled with the talking program and word processor until David Mohr, a friend who is majoring in computer science at UNH, took on helping me get started. I am now using PC-Write very well and have only a few tricks left to learn. Now I need to learn a database so that I can automate the NIEKAS mailing list, as well as those for newsletters I do for the NFB.

Incidentally, the whole package--computer with 256 kbytes of RAM, 2 disk drives, monitor, speech synthesizer, talking software, surge suppressor, cables, and two boxes of disks--cost me \$2.6k. This compares very favorably with what the Avos system would have cost me.

Several features of this system are especially helpful to me. I have the keyboard echo turned on, and catch 90% of my typos. The echo slows down my typing and some day I will stop using it. Then I have a function which reads back what I have written one line at a time so I can edit what I've written. I can have it indicate capitalization and/or punctuation if I want to. I can have it spell a word one letter at a time and even have it say "android, baker, charlie" for abc. If my son Stanley, the doorbell, or the phone interrupts me, I can have the computer read the last line or two back to me to regain my train of thought.

I have now copytyped on my computer several articles for thish as well as stuff for the NFB, Lions, APA-NESFA, and an article for Roger Waddington. I am very pleased with the machine and am glad I made the investment.

Since writing the above I received

a free update of the "Enhanced PC Talking Program" as well as a Braille manual from Computer Conversations. I do not want to take the time to learn the changes in commands until after I finish this NIEKAS, but then I plan to study this update as well as the one for my word processor, PC-Write. Both programs have substantial improvements. If you are interested in either I will be glad to send you more information.

#### OF NUKES AND FIRESTORMS

I recently finished reading Alfred Coppel's The Burning Mountain (Harcourt Brace & Jovanovich, 1983), a novel of the invasion of Japan based on the "what if" of what could have happened if the atomic bombs had not been ready in August 1945. It reminded me of David Westheimer's Lighter Than a Feather (Little Brown & Co, 1971, recently reissued in paperback as Deluge).

Coppel diverged from our timeline by having a lightning strike during a thunderstorm destroy our first test bomb minutes before it was to be detonated at the Trinity site. It took about seven months to reconstruct the bomb and test it.

In our timeline, less than a month after Trinity, we used two bombs on Japan, one based on U-235 and the other on Pu-239. Coppel made the major point that 99% of the U-235 in the world had been in the Trinity device and it took seven months to recycle it for re-use. To me, this does not make sense. Since there was enough for a bomb used in war the next month, why couldn't it be used for an earlier re-test?

Westheimer gave no justification for the unavailability of atomic bombs in his book. It was simply a "what if" book. I do not think Westheimer has ever written any SF. The only other book of his that I've read is Von Ryan's Express, a World War II POW escape thriller.

Both Coppel and Westheimer claim to have based their books on actual US plans for the invasion of Japan and Japanese plans for defense. It is over a decade since I've read the Westheimer book and no longer can remember details, so I cannot compare the battle scenarios.

Coppel got his title from a line in the Book of Revelations while Westheimer got his from a Japanese warrior motto, "Death is lighter than a feather, duty is heavier than a mountain." Coppel also referred to this motto.



According to Coppel's scenario, the invasion of Japan had two phases. Operation Olympic, the invasion of Kyushu, on Nov 1, 1945, and Coronet, the invasion of Honshu on March 1, 1946. Okinawa was used as a base to invade Kyushu, only half of which was taken, and that was used as a base to go on to Honshu. The troops landed on Honshu and made a drive across the Kanto Plain to capture Tokyo and end the war.

Both Westheimer and Coppel made great efforts to try to give the reader an understanding of the Japanese culture and Samurai code which made the enemy behavior so incomprehensible to the American soldier. I grew up during World War II and heard the popular stories of Japanese suicide soldiers who wore bombs to kill US soldiers after feigned capture, but had forgotten them until I was reminded by Coppel's book. Civilians, and even five-year-old children, engaged in such activities.

Coppel added a very nice touch by matching an American raised in Japan with a family of the Samurai class and steeped in their mystique against an American of Japanese descent who was an ardent patriot despite the internment of his parents.

Racism in American society or the military played no part in Coppel's book, unless you count the very frank discussion of the internment of the Japanese-Americans. One major character in Westheimer's book was a black commander of some sort of armored vehicle, a halftrack I think. He was proud of his color but was very realistic about his opportunities in American society. He was contrasted with a wealthy and cultured man from Chicago who kept flinching at his brazen bad taste. For example, he was really bothered by the big ace of spades painted on the side of the black's vehicle. The aesthete man kept arguing in favor of the high culture of the Japanese and insisting that they were not barbarians. He said that after the war he would take the black into a fine Japanese restaurant in Chicago and introduce him to their fine cuisine. He petered out in mid sentence when he realised that the black would never be admitted into the restaurant.

Anyhow, both books gave bloody details of the invasion of Japan and its defense. I assume they were based on the same US documents, and so presented similar scenarios. Westheimer simply assumed that the bomb was not available or was not

used, and so followed the invasion through the final surrender. I don't remember the mechanism of this surrender. And Coppel had the not very believable scenario of the Trinity test's being zapped by lightning delaying everything by nine months. The drive across Honshu to Tokyo was slower and bloodier than expected.

The fall of Tokyo was inevitable but the Samurai class had gotten total control of the government, and would not consider surrender under any circumstances. They ruthlessly assassinated any officials who even vaguely considered the possibility of any negotiations.

The bomb was ready and Truman was under tremendous pressure to end the war quickly or lose the 1946 Congressional elections. So he opted for the bomb. MacArthur refused to use it, saying it would change forever the nature of war. Truman had to make a secret flight across the Pacific to dress down the General, who had never respected him, and to force him to accept his orders. Finally, nine months later than in our timeline, the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Japanese capitulated.

I recently heard that Nagasaki was not the intended target of the second bomb but was hit when Kokura, the intended city was covered by clouds. Thus it is unlikely that it would have been the second target in the alternate timeline.

Coppel seemed to have no major point to make with his book, but simply needed to have the bomb delayed by enough time to allow for the invasion to proceed through Olympic and to Coronet. As I said, I felt the mechanism of the delay was unrealistic.

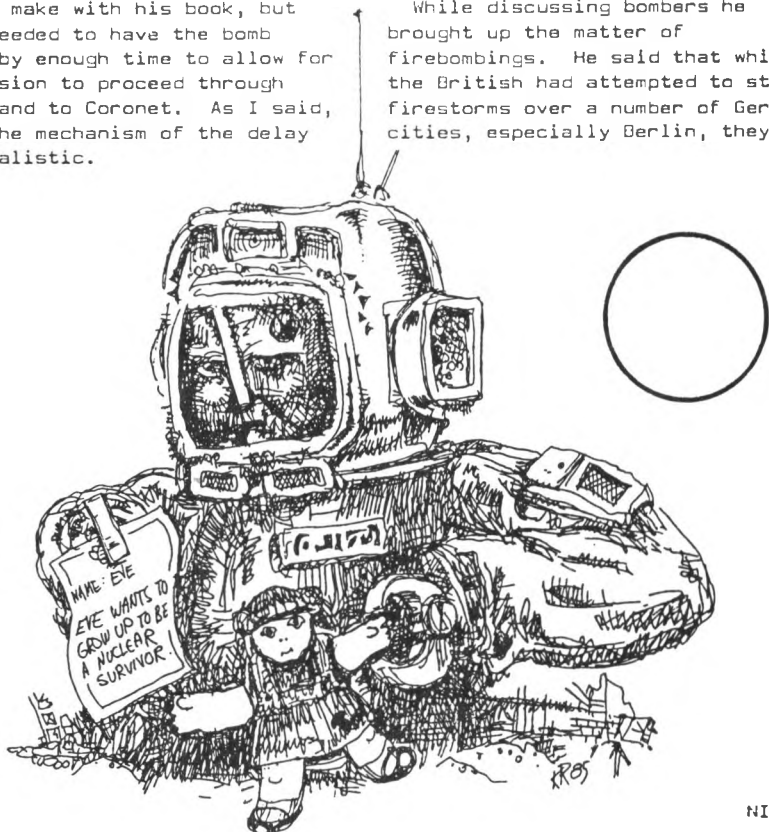
Westheimer, on the other hand, seemed to be making the point that no matter how horrible the atomic bomb was, an invasion of Japan would have been even more horrible, and many more Americans AND Japanese would have been killed.

Both books touched on the firestorms started over Japanese cities brought about by intensive incendiary bombing. Another book which had a very interesting discussion of firestorms over both Germany and Japan was Freeman Dyson's autobiography, Disturbing the Universe (Harper & Row, 1979).

Many other parts of that book were interesting, too. The final chapters of the book blew my mind with their speculations about interstellar civilizations. But the opening chapters are relevant here. He completed his education at the start of WWII and his first job involved the war effort.

His first task was to figure out why almost no crew members survived when Britain's newest bomber was shot down by the Germans. US crews, and those of older British aircraft, had far better survival rates. He found a major flaw in the design of the aircraft and said it had to be lightened. He said the only thing to do was to remove the gun turrets and rely on fighter escort for protection. This was too drastic a change to find acceptance in the British bureaucracy, so crews were lost right up to the end of the European war.

While discussing bombers he brought up the matter of firebombings. He said that while the British had attempted to start firestorms over a number of German cities, especially Berlin, they were



only successful over Hamburg and Dresden. On the other hand, he said that the Americans were far more successful over Japan.

The firestorms were probably as horrible and senseless as the atomic bombs. They destroyed entire cities, killing all the civilians in a certain radius. The air rushing to feed the flames reached hurricane proportions and picked up and carried people into the flames. People in underground shelters suffocated. But little comparison is made between this deliberate firestorm and the atomic bombings. If Kurt Vonnegut had not been a prisoner near Dresden and written and spoken of his experience, I wonder if even that firebombing would be remembered today. And the others seem to be completely forgotten. During or right after WWII a major book and movie came out about our firebombing of Tokyo the night of March 9-10, 1945, Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo. This portrayed our act as a major heroic effort. The British remember the German bombing of Coventry, but do they remember our firebombings of the enemy?

After I wrote this piece John Boardman read for me the July-August 1974 issue of STRATEGY AND TACTICS, #45, which presented a game on the Allied invasion of Japan, and which was accompanied by a long series of articles about the actual plans for the invasion and defense. This confirmed and fleshed out many of the details presented in the two novels. I was interested to note that there were 140,000 casualties in Hiroshima, 76,000 in Nagasaki, and 180,000 in the first firebombing of Tokyo. In all, 42 cities were more than half destroyed by fire raids, and only 3% of all bombing casualties were from the atomic attacks.

The media keep on remembering Dresden and ignoring the others. On the 40th anniversary of the Dresden bombing "All Things Considered" devoted a full half hour to it. They mentioned that many civilians in Dresden were refugees from the destruction of Hamburg. The reporters said that it was still a mystery, just why Dresden was selected. It had no military value, and was a city through which refugees were funneling. They contradicted themselves by saying that the destruction of the city threw more refugees into the countryside, interfering with operations of the German army. John wondered about some of these details. Hamburg and Dresden are at

opposite ends of the country, and the two raids were many months, if not a full year, apart.

A few days later a British letter writer commented that attacking Dresden was sensible retaliation for the blitz of London and the destruction of Coventry, including its cathedral, a British city of no military value.

But Hitler blitzed London in revenge for a bombing of Berlin. Where does it end?

War is of course terrible and barbaric, and it seems foolish to get worked up over just one single aspect of its barbarity, whether it be Hiroshima or Dresden or Coventry.



JACK GAUGHAN

Over the years the late Jack Gaughan contributed many pieces of artwork to NIEKAS. He was also a good friend whom I often saw at cons. The drawing presented here is the last one that we had left.

One of the first special sections we ran in NIEKAS was on the occasion of the death of Hannes Bok. Jack contributed a piece to that section, for he had been a student or apprentice of Hannes. (Hannes had, in turn, been a student of Maxfield Parrish.)

When Hannes died, Parrish was still alive and inherited or had the disposition of most of his work. Jack inherited Bok's sketchbooks, perhaps 75 pages of pencil sketches and studies. Only a few were full

page drawings. One page, for instance, had some 50 sketches of women's faces showing every conceivable mood. Terry Carr used a few of these in his fanzine.

Bjo Trimble, Al Lewis and I came up with the idea of producing a memorial publication of the sketchbook, with Jack's cooperation. Ray Bradbury was originally to contribute to the NIEKAS memorial section but instead we asked him to do the intro to the folio. I don't know where the glitch occurred but the intro was not in the folio as published. It was published as a joint venture of the National Fantasy Fan Federation and Project Art Show, a national organization founded by Bjo which originally sponsored the Worldcon art shows. I still have a few of the folios which I am selling at the price of \$5, plus 75c postage. Ray Bradbury was asked to participate because his friendship with Hannes predated their professional careers. For instance, in 1939 he had brought a lot of Bok's artwork to the first Worldcon and tried to interest publishers in it.

Jack occasionally did special assignments for NIEKAS, such as illustrating an article by Piers Anthony on the Arabian Nights. But usually he sent us pages of preliminary sketches of art done for professional publications, or whimsical sketches done on the spur of the moment.

Between my move to NH in January, 1966, and my loss of sight in November, 1971, I frequently went to New York for weekends or school vacations. While in NY I would attend any fan meetings I could find--ESFA, Lunarians, Fanoclasts, FISTFA, or the NY City College SF Club. On one such occasion Mark Walsted was spending a weekend with me, and after an ESFA meeting in Newark on a Sunday afternoon we stopped in to visit Jack, who lived in NJ almost in the shadow of the George Washington Bridge. Mark bought the original of a FESF cover illustrating a story by Avram Davidson. It showed several dragons and several men bearing high banners. I got one of the original color sketches he had made when preparing to do the Ace Books cover for Silverlock. I wonder if there would be any way to print this in black and white in our Myers issue.

Jack was an enthusiastic fan and pro. He did excellent art for paperback books and GALAXY magazine, and contributed to many fanzines. Thus we all cheered when, in 1969, he received both the fan and pro art Hugos.

Unfortunately this backfired on him. Art directors figured he would now command higher prices and were reluctant to commission him. His appearance in professional publications went down for a while but bounced back.

We printed the Gestetnered NIEKAS as carefully as the medium would permit, and Jack often said that his artwork looked better in NIEKAS than in the professional magazines.

Later Jack moved upstate to the Albany area and I saw less of him, tho I still usually saw him at Boskones and Lunacons.

He was originally supposed to do the cover for our chapbook, 50 Extremely SF Stories, but when we were ready he was in the middle of a very bad slump and had to turn us down. A couple of years later he was over the slump, which I suppose is the artist's equivalent of writer's block. He began to sell well again and even appeared on the covers of ANALOG, a market he hadn't broken into before. Then we heard the sad news that he had cancer. Six months later he was dead. He was a good man and a good fan.

#### MORE ON THE BLIND PANTHERS

I have from time to time talked about my involvement with the National Federation of the Blind. To recap, while there are about 500 organizations FOR the blind in the USA, ranging from the monumental American Foundation for the Blind, which controls directly and indirectly a billion dollars, to the typical local taping service in a small town, and there some local clubs and organizations OF blind people, this is the first and largest organization OF the blind. It was founded in 1940 when

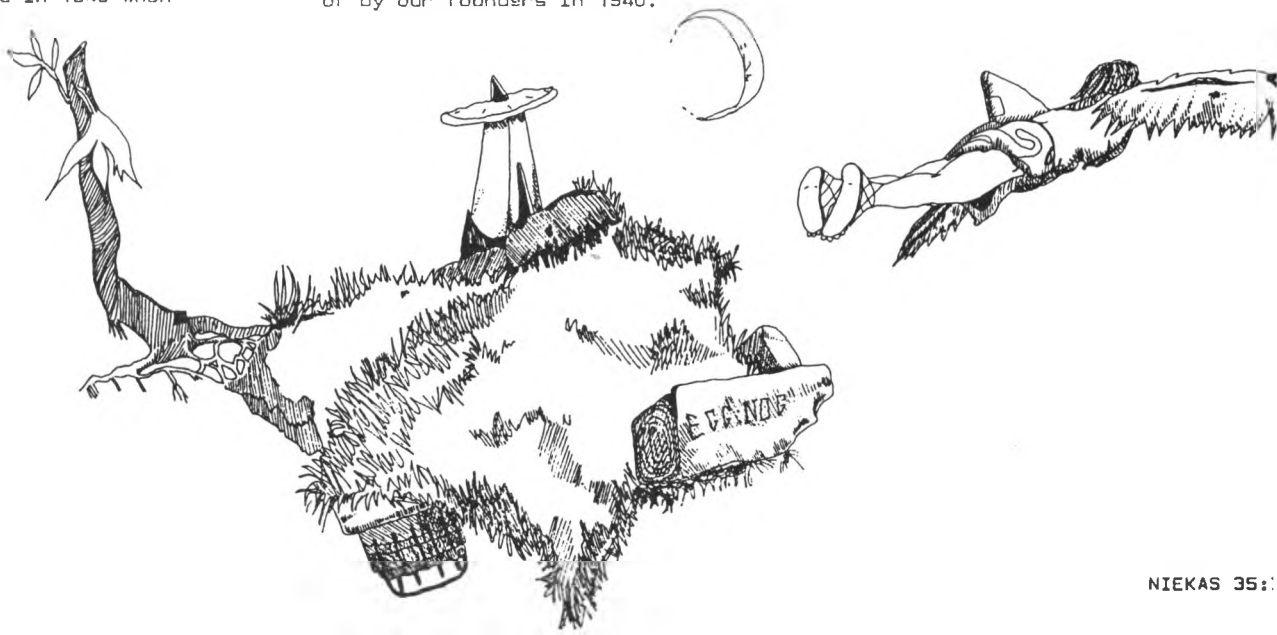
representatives of seven statewide organizations met in Pennsylvania and formed a federation. I first joined in 1975, became a state officer the next year, and started going to national conventions in 78.

Our primary aims are to dispel misinformation about the capabilities of the blind, to help blind people compete for meaningful jobs, to eliminate discrimination, and to change the outlook for the next generation of the blind. One of our info sheets says, "We are changing what it means to be blind."

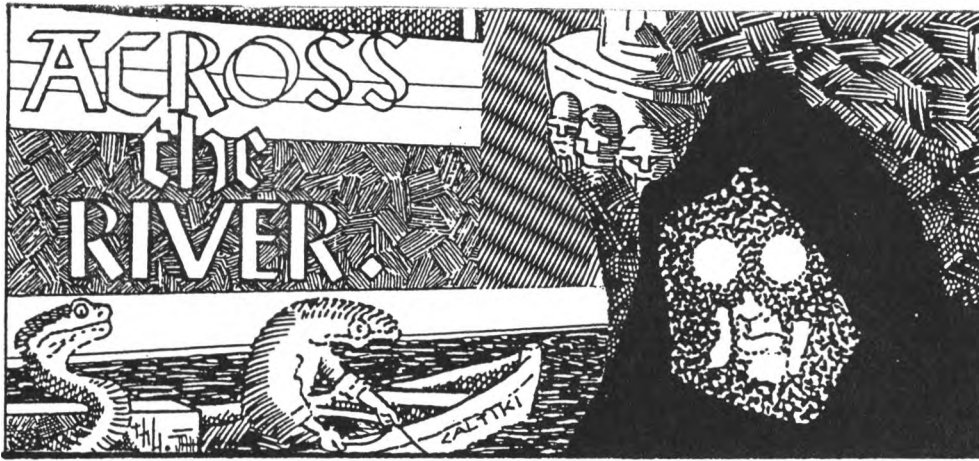
A few explanations: Many teachers working with the blind do not really, in their hearts, believe in our capabilities. They say they want to help us become independent, but when they do not believe it, this rubs off onto the student who learns not to believe in himself. There is also a tendency to promote the proliferation of gadgets of dubious utility, such as beepers on subway doors, which make the public think we are more helpless than we are. Potential employers will think they will have to equip their shops or offices with these expensive beepers, which will distract their other employees, so we have gone to court to try to prevent the installation of devices which are not really needed. We have many other problems due to attitudes and misconceptions of the general public about our abilities to travel independently, to keep house safely, to look after ourselves and to be happy in our lives. These attitudes are part of the general cultural ambience and are shared by the unliberated blind. The long term goal of the Federation is to change these attitudes and make life easier for the next generation of the blind. Today young blind persons are accomplishing things undreamed of by our founders in 1940.

I am enclosing with mailed copies two booklets from the NFB. Both are addresses given by our just-retired national president, Dr. Kenneth Jernigan (who is also a fan--see Laiskel.) One is a sober report on our activities and accomplishments given at the beginning of the convention. The other is a rousing banquet speech given the last night of convention activities. In the latter he often evokes peals of laughter by reading, one item at a time, some dominating list of rules of an agency for the blind. It might not be so funny in print.

I am also enclosing an Associate Membership application form. We encourage interested sighted people to help us in our work by becoming associate members. If you have a strong interest and want to receive our monthly magazine (done in three media--print, Braille and 8 rpm phonograph record), let me know and I will place you on our mailing list. But for most people this will tell more about elephants than they really want to know. Not all people believe in responding to such appeals; if you don't simply ignore the enclosures. But if you wish to help some organization connected with the field of blindness, I say you cannot choose a better one than the NFB. Most of us believe in it so strongly that we donate our time and money to it. Many of us are on a pre-authorized check plan where we automatically donate several hundred dollars in monthly installments. All officers, national, state, and local, are unpaid volunteers and blind. The organization has a very small paid staff so funds contributed go to our real work and not salaries.







by fred lerner

#### PHOTONEUROSIS

Like any other Columbia student in the early 1960s, I spent a certain amount of time in the West End Cafe. As a loyal WKCR man, I put in my time in the Gold Rail. But most of my undergraduate beer-drinking was done in a dingy place whose sign never worked well enough for us to tell if it was called the Marvin or the Marlin. Its atmosphere was early derelict; nobody in his right mind would eat the food served there; and the labels on the bottles above the bar made it obvious that its patrons preferred quantity to quality. But none of that mattered to my friends and me: we craved draft beer and conversation, and we got our fill of both on the long Thursday nights we spent there.

Twenty years later I can't remember any of those conversations, and I suspect that there was little memorable about them. Were I to listen to a recording of even the high points, I'd doubtless become bored very quickly. But there were those among us who were convinced that the words we scattered so freely were worth preserving. "I wish we were taping this," one of us would often say. And I'd reply, "Live in real time, Jim."

I spend precious little time in bars these days. I still enjoy draft beer and conversation, but even more do I enjoy a dram of Glenlivet and a good book. And I have a wife and child whose company gives me a satisfaction that no bar, no friend, and no book can match. There are times when our daughter makes a new discovery, learns of a new connection between things in her universe, or just throws herself so entirely into the enjoyment of the world around her that we are tempted to wish that we had a camera or a video-recorder with which to preserve the moment. And it's at those times that I recall that old phrase, and remind myself to "live in real time."

There's something about the ability to record for the future that endangers the present. Several winters ago my wife and I drove over to Brookfield for the annual ice-cutting contest, held in memory of the days when pond ice, cut in blocks and stored in ice-houses with sawdust for preservative insulation, was the town's premier export. A few years before I had tried my hand at ice-cutting, earning a wicked chest-cold for my efforts; but Sheryl was new to the North Country, and I thought to offer her something new in spectator sports.

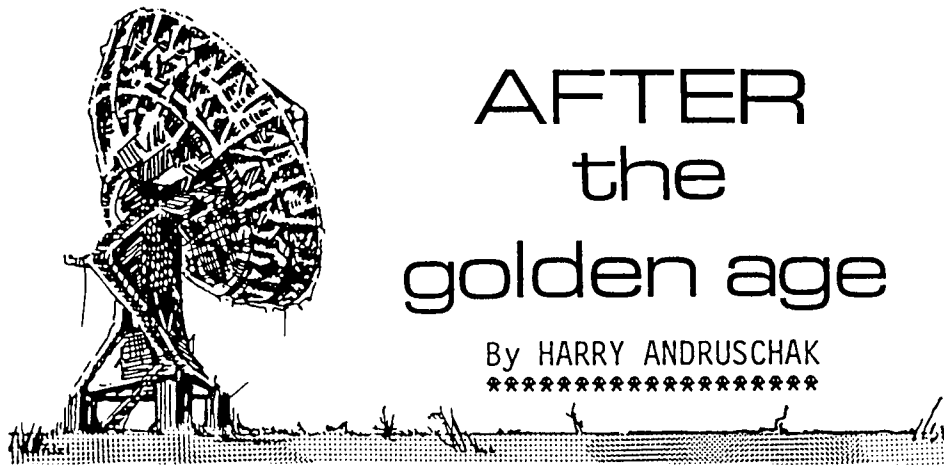
We didn't see much of the contest. Though we stood in the very front of the roped-off viewing area, our sight-lines were obstructed by the camera crew from a

local television station as well as a phalanx of still photographers. The participation and enjoyment of those who came to Brookfield was sacrificed to accommodate those who would see it in the detachment of their warm living-rooms. We won't be taking Elizabeth to Brookfield this winter: what might have been a lively exploration of her Vermont heritage has become just another media event.

This is nothing new, of course. It's a commonplace observation that American politics has been transformed by television, and there has been a comparable impact on art and sport as well. (Should I differentiate between the two? I suspect that spectator art and spectator sport differ only in the extent to which randomness shapes the outcome of a particular event.) Father Capon once observed that "the true baseball fan does not simply watch the game; he keeps the whole city of baseball." With its emphasis on immediate gratification, television doesn't encourage this sense of continuity. Instead it offers an ever-increasing diet of football, a sport in which every game stands on its own and only a handful of professional observers bother to link its present with its past. The parallel with the present anomie of American politics is obvious.

The urge to capture the present presumes a future of leisure moments in which to savour the memories so extensively preserved. I wonder how realistic this is. The acquisitive drive of which this mania for preservation is a symptom is hardly conducive to a placid contemplation of things past. How many families are spending their evenings leafing through old photo albums instead of recording assiduously on videotape the delights and diversions of the moment? What new technology will divert them from those very videotapes five or ten years hence?

I am writing these words on a summer evening. An hour or two ago I was walking through my garden; in a little while it will be time to read Elizabeth her bedtime story; and in ten days' time we shall go up to Montpelier for a day of music and dancing at the Midsummer Festival. I shall remember all these things when winter comes again, and I shall carry their essence in memory for summers and winters to come. I have no intention of sacrificing one minute of these pleasures to record them for a future that will bring its own delights in its good time. Let others profane reality with flashbulb and microphone. I shall be content to live in real time.



# AFTER the golden age

By HARRY ANDRUSCHAK  
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This is going to be a short column this time around. It's being typed on 24 February 1986. I have been sober exactly two years, for what it is worth. The main thing I have to worry about right now is explaining to NIEKAS readers how the Challenger disaster will affect the Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

NASA had planned to launch two spacecraft towards Jupiter in May 1986. One of these was the European Space Agency's Ulysses spacecraft, formerly known as the International Solar Polar Mission. The other was NASA/JPL's Galileo Jupiter Orbiter and Probe Spacecraft. Two of the Shuttle orbiters had been modified to use the Centaur upper stage required to launch the two spacecraft. One was Atlantis. The other was Challenger.

The launch windows are less than 30 days in length, so with only one shuttle, Atlantis, currently available to use the Centaur only one spacecraft could be launched in any given window. Ulysses or Galileo? Of course NASA might spend the money to modify Discovery to carry the Centaur. That way, both spacecraft could be launched in one window.

Launch windows to Jupiter are open every 13 months so the next windows are June 1987, July 1988, and August 1989, and so on. There is also the Hubble space telescope to be launched.

However, NASA science payloads have a low priority for Shuttle launches. The Department of Defense has first priority. With only three shuttles left, the DOD will now become NASA's main customer.

In an era of budget cuts where is NASA going to get the money to replace the lost launch capacity of Challenger? Buy one or two new shuttles at \$2 billion apiece? And with a two to three year delivery time? Re-open the manufacturing

lines of the expendable rockets like Titan, Atlas and Delta? That will take two to three years and money, although it is now admitted that the expendable rockets are actually cheaper than the shuttle, despite all the NASA hype.

So JPL is stuck with the Galileo spacecraft that has been ready for launch since January 1982, and no firm launch date.

Meanwhile, the Voyager 2 spacecraft has just completed its Uranus encounter. This magnificent achievement has been ignored by press and public, since all attention is on the shuttle disaster. JPL has checked out the spacecraft after encounter, adjusted its trajectory, and the Voyager 2 spacecraft is now on its way to the planet Neptune to arrive in August 1989. Does anybody care?

We live in interesting times, folks.

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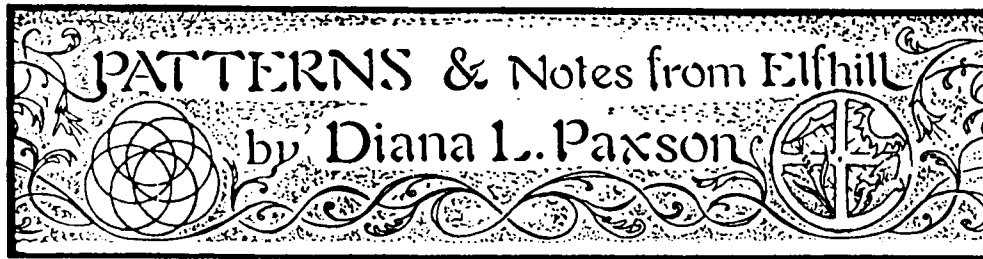
I have some bad news. Last Wednesday, July 3rd, I was informed that I'm to be laid off my job at JPL as of October first. I'm still trying to recover from the shock, and if it wasn't for the "We Agnostics (AA) Group" I would probably be back drinking now.

At the moment I have no idea what I will be doing or how to go job hunting. I will be working this out with my alcoholism counselor at JPL.

I have no idea how this will effect my NIEKAS column, tho probably we will have to shut it down. No new launches are likely to happen before January 1991 anyway. That is why the shop is laying off a lot of technicians, led by me. No launches for at least 4 1/2 years ! !

I will try to keep in touch and let you know how things are going.





## HOW TO SHARE A WORLD FOR FUN AND PROFIT

In 1979, Ace Books took a chance on a weird idea of Robert Asprin's (actually, I'm not sure if he has any other kind), and published an anthology called *Thieves' World*. Bob himself has given his account of How It All Began in the essay at the end of that volume, so I won't repeat the story. It's not the cause, but the effects of *Thieves' World* that interest me, both as a phenomenon, and because of their impact on my own career. So far, I have been invited into six "shared world" anthologies, and actually contributed to five (*Thieves' World*, *Darkover*, *Witchworld*, *Elfquest*, *Hell*) which if not some kind of record, certainly qualifies me to discuss the phenomenon!

Given the dictum that "anthologies don't sell" which I have heard from so many publishers' panels at conventions, it is all the more remarkable that *Thieves' World* took off and has been making out like bandits (so to speak) ever since. I'm now supposed to be working on my story for Volume 10, and the end is not in sight. That would be remarkable enough, but as usual, herd-instinct has seized the publishing world, and these days no sf publisher's list is complete without its own shared world anthology series.

Some of these worlds are created by two or more people expressly for shared use, like *Thieves' World*, *Ithkar*, *Hell*, and *Liavek*. Others belong to single authors who invite other writers to come play, including Marion Zimmer Bradley (*Darkover*), Andre Norton (*Witchworld*), the Pinis (*World of Two Moons*), and C.J. Cherryh (*Merovingen*). With the exception of *Darkover*, the latter are a more recent phenomenon (at least as professional publications, although writing amateur fiction about favorite worlds and characters is a time-honored tradition in fandom). I should probably include *Star Trek* here as well, even though it is a media world and consists of a series of novels rather than short stories.

The question of why anthologies do or do not sell is probably connected to the question of why the number of short story markets has shrunk so dramatically from the abundance of pulp fiction's Golden Age. Not only have the number of magazines devoted entirely to short

fiction decreased, but many of the general magazines have ceased to take any short stories at all. The science fiction short story market is still healthier than any of the others, but in general, the age of the short story seems to have passed.

Perhaps the need for a kind of entertainment that can be ingested in small pieces is now filled by TV. Perhaps our contemporaries find it harder to "get into" one story after another. General anthologies seem to have the same problem, and although the magazines are willing to establish a small, select, audience and publish for it, book companies require a larger readership to consider a book viable. Or maybe the problem is that so many writers of short fiction have been corrupted by college writing courses which teach mainstream literary values, resulting in beautifully written, pointless exercises. The difficulty may not be that the stories are short, but that they are modern (if by modern one means obscure essays in social realism, psychology or surrealism).

I might digress here by suggesting a similar problem in the field of poetry, which is in even bigger trouble than the short story as a popular art form. For millenia poetry was the preferred form of entertainment. Even drama was written in the prevailing poetic forms. Today, there are only a few poetry magazines in the country, and of these, only one is completely supported by subscriptions and sales (the others, like most poets, depend on grants and subsidies from the government or educational institutions to keep going). A decreasing number of general magazines buy poetry, and those that do often look primarily for humor.

During those same centuries, popular entertainment was mainly oral, and had to depend on the techniques of oral literature to succeed. These techniques are certainly more obvious in the discipline of poetry--poets and critics have spent many pages analysing the rules and requirements of rhyme, meter, and a host of poetic effects designed to marry sound and sense. (If you have trouble appreciating some of the old stuff, try moving your lips when you read!)

What may be less apparent is that the short story was also originally an oral art, and still flourishes in oral cultures (like the Society for Creative Anachronism) as



the folk tale. As such, it must also fulfill the requirements of successful oral literature. Many of us find the novels of Charles Dickens hard to get through, but in the 19th century they were wildly popular. Perhaps one reason for both the former success and the present failure is the fact that they were usually written for serialization in magazines, and most people *heard*, rather than reading them, sitting around the family fireside doing handwork while the *pater familias* read aloud. Dickens succeeded, therefore, by making the novel imitate the short story, or rather, the tale.

Of course I may be picking sour grapes here, because I have never yet succeeded in selling a story to *F&SF*, but the fact that the closer a magazine comes to the old pulp zines the more I will probably enjoy it is probably more indicative. It is true that if you don't like to read a particular sort of literature, you're not likely to be able to write it well. At least I can usually find *something* interesting in *F&SF*, whereas I can't read the short fiction (I won't dignify them by the name of "stories") in the literary magazines at all. This is, I suppose, why (when my college writing course had convinced me that I couldn't write, and even if I could, no one, including myself, would ever want to read the results) I ended up as a writer after all.

It is uncertain whether the present dearth of markets for short fiction is the result or the cause of the fact that so few authors make their names primarily through writing it. What is clear, however, is that the latter part of the 20th century is the age of the novel, and that publishers (and apparently readers) like short stories better if they approximate the novel form. I think that one reason the shared world anthologies (in general) are succeeding so much better than (in general) anthologies or collections of unrelated short stories is just because they can be read as a kind of a novel.

Greek tragedy assumed that a drama must observe the three unities-- of place, character, and action-- in order to succeed. Long fiction is more flexible, and can stretch any one of those rules (as when there are multiple protagonists or a story that wanders all over a universe, or even, as in Heinlein's *Number of the Beast*, through a multitude of universes, if one writer's perspective unites them) and still succeed, if one or more of the others is obeyed well enough to give the story unity. Stories in a shared world anthology have different protagonists and actions (though in some of the anthologies characters are shared), but they are united by a common setting, and in some cases, by taking place within a predetermined or mutually agreed on history. The reader probably perceives little difference between worlds invented by groups or single authors, so long as all the writers are able to portray the setting with reasonable consistency, but for the writer there are certain changes in focus and approach.

Although the rash of anthologies set in an already created universe appeared on the professional market slightly later than the jointly created setting, they represent a venerable literary tradition. The need of fans to extend their involvement with a world that has caught the imagination is essentially the same motivation that fuels children's mimetic games. I imagine that Cro Magnon children replayed their fathers' hunting tales, and as each culture developed its heroic cycles, its children must have acted out their stories ("We'll be the Christians and you be the Saracens"-- "No, we were the Saracens last time!"). History, folk tales, religious stories, plays, anything that caught the imagination was grist for the mill. These days, children's dramatic play is more likely to be inspired by television. When Disney put out a series on Davy Crockett, I pestered my father to carve me a rifle from a piece of lumber, and led the neighborhood boys in endless battles and expeditions.

As an alternative to acting out the stories, one could always put one's dolls through the adventures, a practice which has been made much easier (though perhaps less creative) by the toy industry's explosion of "action dolls". These days the toy rights are one of the most valuable subsidiaries in any media contract. So are the game rights, which with varying degrees of structure allow people to interact with a created world. The practice of participating in a secondary universe through writing dates from the spread of literacy, and I suspect arises quite naturally in any child with a good imagination and facility with words who becomes enamoured of a particular world.

In fandom, this impulse results in the publication of fan fiction. Stories set in secondary universes have usually appeared in fanzines devoted to their creators. However not all popular writers inspire such a tribute. Before the compulsion to add to the mythos is aroused certain criteria have to be met. Usually the work must be mythopoeic in the sense that the "world" or culture being portrayed is as important or interesting as the characters who live there. This usually requires a work of considerable length, or else a series. When the work provides the right sort of depth and complexity of setting, people who enjoyed it find themselves peculiarly frustrated when they have memorized everything the writer has written on the subject and still want more. The 60's posters labeled "Visit Middle Earth" address this feeling directly. The reader is homesick for an imaginary world.

Someone with more knowledge of fan history than I may be able to cite earlier examples of fan fiction set in secondary worlds. My first acquaintance with it was in connection with Tolkien, whose Middle Earth remains one of the supreme examples of modern mythmaking. Tolkien's interest was in his world as much as (or perhaps more so) than his characters. The world, with

its history, geography, and above all its languages, came first, followed by the legends of the people who lived there. It is therefore no surprise that people who had worn out their copies *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* and were awaiting with diminishing hope the publication of the *Silmarillion* should attempt to fill their need to reexperience Middle Earth by writing new stories of their own. These stories were by no means always the work of people incapable of creating worlds of their own. Marion Zimmer Bradley's tale, "The Jewel of Arwen", appeared first in her fanzine, *Astra's Tower*, and was reprinted years later in (I think) one of Lin Carter's anthologies.

Perhaps because of her own background in fandom, Marion has always been more sympathetic to fan fiction than most professionals, and *Starstone*, the Darkover fan fiction magazine, was published with her blessing. *Starstone* saw the first appearance of several writers who are now on the way to becoming pro's themselves, and demonstrates the value of this kind of writing as a training ground. The Elfquest graphic novel has also produced a fan magazine which publishes fiction. Jacqueline Lichtenberg's Sine/Gen series has also inspired considerable fan participation, which has reached print in the form of collaborative novels rather than anthologies. Perhaps the strangest and largest source of fan fiction is Star Trek, and in this case it is not so much the world as the two main characters which have attracted the devotion. The resulting fiction is referred to as "K/S" (Kirk/Spock) because it focuses (fixates?) on their relationship as the basis for fantasy (in the psychological sense).

The danger in writing fan fiction is that a potential writer will become too dependent on other people's ideas. The advantage is that it allows an amateur to take characters and setting as givens and concentrate on learning his or her craft. Some of the shared world anthologies have provided an opportunity for talented fans to break into print, although all of them require a leavening of known Names in order to sell the anthology. The good newcomers will evade the trap of imitation, and go on to sell their own original work as well. Comparing any of the professional anthologies with a fan-fiction-zine also demonstrates that more than name-recognition is required. Big name novelists sometimes turn in pieces that read more like chapters than stories, but they can be depended on for competent writing.

The particular genius of Robert Asprin, and the specific source of the current craze for *professional* shared world fiction was the intuition that the whole can be more than the sum of its parts, and that a setting can in itself be sufficient to win readers' loyalty without a single big-name author or a dominant plot and hero. When this concept is carried out by writers who know their craft, the result can be very successful indeed.

Whether the world is invented for the purpose of

the anthology, or exists already in one or more novels, it must meet certain requirements if it is to be shared successfully. First, it needs a certain scope-- that is to say, the back yard has to be big enough for other people to play in too. This does not necessarily mean physical area. Sanctuary itself is a small town, and although the Empire of which it is an unwilling part is large, the surrounding real estate has been exploited only in the TW spinoff novels. The Ithkar stories are set mainly within the confines of the Faire. However both Sanctuary and Ithkar are "high density" environments, with a wealth of different districts and neighborhoods. Most of the Thieves' World writers have carved out their own territories as well as inventing characters, and tend to work from the power base of their own "turf". In my earlier stories, Lalo and Gilla kept for the most part to their own part of town, and interacted mainly with characters (like Cappen Varra and Enas Yori) whose creators appeared to have abandoned them. However since Lalo painted the Black Unicorn, things have changed, and lately both Lalo and I have been forced into a more active role.

In the Darkover anthologies, the geographical settings include town and countryside, and offer a series of historical periods to choose from. I have always been leary of using other people's point of view characters, so in my contributions to Darkover I attempted to stake out a part of the planet's history which Marion herself had not covered, and invented my own characters to live there. A similar situation exists in the Witchworld anthology. In both cases, the prospective writer has numerous novels to mine for information and details. This requires less original invention from the writer, however it does require more research to maintain authenticity. The problems in writing for a well-developed world of this kind are much the same as those encountered in writing a historical novel. In both it is essential to do your research, and plot developments must conform to an already established sequence.

In the Elfquest spin-off, *Blood of the Ten Chiefs* each writer took one of the Wolfrider chieftains who preceded Cutter. Although everything in these stories must be consistent with what *Elfquest* said about Elf history, each of us has not only his or her own characters, but our own historical periods and in some cases tracts of territory. Aside from the need to coordinate with the writers whose chieftains preceded or followed our own, there is very little interaction. The particular interest in writing Elfquest material is in trying to make plain prose convey some of the marvelous visual qualities of the original graphic novel, while taking advantage of its ability to convey senses such as sound and smell which in the comic format are more difficult.

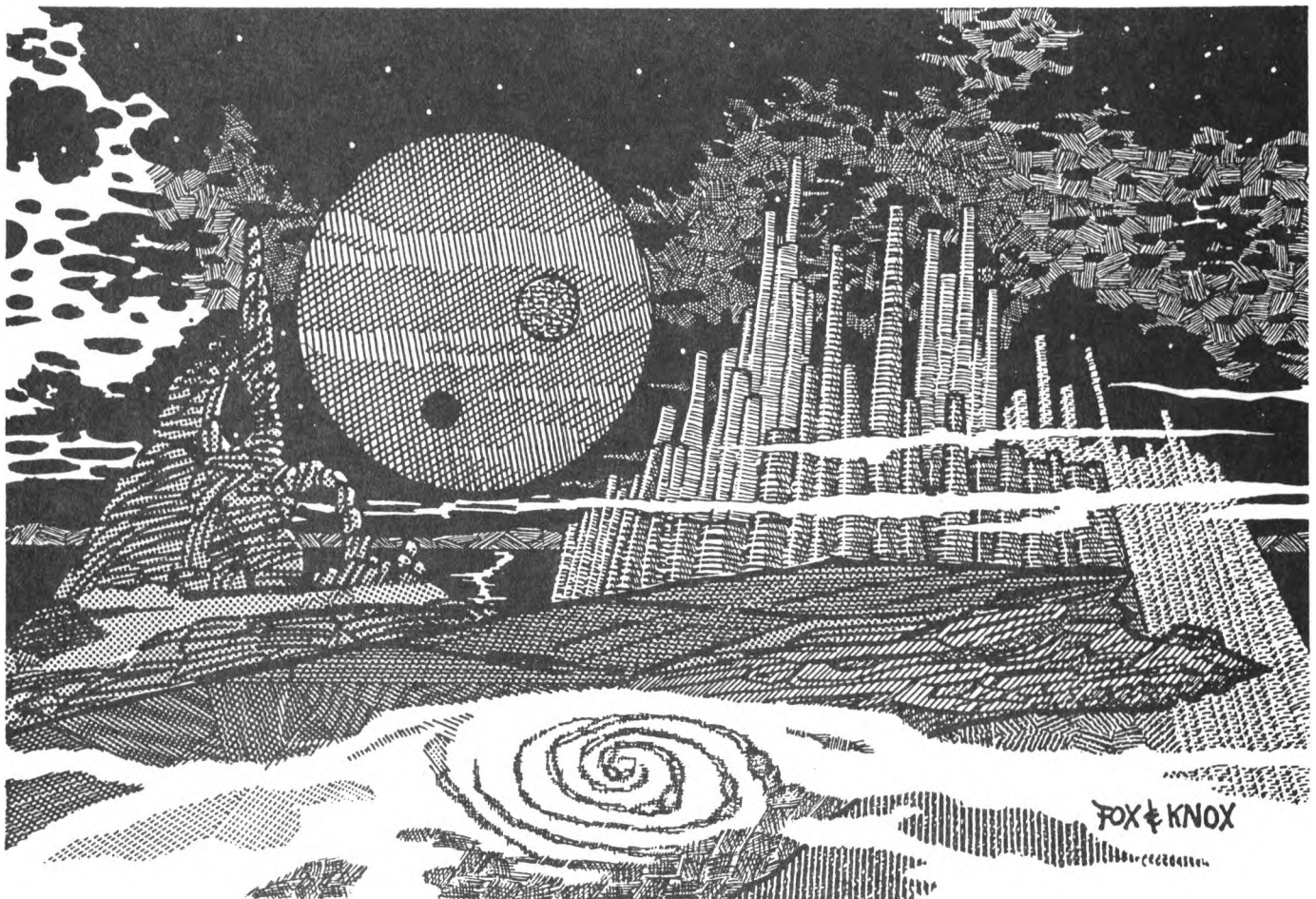
For the author, the main difference between writing for an anthology set in an already created world and participating in a shared creation is just that element of interaction. The process is similar in some ways to participating in a role playing game in which all of the players are themselves perfectly capable of making up a game of their own. The editors are in the sometimes unenviable position of coordinating this crew, and making sure that everyone's efforts add up to a coherent whole.

At least in a game everyone is in the same room together and developments can be adjusted as they occur. In an anthology, the game is played by mail, and although the editors may set up the basic situation, they are as vulnerable as the other players to surprise moves. Fortunately there is a certain amount of honor among thieves, and most of the writers have the courtesy to inform you of their plans for your character.

Writers who are able to get together may plot their stories in cooperation, instead of relying on telepathy to integrate the new material (although it is amazing how often writers working without communication have written stories that dovetail quite well).

The amount of freedom you have to invent new material depends to a great extent on where you come in. Writers who are in on an anthology from the beginning may end up taking a major role in defining the setting. The later in a series you join the crew, the more details will have been established already and the less uncharted territory will be available. A single author writing a series runs into the same problem as previous decisions constrain future options. Eventually the writer may have to decide whether to repeat the same plot over and over, or stop the series. The shared world allows the same material to be dealt with from a variety of perspectives, and can thereby retain its freshness.

Apparently I have got a reputation as a team player, and I find writing for the anthologies a profitable opportunity to tackle themes and styles I might not ordinarily try, and to reach audiences who might not otherwise try me. The pressure of my own work may in the future limit my participation, or the market itself may fade, but for now I'm enjoying myself. I hope everyone else is too.





----As Art Editor for NIEKAS, I often receive artwork which is difficult to find a place for, but which is nonetheless worthy of publication; to this end, we introduce JESTAHTT, a sort of 'Best of the Issue' column which not only makes great filler, but also serves to counteract the so-called 'ponderously academic' NIEKAS text we've all come to feed upon.. well, most of us, at least. We welcome all opinions on this experiment: even negative ones (Yeah, I've thrown in my own stuff, too--sue me.).

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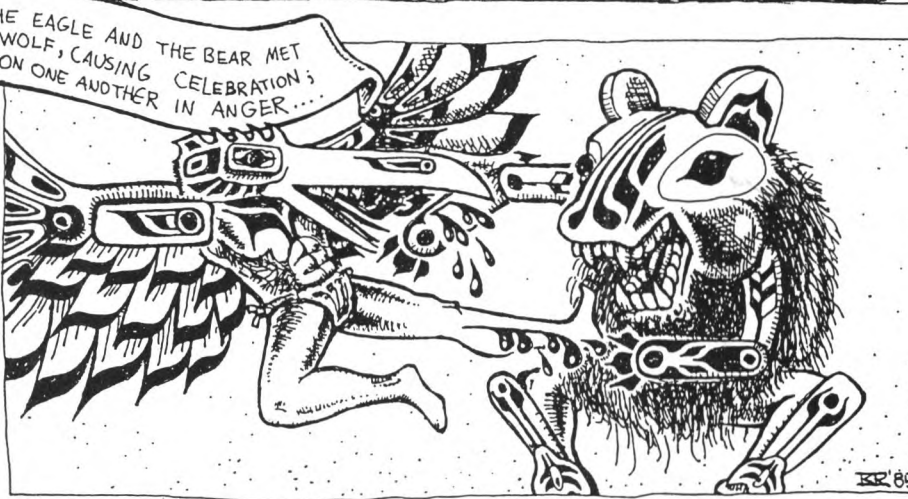
JOAN HANKE-WOODS- Hugo Winner for 1986--'Nuff said!

BILL WILL- New kid on the NIEKAS block; wants to do comix, against my advice, I might add. (You can't tell 'em anything nowadays.)







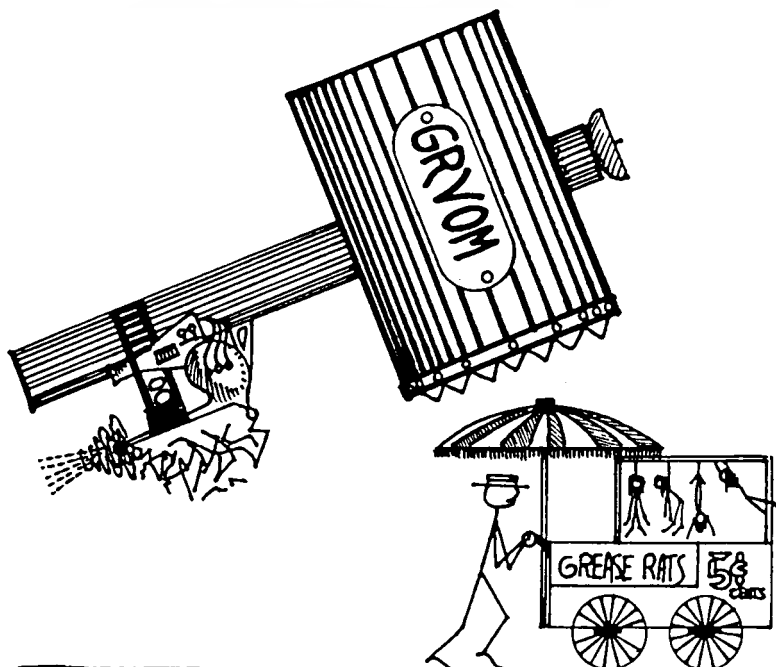


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Above: KURT REICHEL- Master of neurotic cartoon imagery with an important lesson to us all: read 'em & weep... Below: CZAR: If yr average picture speaks a thousand words, then there's got to be a novel in this one; by the way, CZAR is actually ~~KKKK BBBBBBBB~~ in disguise.

Next page: Femme Fatale section (clockwise from top left) MEL WHITE: Illustrates Myers Myers' THE MOON'S FIRE-EATING DAUGHTER, but I couldn't wait to use it- after all, who can predict when our Myers issue will see print? CHERYL BROWN: Has turned out a lot of xInt work; now unfortunately not doing much artwork due to raising a family(full-time work in it-self, of course)... well, maybe later! ... RANDY MOORE- Would've been right at home in ZAP COMIX, or the like; this would make some ad for ciqs or something...JOAN HANKE-WOODS- Speaking of advertising, Joan sez this Bird Brain started life as an unused sketch for a hairstyling establishment--count the birds!!!

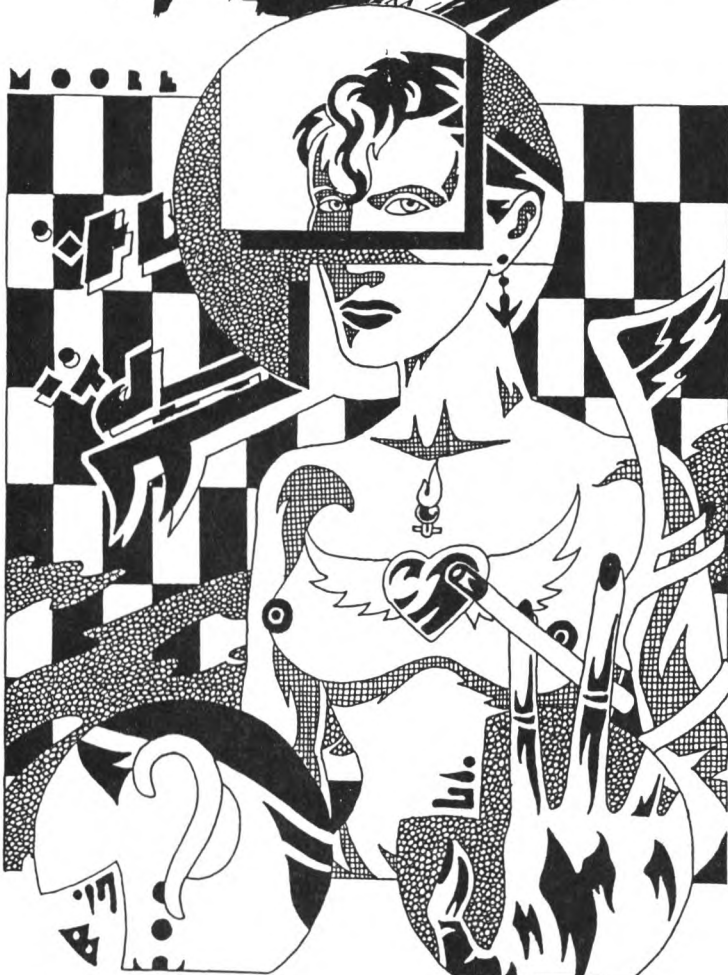
WE NEED ART SUBMISSIONS!!!! Especially hard  
up for artists who can take assignments for  
articles, column headings, etc. We (I) like a  
variety of styles & subjects to choose from,  
but we (I) want quality in our submissions--  
just a quick scan thru NIEKAS will give an  
idea of what in fact gets used...PLEASE DO NOT  
SEND ORIGINALS! We (I) do not care to assume  
responsibility for originals unless' utterly  
necessary (which it never is). Stats or quality  
photocopies are fine, really. (Unless we're  
talking cover art, stats are really unnecessary  
because interior reproduction is fair to midd-  
ling anyway, and is likely to remain so unless  
circulation grows enough for us to get better  
equipment, or farm it all out (the best way if  
you can do it). Oh well--Caltiki Be With You.



~~GA~~ Grease Rat Vendor Obliterating Mallet

RHK

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# Heinlein... Moskowitz...& ME.

by alexei.  
panshin

HE WROTE,  
DID HE?



imply, there is something delicate and breakable in Heinlein's life that needs special care and protection.)

When I set out to do my research twenty years ago, the very first person to whom I wrote was Robert Heinlein. In a page and a half letter, the only thing I asked of a personal nature was this: "I intend to include a short biographical chapter in the book, and I'm interested in your family background--for instance, what your brothers and sisters do--and anything else that isn't too personal to talk about and that doesn't appear in the four or five biographies of you that I have seen which all seem substantially to duplicate each other."

I learned of no Heinlein relatives, wrote to no Heinlein relatives, and sought to borrow no intimate family correspondence. Readers of Heinlein In Dimension will attest that this book of 200 pages has just three pages on Heinlein the person. That's how overzealous and poking into Heinlein's personal life I was.

The fact is that the only correspondence from Heinlein that I've ever seen--aside from letters to me or meant for my eyes--were letters to a friend of Heinlein's named Arthur George Smith, the "Sarge Smith" to whom Starship Troopers is dedicated. Avram Davidson, who was one of the people to whom I wrote twenty years ago, recommended that I contact Smith and gave me his address. I sent him my standard letter asking for information, comment and criticism. I got a letter back from Mrs. Smith saying that her husband had died about six months earlier, and offering me Heinlein's letters to her husband. In accepting her offer, I said, "I can see that you have a great deal of respect for Mr. Heinlein and if there is any possibility in your mind that letting me see his correspondence might be in any way a disservice to him, I would prefer that you did not send me the letters." She sent them. They proved to have no relevance to a book on Heinlein's writing, and I said, "Thank you very much" and sent them back to Mrs. Smith.

I've never made any secret of the fact that I saw these letters. And when Heinlein first made his anger about it known, in a letter to my publishers accusing me of conning his best friend's widow out of a file of letters and threatening to sue Advent if they should publish my book, I wrote to Heinlein, who had

In NIEKAS 33, Sam Moskowitz takes Ed Meskys to task for mis-remembering some fact (or non-fact) about Robert Heinlein and says that Heinlein would have reason to be irritated about this error. I'm not sure why, since the error casts no discredit on Heinlein.

Funny thing, though, in his very next paragraph Sam goes on to say some discreditable things about me that don't happen to be true. I can't help but wonder if he thinks that's as serious a matter, and whether he would grant me the same right he grants Heinlein to be irked?

One thing that Sam says that isn't so is that twenty years ago I wrote him a letter asking him for everything he had on Heinlein; and when he didn't answer me, I wrote a vicious attack on him in the fanzine YANDRO.

The fact is that when I first set out to research Heinlein In Dimension, I wrote to a lot of people, not just Sam. I asked nobody to turn over private researches in their entirety. I did describe the book I'd been commissioned to write and I did ask for information, comment and criticism. Some people answered me, and some didn't. But I certainly didn't go out and launch vicious personal attacks on the ones like Sam who didn't reply. If I went in for that sort of thing, I'd be kicking Sam around today because all these years later, he still answers no request I make for information--not even the page number of the editorial in the first issue of AIR WONDER STORIES, and other secrets like that.

What Sam is taking for a personal attack on him was not that at all. About a year after my letters asking for help in dealing with Heinlein

and his fiction, I wrote a review in YANDRO of Sam's book, Seekers Of Tomorrow--just as I would review every work of SF bibliography and criticism that came into my hands for a period of fifteen years or so. At the outset of the review, I said that Sam had an abiding love for science fiction and no talent for communicating it effectively. And I spent the body of the review pointing out examples of carelessness and clumsiness. I would not do this today, not because I no longer find Sam's lumpish prose and petty errors grating, but because I've come to believe that Sam's carelessness and clumsiness are less important than the value of his pioneering researches. And I've said as much in print in the last year or so when I saw Sam attacked.

But Sam says something else that isn't true that bothers me. He says, "In the case of Alexei Panshin, he was young and overzealous and pursued information about Heinlein's personal life like a bull in a china closet. He learned about relatives, either borrowed or tried to borrow their personal correspondence from Heinlein from them. Heinlein was horrified. After all he was scarcely dead and fair game for researchers."

(I can't help but wonder, by the way...how do you GET a bull into a china closet? And once you've got him there, how do you induce him to stay? Never mind--but do understand that it was phrases like that which were one of the things that got to me in reading Sam's book twenty years ago.)

Sam says one thing that IS true here. I was young. Naive, too. But I simply wasn't overzealous in pursuing information about Heinlein's personal life. (Even if, as Sam's china closet image seems to

Heinlein was playing games like that 40 and more years ago. I'm reminded of a story that Isaac Asimov told me when I was researching Heinlein In Dimension. I didn't use it, of course, but Asimov himself has since put it in print a couple of times. When they worked together in the Philadelphia Navy Yard during World War II, Asimov preferred to carry a brown bag, and eat and read during lunch hour at his desk. But Heinlein wouldn't let him do it. He insisted that it was Asimov's patriotic duty to eat at the cafeteria, even though Asimov found the food revolting. What is more, he would not let Asimov complain about the food, and would fine him a nickel even for remarks like, "Is there such a thing as tough fish?" Heinlein's answer to that was "That will be five cents, Isaac. The implication is clear." And Asimov says that since Heinlein was judge, jury and executioner, that was that. Well, that is still the way Heinlein will play things today when he can.

But here's the weirdest part--for me, at least. A couple of years ago, I was selling books at a Philcon. A teenager wearing a badge with the name Steven Diamond approached me and told me that Heinlein was his uncle (or maybe it was his great uncle). And that Heinlein had sent a copy of Heinlein In Dimension for him to read, and copies to his other nephews, too. According to him, Heinlein said that the book made some errors, but that it was basically sound. The kid stayed and stayed and talked and talked. I was restive, because he was killing business. And I was never sure whether he was lying with an effortless facility marvelous in one so young or whether he was indeed what he claimed to be. Eventually, he said that he personally preferred Asimov's science fiction to Heinlein's. Seeing my opportunity, I pointed out Asimov across the room and suggested that he go tell Asimov that. And he moved on, leaving me wondering, was it a message to me of some kind or just more of the bizarreness Heinlein's style seems to bring out in people? I still don't know.

#### APPENDIX

##### LESE MAJESTY

reprinted from YANDRO 147, Apr '65

I swear that what follows is true. If it seems incredible, I can only answer that it seems incredible to me, too, and I know only too well that it is true. If it matters, I have documentary evidence to remind me--more than 75,000 words of it.

NIEKAS 35:20

Robert A. Heinlein and I are not on good terms.

I'm 24, an ex-PFC, a new college graduate. I've sold half a dozen stories or so and had one anthologized. I have a novel almost finished that I think pretty well of (as opposed to the 200 pages of not-much-in-particular that I turned out when I was 18). I like to think that I'm getting someplace. But the truth is that when they rank people in order of their importance in this country, I don't come out very high, and certainly nowhere near Robert Heinlein. Why, then, should he shoot me down? The answer is that in the course of an innocent scholarly pursuit I have offended him.

About a year and a half ago, I got a note from a Los Angeles fan, Bill Blackbeard, saying that Robert Heinlein's novel A Stranger In A Strange Land was still considered controversial out there. He asked me if I would care to do a critical article on it. Since then, after making page-by-page notes and doing a lot of mulling, something I wasn't prepared to do then, I have written about A Stranger In A Strange Land, but at the time I shipped Blackbeard an article on the subject of sex in Heinlein's writing. It was hastily written, not exhaustive, and marred by at least one snap judgement--but in spite of this I had what I thought was a pretty well documented central point. Blackbeard handed this article on to Redd Boggs, who had just taken over the editorship of SHANGRI L'AFFAIRES, and Boggs put the title "Heinlein: By His Jockstrap" on it and put it in his first issue. That was my first offense.

I was at the Midwestcon last June. Earl Kemp, whom I've known for some years, walked up to me and said, "Alex, how would you like to do a book on Robert Heinlein for Advent: Publishers?" Since he had a glass in his hand, I didn't take him seriously. However, in August, in Wabash, Indiana, Earl came up to me again and said, "Alex. I wasn't kidding. How would you like to do a book on Robert Heinlein?" Since he didn't have a glass in his hand at the time, I decided to take him seriously.

What Earl wanted was a minimum of 40,000 words in a serious critical study of Heinlein's fiction. Visions of glory aside, that is a lot of work. I thought it over carefully, and then wrote Earl a two-page, single-spaced letter saying I would try.

I have written the book, 75,000 words of it, and the existence of the book alone--not what is in it--is my second offense.

In December, 1964, I began work. I knew what I wanted in general, but I was missing several stories and I had a number of questions I needed answers to. I sat down and wrote 43 people asking for material, information, advice, comment, criticism, and quotable opinion.

The FIRST person that I wrote to was Robert Heinlein. I assumed he would be interested. I mentioned the article in SHAGGY, and said that I intended the book to be much better, that I intended it to be comprehensive and responsible, and told him what would be in it. Then I asked him for help. I asked him for suggestions, comments and criticism. And I asked him a series of specific questions on pen names, non-science fiction writing, family background, movie writing, and so on, in hopes that he might answer some of them.

I never heard from him at all. I was sorry about that because I wanted the book to be as good as I could make it, but I pressed on anyway.

I wrote the book by a schedule. By the end of January, I had finished nine out of 31 projected chapters, and I sent them off to Advent. They wrote back: "The manuscript you sent is eminently satisfactory, and if the rest of it is as good, we'll have a book both you and Advent can be proud of."

At about this time, the end of January, I found out that even though Heinlein was not communicating with me he was writing and talking to other people, and angrily. It puzzled me a little that if he didn't like what I was doing he would not write to me about it, but he did not.

In December, I sent a letter to Lurton Blessingame, Heinlein's agent, and told him what I was doing, and asked him for information and advice. He answered and said that he thought a critical study of Heinlein was a fine idea, particularly now while Heinlein was around to answer questions and make rebuttals. He also said, however, that his cooperation rested on Heinlein's OK. I assume Heinlein didn't give it because Blessingame didn't write again.

Much the same thing happened with an Annapolis classmate of Heinlein's. L. Sprague de Camp had suggested that I write him, and I

not answered my first letter. I offered him a look at what I had written, and also a look at my complete correspondence with Mrs. Smith, so that he could see that I hadn't conned her in any way. He didn't answer that, either.

At the time, Heinlein's threat to sue did temporarily kill the publication of my book. And I laid out the (to me) bewildering facts in a fanzine article in YANDRO 147. Since Sam was apparently getting YANDRO then, he ought to know the facts that he is misrepresenting now. What's more, I said it all a second time in Richard Geiss' THE ALIEN CRITIC in 1975 when another garbled version surfaced. I'm sure that Sam has that one, too.

Even today, Heinlein doesn't communicate directly with me, though I have sent him a book review, three essays and one story I've written concerning his work as a matter of courtesy. Recently, in fact, I wrote him a letter of inquiry asking if it was possible that his story "Universe" was inspired by the same Emerson quote as Asimov's "Nightfall." A minor point in a large book Cory and I are writing on the conceptual development of SF. Heinlein didn't answer that, either. I never really thought that he was likely to, but I did feel obligated to give him the chance to correct me.

I have heard from Heinlein once indirectly. Back in 1973, I wrote to a university librarian named Rita Bottoms, keeper of the Robert Heinlein Special Collection at the University of California at Santa Cruz. I asked for access to the collection, and she wrote back that permission was denied. I wrote again to ask why, in view of the fact that the collection was open to the public and that I was a legitimate Heinlein scholar. The answer that I got back was a long letter from Heinlein to Rita Bottoms telling her to ignore his personal animus towards me, and to do what was professionally correct, and asking her to send me a Xerox of his letter.

In the course of that letter, Heinlein informs Mrs. Bottoms that he is going to establish a file on me in his collection. Heinlein says, "My prime reason for disliking Mr. Panshin is that he obtained and read without my knowledge or permission a file of very personal letters from me to my dearest friend--all this after my friend's death. Details, with proof, will be exhibit A." It's strange, too, because this letter itself was FAR more personally revealing than

anything in the Smith correspondence. There was to be more in the file, by the way. Exhibit B was to be a review of Heinlein In Dimension documenting my errors. Heinlein says, "I shall avoid the sort of wild conjecture that he makes in his book. But I will not be gentle; the facts are rough." Exhibit C was to be a similar pull-no-punches review of Rite Of Passage, which Mrs. Heinlein and others had told him was a pastiche of his work.

I sent a copy of the YANDRO article off to Heinlein, along with my correspondence with Mrs. Smith, and asked that for completeness they be included, too.

But why establish a file like this at all? My opinion today is that Heinlein was raising a warning signal for other critics and researchers, letting them know where the lines are drawn.

I've never been in the collection myself to this day, though I did send a researcher in my name to check out some things for me. Truth to tell, I don't know whether the exhibits Heinlein claimed to be setting up actually exist, or what is said in them. What did Heinlein have to say about Rite Of Passage when he finally got around to reading it? And, having given Heinlein more than one opportunity to correct the errors in Heinlein In Dimension to which Spider Robinson objects, I'd like to know what errors Heinlein actually found. As I told Heinlein at the outset, I desired to be accurate, and even after 20 years, I'm willing to make my corrections. Most of all, though, I'm curious to know how Heinlein disposed of the relevant correspondence I sent him for inclusion in my file. For me, that's the real test of his honesty and his sincerity.

From time to time, I wonder about this whole strange flap, especially when some garbled version like Sam's gets back to me. One of the things I wonder about is the apparent disparity between Heinlein's reactions at my "offense." I ask myself, did I actually overstep the bounds of civilized behavior 20 years ago? Trying to look at the situation as objectively as I can, I don't think I did. I was certainly attempting not to. But I honestly don't know. I've only written the one book on the work of another living writer--and I was young and naive then, and improving like crazy. Maybe someone in the biography-and-criticism business can tell me. Is it considered a breach of etiquette or professionally

dubious to read letters from an author to a friend without the author's prior knowledge and permission? Did I do something I shouldn't have in agreeing to look at these letters when Mrs. Smith informed me of their existence and shoved them in my direction?

Here's a thought experiment...I picture myself sitting down right now to write a book about a SF writer, say A. E. van Vogt. Along the way, someone named Mrs. Jones offers me a look at the correspondence between van Vogt and her late husband. Is it OK for me to look? Is it necessary for me to ask van Vogt before I look? And if I do look, would van Vogt have a reason to start a special file on me in the university collection of his papers? And I laugh, because once you fill in the blank with any other name but Heinlein, the situation looks ludicrous and paranoid.

It appears to me that Heinlein presents himself as a special case, deserving of special treatment. And that he has sufficient leverage--the desire of people like Sam and Spider to be his good buddies--that people play along with him. He sure snookered Sam with a letter telling him much, but then denying the right to use what was told. And look at the lengths that Sam is willing to go right now in order to avoid arousing Heinlein's possible displeasure. Even I, who no longer aspire to be Heinlein's good buddy, and stand near the top of Heinlein's official shit list, have done my best to respect Heinlein's demands for privacy.

But how very odd it seems to me that Heinlein will use so many kinds of manipulation to control what is said about him or known about him. Just off the top of my head--silence, threats to sue, rage for effect, tricky letters, special files, fences, smoke and intimidation. And not just with me and Sam, but with a lot of different people over a period of many, many years.

What's it all about? What's it all for? It really beats me. But I can see that there is this consistent, continuing pattern of pre-emptive growls and flutters.

And whatever the answer is, it is not what Sam suggests, that Heinlein "only wants to give information to responsible individuals under civilized conditions." That's only one more game, the pretense by Heinlein that he knows a Code that others have forgotten, and that anyone who crosses him in any way is Out of Line.

did, asking some very general questions. He answered by saying that he would be glad to help me, but suggested that I send him specific questions that might each be answered in a single paragraph. I sent him the questions--innocuous ones by my standards--and for all that he was glad to help me, I didn't even get a postcard for an answer.

There were other people I never heard from in the first place. And Advent wrote to tell me that they'd been informed that my letters to people had angered Heinlein.

That's just hearsay, of course. Heinlein never wrote to ME to tell me what might please him, though I would have been very happy to listen.

Then I made a mistake that made Heinlein even madder at me.

Again at someone's recommendation I had written to Arthur George "Sarge" Smith, whom I only knew from the dedication of Starship Troopers. The answer came back from Mrs. Smith, saying that her husband had died in September. She also said that she had a file of letters from Heinlein to her husband that might be of interest to me.

I don't apologize for writing back that I was interested, but I do acknowledge that it was a mistake--for two reasons. One is that the letters that I ultimately saw didn't have any bearing on the book I was writing. The other is that my looking at them was something that made Heinlein madder.

I wrote to Mrs. Smith saying explicitly that some of the conclusions I would be making in my book would not be favorable. I said, "I can see that you have a great deal of respect for Mr. Heinlein (she had spoken in detail of Heinlein's sincere, kind and understanding nature) and if there is any possibility in your mind that letting me see your correspondence might be in any way a disservice to him, I would prefer that you did not send me the letters."

I shouldn't have written at all. I should have taken to my heels the moment her letter had landed in my mailbox.

When Heinlein found that I had seen the letters--I had made no secret of it and one of his friends had told him--he called Advent. This was early in February. Advent wrote him a letter that offered not only to let him see the manuscript but also the opportunity to change

any point in which I stepped outside the bounds of legitimate criticism. (And they wrote and told me to return those damned letters. I'd already done that.)

I sent Advent nine more chapters.

Heinlein sent Advent a registered letter, the original to Earl Kemp. Carbons were listed as follows: AGA (who?); Science Fiction Writers of America (a newly formed organization of which Heinlein and I are both charter members); George Price (another Advent partner); Harris, Lorah and Harris (another registered letter--these, I would guess, are his lawyers); Lurton Blessingame (that, if you recall, is his agent); and three more carbons for his files. None to me--I gather polite society doesn't recognise me.

I have seen a copy of this letter and it is one of the strongest letters I have ever seen. It called into doubt Advent's purposes since they had chosen me, "an untried college student," to write the book, instead of an experienced, respected and qualified critic such as Conklin, Knight, Merrill, Moskowitz, Boucher, or P. Schuyler Miller (Heinlein's list).

The letter accused me of having shown ungentlemanly, unethical, and in one case, dishonorable and illegal methods of gathering material. It said other things, too: that I had pried into his affairs (that letter he never answered, perhaps?), that I had caused him trouble in the past (the SHAGGY article, or the fan letter I wrote him when I was a boy?) and that I had conned his best friend's widow out of a file of letters (hah!!).

The letter forbade Advent the right to quote from any of his copyrighted works, the use of his name or picture, or anything in which his permission could be required.



He refused to look at the manuscript (why??). Moreover, he said that if it were published he reserved the right to sue, bringing criminal action or whatever else seemed appropriate.

Advent sent me \$50 and a letter that said (a) they still liked my manuscript, and (b) goodbye and good luck.

THAT is what it feels like to be stepped on.

One thing is clear to me, if not to Heinlein. Writing a book like this isn't likely to return much for the time and effort involved. Ask Advent's other authors how much they realized for their work. It is possible that none of his chosen critics might be interested in writing a critical book for Advent: Publishers on the stories of Robert Heinlein.

Why Heinlein never wrote to me so that he could be assured that I was writing nothing other than the critical, responsible study that I told him I was writing in the first place, I don't know. Perhaps that is the way important figures deal with untried college students.

I wrote three letters: one to Science Fiction Writers of America, one to Lurton Blessingame, and one to Robert Heinlein. I offered to let any or all of Heinlein's preferred critics read my manuscript. I said that if any of them pointed out illegitimate criticism, I would change it to satisfy them or delete it. I said that if any of them thought my manuscript worthless, I would drop it entirely. I offered to let my book and my correspondence, including that with Mrs. Smith, be scrutinized.

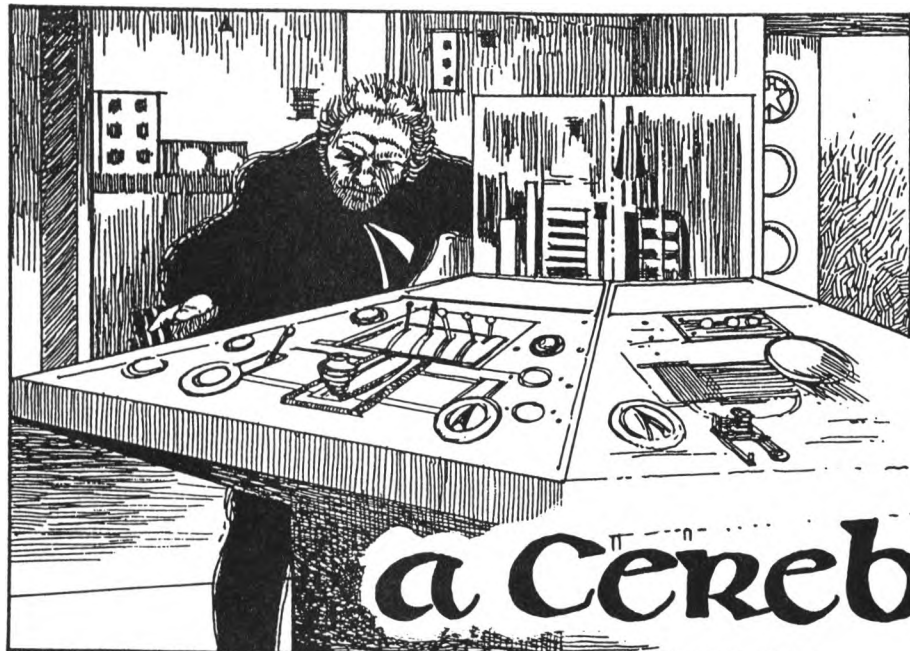
Damon Knight, for the SFWA, wrote that he had sent a letter to Heinlein asking if there was anything the SFWA could do to smooth things. This was more than a month ago and since I haven't heard anything from the SFWA since, I assume that Heinlein didn't think there was anything the SFWA could do.

Lurton Blessingame sent a note that said before I wrote a biography I should find out the reaction of the person involved. I replied that I wasn't writing a biography and that I had tried to communicate with Mr. Heinlein. That was the last that I heard from him.

Robert Heinlein never answered.







-oOo-

#### HOW TO EXPLAIN TO YOUR PARENTS ABOUT THIS TV SHOW

by Tamar Lindsay

For those who don't know what DOCTOR WHO is about, or who have to explain their TV watching preferences to others--it is a British television show that began as a children's Saturday night bedtime show that was not going to talk down to the children or bore their parents. In England it is still considered a children's show, and young adults sometimes give it up or pretend to do so, as a mark of adulthood. The original producer was told that it was to aim at children from 9 to 14, and that the character of The Doctor was to be primarily mysterious and unpredictable. That producer, Verity Lambert, admitted at the time that she knew absolutely nothing about children.

The character of The Doctor was intended from the beginning to be an unreconciled combination of opposites--elderly and childish, kindly and somewhat sinister, logical and irrational, and any other odd combination you can think of. His possession of his time/space travel machine was at first also unexplained, as was his inability to control it. The reason for leaving it whenever it lands somewhere is that to do the complex calculations for an accurate journey to another time/place, you must first find out exactly when and where you are. The machine is called a TARDIS, which is short for Time And Relative Dimensions In

Space capsule. It looks like a police box, which was at the time (1963) a fairly common sight in England. A police box has/had a dual function: it provided the general public with a free telephone to the police, which would also allow police headquarters to notify any policeman in sight of the flashing light on top to answer the phone; and it provided the police with a strong temporary jail for holding prisoners while the police wagon was on its way. The phone is accessible from outside, so the two functions can work at once. The TARDIS looks like that because it was designed to imitate anything common in the immediate vicinity where it lands, as camouflage. However, this particular TARDIS was in for repairs at the time The Doctor appropriated it and took off from his home planet of Gallifrey, and one of the many things wrong with it is that the chameleon circuit is sticky; it changed to police box shape when it landed, and stuck that way. The Doctor has no name--this was established in the first episode when someone called him "Doctor Foreman" after the name his granddaughter used in school and he said "Doctor Who?" He is known only as The Doctor. For a long time, right from the beginning, in fact, he was listed on the credits as "Doctor Who," but actually it is only the show which is titled "Doctor Who" With the fifth Doctor, the producers corrected their mistake and he is credited as The Doctor. In certain shows it was established that Time Lords, of which he is one, are also known by other names, and his name in college

was Beta Sigma, initials BS, but he now insists on being called Doctor, even by old college buddies.

Contrary to what you might expect, the Doctor is not trying to get back home; he is, in fact, on the run for stealing the TARDIS. He is escaping from a society which is an enormous, useless bureaucracy, whose people have time/space travel and try to avoid using it, and he is exploring the universe.

The mundane considerations of television actors' health and career choices have led to changes of actors playing The Doctor. When the first one became too ill to continue, the decision was made to write in a plausible way to make the transition. Therefore, whenever a Time Lord is badly injured and would be expected to die, he regenerates and grows himself a new body, which looks different. The body grows very quickly, but it takes time, usually, for the brain to heal, and the personality is also quite different.

The Doctor originally had his granddaughter with him, to explain and exhibit the universe to her. He also took off from 1963 Earth with two of her mundane schoolteachers, partly just to show them that he wasn't a mere charlatan. Eventually they got back to 1963 London, his granddaughter found a home she wanted to stay in (not on Earth), and he picked up some other companions. Most of The Doctor's companions are stowaways or otherwise accidentally come by; he seldom has a chance to choose them.

They are there in order to ask questions so that he can explain things to them (and to the viewers) and they help him get into and out of trouble whenever they land. The original Doctor was more sinister and ruthless in the early episodes; he seems to have learned some of his finer virtues from the two schoolteachers.

Each actor who has played The Doctor has given him a different characterization, with the later ones trying to incorporate some bits of the earlier ones for continuity. The original was short tempered and imperious and tended to teach Socratically, by making the pupil think things through for him- or herself. The second was based more on Charlie Chaplin, and emphasized the childish qualities of The Doctor; but beneath the panic and the silliness, he was always

unpredictability, with a bizarre sense of style picked up from the fourth and strengthened.

The reasons for the different characterizations are a mixture of original concept, actor's preference, producer's decisions, and competing pressures--what was popular in TV and movies at the time. Some producers looked at what popular novels were about, others at current movies; some elements were copied, others avoided on the theory that if you can't compete (with a low budget), you should do something original instead of being a poor copy.

And yes, Colin Baker, the sixth Doctor, did finally repair the chameleon circuit on the TARDIS, but the sapient machine is old and cranky and set in her ways, and she's out of practice to boot; so

only been a Whovian since I was suddenly and severely hooked last fall. This makes me somewhat less than an expert on the subject. Recently, however, Ed was nice enough to ask me to put down some of my thoughts. A fan with a new enthusiasm is rarely reluctant to share it, and I thank him for the opportunity.

I've seen many of the episodes made by the fourth Doctor, Tom Baker, and very few of anyone else's. Also, since I don't (yet) own a VCR, I've seen these episodes only once or twice (we have two stations that broadcast them in the Washington DC area) so I must rely on my memory for details. Caveat. Especially when I quote.

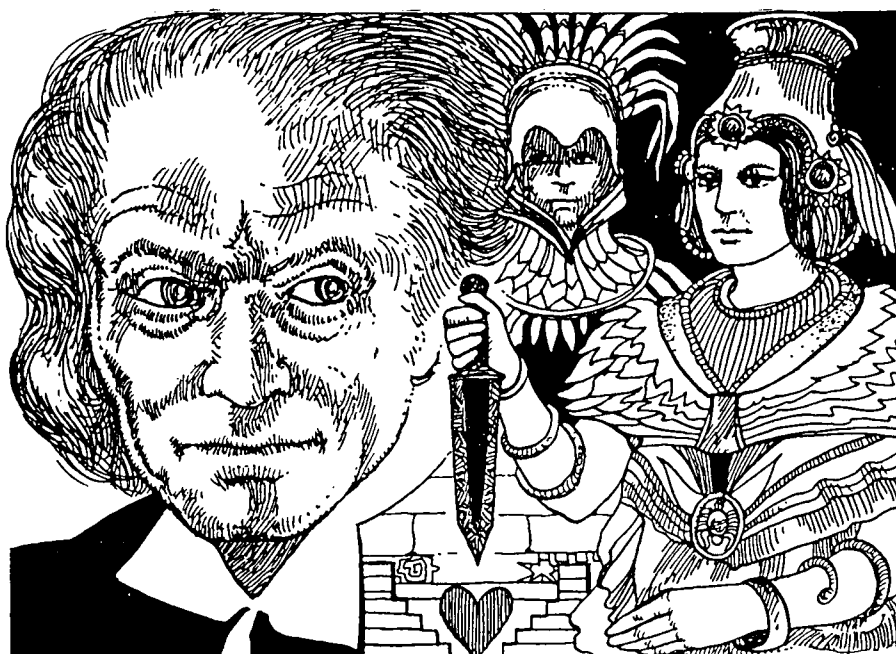
If any one thing hooked me, it was Tom Baker. I love the variety of the human face, and his is marvelously strange, funny and expressive. He also has a deep, resonant voice that's made all the more pleasant by his British accent. I understand that much of the humor of his performance was spontaneous on his part, and left in by a wise director. This certainly helps take my mind off the worst problem of the program, which is that most stories are formula and unbelievable.

His Doctor (I cannot speak of any of the others) is a very right-brained and non-linear thinker. He is untidy and unsystematic. He is portrayed as being brilliant, yet in over five centuries he hasn't been able to fix the steering mechanism on the TARDIS. There is some question as to whether he's even gotten around to trying very hard.

Despite this, he manages to make some dreadful problems come out reasonably well at the end, through his genius, his genuine courage, and his utterly unshakable humanism. He's a good guy who's at least as much fun as the trickiest villain on any other program, and that is a breath of fresh air. Despite his possessing many attributes of the hero archetype, I see him as an example of the archetypical trickster.

The trickster, who refuses to be controlled by the rules the rest of us must live by, is popular in human legend as far back as we have records, and probably as far back as stories were told around paleolithic campfires. The classic examples most often given are Loki and Coyote Man, but it would be just as accurate to point out examples in our own culture, from The Stainless Steel Rat to Bugs Bunny.

A wonderful visual metaphor for his whole trickster aspect is his



thinking, and his most bizarre behaviour usually had an extremely logical purpose revealed later. The third was more of a James Bond, but he retained the flashes of temper. The fourth re-emphasized the childishness--"What's the use of being grown up if you can't be childish occasionally?"--but continued the action-adventure style, and the flashes of temper. The fifth was deliberately less all-knowing, more likely to get into trouble from sheer curiosity, and resorted to more of the apparently panicky running of the second. His temper flashes were more childish than imperious, but he also taught Socratically; he did some physical action, sword-fighting and so on, but more in self-defense and as a last resort. The sixth appears to be returning to the original

most of the time it still looks like a police box. When it does change, it looks like something equally out of place for where it is.

Send constructive fan mail to:  
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Doctor Who  
Wood Lane  
London W12 7RJ, England UK

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TOM BAKER'S DOCTOR WHO

or

The Trickster as Hero

by Sherna Comerford

Although I've been a science fiction fan for twenty years, I've

most famous prop. Tom Baker is a tall, lean man. As the Doctor, he wears an eccentric conglomeration of clothing, including a brightly striped scarf that loops very loosely around his neck and dangles all the way to the floor on both sides. As he moves, it threatens to tangle his legs at each step. It accentuates both his appearance and his eccentricity, and for seven years he wore it in most of his scenes with a skillful lack of grace that never descended to the merely slapstick.

Another prop he uses frequently is a small paper bag of jelly babies (a candy not unlike gummy bears in this country). On the farthest planet or in the tensest situation, he is likely to reach into the bottomless pockets of his long coat, pull out this utterly mundane object, and offer the suspicious (fill in the blank) a jelly baby. Sometimes it helps defuse things. Most often it helps entice others to underestimate him.

One delightful moment comes when he uses it to steal a flying boat he needs to reach the villain. It had already been established that the people on this particular planet had never seen penny candies before, so the Doctor sneaks out of hiding and lays a trail of them leading away from the flier. Then, to get the guard's attention, he very carefully tosses the bag onto the hood of the flier without revealing his hiding place. The guard sees the bag, looks from it to the candies on the ground, and goes off following the trail, leaving the flier unguarded. Tra-la.

What I didn't mention in setting this scene is that when Tom Baker tosses the bag of jelly babies, he first pulls one out with his teeth, like John Wayne pulling the pin on a hand grenade. It's this kind of throwaway bit that makes it difficult to take your eyes away from the screen even briefly. Sometimes a throwaway is important to the story line, and missing it means you have to wait until things are revealed to the other characters before you know what really happened.

The Doctor is himself aware of the quirkiness of his personality, and there is always the underlying question of whether he's doing something for fun or as a brilliant disguise for a serious purpose. I am especially fond of such self-descriptive lines as "I'm a very dangerous fellow when I don't know what I'm doing." and "Interfere? Of course we'll interfere. Always do what you're best at, I say!"

It becomes a conscious plot element in the story "Invasion of Time," when the Doctor must keep his real motives hidden from some mind-reading aliens with whom he is pretending to collaborate as they invade his home planet of Gallifrey. He explains to a fellow Time-Lord, Cardinal Barusha, that Barusha will be in danger if he gets too involved with the invaders because his mind is too straightforward. He can't keep up the constant mental and behavioral stream of misdirection that the Doctor has been using to hide his true motives and remain in the aliens' confidence.

This story is an unusually fine showcase for the talent of its star. Maintaining those mental barriers and having Gallifrey (of all places!) at risk puts the Doctor under a great mental strain, which apparently has been going on for some time. He doesn't do anything he doesn't always do in his sudden fits of temper and quirky irrelevancies, but the intensity is subtly increased, and we feel subliminally that this one is getting to him on a level that most of his adventures, as serious as they are, do not.

Tom Baker is a fine actor and a very talented clown. I'd put him in the same class as Art Carney, and they don't come better than that. Unfortunately, I've heard it said that his seven years as the Doctor had typed him in the limited imaginations of those who are responsible for casting other roles. If so, it's very sad. I'd love to see what else he can do.

I've recently seen a few of the episodes made by the fifth Doctor, Peter Davison. I understand that some people don't like him because he replaced the man who did such a brilliant job in the role. This is silly. Each actor brings a different interpretation to the part, and there's no need for them to be in competition with each other. I enjoy Peter Davison's Doctor (as I enjoyed the couple of Jon Pertwee episodes I was lucky enough to see) without worrying about what Tom Baker did that he didn't. Each of the six Doctors (and I hear rumors that there may soon be a seventh) should be judged, for better or for worse, on his own merits, because each one has qualities and quirks that the others lack. Peter Davison's attributes, however, do not seem to include the trickster, and I shall have to wait to analyse what I like about him until I've seen more of his work.

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## SOME BOOKS ABOUT DOCTOR WHO

by Tamar Lindsay

DOCTOR WHO--A CELEBRATION, Peter Haining, W. H. Allen & Co PLC, London, hc, 1983, 256 pp., \$19.95

DOCTOR WHO--THE KEY TO TIME, Peter Haining, W. H. Allen & Co. PLC, London, hc, 1984, 264 pp., \$24.95

DOCTOR WHO--THE UNFOLDING TEXT, John Tulloch and Manuel Alvarado, St. Martin's, NY, trade pb, 1983, 342 pp., \$9.95

THE DOCTOR WHO PROGRAMME GUIDE, VOL. #1, Jean-Marc Lofficier, Target Division, W. H. Allen & Co. PLC, London, pb, 1981, 128 pp., \$2.95

I am an adult "Doctor Who" fan, or Whovian. I came to the show as an adult, around the age of 35 (it depends on whether you count from the first show seen or from the moment I realized that I was hooked). I am female, which is less important but which may count for some of my perceptions. And I am the holder of a BA in English literature, which definitely has something to do with my perceptions.

The first three books listed above are all expensive, compared with the prices of the individual Doctor Who paperback novelizations, each of which presents one complete story line. (I reserve the term "episode" for the half hour fragments into which each story is broken, as they are shown separately in the format of a long-term series, and therefore have cliffhangers written in.) The newcomer to the show may wish to buy only one, to find out what it's all about; I would recommend Doctor Who--A Celebration for that purpose. It has descriptions not only of each Doctor, but of the various companions, starting with the very first one, and it also has statements by the various actors about how they saw the roles. The various villains are also included, and the writers and producers. The descriptions of the major continuing elements, such as the TARDIS and the planet (and city) of Gallifrey are fairly accurate, differing only in a few details from the statements made during the shows 20+ year run. There are eight full color pages of photos of The Doctors and a few important villains. The book has a great many more black and white pictures. The back of the book contains capsule descriptions of the stories through the second year of the fifth Doctor, Peter Davison, ending with "The King's Demons." The last pages list the episodes which the BBC has and the ones which have been lost as of May 1983, so

that if anyone has a private copy of any of the missing ones, they are politely requested (begged) to let the BBC know, for copying purposes.

The second book, by Peter Haining, Doctor Who--The Key to Time, takes a slightly different slant. It was published in 1984, and instead of plot synopses gives production information about each episode as it was made and as it was shown, in a sort of diary format. Much of the interview-related information from the previous book is repeated, but a few different versions of some incidents are given. The book covers the third and last year of the Fifth Doctor, Peter Davison, and covers the beginning of the sixth Doctor, Colin Baker, without telling much about him. The book is lavishly illustrated with 24 pages of color photos and scarcely a page of text without a black-and-white illustration. Many of the drawings are unfortunately of the poorer sort of fan artwork--lovingly drawn, and that's about the best that can be said. This is not to say that there aren't some good ones--just very few. Some of them are cartoons, a few of which are rather good. On the whole, however, except for the color photos and the information of adult interest, the book is something of a ripoff. It is mainly of interest to rabid fans like me.

Doctor Who--The Unfolding Text is a much, much tougher book to read. I doubt that half the people who bought it will fight their way through it to the end. Only my English Lit training kept me going. A friend who works for the government says she has never seen such jargon. We agree with the authors and think they are correct

in what they say--but the way they say it is mind-boggling. It came out in 1983. It has 26 pages of notes at the end, which would be called footnotes if they were at the foot of the pages. It has nine black-and-white photographs in 342 pages, a diametric opposite of the other two books. The author examines the program as an intersection of the requirements of (1) science fiction narrative, (2) television narrative, and (3) BBC policies and restraints, as affected by British pressure groups and audiences.

Doctor Who--The Unfolding Text includes a fair amount of the information from the interviews given in Celebration when that information adds to the discussion of the logic behind the show or the conditions of making it. It has a great deal more information about how specific elements were decided on, including conflicting opinions of different people. For instance, many people feel that enjoyable as the Tom Baker Doctor is, that period was a low point in the history of the show because the stories sometimes undercut standard elements that had been previously established. Much of the criticism is directed at Doug Adams for weakening the image of the Daleks by pointing out that they can't climb stairs or ladders. Adams defends his work by pointing out that he was trying to improve the quality of the science fiction element of the show, and he does, in fact, have a good defense. However, as the authors point out, he did so at the expense of the framework of the show itself--the continuing tradition that the Daleks are extremely dangerous and must be

taken seriously. (Everyone seems to have forgotten that in the Hartnell episode, "The Chase," a companion says that Daleks "don't like stairs.") The continuing tradition is dominant in the end, because if the villains aren't taken seriously, the show falls apart. The importance of the mythos surrounding the show has been appreciated more by the later producers, as is made clear in discussions of the Peter Davison (fifth Doctor) period: almost everything in them can be traced to earlier shows as allusions, even though the stories stand on their own quite well. (This is the sort of thing that appeals to the English Lit major in me, and to a significant sector of the audience: the game of catching allusions which are, in fact, put in there to be caught.)

Besides the in-depth analysis of the content of the show, including the characterization of The Doctor as the definitive romantic hero playing out the dialectic of self and others, the authors also discuss the doppelganger motif (all those duplicate androids), the attempts to provide a female character with something to do besides scream and ask questions (they really do try, too), camera work, imagery, and marketing. The last chapter is an intensive discussion of one Peter Davison story, "Kinda," from the various aspects of writing, costume, minor effects of small gestures in the acting, problems of camera placement and use, depth of religious layering (Buddhist, Pagan, and Christian elements), the intent of the author vs. the result required by the producers' overriding concept of The Doctor, and the changes due to a change of actors between the writing and the production (Tom Baker to Peter Davison), to name a few. If this sounds like a lot for one chapter, consider that this chapter is perhaps the easiest one in the book. For those who are willing to work through it, I consider this to be an invaluable companion volume to Doctor Who--A Celebration.

I felt that since the third book is so difficult to read because of its jargon, anyone who could fight their way through should be able to cope with comparisons to a show they haven't seen. People are always comparing things to movies and TV shows that I have never seen. When it's done right, I can still tell what they're talking about.

The fourth book, The Doctor Who Programme Guide, is very useful to the new viewer and to anyone who wants to discuss the series without losing track of when things happen.



This volume has descriptions of each story line, in order, from "An Unearthly Child" through "Logopolis," first Doctor through fourth Doctor. Yes, the same basic information is in Celebration, but not as completely and not in such a handy format--standard paperback. Lofficier gives the names of the script editor, the writer, all major actors, the dates first telecast, the producer, the number of episodes, the title of the book (if any), and, of course, a brief synopsis of the story line, which is rather better than the synopses in Celebration. ((I have gone so far as to write my own synopses for the Peter Davison episodes, as a handy way of recalling details when talking about the show with others.))

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#### SOME MORE BOOKS ABOUT DOCTOR WHO

by Frances Woodard

I began watching DOCTOR WHO as an adult, at around the age of 24. Once while waiting for a ride I watched the program, having nothing better to do. It ended with a cliffhanger and curiosity forced me to watch the next episode, the next, and the next. By the time that particular story line was finished I was hooked.

In some ways the British DOCTOR WHO started out with the same idea as the American STAR TREK. For example, DOCTOR WHO originally reached out for an audience they knew was intelligent, and avoided the traps that other programs set for what they deemed "a not very intelligent audience." DOCTOR WHO was written for children, but in a short time it had captured a sizeable number of adults as well. DOCTOR WHO, like STAR TREK, dared to be both imaginative and creative.

THE MAKING OF DOCTOR WHO, Terrance Dicks and Malcolm Hulke, W. H. Allen & Co., Ltd., London, 1972, 128 pp., \$2.75

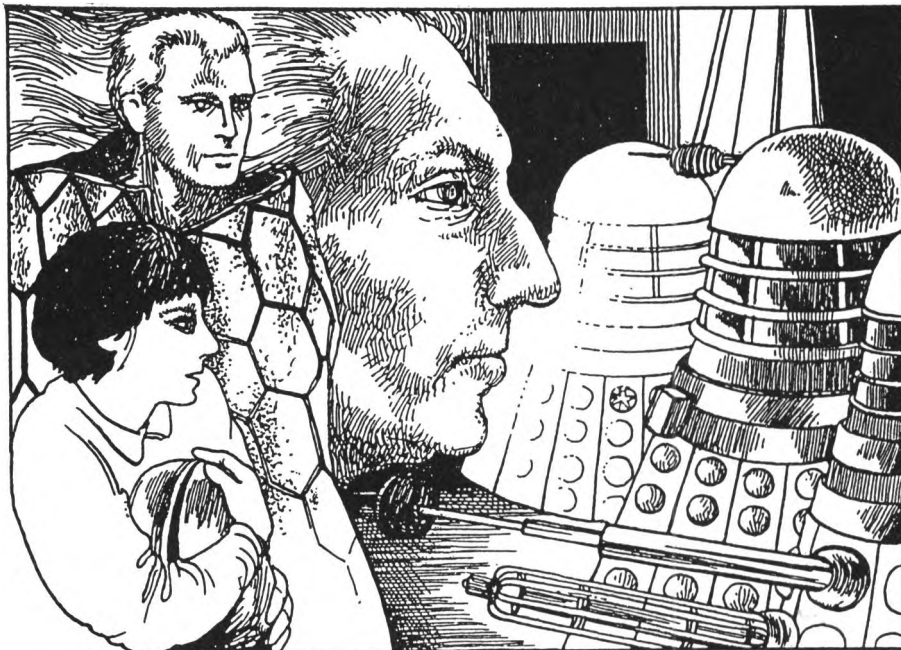
THE DOCTOR WHO QUIZ BOOK, Nigel Robinson, W. H. Allen & Co., Ltd., London, 1981, 128 pp., \$2.75

THE SECOND DOCTOR WHO QUIZBOOK, Nigel Robinson, W. H. Allen & Co., Ltd., London, 1983, 125 pp., \$2.75

THE THIRD DOCTOR WHO QUIZBOOK, Nigel Robinson, W. H. Allen & Co., Ltd., London, 1985, 145 pp., \$2.95

THE DOCTOR WHO PROGRAMME GUIDE, VOL 2--WHAT'S WHAT AND WHO'S WHO, Jean - Marc Lofficier, W. H. Allen & Co., Ltd., London, 1981, 111 pp., \$2.95

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The Making Of Doctor Who gives a good overall view of the program, the actors, the story lines, the production, and the people behind the scenes. The reader learns, for example, how the Daleks were created from the initial concept by Terry Nation to the final appearance on camera. The book contains a brief summary of the first three Doctors, a chapter on Tom Baker, and summaries on the famous monsters and The Master. The book also offers a special chapter on UNIT, including a breakdown of the main characters of UNIT. This book concludes with a "Diary of Production" using "The Robot" story line as an example. The readers are taken through the planning, writing, and production that was used to bring "The Robot" to the screen. The Making Of Doctor Who is a very interesting, informative book both for Whovians and for beginning watchers. It provides some background history on many of the aspects of the program and also contains eight pages of black-and-white photographs, mostly with Tom Baker as The Doctor.

The three Doctor Who Quizbooks are excellent books for trivia buffs. These three books contain very detailed and exacting information regarding this popular program. All three books are broken down by theme category, such as, "The Adventures of the First Doctor," "Who Said What," and "Behind the Scenes." The questions are in the front of the book, and the answers in the rear.

The Doctor Who Programme Guide, VOL. 2, picks up where the Programme Guide left off. It contains a listing of the programs up to the end of Tom Baker's tenure. After a summary of The Doctor's companions

the book has a complete glossary of every term, character, planet, ship, name, and object ever used in this program. As the listing contains clear definitions, I feel this book is a must for the beginning DOCTOR WHO viewer.

I currently own 114 books on DOCTOR WHO, most of which are novelizations of the individual story lines. I discovered that the books, usually bearing the same titles as the programs, contain more information or clarify the story line. There was, however, one particular book, Aztec, which did not have much to do with the final script as aired. These books cost between \$2.50 and \$2.95 and contain something over 100 pages.

The newest addition to my library is Doctor Who Brain teasers And Benders by Adrian Heath (W. H. Allen & Co., 1984, 128 pp., \$2.95). This book contains crossword puzzles, anagrams, grids, hidden words, general puzzles, and other such games. I found to be a challenge, a tease, frustrating, and very enjoyable.

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#### DOCTOR WHO--THE FESTIVALS

by Frances Woodard

I recently attended two DOCTOR WHO festivals, one in a small town and one in a major metropolis. They were remarkably alike. I have never been to a real SF con or any other media con, so I cannot compare them.

On March 21, 1986, Channel 11 of NH sponsored a DOCTOR WHO festival. It was held at the Highway Hotel in



Concord from 5 pm to approximately 1 am. Lured by the promise of additional benefits, we purchased our tickets in advance.

It was easy to spot the festival by the UNIT officers and men skulking around outside. The festival was small, but well done. It featured as guest speaker Patrick Troughton, the second Doctor. He was both very informative and interesting. He offered great insights into the program and was very patient with the autograph session and the questions asked during the interview.

During the course of the evening we discovered that there weren't any benefits to being an advance ticket holder. I did, however, manage to get in and out of the three-to-four-hour autograph line very quickly. My friend Dorian and I and only two other people wore celery. (Peter Davison wore celery as a boutonniere to ward off unhealthy influences.) We even went to some trouble to find an open market during the evening to refresh our celery. Our celery was met with kind words and appreciation. Most people had chosen to dress like Tom Baker with the hat and the long flowing scarf. The only disappointment was the huckster area. It had mostly T-shirts and a few pins and books. The restaurant in the Highway Hotel closes early and Dorian and I had to leave the festival to grab supper.

In May Channel 2 from Boston also sponsored a DOCTOR WHO festival. They too promised additional benefits for advance ticketholders. The festival was held on a Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm at the Park Plaza Towers Hotel in downtown Boston. I went with Scott, a fellow Whovian, and Peter, new to the show, to what I thought would be a bigger and better festival. Only Peter had not purchased his ticket in advance but he got in no faster than Scott and I did. I couldn't complain, for the staff did keep the lines moving very quickly.

I was surprised by how close to the Concord festival this was in size and format. They even had two of the same shows. Both festivals started out with the same video, "K-9 And Company."

After a short break we were shown a Peter Davison episode of DOCTOR WHO. Peter Davison was the guest speaker, and I found him to be altogether delightful. He teased the Channel 2 crew without mercy at the start, and then ignored them while he gave us, the audience, his full attention. He not only told us a lot about what happened to him when he

was filming DOCTOR WHO, but also shared with us his experiences in filming ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL. He has a terrific sense of humor and though we were the last stop on an extended tour of the United States, his energy and interest never wavered. He handled difficult questions with a great deal of tact and humor and I was impressed by his stage presence. He then disappeared into one of the back rooms for the first of three long autograph sessions. Our tickets got us into the second autograph session. Though he had been signing autographs steadily he took time to talk with each individual person. I found him to be very warm and enjoyable.

The costume contest followed. Once more I found it to be surprisingly like that in Concord, with the same number and variety of costumes. In Boston, however, there were more annoying people who just walked on stage without any outfit, in regular street clothes, and said that they were the seventh or the eighth Doctor. After the first one, they just weren't funny any more. Scott and I used this time to come up with our idea of a costume for the seventh Doctor, borrowing ideas from previous Doctors. I would like to try creating it some day.

The contest featured several really well done costumes, a few outfits that nobody could figure out, and some just plain terrible ones. I was impressed by a twelve year old's building of a K-9 Unit. Though it wasn't mobile it was extremely accurate in all details. Talking with him later, I learned that he had indeed built it by himself. He won first place in the "Companions" category.

The huckster area was about the same size as that in Concord with very much the same things for sale. The only addition was a table from England which had pewter figures. I wish I could have afforded more than one.

Finding nearby restaurants was not a problem here, for we were kept so busy we never had a chance to search

for one until the festival was over around 6. We kept ourselves going with hot dogs from the concession. We tried sodas, too, but that was a mistake not to be repeated. We had a choice of Mountain Dew, Coke and ginger ale, which were so watered down that we could not identify the taste. We passed our cups around with our eyes closed and could not identify what we were drinking.

The final video, after the second autograph session, was of a Colin Baker episode. I had already seen it in Concord. Scott hadn't seen that one and I enjoyed watching his reaction to it. The festival ended with the audience helping take down the chairs and store them.

Peter, Scott, and I then went out in search of food. We ended up in Durgin Park which is famous for its cranky and uncooperative waitresses. When you are called for your table, if you do not run up fast enough you can be sent back down. It's part of the whole atmosphere of the restaurant and is very entertaining, and a proper way to end the festival. Seating is family style and you have to fight others for water pitchers and menus. The food is good, hot, and plentiful, and the prices are fair.

We left rather late and had a very hard time finding an open gas station and then finding our way out of the city. We discovered little parks, dark and rather frightening back roads, and all sorts of interesting things. Every time we thought we found a street on the map, it would change its name the next block. It was a good thing we finally found an exit in the right direction. After missing several well hidden red lights, Scott had gotten a very strange look in his eyes and Peter's hyperactive behavior was steadily increasing.

I finally reached home in Laconia at 3 am, and had to get up at 7:30 to go to work. I am not saying it was an easy Monday, but I would not have given up Sunday's activities, including our evening adventures, for anything. I hope to do it again with the same friends next year.

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# FRESHNESS, CONSISTENCY ...AND LOVE

by Ruth Berman

In the July 1984 WRITER'S DIGEST there was an article by Joel Rosenberg on writing fantasy, specifically, on the need for freshness and consistency of imagination in creating a fantasy world.

The advice, by itself, was excellent, but Rosenberg's examples (based on his own first novel, The Sleeping Dragon) seemed to me to prove rather the difficulty of following good advice. I thought of writing a letter to WD on the topic, but the points involved seemed rather too long for a letter and too short for their usual article length. Besides, with questions of writing fantasy, it seems more appropriate to discuss them with an audience of fantasists.

Rosenberg discussed in the article the difficulty of creating an interesting dragon, pointing out that dragons have been overused in recent years. He explained that he had wanted his heroes (people from the ordinary world dropped into the city of their D&D games) to get information from a dragon. So he proceeded to ask himself what the dragon was doing in a city and how it could talk understandably with non-human vocal apparatus.

Searching for fresh and consistent answers, he decided that the dragon was telepathic (consistent enough, but hardly fresh), and that it was chained in the city as a slave to act as a garbage and dung incinerator. He then found that this answer fitted into the story thematically: The freedom-loving heroes pitied the dragon and freed it.

Well, a dragon-Disposall is fresh-

-but is it consistent? There are at least three practical problems.

First, would incinerating shit be a good idea? Wouldn't the process produce noxious fumes that would be as unpleasant and unhealthful as the traditional ancient or medieval dung heap?

Second, what about security? If the dragon got loose, wouldn't it be angry enough to incinerate a major portion of the city? (Indeed, it seems odd that it doesn't do just that when freed by the heroes, but perhaps the novel includes a conversation along the lines of "If we let you go will you promise...?" although the article doesn't mention it.)

Third, what about morality--or do I mean labor relations? The dragon is intelligent. It is therefore immoral for the cityfolk to enslave it. People do, of course, frequently do immoral things. But strong motives for morality often constrain them. As mentioned under security, chaining a dragon must be difficult and dangerous. Why didn't the cityfolk simply hire the dragon's services? Dragons notoriously love gold--wage negotiations should have resulted in an arrangement beneficial to both sides.

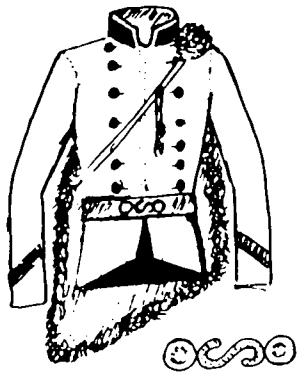
The dragons of legend are (often--not always) irredeemably at odds with humanity, either because they are beasts, too dangerous to live around and not intelligent enough to negotiate with, or because they are creatures of Satan with intelligence and malevolence to turn any contact into an opportunity to do harm. A Satanic dragon might

have fitted in with Rosenberg's plot if he had chosen to use one, but it would have been difficult in such a case to make it convincing that the dragon would give the heroes reliable information. Besides, the theological implications of absolute evil might not fit in with the overall portrayal of the story's world. Perhaps the fresher approach of a dragon not irredeemably at odds with humans would have worked better.

But perhaps not.

Another rule of writing is "write what you like." (Not to be confused with "write what you know," which tends not to apply in fantasy, that is, not directly.) Rosenberg does not like dragons. He doesn't even like Tolkien's dragons; he commented in the article that he thought Smaug a low point in The Hobbit. Probably few readers of Tolkien would agree with this reaction. That kind of difference of reaction is probably a good indication of something to avoid in one's writing, no matter how one labors to be fresh and consistent, because the absence of love will show through. Making something boring into something fresh is a challenge, but it is likely to be a challenge the boree should not take.

Instead, it is probably wiser to put the freshness to work finding a way to plot in another direction. After all--why a dragon? The heroes might have done better to get their information from a chattering and bird-brained griffin, or a friendly unicorn, or an oracle of the gods, or an entranced clairvoyant, and let sleeping dragons lie.



# LANGEVELD'S CATALOG OF MILITARY HISTORY, UNIFORMS AND TRADITION by Colin Langeveld

The Emperic Rangers (Mainwaring's Guards)

Late in the April of 2245 the Emperic colony of New Creotia decided to declare its independence. By the end of that April New Creotia was firmly back in the hands of the Empire, (see Frelang Gibling's Guidelines to Independence and Ghazher's Democratic Showcases) but at a terrible cost to the Emperic Forces. Landings were made with total disregard to surprize or or any form of tactical stealth. In other words the Marines that were disembarked from the battle-shuttles were like sitting snark wornels to the newly formed but short lived Independent New Creotian Army. After all the political dust had settled the chiefs of staff took a serious look at the state of military tactics. In short, how do we take a planet with the minimum loss to Emperic forces. (see Zork Snaffnler's Military Equipment and the Cost to the Taxpayer). The answer came in the form of the legendary Tobious Mainwaring.

With the permission of the military high command he raised a force of highly trained infantry, who could scout and skirmish, move about quickly and quietly and use individual initiative without waiting for words of command. To put this into practice he formed the Emperic Rangers. A small corps of hand-picked men from various regiments chosen for their efficiency, toughness, and high standard of intelligence. They were to be lightly equipped, their dress modified, and they were to be given a special course of training based on the American Rangers. (see Langeveld's Pre-Emperic Regiments vol 67) The Regiment received its Colors on June 20, 2246.

Their first chance of action came during the First Rifian Expansion attempt, 2250-2300. Simpson's Haven, a recently colonized world,

had been occupied by a large force of Rifians. Only four of the main land masses were settled and 25 Rangers had been dropped onto each of these, as close to the local military installations as possible. 200 men in all. Three of these landings proved to be disastrous. The first landed in the middle of a locals vs. Rifian Cricket match, the second had an argument over industrial-managerial relations, only two survived, and the third made planetfall in the gardens of the Sisters of Benevolent Appraisal. They were never heard of again. The fourth, however, was highly successful and achieved exactly what it had been trained to do: to disrupt enemy communications, cause distraction and general chaos, and keep the occupying forces busy while Emperic Marines made planetfall.

The man responsible for this successful operation was Ranger Terence Shnurd Tiffer and is worth a mention in this history. It was he who blew up the predominant buildings surrounding the local interstellar sensor station, a senior citizens' home, a hospital, and a Freemasons' Lodge. During this minor distraction the Rangers were free to disable the station.

Despite his vital contributions to the liberation of Simpson's Haven Shnurd Tiffer was not a popular man. Adept at the skill of tracking, subversive warfare, and making fire by rubbing two sticks together he soon rose to the rank of Captain. During scouting operations on Pisce II, he kept track of a large body of Pisce's infantry by constantly examining their wakes. He was to become an expert in this delicate form of undercover tactic and he was eventually to play a major part in the formation of the Second Regiment. His entry at the annual Regimental Ball was greeted with the inevitable "Here's Shnurd Tiffer, the turd sniffer."

There's no clear record of any

regulation concerning the Rangers' dress during the first few years of their formation, and it would be reasonable to assume that the standard Marine uniform was adopted. In 2249 Davardy I decided to bestow honors on various regiments to mark the opening of the Girian peace talks and the Rangers were given the grant for the uniform that has remained virtually unchanged to this day.

The head-dress is a black beret with three Gromought tail feathers worn behind the cap band. Permission to wear the feathers was granted on the ascension to the throne of Dainer I in 2269. The tunic and breeches are Brunswick green with black buttons. Piping the collar and down the breech seams are white for the first regiment and yellow for the second. A "snake buckle" on the black belt is of white metal. Boots, black for the First and brown for the Second Regiment in memory of Shnurd Tiffer. The green cape with black lining is held to the tunic with magno-friction pads. Officers' tunics are double breasted, the piping is silver for the First, gold for the Second. The belt buckle is of Thrisian silver and the cape is fur lined. The cap badge worn by all ranks bears the Rifian hunting horn.

On parade, as on active service, a 20 inch sword-bayonet is worn. The first ten inches of this formidable blade is saw edged and when fixed to the Baykhar sporting laser (chosen for its lightness and accuracy) becomes an interesting implement. The order to "fix swords" is unique in the Emperic Service.

The official combat dress is the chameleon jump suit, but it is well known that Rangers will adopt local clothing while on active duty. Space armor is never issued as is any form of mini-medec equipment. To quote their motto, "lightness, speed, and silence."

# GINČAS



## ACCOUNTABILITY, CREDIBILITY, AND APOLOGIES

ED MESKYS

An editor owes it to his readers and writers to be fully aware of what he publishes. Unfortunately I have gotten lazy at times and when I received a manuscript from an established contributor with a good track record I sometimes turned it over to a copy typist without finding a reader to go over it. Also material was coming in late and I did not proof everything before printing. This has resulted in two different errors. Errors in a manuscript which the author relied on a copy editor to catch got by to the embarrassment of the author. And one copy typist who was unfamiliar with fanspeak not only included a DNQ in Laiškai but even included the DNQ designation. This is embarrassing not only to Susan Schwartz whose DNQ it was, but also to Piers Anthony at whom it was directed. And last of all it damaged the credibility of NIEKAS. Authors will be far more reluctant to submit material, to the detriment of the fanzine. And wouldn't you know that there were only two letters in #34 which I didn't copytype myself! \*Sigh\* Also three pages were printed before proofing and were discarded when we found they had many errors. Then Anne Braude proofed them, we made corrections, and reprinted from the UNCORRECTED copies! We didn't discover our error until after we had collated the issue. \*\*\*Sigh!!!!\*\*

Incidentally, this has nothing to do with the absence of a column from

Piers Anthony this ish. Before #34 went to press Piers wrote that he would have to suspend the column for now because he had too many fan commitments, and they were beginning to interfere with his professional writing.

I anticipate copytyping 80% of this issue myself, and HOPE to have everything proofed for typos AND content.

I apologize to all involved and promise to have everything read to me for copyediting before copytyping, and to have everything proofed before printing.

BOB KNOX

Alas, this is what can happen when an art editor tries to be a copy editor...yes, I am the culprit, though no malice was intended on my part, apart from my placing Schwartz's LoC next to Piers's (I couldn't resist that). Frankly, I'm not that fandom conscious and don't always recognise terms such as "DNQ", which could have meant "Deadly Nerd Quotient", for all I knew; perhaps it should. I'll ask next time.

I'd not have run the Piers comment if I'd known what I was doing, ball-buster though I be, and apologise for doing so, especially to NIEKAS for making us look bad.

As to Susan Schwartz, I echo the sentiment that the statement amounted to mere name calling and needn't have been written at all, "DNQ" notwithstanding. It can easily be shrugged off (as I'm certain Piers has done), for it's

been said before in various ways by various individuals, and is inaccurate to start with--not that I haven't made such statements at times. However, now that I've owned up, I might as well confess to finding the entire incident hilarious and not for a moment regretting it, especially considering the comment it has drawn...proof that somebody's paying attention.

DAVID PALTER

I am not sure which member of the large editorial and production staff of NIEKAS is responsible for the publication of Susan Schwartz's DNQ comment on Piers Anthony; but I suspect that it was not Ed Meskys who is a veteran fan and would not make such an error. It does, in any event, show once again how risky it is to make DNQ comments in the first place. I believe that if you do not want to be quoted you are far better off by just refraining from the comment in question. I never write down anything that I would fear to have others read. Why take a chance?

Susan calls Piers an egotistical misogynist idiot, which appears to me to be an exaggeration. Undoubtedly Piers Anthony is egotistical. He has also shown a degree of sexism which does not necessarily make him a misogynist. The distinction is between one who wishes to place women on a subordinate role to men, and one who hates women. The two efforts can be combined but can also exist separately. He has been foolish about some things, as have we all, but not to such an extent as to show him to be an idiot. I think that I can also note in Piers's favor that it is generous of him to take the time to write his regular column for NIEKAS. Few successful authors do that sort of thing. Much of his fiction I have enjoyed immensely, though some of his work is spoiled by an unpleasant mixture of didacticism and silliness. On the whole he has his failings, but still strikes me, basically, as a good writer and a good person.

PIERS ANTHONY

I see I am called an egotistical misogynist idiot. Could it be true? I'll have to ask my daughters. But do you always run items that say DNQ?

[From a later letter] About that egotistical misogynist idiot remark. My daughters said the first word is correct and the last two words wrong. My daughters are the ultimate authority on such matters.

JESSICA AMANDA SALMONSON

Susan Schwartz's letter says Do Not Quote and it certainly looks quoted to me. She insults Piers quite nicely and might not have wanted this published. Why did you publish something that says DNQ on it? Are you a meanie at heart? Will Piers be angry? I've not read enough of his work to know whether he's as sexist a writer as he's famous for being. I know that I find a number of profoundly sexist writers charming and fun to be with, as long as they don't mind that I poke fun at them a lot. Bob Adams is a good example, a jolly chap who can tease and be teased without threat. The only time that I bought one of Piers's books was because a devotee insisted it was his best book. And all I remember about it now was that it was rather childishy done. I think I was writing The Swordswoman (Tor Book) at the time and so stuck in something satiric about that recommended book. These years later I've totally forgotten what I was satirising. The Swordswoman consciously satirised about a dozen well known books, but at the moment the only ones I remember are the masochistic insect queen who is a parody of John Norman's ladies, and the swordswoman herself who is a sardonic version of John Carter of Mars.

THE KABBALAH

LIN CARTER

I found most interesting Diana's piece on the Hotz Aretz (as the Tree of Life is named in Hebrew-- incidentally, the Kabbalah itself the Hebrews call Chokmal Nesethrah, the "Secret Wisdom"). I began my studies in, and experimentation with, the Kabbalah some years ago, operating on the viable premise that a fantasy writer should know at least as much about magic and like that as science fiction writers know about science. I thought her piece a very decent introduction to an inconceivably complex subject--the Tree is, as she says, the ultimate filing system: everything in the entire cosmos can be sorted into ten cubbyholes thereon.

For anyone who would like to get right into it, I strongly recommend doing it this way. Begin with the actual texts of the Kabbalah themselves; Mather's English translation of The Kabbalah Unveiled is in print and accessible. It contains three of the basic books, and the footnotes and Mather's intro themselves are worthy of study. Then go on to a balanced, overall picture of the Kabbalah and what it

is to the Jews: I suggest A Kabbalah for the Modern World, by Migene Gonzalez-Wippler, which is in paperback. From there on, you're on your own.

A few notes superadded to her piece might not be unwise. She did not mention that equated with the ten stations of the Tree are the ten degrees in the initiation of a ceremonial magician. He starts in Malkuth (Earth/the material plane), and his first degree is

$$1^0 = 10^0.$$

This cryptic equation simply means that beginning in Malkuth is, in a mystic sense, ending in Kether. Or, again in a mystic sense, Kether is present in Malkuth, and Malkuth in Kether: "as above, so below," as Hermes Trismegistus put it in the Emerald Tablet.

This last is one of the great teachings of magic and alchemy and of all occultism. It has been repeated over and over and over again, in a variety of ways, all adding up to the same truths. For instance Thomas Vaughan, apparently quoting Proclus: "The heaven is in the earth, but after an unearthly manner; and the earth is in the heaven, but after a heavenly manner." Or, as the slogan of the Mysterium Magnum Lucis puts it: The Crown is the Kingdom and the Kingdom is the Crown. (Kether = Crown, Malkuth = Kingdom)

Diana might also have remarked that the second sephira up from Malkuth, which is where we are, Yesod, is more popularly known as the astral plane. There is a reason for this name, but it took years for me to find it out so I will keep it to myself. This is the dominion of dreams; it is where we 'go' when we are asleep. (We don't go anywhere, of course, except in a certain sense. You've heard of "astral travel" but the term is a misnomer. No travel is involved. We already exist in Yesod in the astral counterpart of our Malkuthian body. All that is involved in astral travel is a transfer of consciousness from one receptacle to another.)

Amusingly, I was in Yesod just last night and encountered a group of people talking in an unknown language; when I asked them what language, they said it was their own: the Language of Dreams. Since I was aware I was asleep, I asked them what their word for "sleep" was. One, a woman, answered me, and said AMBERSLAND. I instantly forced

myself awake (literally) and scribbled the word down on the notepad I keep by my bed. AMBERSLAND...it would be very interesting to learn if this word had anything to do with Sleep or Dreams in any known language....

Regarding magic (or Magick, as Therion Magister--Aleister Crowley--liked to spell the word), Crowley sometimes has this pithy comment to make on it, with an eye cocked to the skeptics, I suppose:

"Magic is as mysterious as mathematics, as empirical as poetry, as uncertain as golf, and as dependent on the personal equation as love. But that is no reason why we should not study, practice and enjoy it: for it is a Science in exactly the same sense as biology; it is no less an Art than sculpture; and it is no less a Sport than mountaineering."

To which I will only add: Ascendat in nobis, Zetetikos, ignem sui amoris et flammam aeternae caritatis. Hoping you are the same.

DAVID PALTER

Diana Paxson's article on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life is highly informative. Kabbalah is one of those things which is continually being referred to in various places. Yet I have had extremely little knowledge of it. And it is an interesting subject. But still I would never be as interested in it as Diana evidently is. Although she states that it is impossible to be certain whether Kabbalah pertains to internal or external reality, she also tells us that an unexpected consequence of her study of the Yesod sphere was that her waterbed flooded. I assume that she did not perform a ritual which involves stabbing her waterbed with a ceremonial dagger, since the flooding was unexpected. So Diana must believe that some intangible mystical force breached the integrity of her bed. And incidentally, I must wonder if she will give birth to a mermaid nine months later. This degree of mysticism is beyond my current level of acceptance. However, as a work of fantasy the Kabbalah is still fascinating in conception.

Thomas Egan's comments that the moral principles of Catholicism are universal, absolutely true and eternal, that Americans cannot understand the concept of truth, and that the Bible is history and not myth, are actually far more unbelievable than the mild mysticism



of Diana Paxson. While many people do not wish to face reality, and live instead in the fantasy of their choice, that is their privilege. It is not easy to do because reality has a way of rudely intruding, but with determination one can sustain the delusion of just about anything. Good luck, Mr. Egan!

## OF DUNGEONS AND CHRISTIANS

KATHRYN SHAPERO

As a role gamer and a Christian, I found the Christopher article a nice change from some of the nonsense that has been written about Dungeons and Dragons of late (or not so late--it's been several years since NEW WEST sent a reporter to interview several of the local gamers for an article on same. Mercifully, I managed to stay out of it due to an ingrown distrust of reporters garnered over years of SF conventions, but one poor gamesmaster friend of mine took a long time to live down the reporter-bestowed title of "High Priestess of D&D." SIGH.)

Dungeons and Dragons is only one (albeit the oldest) of what are generically termed role-playing games. Not all involve this particular brand of fantasy, there being science fiction games such as Games Designer's Workshop's Traveller and Fantasy Games Unlimited's Other Suns, superhero games such as Hero Games's Champions, non-European fantasy games such as FGU's Land of the Rising Sun set in mythical Japan or the Chaosium's original RuneQuest set in the invented land of Glorantha, H. P. Lovecraftian fantasy (Chaosium again--Call of Cthulhu), and even Saturday morning cartoons (Steve Jackson Games's Toon). The only one of the above which involves any existing religions is LRS (in which most, though not all, characters are either Shintoists or Buddhists) and I know of none which involve Satanism. Depending on the game, people may play humans not only of either sex but of different cultures or even non-human intelligent beings (especially in the science fiction games). Game goals are also variable; while both D&D and Champions involve a lot of combat, the "good guys" are expected to kill opponents in the former, but will almost certainly get arrested for murder in the latter if they do so. Some other games such as Other Suns can involve little or no combat.

Incidentally, the rule against Dungeons and Dragons Clerics using

edged weapons comes from certain Crusader mythology whereby a rather cynical churchman was forbidden to shed blood for some reason and reasoned that it was still OK to bash heads, so carried a mace. [Not a Crusader, but Archbishop Turpin in the legends of Charlemagne. ajb] Interestingly enough, the original version of D&D did indeed use such terms as "Bishop". I believe the change was made to make it more "universal" in terms of which religions the gamesmaster wished to exist in his or her campaign. (Usually invented religions, I've noticed--I have a reluctance to try and role-play God myself!)

Since I haven't played D&D since before the publication of the current version (Advanced Dungeons & Dragons or AD&D for short) Mr. Christopher probably knows more about it than I do.

HARRY HENDERSON

Joe Christopher's Christian analysis of role-playing games is a good example of the reasoned discussion that veteran gamers like myself have generally failed to find in the media. His description of character alignment is wrong, however. "Good" and "lawful" are not identical; neither are "evil" and "chaotic." In D&D there are two dimensions of alignment: good-neutral-evil and lawful-neutral-chaotic. The first scale depends on the moral value of acts performed, while the second describes the attitude and the typical methods the character uses to carry out his/her goals. Altogether, therefore, you can have six combinations. [Nine, actually. ERM]

To illustrate the first scale: killing undeniably evil creatures (or killing only as a necessary part of a definitely good cause) is "good." Killing for self defense, or expediency, is "neutral." Killing for sheer gain or sadistic reasons is evil.

Along the second scale, "lawful" refers to characters who believe they are part of a hierarchical, rigidly-structured system and act according to its rules. "Neutrals" have some respect for rules, but override them as circumstances require. "Chaosics" operate, not by rules, but by instinct, emotion, or perhaps mystical impulses.

The key is that any combination is possible. Let me give you a few examples of various combinations: lawful-good, Fundamentalist Christian or strict-observance Jew;

neutral-good, conscientious objector; lawful evil, Mafia soldier (he does evil according to Mafia rules!); chaotic-good, Pentecostal Christian (or pagan Druid healer); neutral-neutral, or "true neutral", Zen master; chaotic-neutral, most animals; chaotic-evil, Charles Manson.

An important thing to note is that D&D, while the most popular role-playing game, is not synonymous with the genre. There are several other popular game systems. RuneQuest, for example, rejects the D&D alignment system as oversimplistic and instead encourages playing characters as members of fully realised cultures, each with its own values and world-view.

Role-playing is fundamentally subversive to the extent it encourages people to experience the points of view of other cultures and individuals very different from themselves. I have always felt that behind their fear of Satan many Fundamentalists have a much greater fear: the fear that the world is actually more complicated than they can understand or ever be comfortable with. They view any form of change as threatening. While I can understand their viewpoint (and even have sympathy for their plight), I cannot accept the right of any religious or political group to ban the expression of all viewpoints different from its own.

JESSICA AMANDA SALMONSON

The Christian reasoning for fearing D&D is pretty amusing reading. Joe Christopher really gets into it, doesn't he? It's all sort of intellectually done, but still seems dumb to me. When Christians stop using televisions for baby sitters, then they can start worrying about the bad effects of a game that appeals essentially to nerds. And I think that that's all Joe needed to say about it.

DAVID PALTER

Anne Braude's discussion of Secular Humanism and Joe Christopher's discussion of D&D are both quite illuminating and should serve to clarify any confusion that people may have on these topics, although the large scale national controversy won't be noticeably influenced, unless these articles can be reprinted in some publication with a much higher circulation.

RUTH BERMAN

Looking at both Anne Braude's column on the attack on Secular Humanism and Joe Christopher's "A

Letter to a Christian Mother, " it is hard to avoid the suspicion that many people automatically attack as evil anything that teen-agers happen to enjoy--because if they enjoy it, it must be bad for them, what you might call the medicine theory of Sound Value, comic books, sf, pinball machines, computer games, J D Salinger, d&d games, television shows, Shirley Jackson, and so on.

JOE RICO

Joe Christopher's "Letter" was a pleasure to read. His answers to Christian objections to D&D were straightforward in addressing what many consider valid points. I might make some observations on his analysis of the Cleric's character. It seems clear to me that the prohibition of the use by Clerics of swords and other edged weapons has its roots in the European Middle Ages. In that era Catholic clergy who were also overlords, on occasion would lead their vassals into battle wielding hammers, morningstars, and maces on the grounds that they would not shed blood by using these weapons. This justification was based on the numerous references in the Bible to the equation of wrongful killing with the spilling of blood. See numerous references, eg, Genesis 9:06 "Whoever sheds the blood of man by man shall his blood be shed." Such reasoning was considered hypocritical, even during the Middle Ages, and did not trouble in the least orders of fighting monks such as the Templars, who used edged weapons. Perhaps after reading Jeremiah 48:10. A reluctance on the part of clerical doctors of this age to perform surgery seems not to be based on this moral point but rather as an effort to keep surgeons in their place as second class members of the health care community of Medieval Europe.

J. R. MADDEN

Out of all the fine writing in NIEKAS 34 I would say my favorite was "Letter to a Christian Mother" by Joe Christopher. His reasoning and explanation of the Dungeons And Dragons game from a religious perspective can well serve anyone who has had to deal with questions from concerned parents about the nature of the game. I would like to commend the mother referred to in the article, as well, because she, unlike some knee-jerk reactionaries, took the time to solicit an educated opinion before acting in the matter of the game.

Several years ago one of my fellow workers expressed concern about his son being heavily involved in

Dungeons And Dragons. The fellow worker objected to the game for its use of Christian myths, angels, archangels, devils, etc., as part of the game. Of course he had no objection to other people's myths being used. To his credit he did not attempt to ban his son from playing the game. Instead he let the fever burn out of its own



accord, as it seems to have done for the bulk of the U.S. population with the exception of the occasional Bible-thumper who serves up the demon of D&D at one of his hot air rallies. D&D was originally something of a cult among its players. Advertising was within a small specialized group or by word of mouth. Games were only available through the mail or specialty shops in major cities. Most grownups had little knowledge about the game. Then the spate of publicity hit the big time and a new fad swept the nation. The makers of the game were, of course, very happy with the increased sales though the negative publicity had to be dealt with. Today the mania has subsided with the game, more or less, being played by the original, or those similar in outlook to the original, fans.

ANNE J. BRAUDE

I particularly enjoyed Joe Christopher's piece on Christian qualms about Dungeons & Dragons, which has an intelligent and compassionate perspective avoiding both fashionable disdain for the genuine spiritual sufferings of fundamentalists and the recent media hype that has linked D&D to an

increase in juvenile suicide (60 MINUTES) and to Satanism (20/20 and a recent DONAHUE). Joe did not actually mention either of these; but as he implied in his sixth point, when a person becomes obsessed or driven off balance by a role-playing game, it is probably due to the flawed or damaged personality which he brings to the game rather than the game itself.

In that same section, he is in error when he equates Law with Good and Chaos with Evil; the Law/Chaos and Good/Evil axes are perpendicular to each other. The Law/Chaos axis is akin to the Light/Darkness polarity understood in terms of the Apollonian and the Dionysian; see my discussion of Dixie Tenny's Call the Darkness Down (NIEKAS 34:52). Someone might be Lawful but Evil, like the efficient, scientific Dr. Josef Mengele; someone else might be Chaotic but Good, like the benevolent but unsociable Johnny Appleseed.

In point 8, Joe deals with the fact that the rolling of dice in the game suggests a world ruled by Chance rather than Providence. But the game world does have a Creator, who rules it, judges it, and sustains its existence from moment to moment--the Dungeon Master. His relation to the game and the players (for the duration of the game only!) is that of a surrogate God, which opens up a whole new can of theological worms.

As for clerics (point 10), the prohibition against their using edged weapons is medieval Christian (which is why Charlemagne's Archbishop Turpin went around bashing people with a mace), but otherwise the role of the cleric in D&D seems inspired less by the real religion of the present-day world than by fantasy tales in which the priests of benevolent deities aid the hero against evil magicians and malignant supernatural beings (as in the stories of Robert Howard, Fritz Leiber, and occasionally Andre Norton), or by ancient more or less benign cults such as Druidism and Mithraism. I have been told by friends more familiar with role-gaming than I am that there are Christian fantasy roll-playing games; they couldn't give me any specifics except that they thought that at least one involved the Quest for the Holy Grail. I know Diana Paxson years ago designed a board game based on the Grail romances; perhaps she could now find a lucrative market for it. And even Joe Christopher might like to try his hand at, for instance, a Narnia adventure?

# Varlak the Wizard

by Jane Sibley '86

IT'S SPRING AGAIN -  
AND THAT MEANS...

≡SIGH≡  
A TAG  
SALE.

AW - CAN'T WE  
JUST THROW IT  
ALL AWAY?

NOW, YOU REMEMBER  
WHAT THE E.P.A. SAID  
ABOUT TOXIC WASTE...

≡CHUCKLE≡ THE OLD  
"LOOPHOLE" SPELL  
IT ONLY WORKS  
ONCE, THOUGH.

WITH THE A.E.C., OSHA, AND  
THE ZONING COMMISSION  
WATCHING US NIGHT AND  
DAY?

HOW DID WE  
WRIGGLE OUT  
OF THAT FINE?

WHAT  
ABOUT  
BURNING  
THE STUFF  
UP?

YEAH... ONE  
JAIL TERM  
IS ENOUGH!

WE COULD SHIP IT TO  
ANOTHER DIMENSION...

WE DID THAT  
LAST YEAR.

THEIR AMBASSADOR THREATENED  
TOTAL, KILL-QUICK WARFARE  
IF WE EVER TRIED **THAT**  
STUNT AGAIN!

≡SIGH≡



WHAT SAY WE MARKET THIS  
NEW, IMPROVED SNACK FOOD?

YOU MEAN...?

YUP. THEY'LL  
NEVER TASTE THE DIFFERENCE!

# LAIŠKAI

David Palter  
137 Howland Ave  
Toronto ONT M5R 3B4 Canada

Thanks for NIEKAS 34. It's quite an interesting issue. Buck Coulson is, of course, correct in pointing out, with respect to the 1970 Kent State shootings, that it was neither legal or logical for the students to throw rocks at armed National Guardsmen. They were asking to be shot, so they were. Many readers will recall that the same point was made by John W. Campbell in an ANALOG editorial shortly after the incident. I still count this event as one of the injustices of the Viet Nam era because it had been inappropriate to call out the National Guard in the first place. The students were, at first, merely conducting a peaceful demonstration to express their serious concern about President Nixon's conduct of the war. But the governor of Ohio decided that this should be treated as an insurrection, and called out the guard to quell the demonstration. Some students were then stupid enough to conclude that since they were being treated like criminals, they therefore should act like criminals. Well, many very stupid things were done in the name of the anti-war movement, which does not in any way detract from the validity of the objections which we all had to the war. In this case a tragedy was brought about through a combination of the abuse of authority by the governor and the stupidity of the students. It is still an injustice--though not, admittedly, as poignant an injustice as it would have been had the Guardsmen opened fire on students who were doing nothing violent or illegal whatsoever. Alas for our tarnished martyrs. [When did using obscene language and gestures to the National Guard become a capital crime? I must have missed that. And two of the four killed at Kent State were not participating in the demonstration but leaving the area--one was a ROTC student. See James A. Nichener's Kent State: What Happened And Why (1971). ajb]

One of the oddities in this issue is that a letter on pages 47-48 is credited to Ed MeSkys. Now tell me, Ed, did you really write a letter of comment to your own fanzine? If so, wouldn't it be more appropriate to include such comments in your editorial? [Bumbejimas and the other columns were already pasted up and it would have been too complicated to insert additional



remarks when I had those thoughts in response to typing the material in Laiškaiti.ERM]

Some of the artwork is very good. I very much enjoy the inner cover illustration which is an octopoidal creature of some kind, which think is very nicely done. That was my favorite illustration in thisish.

Lin Carter  
Montclair NJ 07042

What ho! Dunno why you sent me NIEKAS 34 (I don't seem to be mentioned in it anywhere), but thanks for doing so. I found a lot of interesting stuff in it. I see Piers Anthony is still busy being Piers Anthony, but I shall make no comment on his hassle with Charlie Platt, since Piers and I have a mutual non-aggression pact, and I'd like to keep it that way. Why roil waters so easily muddled, anyway?

Piers Anthony  
Inverness FL 32652

Say, you know I am now using a word processing program called Edward, so to type this card I called up Ed and then addressed it to Ed. That could get confusing in a saner world.

I really don't have much to say about NIEKAS 34. Your comments about Phil Dick are interesting and

the John Brunner item, too, for a different reason. You see, I will be guest of honor at the 1987 World Fantasy Con in Nashville and will have to give a speech so I'm curious what one says at such affairs, but alas, I do not fit the mold. My talk will not be like much of anything heard before. I doubt many will sleep through it, though, but we'll see.

Robert Bloch  
Los Angeles CA 90046

Greetings! My first impulse is to thank you for a very fine issue but it hurts my head when I read it because its contents make me think. As we all know, thinking can become a habit, perhaps even an addiction. NIEKAS is dangerous to normal mental torpor and stupidity; people like Brunner and your other contributors toss ideas around with no regard for whom they may strike. I admit science fiction encourages a sense of wonder, but whoever said that what we wonder about should make sense? Oh well. That's a chance we all must take, so thank you anyhow, and very best.

Barry Bayley  
Shropshire, UK

Many thanks for the copy of your excellent NIEKAS fanzine which I have been reading with pleasure. I gather that you are blind and not able to read everything in print. It makes me wonder what the state of progress is as regards a print-to-Braille reading machine. I've heard that letter recognition machines are being used by small printers though I don't know what they cost. So a print translator is presumably state of the art. [The Kurtzweil machine, which will read a print book or multi-column magazine out loud, is about \$30K. However, peripheral devices to enter data into a personal computer by optical character recognition are almost affordable, and should be soon. At that time I could read through my computer anything I am willing to tear up into individual sheets. ERM]

Jessica Amanda Salmonson  
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Seattle WA 98102

Last night I read Marguerite Duras's The Malady of Death and was extremely moved by it. I read it a second time this morning. (It's painfully short though the cover says it's "a novel.") It could easily be construed as pornographic but its emotional violence strikes me as not the least bit sexy, but on some level shocking. It could also

be construed as homophobic (unless one has read other of Duras' work and knows she's not homophobic) as DEATH on one level is symbolic of homosexuality. I think it is a supernatural story but others probably wouldn't think so; it's too vague and mystic on that score. The strength of the story is in its empathy for the pain and confusion of life; that an extended attempt at sexual comfort is her means to express this empathy for pain might be hard for the prudish or the conservatively minded to accept. As for me, though, I'm in awe of Duras to a degree no writer of fantasy and science fiction has ever come close to inspiring in me. I have a love for tacky old horror stories and heroic fantasy, but something in me is convinced it would be possible to blend the artistry of writers like Duras with purely fantastical fiction. In fact, I think Gabriel Marquez has achieved exactly that blend in his fiction, and American writers should be aiming more for that kind of combination instead of lionizing the awful stuff of the Campbell years.

How many have noticed that the Nebula Award has become primarily a pulp award? Authors whose books have appeared only in hardcover routinely withdraw them from consideration so that the cheap mass-market edition can be considered instead. If it isn't a cheap edition, it has less and less a chance of sufficient nominations to end up on the ballot. The short story nominations are chiefly from the crummy pulps. When a magazine like ANTAEUS runs a fantastic tale, as it often does, f/sf professionals never read it. The Nebula does not encourage quality publishing plans but awards only the throw-away or quick-disintegration kind of product. The Nebula, as a peer award, inescapably has a weight of meaning to it. In its present state, the meaning is that sci-fi is gobbledygook and should be published in as junky a manner as possible. Anything else is not part of the peer group at all.

The PKD reminiscence was interesting and so was Piers Anthony's article.

A Christian writer no one seems to read anymore, and whom I greatly admire, was Laurence Housman. He was also a feminist and a socialist so maybe that's why I like him so much more than standard bozo Christian bullshit fantasy morons such as the lionized (pun!) C. S. Lewis. Housman's "The Catch of the Cherub" is about a charwoman for a cathedral, whose cat gets hold of a cherub on the cathedral roof and brings it home. The charwoman

nurses it to health, then has to deal with the awful necessity of letting it fly back to heaven. It's also a story about wife-battering and women's independence. There are many of his stories like that one. He also wrote a good many fairy tales that are a bit more difficult (surprising, since they are ostensibly suitable for children and should be easier). They are quite surreal and satiric and nothing like other fairy tales of the time. But his short stories are superb and it's a wonder to me that he is so forgotten (or, if remembered, he is remembered as a famous poet's brother). Dover Books brought out one of his fairy tale books some while back, and that was by no means the best book to reawaken interest in him. I remember that the Dover edition mentioned Clemence Housman, the illustrator, as the artist's wife. She was of course his sister and she wrote that classic novella The Werewolf. Her wood engravings are reminiscent of the Pre-Raphaelites. The Housman family is good evidence that you don't have to be a moron to be a devout Christian, though most do seem to be dupes and asses. Here in the Northwest a rowdy Christian organization is trying to get a people's initiative on the ballot outlawing homosexuality and making it a criminal offense to employ gays and lesbians. This is what Christians seem to spend most of their time doing as public service. Why does one rarely hear about Jewish organizations for the suppression of

human rights in America? (There IS a fucked right wing Buddhist sect, however, the Nichiren sect, mostly Japanese nationalists, not to be confused with white Americans who chant the Lotus Sutra to have their wishes come true. They are totally divorced from the Japanese Nichirens. St. Nichiren, however, was a fascinating historical character, a fanatic of course but rather appealing. Sect members go door to door trying to get converts, much as Jehovah's Witnesses do, and have none of the political influences of Christian right wingers.) [Laurence Housman also wrote Victoria Regina, in which Helen Hayes attained stardom of the first magnitude. ajb]

FANTASY REVIEW recently reviewed my latest novel, Ou Lu Khen And The Beautiful Mad Woman. It was mostly praise and it was rather perceptive. Sometimes a good review is so imperceptive that it hardly seems like flattery. Other times a negative review is so silly it cannot be taken seriously. Beard Searls, or whatever his name is, trashed Tomoe Gozen because he claimed heroic fantasy has to have a Western setting to be viable. Now I should take him seriously? My next book will be a short story collection from Berkley, A Silver Thread Of Madness. I hope it'll be reviewed. Many books of short stories don't get much attention. I've sold another short story collection to specialty publisher W. Paul Ganley. It'll catch the majority of my horror stories from 1970 to present, whatever didn't go into Silver Threads.

Joris Bell  
Rt #2 Box 181  
Wendell NC 30591

I am writing to express the opinion that the two stars of NIEKAS are Robert H Knox and A J Braude. I am glad that Bob has persuaded the publisher crew to use only the best artwork submitted to you. Previously I felt tempted to enquire as to whether you would ever publish writing which is as bad as some of the drawings used prior to #32. #33 is almost completely of professional quality and I could only wish to have seen more of Robert's serious work in it. But then a good editor will always yield to the presence of the work of others. Mr. Knox is one of the rare artists who performs in several different styles. One of his is masterful, and the others are at least interesting. John Farwell is another such artist.



NIEKAS #33 looks so good that the only thing between it and the appearance of a professional magazine is the inconsistent and consistantly unreproduceable typography. It would only be a tiny step forward requiring only a little more effort to type the complete text in one style, something other than Letter Gothic and more closely resembling the standard typefaces of books and magazines. It seems to me that you use Letter Gothic because it is legible when it is reduced to the tiny size you seem to prefer in order to get as much text into each issue as you possibly can. But why do you consider this desirable? You could come out the three times a year which you say you would prefer, or even four if you would enlarge the type to the size that most sighted people are accustomed to reading...or just slightly smaller. Thus you could spread your available material into an annual three or four issues that would be considerably more attractive than your present product. Just add justified margins throughout and you have arrived.

Anne Janet is comparable to Bob in her diversity. It is a rare combination of qualities in a writer to be able to shift effortlessly between an erudite examination of the Mysteries, and a vividly witty devastation of whatever she may be observing, including herself. This is a humorous writer at least equal to Irma Bombeck. Would I buy a new mole from this woman? You bet your Bumbejimas I would.

Edmund, having seen what you look like in #33, and having viewed Robert's depiction of himself in the Lovecraft Portfolio, my curiosity about Anne remains ungratified. She couldn't possibly look as funny as she writes. She couldn't possibly look as serious as she writes. If she does either of the above, or both, so much the better. Let's have a picture over one of her columns. Fearfully, Joris Bell. [later, to Anne Braude] On my last brief foray into the parallel universe I had just enough time to pay a visit to the local parallel public library. While there I was able to research that metalinguistic problem encountered in a letter of yours which appeared in NIEKAS #33. After paying the library admission fee of \$3.75 I headed straight for Brewster's Unabridged Lexicon. There I found, to my surprise, that this most respected authority lists no such word in parallel English as "airplane," "turbulence," or even "stomach." But I was gratified to locate, instead, the following entry:

BAF.FEK.A.BUK.U.TY (noun) A small circular container, made usually of

aluminious, with a long handle, used only in the task of collecting and removing droppings of the Bald Eagle in areas where its population has been permitted to proliferate unchecked.

Send the prize monies to Joris Bell, Rt 2 box 181A, Wendell NC 30591 (this universe).

Ruth Berman  
2809 Drew Ave S  
Minneapolis MN 55416

Thank you for the copy of NIEKAS. I realised later that in my letter quoting Jeremy Bernstein, when I described who he was, the biographical bit was wrong--I confused him with another Bernstein. Jeremy Bernstein is a physicist who writes for the New Yorker, but he isn't the brother of composer Leonard Bernstein who writes for the New Yorker. The said brother is Burton Bernstein, who mostly writes on literary topics.

Your description of visits with Philip K Dick was interesting. I remember going with you on one of them. I think we talked some about opera at that time, but I can't remember if it was Wagner, GandS, or yet something else.

I read Ursula K leGuin's Always Coming Home recently (and listened to the cassette of the people's poems and songs that goes with it), and thought it was splendid. It's a wonderfully quirky example of what seems to be appendices gone mad, and all to the good. One longish story, which probably adds up to about short novel length, is scattered through it, about a woman whose mother belongs to this ecology-loving, very Amerindian-like people occupying a future California (after your standard Terrible Disaster gets rid of the previous culture) and whose father belongs to a war-like group trying to move in, and her conflicts as she tries to adjust first to one, and then the other, and then to integrate what she values in both, even though she mostly condemns the latter set of values. Going in and around that story are short stories, folk tales of their peoples, poems, essays (rather like Tolkien's appendices) on language, and so on. And I liked the music composed for the cassette, too.

Joe Rico  
193 School St, Al  
Taunton MA 02780

Congratulations on yet another wonderful issue of NIEKAS. I must especially compliment Anne Braude's article on ethical teaching in the public schools. It came just as APA NESFA, for which I write, was

discussing the same topic. Braude's overview of this issue and particularly her discussions of Richard Mitchel's work, cuts through a lot of rhetoric, and offers a solution that would appeal to any but the most committed ideologue.

John Brunner's speech was amusing, as I read it in the sincere belief that at the Worldcon in 2025 we will hear explanations from Brunner and other prophets of doom, of what went wrong with their predictions, or more likely, they will still be trying to convince us that the end is around the corner.

Roger Waddington  
4 Commercial St  
Norton, Malton  
North Yorkshire YO17 9ES UK

Well, must admit it was the little things that caught my attention, the throwaway lines rather than the set pieces, as in John Brunner's piece where he mentioned the apprenticeship the magazines provided. In these days of dwindling titles it's a thought that has exercised my mind quite often. What hope is there for young writers who want to try their skills with anything else than a full length novel? I know we've got a handful of magazines left, and some of them are still quite healthy as far as circulation figures go, but are there enough for those who want to enter the field? You could say that with a maximum of new writers submitting to a minimum of magazines, it insures that only the best find print, and the rest are weeded out. But I'd like to see a plethora of magazines, everyone given his/her chance, or at least a greater number than at present. The readers would have the final say. That is why, even in reduced circumstances, the SF I buy is in the magazine form.

Thus the book reviews are really of only academic interest to me. Mind you, once I'm back at work and earning again I'll want to be seeing who's published what and which new authors are worth noting. But leave out the word counts as per PM's comment? No way! It may happen that they're all coming but the same way at a penny a page, more or less, but it's the "more" side that I look for. Don't know whether it's only been since my unemployment with all this time to fill, or the traditional Yorkshire insistence on value for money, but my literary criticism has gone by the board, and a good book to me is something that is long and interesting and able to be used as a doorstep when finished. I do have some standards left, though, for Dhalgren only made it on



the last criterion. I suppose I'm heading for the same category of readership that I once shuddered at seeing in the "best seller" readers, where the bigger the book is the better it sells. But is there any hope for me? Certainly it is one of the reasons I am looking forward to Robots And Empire being published over here, even though little happens for all those pages, even though he's done better in less. Agreed on that. Remember Pebble In The Sky? It's the thought of that long excursion into Asimov country. When some books are over before you've hardly started, a book that takes it's time and yours is to be welcomed.

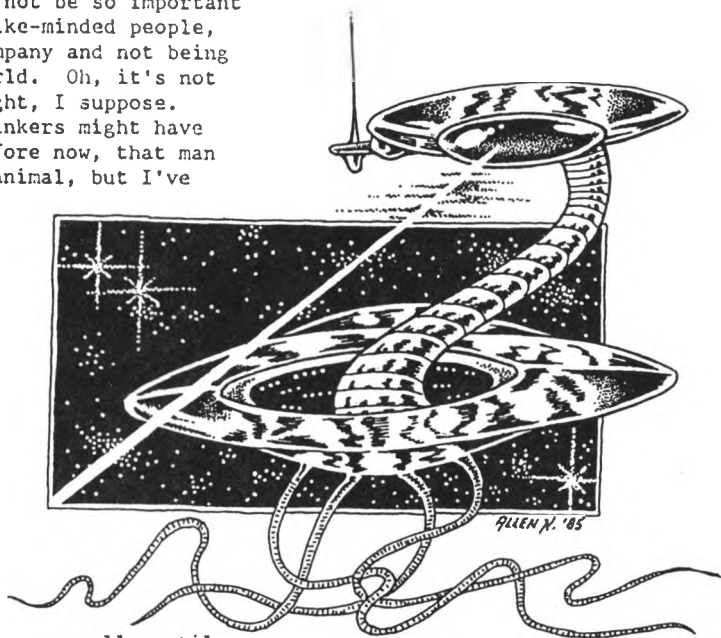
Harry Andruschak and the Unitarian Universalist Association brings to mind the thought that what we believe in might not be so important as being among like-minded people, sharing their company and not being alone in the world. Oh, it's not an original thought, I suppose. Some original thinkers might have discovered it before now, that man is a gregarious animal, but I've

never realized it personally until now. Think Simak might have had something to say about it, as well. Can remember the title of "Huddling Place" but not the actual story. What concentrated my mind was going back to work, even if only temporarily. It was the feeling of having people around me again, and not being egocentric. This may be over-reaction after two-and-a-half years away. But if I do find another job, it'll be for companionship first, with work and a paycheck definitely behind.

If my job had lasted longer I would have been thinking of a word processor myself, not the least for the editing it would provide, taking out words, sentences, and even paragraphs without wasting paper. But what to do when the power cutbacks come? This manual model certainly won't be confined to the scrapheap.

J. R. "Mad Dog" Madden  
P O Box 18610-A,  
University Station  
Baton Rouge LA 70893

You might enjoy my trip journal covering Aussiecon 2. I guess I followed fannish tradition somewhat in my journal. I did not finish converting my notes into final form until November. Correcting the typos and slight editing took until March or April, and the master printing, which took six hours, was not accomplished until the end of May. So I just managed to get it out before the next worldcon rolled around. If you think others would be interested in reading this journal please publicise it in NIEKAS. I am asking \$2.50 postpaid, first class delivery.



Craig Ledbetter  
1 Yorkshire Ct  
Richardson TX 75081

The cover of #34 was beautifully done. How I envy artists and their abilities. I am totally deficient in that area.

Your recollections on P. K. Dick were interesting to read. I have always been a fan of his beginning with Ubik and reading about him is almost as fascinating as reading fiction by him. It was a nice, easy read and a good way for me to be introduced to your wonderful zine.

The Anthony vs. Platt discussion still begs one question. Why did Anthony let Platt print the interview if it upset him so much?

Don D'Amassa has long been a favorite critic of mine and so I was quite happy to see his writings in NIEKAS. Don doesn't mince words.

His reviews for SFC are lean and very to the point. I very much lament the popularity of the hack and slash films. The great majority are reprehensible on moral grounds. But never mind that, they are just plain boring. I put out a video review newsletter on horror films and it is depressing to be confronted continually with viewing unwatchable films.

I enjoyed reading John Brunner's speech very much. I have never been a fan of his "Noise Level" column in SFR. I am a fan of some of his fiction and can remember beginning my sf days with him back in the 60s. If the US will be wiped out in 12 years I guess I better start drinking and smoking to make my last few years as comforting as possible.

As is usual for me the review section of a zine is my favorite. The review of The White-Boned Demon steered me toward a book I'd have never thought of reading. For that alone I am indebted.

Nola Frame  
933-B Maple Ave  
Inglewood CA 90301

Love your illos. Love your layout. Beautiful, beautiful! Even love Mike's dot matrix, which normally I wouldn't like, but it's high quality. It was nifty keen to read that stuff from Piers Anthony. I've not been able to get into his Xanth books because I've associated too long with one Sylvia Stevens who used to be in fandom and who is a punaholic. Every time I try to read a paragraph in a Xanth book my mind's reading ability comes to a screeching halt. Incidentally, I wonder how those books are doing onto talking books, if they have been converted. [NLS just started recording some of them but I haven't received any yet. ERM]

While I like NIEKAS very much I am not sure I belong. I mean, to put it simply, I am not a high fantasy fan. I am a hard science, hard medicine, science fiction and science fantasy fan. More along the line of Jacqueline Lichtenberg or Marion Zimmer Bradley, the sort of gray quagmire area between hard science and fantasy. You know, I am such a misfit as far as fantasy is concerned, do you want to know who my favorite character is in Lord of the Rings? That's right, Sauron of Mordor. I mean, anybody that can create a ring of such beauty can't be all bad. Besides, the ring is his, and it should be returned. None of this finders keepers, losers weepers.

There's a wonderful poem in Bored of the Rings, by the way.

This ring, no other, is made by the elves,  
Who'd pawn their own mother to grab it themselves.  
Ruler of creeper, mortal, and scallop,  
This is a sleeper that packs quite a wallop.

\* \* \*

If found, send to Sorhed (the postage is prepaid).

Brian Brown  
11675 Beaconsfield  
Detroit MI 48224

The Macintosh typefaces all look hideous. The Mac may be great for graphics work but it's a total failure as a word processor. A word processor is only as good as its printer and the Mac's sucks.

I've long been convinced that religious fundamentalism is the greatest evil on the face of the Earth today, whether it be Islamic, Jewish, or Christian. Religious fundamentalism has been a headlong flight away from reality and modern life. These people refuse to deal with what is, which to my mind is a classic sign of insanity.

The logo for Piers Anthony's column is badly designed since it doesn't look like a column heading. It doesn't look like much of anything, really. The artwork is very bad. Piers himself seems unchanged from the days when he was feuding with Ted White and Dean Koontz in the pages of OUTWORLDS, mid 70's. He was, cantankerous (to put it politely) there, and he still is today. Anthony's response to Platt's depiction of him convinces me that Platt had him dead to rights.

Wayne Fordham  
9415 Beck, #147  
Dallas TX 75228

There's no question NIEKAS is a good and important zine. You have every reason to be proud of it.

In many ways the PKD reminiscences were my favorite part of the zine, because the human elements in it (recollections of naked speakers scattered over the living room rug connected to the amplifier, the black-and-white kitten named John W Campbell eating donuts off the kitchen table, etc.) allowed for immediate identification whether you've ever read Dick or not.

The varying type styles are reduced just to the edge of the size I call acceptable, and yet are big enough to read.

Mike Resnick's book reviews are witty, biased, informative,

opinionated, and interesting without ruining the plots of the books. In other words, he has all the qualities of an excellent book reviewer. Most of the others spent too much time on plot which, after all, is the author's realm.

Anne Braude  
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Scottsdale AZ 85257

Mathoms corrections: page 11, column 1, paragraph 1, line 6 should read, "...the political and social agenda of the Moral Majority and others of the funnymentalist ilk, with particular attention to the separation of church and state and to censorship." and on page 12, column 2, paragraph 1, lines 25-26 should read "(It is interesting that 'appreciation,' which comes from a Latin verb meaning to be able to tell what something is worth, in educationistic jargon is synonymous with approval or acceptance." And on the same page, in the last paragraph in column 3 I perhaps did not make it clear that Lewis was supporting the position that the ethics we call "Christian" are in fact subscribed to by many different cultures and religions. The error here is the ambiguity of my own phrasing.

I don't mind having NIEKAS readers disagree with me (well, actually I do mind quite a lot, but what can I do about it?), but I do wish they would be more careful to argue against what I really said rather than what they think I said. Tom Egan twice misstates positions I took in my LoC in NIEKAS 31. I did not condemn fundamentalists and authoritarian Catholics per se, but only those--and anyone else of any persuasion--who would declare any area of thought or behavior off limits to examination by human reason (i.e., not those who believe abortion is a sin, but those who believe that this belief should not be questioned or challenged by the faithful, or in extreme cases, not even by those who do not subscribe to their beliefs). I believe that any principle which is, as Tom says, "universal, absolute in truth-value, and eternal," will triumphantly survive any honest rational challenge.

I can't find any statement in that letter in which I "relegate" Biblical history (to what?) as "full of myth," though I do remark that literal interpretation of the Bible has been questioned since Dante; but in any case I almost always use "myth" in Northrop Frye's sense of a story told to account for something rather than in the sense of an untrue tale, so for me it is not pejorative to call something a myth. Myth is a form of metaphor, of which

Tom speaks approvingly in the same paragraph. [Concern about literal truth goes much further back than that. In the second century St. Augustine knew that the world was spherical and was disturbed by its description as flat in Genesis and at least one of the Psalms. There the world is described as flat with a dome over it, the firmament, with solid water above the dome (separated from the waters under the dome on an early day of creation), and with gates in the dome which God opened when he wanted it to rain. God's abode was a mansion sitting on top of this dome. If I remember correctly it is in his Confessions that I read his resolution of the problem by deciding that the Bible was not meant to be a treatise on the physical nature of the world but was written in terms understandable to the authors' contemporaries. This is how modern Christians resolve the problems of the Earth's motion (Galileo vs Joshua) and evolution. ERM]

Mark Blackman says I blew it by calling the Book of Job a tragedy; what I did was to cite John Milton's view that it should be the model for Christian tragedy. I should have made it clearer that Milton was primarily referring to its dramatic structure, which he followed in his own Samson Agonistes. As to whether it can be properly called a comedy, it's debatable. At the most fundamental technical level, the genres of comedy and tragedy did not exist in Hebrew literature, so it would seem inappropriate to apply such labels. In the second place, comedy traditionally begins in unhappiness and ends in happiness (tragedy performing the reverse movement); Job begins in happiness, descends into unhappiness, and returns to happiness, so the structural pattern does not fit properly. There is a real argument over whether a Christian tragedy is possible, since Christian faith postulates an ultimately comic universe in which redemption and eternal union with Divine Love (comedy conventionally ends with a marriage) is available to everyone willing to accept it (hence Dante's Divine Comedy). Since a tragic hero must have nobility, can one refuse freely offered grace and reject Heaven and the Beatific Vision without looking merely petulant, like a spiteful child who won't kiss and make up? The best writer I can think of offhand who has dealt directly with this question is, perhaps surprisingly, not C. S. Lewis or Charles Williams but G. K. Chesterton, in The Man Who Was Thursday, which perhaps inspired them both. It starts out as pure E.

Phillips Oppenheim--Scotland Yard undercover agent pursuing anarchist gangs--but turns into pure mythopoeia at the end. The paperback has been recently reissued--look for it on the mystery shelf at your bookstore.

Since writing the above I have seen the appalling (to me) decision in the Tennessee textbook case, often called by the media Scopes II, in which a federal judge ruled that a local school district did indeed infringe on the First Amendment rights of some extremist-fundamentalist parents by requiring their children to study such texts as The Wizard of Oz and The Diary of Anne Frank, not to mention a science fiction story and a classical myth. (The objection to Wizard of Oz was that it contained a good witch, and their religion teaches that witchcraft is evil. I never did figure out their objection to Anne Frank's book; perhaps their religion teaches that it is OK to put young girls in concentration camps or gas ovens as long as they're Jewish.) In a post-verdict discussion on McNeill/Lehrer, the lawyer for the plaintiff parents asked (plaintively) why the public schools were always willing to put material from other religions into textbooks but were so hostile to input from extremist-fundamentalists. I can easily answer that. Material from other religions is included so children can learn more about the distant parts of the world they live in; something about Christianity--say, the Sermon on the Mount or some of Jesus' parables--should be included on the same basis. But the purpose of the public school is to prepare the young to be good citizens of a democratic republic: that is, to be informed, to ask questions, and to evaluate the answers critically. Probably no one is entirely satisfied with the schools' job performance in these areas, but that is what Mr. Jefferson had in mind when he contemplated educating the electorate. Extremist-fundamentalists, on the other hand, believe not only that the Bible is literally true but that it contains all the answers to all the questions that really matter; if a question cannot be answered by resorting to Scripture (such as "What do we do to prevent the further destruction of the ozone layer?"), then they believe it cannot be a genuinely significant question. Since they believe that revelation has already given all the answers, they wish to teach their children to accept and obey the received authority--that of their parents and their church--which is not only incompatible with

the purpose of the schools, but quite antithetical to it. It seems to me that granting them First Amendment privileges in this case is a threat to those privileges for everyone else (one parent testified under oath that she objected to anything that taught that her own religion wasn't necessarily better than all others), but inimical to society's interest in religious tolerance, an educated electorate, and the pursuit of truth by inquiry and research.



State and local school authorities have traditionally bent over backward to accommodate non-mainstream religious communities such as the Amish by letting them run their own schools and provide their own teachers as long as they met minimum state certification requirements. This is the first instance where a court has held that a school system must so accommodate a segment of a pluralistic community rather than a self-contained group. I have long had qualms about whether such accommodation has not in fact discriminated against the children of such groups as the Amish by allowing them to receive an education inferior to that of other students and in effect violating their First Amendment rights by denying them, at their parents' wish, the ability to choose freely, because fully informed, between their parents' traditional faith and other religious options. Imagine a hypothetical case in which an entire community was made up of members of the International Flat Earth

Society, including all members of the school board, and state authorities allowed them to teach the flat-earth theory in their science classes. Subsequently a graduate of the school system sued the state and/or local school boards because he had been unfairly deprived of sufficient knowledge of science to allow him to meet the entrance requirements of Harvard. Would he have a case? Courts have frequently ruled against parents who wished to deny their children blood transfusions on religious grounds, though normally only in life-threatening emergency situations. The First Amendment is the most cherished of our constitutional rights, but it is not an absolute right: the law does not, for example, allow a devout Jewish soldier to lay down his arms in the middle of a battle just because the Sabbath has begun. (This is true even in Israel, by the way; but fortunately they usually manage to win their wars in six days.) The rights and interests of the individual are balanced against the rights and interests of the state (meaning society as a whole, not the government in power); and it is certainly not in the interest of American society that children should be able to opt out of segments of their education at will because of parental objections. The extremist-fundamentalist plaintiffs also objected to the feminist viewpoint being taught in social studies; what if someone objected on religious grounds to the schools' teaching that blacks were not inherently inferior to whites? Or that Jews did not make matzoh from the blood of Christian babies? Or that Gandhi was a more admirable human being than Ian Paisley?

Turning to the recurring theme of there being no remedy for swinehood (am I really changing the subject?), the actual quotation may come from Sidney Lanier, as Piers Anthony says, but I think the image comes from Book II of Spenser's Faerie Queene, where Sir Guyon, the knight of Temperance, overthrows the enchantress Acrasia and destroys her Bower of Bliss. Acrasia, like Circe from whom she is derived, turns men into beasts; when Guyon's faithful guide the Palmer, representing Reason, disenchants them with a touch of his staff:

But one above the rest in  
speciall,  
That had an hog beene late,  
hight Grille by name,  
Repined greatly, and did him  
miscall,  
That had from hoggish forme him  
brought to naturall.

Said Guyon, See the mind of  
 beastly man,  
 That hath so soone forgot the  
 excellence  
 Of his creation, when he life  
 began,  
 That now he chooseth, with vile  
 difference,  
 To be a beast, and lacke  
 intelligence.  
 To whom the Palmer thus, The  
 donghill kind  
 Delights in filth and foule  
 incontinence:  
 Let Grill be Grill, and haue  
 his hoggish mind....

(F.Q.II.xii.86:6-87:8)

When I was studying Spenser at Berkeley in the sixties, the Puritan virtue of Temperance was rather looked down upon; today, when drunk driving, drug abuse, and AIDS have assumed crisis proportions, Guyon, prig that he is, seems more acceptable, and even heroic.

Neil A. Frankowski  
 Reluctant Publishing Ltd.  
 7732 Auburn Rd  
 Utica MI 48087

[After explaining how his company acquired STAR DATE magazine and is reviving it in its original format, he went on to explain how he wanted to fulfill old subscriptions but the previous owner considered the mailing list not a liability but an asset for which he wanted \$8000.]

We were shocked to find out that the previous publisher counts his subscription list as an asset and insists that we should pay them for the privilege of picking up their bad debt. We can think of no words foul enough for such people. I would appreciate it if you would see fit to let your readers know that if they have subscribed to STAR DATE they can reinstate their subscription by sending Reluctant Publishing any reasonable proof of purchase such as a cancelled check.

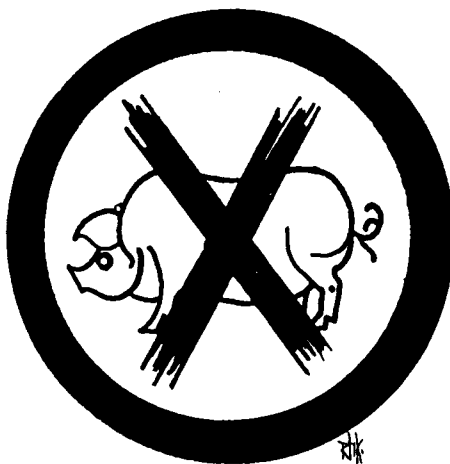
Sandra Miesel  
 8744 N. Pennsylvania  
 Indianapolis IN 46240

Mention was made in the previous NIEKAS of the legends of St. Anthony (St. Anthony of the Desert, not St. Anthony of Padua). St. Anthony of the Desert, who was called the Father of Hermits, lived in the second century A.D. He was a rural kid who decided to become a hermit in the desert and lived to a great old age and attracted many followers.

Now his symbol in art is the pig because he was subject to many temptations of the flesh for which the pig was the natural symbol in its grossness. The temptations of St. Anthony are a favorite subject of art down to Renaissance and

Baroque times. But in the Middle Ages the identification of the pig as the symbol of St. Anthony's problems with sensuality was blurred and they began to think, because he was a desert father, the pig was his pet. Then the pig became this cute little animal that followed him around and wore a bell around its neck. Originally the bell had been used to drive away the demons that were tempting the saint. The pig now wore a bell on a collar. I've seen one miniature where the pig is wearing the bell as an earring in his little piggy ear.

During the High Middle Ages there was an institution in France and England called the Hospitals of St. Anthony; and these were maintained, not for the care of the sick, but for the care of the indigent and travelers. They were hostels rather than hospitals. These were maintained by the sale of pigs which were allowed to run freely in the cities such as London and Bordeaux, where these Hostels of St. Anthony were located.



When you hear about pigs rooting in the garbage in the medieval street, this is not necessarily just anybody's pigs. In some of these cities, such as London and Bordeaux they were the special pigs of St. Anthony. The herd was maintained by donations, by pigs that were confiscated from robbers, pigs that had been condemned in the market as unfit for human consumption and eventually were restored to health; and they were identified by special collars and bells.

Now the temptation was to run your own private pigs, which normally by law in London, for instance, were required to be raised in your back yard in a pigsty and not allowed to run in the street. A sharp in London in the 14th century made

counterfeit collars and bells and ran his own pigs in with St. Anthony's pigs. He was caught and hauled up before the London City Council and made to sign a warrant that he would never again do this and he would never put about the necks of pigs nor cause to be put about the necks of pigs, such collars and such bells, and he would keep his own stock at home. I found this in Riley's Memorials of London and London Life, a fascinating book of primary source material drawn from the public records of the City of London.

Another aspect of St. Anthony's pigs in medieval cities--it was forbidden by law to molest them, and the pigs figured this out and became extremely arrogant and loved to knock people in the mud and tromp on them, etc. You could not discipline them or drive them off. Anyway, thus St. Anthony's pigs.

This started when Piers Anthony commented on the idiom "follow like a tantonny pig" or "follow like an Anthony pig." This idiom existed from the middle ages down into the Regency (because I once saw it in a Georgette Heyer novel) and it again refers to these St. Anthony's pigs where the runt of the litter might be donated to the St. Anthony herd. It would follow people around and make a nuisance of itself. That is the origin of the idiom and if Piers wants to identify with the St. Anthony's pigs he is welcome to do so.

[Robert Graves retells the story of an Italian workman repairing a church tower who fell off. Half way down he cried out, "St. Anthony, save me!" and in mid-air he was arrested by an enormous invisible hand and a voice said, "Which St. Anthony?" He thought quickly and said, "St. Anthony of Padua." SPLAT! It was St. Anthony of the Desert and all of those temptations had left him rather irritable. ajb]

[N.B., the extreme colloquiality of Sandra Miesel's diction here is due to the latter's being transcribed from a taped conversation. Ben Indick's letter, below, was also taken from a tape. ERN]

Ben Indick  
 428 Sagamore Ave  
 Teneck NJ 07666

I was most moved and impressed by your article about Philip Dick. Like yourself I haven't ever read very much Dick. I, for some reason, did not care for his famous Hugo winner, The Man in the High Castle but I did like his Flow My Tears the Policeman Said. On the other hand

# REVIEW & COMMENT.

RAINBOW CADENZA, J. Neil Schulman, Simon & Schuster, 1983, \$15.95 hc

Obscure, nearly out of print, Rainbow Cadenza is a wildly funny sexist dystopia which mixes a very strange military draft, a classical concert scene in which music is forbidden, and the craziest future society ever to be so plausible.

Between modern medicine and governments looking for cannon fodder, there are now seven men to every woman; and women must now serve a compulsory three-year term of service in the Peace Corps--as prostitutes. They never counted on Joan Darris, teenage lasergrapher, rebel, with a wicked and raunchy sense of humor, and an independence of mind that, refreshingly for once, does not bring down the system around her ears. Just the house.

Besides Joan we also meet a fascinating set of people; hear that rare thing, a future vocabulary of obscenities that makes sense and sounds real; savor junk food at the Quiche-Me-Quick stand; learn what goes into the writing of a great vistata; and laugh our way through one of the best--and most serious--revenge scenes in science fiction.

Rumor has it (through another magazine) that this book may go into paperback production. Let's hope so. It's too good to miss. PAT MATHEWS

GALAXY MAGAZINE: THE LIGHT AND DARK YEARS, David L. Rosheim, Advent: Publishers, 1986

I have been a devoted reader and collector of Advent Books since the company's inception, and I'll say this for them: they went damned near 30 years before publishing a turkey.

That streak ended with the publication of Galaxy Magazine: The Light And Dark Years, by David Rosheim. Obviously the book is meant to be a companion piece to Alvin Rogers' A Requiem For Astounding, and there is no reason why it shouldn't have worked: after all, Rogers gave us an enjoyable piece of nostalgia about a magazine that was still atop the field, while Rosheim's subject was complete: GALAXY was born in 1950 and died in 1979. It should have been even easier for the author to come up with the proper perspective and conclusions.

But there is a difference between the two authors: Rogers cared desperately about ASTOUNDING, and could barely wait for each new issue--and he transmitted

that eagerness and enthusiasm to the reader. Rosheim, who by his own admission went years without even reading GALAXY, comes across like an opportunistic writer (and a poor one at that) who jumped at the chance to write this book for Advent and only then went out to do his homework. There is no excitement, no sense of impending literary events, no attempt to show how Gold essentially remade the field that Campbell had created. There are inaccuracies (example: how the hell could Vaughn Bode die in 1971 when I met him in 1973?), there are ridiculous and incredibly shallow political intrusions, there is just out-and-out bad writing. This is a retrospective look at one of the all-time great magazines, and yet every story is described as it would be in a magazine teaser; if you want to know how the authors actually handled the problems and characters they created, you'd better have a complete run of GALAXY on hand, for Rosheim sure as hell isn't going to tell you.

Still, the history of GALAXY is a fit subject for a specialty press, and I hope that once this unfortunate attempt has become just an unpleasant memory, someone -- possibly even Advent -- will try again. MIKE RESNICK

CHILD OF FORTUNE, Norman Spinrad, Bantam, 1985, 402 pp., \$16.95

Anyone who read my review of The Void Captain's Tale in this fanzine knows that I consider it one of the half-dozen truly brilliant science fiction novels of our time. So it was only natural that I picked up Spinrad's Child Of Fortune the first day the hardcover hit the bookstores.

I was disappointed.

Norman has set this novel in the same universe and society as The Void Captain's Tale, but for various reasons, it doesn't work as well.

First of all, the language, which rang absolutely true when put in the mouth of a middle-aged, sexually-obsessed Void Captain, seems terribly affected coming out of the mouth of a teenaged girl. Second, Child of Fortune is a much longer book than The Void Captain's Tale, but its story line is much weaker; it simply isn't worth anywhere near this much wordage. Third, I think before Norman wrote a 175,000-word book in the first person of a 16-year-old girl, he should have talked to some; Wendi Shasta Leonardo simply does not ring true.

Child Of Fortune is not a bad book. In fact, except for its length, it is about as good a book as it can be. But it isn't remotely in the same class as its predecessor, and no one is sorrier about that than me. MIKE RESNICK

THE ODYSSEUS SOLUTION, Michael Banks and Dean R. Lambe, Baen

This is a nice, action-packed novel in the Campbellian tradition: the bird-like Cewom-jik invade our solar system, looking for a planet to colonize, and hit upon Earth. They manage to introduce matter duplicators into human society, and the economy is soon in a shambles. They destroy all technological knowledge, they hunt down rebels, they encourage Fifth Columnists.

All this is preliminary to the main thrust of the book, which takes place a generations later, when our hero Brent Erlanger, stumbles onto a human underground and joins the battle to oust the Cweom-jik from their primacy.

This is an archtypical ASTOUNDING/ANALOG story. It won't win a Hugo, but it delivers exactly what it promises, and shows rather fewer first-novel faults than one might expect, especially considering that it is the first novel for either of its collaborators. All in all, a nice, workmanlike job, and one which I hope will encourage Banks and Lambe to write works of increasing ambition in the years to come.. It may seem presumptuous, based on a single first novel that I am told was somewhat butchered by a copy editor, but I can foresee them coming up with something to rival The Note In God's Eye a few books up the road. MIKE RESNICK

WHITE MARE, RED STALLION, Diana L. Paxson, Berkley Books, 1986, 242 pp., \$2.95

Diana Paxson's latest book is well written and quite interesting. I will admit, however, that I was first attracted to the book by its cover, which depicts white and red horses rearing to each other and a raven, rimmed in red, descending between them. Upon reading the book I discovered just how symbolic this cover is, and I commend the artist.

Miss Paxson takes the reader back in British history to the time of the Romans. As in previous books, Miss Paxson begins her story simply enough. Maira, the main character, is the daughter of Conner and Bruith--he is the leader of the people and Bruith is very strong in the ways of the ancient magic. Soon Maira and Carric become lovers. This is still not the real problem even though Maira's people, the Novantae clan, and Carric's people, the Selgovae clan, are not exactly friendly. There is no real animosity between the clans, just some occasional cattle stealing. However, during a mock battle between the clans, Maira's brother Eoc accidentally kills Carric's "sword brother" Conon. This initiates real revenge and hatred between the two clans and the story embarks on what is to be a series of great plot twists.

As I have noticed in Paxson's book Brisingham, her women are the stronger of the two sexes, usually found in the dominating position--almost Amazonian in their mental and physical strength. When Maira's father forfeits his life to pay for the death of Conon, Maira bids for the position of leader of the Clan of the White Horse, over her brother who should have rightfully assumed the position. Eoc had been seriously injured in the battle and it is doubtful that he can claim the position, let alone hold it. It was not surprising to me that Maira won her bid for

leadership for that is in keeping with the Paxson format. I found the ritual of her initiation to be very difficult to take. I am sure that it did probably occur in this manner for it was very much in keeping with the era.

As Maira becomes the leader, her experiences with the ancient magic and dealings with the Goddess are usually ones of bitterness and pain. Her mood as the leader is one of anger, sorrow, and loss. We grow with Maira as she struggles to do what is best for her people, and sorrow with her at the loss of relationships, friends, and family, and always the longing for her lover, Carric.

White Mare, Red Stallion is rich in history, intrigue, and adventure. As in Brisingham, Paxson keeps her readers guessing as her plots twist around each other and romance whispers among the hatred. Paxson seems to bring successfully the old "will the man get the woman," or actually in her case "will the woman get the man" intrigue vibrantly alive, which make her endings enjoyable to reach even if only for the relief of ending the suspense of it all. There is little question that as a good writer, she has carefully and painstakingly researched her books. The result is material that feels as if it were simply lifted from history and not the product of Paxson's imagination. FRANCES WOODWARD

-OO-A DIFFERENT VIEWPOINT:

One of the most gratifying aspects of Diana Paxson's White Mare Red Stallion is her skill at weaving together materials from many different scholarly sources to create a well rounded and convincing picture of ancient Celtic life. Her fairly conventional romantic plot is given freshness and power by a vivid sense of locale and culture. In portraying the material side of the life of a Celtic village she has made good use of the findings of the Butser Iron Age Farm project, which has taught us so much in recent years. Since religious observances held such an important place in the consciousness of the Celts (virī religiosissimi, Julius Caesar called them). Some of the most striking and successful passages in the book have to do with ritual. Refreshingly Paxson has gone to "hard" sources for her depiction of Celtic religion, instead of relying (as so many writers of "Celtic" fiction do) on familiar but spurious sources like Wicca and Robert Graves (though there are a few traces of those in her book, too). Two of the great Celtic feasts--the August feast of Lughnasa and the November (new year) feast of Samhain--are shown: for the first, Paxson has drawn very creatively on Maire MacNeill's classic The Feast of Lughnasa, and for the second she has used the Mari Lwyd ceremonies still found today in south Wales. The overall result has a very authentic feel to it; only in one scene--the by-now notorious one in which Maira gains the chieftainship--does Paxson tread on controversial ground. The ritual she uses is the reversal of the one described by Gerald of Wales for the investiture of an Irish King. This poses an ideological problem: in Celtic society, although women could and did become political leaders, the ceremonial office of kingship is reserved for males, because the king represented the (male) god married to the (female) land. The concept of a female "king" comes across as highly implausible--but not impossible, as the Celts were great inventors.

I understand that this novel was planned as the first of a series that would follow a Celtic community near Dumfries (in the Scottish border country) through the centuries. If the same level of fine research and creative insight can be brought to the rest of the series, it will be something to look forward to. ALEXEI KONDRATIEV



ARIEL, Jack Bickham, St. Martin's Press, 1984, 316 pp., \$15.95

Ariel has all the elements needed to delight most readers. It has unhappy love affairs and unhappy lovers; the gallant struggle to keep a company, Drummer Boy Labs, alive; budding love affairs; espionage; arson; and who could forget the necessary ingredient of murder?

The characters exist in an intriguing tangle of relationships that would delight any soap opera fan. Janice, who is extremely beautiful and intelligent, and yet appears so cold and unfeeling, falls in love with Victor, whom the readers know to be the Japanese spy sent to steal the living program, Ariel, from Drummer Boy Labs. Victor uses Janice to gain information. He does not love her, or any woman for that matter. Linda, who is going through a very difficult divorce, goes to work for John Harrington, the owner of Drummer Boy Labs and her old flame. Jess, the old man, is loved by everyone; Les loves all the women, and Ted doesn't know who or what he loves. This completes the cast of characters.

I usually avoid all prologues and forewords for I have found them to be quite dry and uninformative, and having nothing much to do with the book at all. Ariel, however, begins in the prologue, which quickly sets the pace of the book. As the prologue begins, the special technicians assigned to Ariel (Artificial Intelligence Establishing project[I know the acronym doesn't fit but that's the way the book gives it!]) are putting her on line for the first time. There is an electrical fire and the entire system starts shorting out. In order to salvage some of their work, the computer is shut down before its memory units can be pulled. The result is a massive dump of memory units and Ariel is returned to Step One in a matter of minutes. Jack Bickham writes realistically and strongly and the reader feels the deep anger and dismay as these technicians helplessly watch years of work go down the tubes.

Rusty, John's son, provides most of the comic relief in Ariel. He is a freckle-faced whiz kid and it is extremely obvious that he prefers his computers to friends and sports. The comedy comes from Rusty's quick one-liners in response to his father's inquiries about his baseball practice and games. There are a couple of paragraphs where a friend of Rusty learns the difficulties of using words with double meanings while playing a computerized Dungeons And Dragons game. As a former Dungeon Master, I enjoyed these paragraphs immensely.

The future of Drummer Boy Labs, if the Ariel project fails, depends on their marketing their newly designed layered chip. This is a super-chip that is made by combining integrated circuits in layers to form a special chip that will make a computer more intelligent and faster and will allow for more complex programming.

Conway Industries, a strong competitor whose owner has a personal grudge against John Harrington, sets out to steal the super-chip and market it first. Much to the reader's dismay, he succeeds, and the plot continues to build. Re-enter Rusty, who has been talking to Ariel late at night through his home computer. Because he doesn't want his father to know, he stores this in a file he names "Source B" in the computer--which the computer renames "The Rusty Source." The technicians, in the meantime, have loaded into memory a program that Linda has designed, called "Infant." An accident, caused by another

hacker, combines these separate sources and combines them into one program, and Ariel suddenly comes to life.

Jack Bickham has written a book that is both realistic and highly entertaining. You don't have to be a computer expert or a hacker to understand and enjoy his book. The computer, Ariel, becomes real to the reader. You find yourself caring for her and wondering what is to happen to her. The different plots parallel each other extremely well, meshing together from time to time to build the suspense and make this book very difficult to put down. As the story draws to its conclusion, the different plots blend smoothly together into one main story line. The conclusion is somewhat amusing and very satisfying.

I have only one very strong criticism regarding this book. Jack Bickham felt it necessary to write very detailed and explicit bedroom scenes. I felt that these scenes were in exceedingly poor taste because they were so detailed and irrelevant. While sex is part of everyday life, and it would be realistic to include it in books such as Ariel, the detail was damaging to the book. It is in cheap books that are badly written that one would expect to find explicit scenes like those in Ariel. Ariel is too good a book to lower itself to this. It stands very well on its own merits.

A book can be good for a single reading, or it can earn a place on my very limited library shelves. Not only do I recommend Ariel quite favorably but such a space has been reserved for this book as part of my permanent library. FRANCES P. WOODARD

LYONESSE, Jack Vance, Berkley books, April 1983, 436 pp., \$6.95

Jack Vance sold his first short story to a minor pulp magazine where it was published in 1945. This and subsequent stories left their mark on fandom. Where did this new writer come from? He was too good to be inexperienced. Henry Kuttner had been using many pen names for several years and many suspected this was only a new one. It took some time for fan to be assured of his real existence.

In 1950 a minor publisher, Hillman Books, brought out his The Dying Earth exploring the glory and tragedy of the last days of old future Earth seen in the mythic glow of ancient magic and human frailty. This marvelous book got very limited circulation and is now a rare collector's item. After all his books of science-fantasy since that time he has returned to his original theme--but this time he situates his dying world in the Elder Isles of the Atlantic near Europe. The ancient Greeks and Romans spoke of them, and medieval chroniclers identified them with "Hy-Brasil." All spoke of a civilization of vast wealth and strange folkways. Legendary beasts and magic lay here. According to the genealogies in the book, it takes place a couple of generations before King Arthur. Vance takes this as his basis to make a strangely beautiful tale of medieval romance and chivalry--and perennial human weakness in character and deed.

"Lyonesse" is one of the kingdoms medieval chroniclers spoke of in this group of lands and states (supposedly lost in the great upheavals of the Ocean), and Vance carefully sets out his situation of war and intrigue in a fine prose of rich imagery and wit. In Vance's view this land covered an area larger than that of modern France. Cynicism is here among all characters, high and low, but nothing can corrode the

imagination of Lyonessa as it celebrates the sorrows of life and the potential of the human spirit. Heroes are not musclemen filled with the "macho" image of the sword and sorcery barbarian. Courage and common sense move as partners, even when tested by failure and death.

Vance permeates his novel with a substratum of Celtic myth and folklore; the ancient gods of Nature have not been ousted by Christianity (although missionaries have come over the centuries), and maintain a modest presence in the novel). Trolls and elves and fair folk work their mischief among each other and the human population. But magic is not allowed to overwhelm the human character. There is the supreme question of ambition here--what are our highest goals of life and how far will we go to gain them?

The King of fierce Lyonessa wants to unify all the Elder Isles under his own Throne. When force fails he tries for dynastic marriages. His daughter, Sauldrun, refuses to cooperate. Exile is her reward but in turn is the key to the saving of another protagonist, Prince Aillas of a nearby kingdom. Love is bittersweet here, as the author brings in betrayal and murder--and a child who will turn the tables on a world of gorgeous legend.

Revenge and humor are balanced to create reader interest in the variety of characters. Some of the best scenes are small and spare, such as the wanderer Glynnis and her comrade Dhrun (Aillas's son) meeting the medicine show of Dr. Fielius. Then there is the duel of wits with the fair folk. Vance knows when not to say too much here, and how to prod our souls with the cruelty and joy that magic-people can give to others. Above all, in his explorations of varied characters, he respects the course of logic and situations. His plot is complicated but reasonable in its interjoining situations and testings of character. Dialogue is imitation medieval but never tedious, and the author makes his backgrounds concrete in detail and culture.

While this book is long it is incomplete. It is only the first half of a double decker, not a complete novel in itself. The author even ends it with a number of questions to be resolved in the next volume.

Several story lines intertwine following individuals over a long time. There is heroism in the face of adversity and cruelty. The story raises questions about human nature which will linger in the reader's heart. He will return to this book again and again.

THOMAS M. EGAN

THE ROBOTS OF DAWN, Isaac Asimov, Doubleday & Co., 419 pp., \$15.95

Asimov is a basic optimist about man the individual. The human species is "saved" always by the vitality and basic decency of individuals who ultimately test their humanity above the sheer power of technology, applied science--especially as embodied in the supreme creation of SF, the robot.

The concept of the robot is prefigured in the Golem legends and Frankenstein and took its modern form in Czech satirist Karel Capek's 1921 play R.U.R.. There, and in writings up to Asimov, it was the central symbol for the conflict of the use and abuse of human ideas and power over nature. Would the robot enslave man by his superior functions, take away his work incentive, his ultimate inventiveness? Asimov

explored all these questions, and more, in his writings. Editor Campbell helped him, in 1942, set up his famous three laws of robotics, and many of his subsequent stories were explorations to see how they could be stretched or violated.

Robots of Dawn is the third book in a series created in the 1950s. He had started writing it then but abandoned it when he turned to non-fiction exclusively as a result of the educational crisis related to the Sputnik shock. He slowly returned to fiction but in 1960 admitted in a letter to the MIT Science Fiction Society that he had lost the manuscript. His only novel before the 1980s was The Gods Themselves, which was expanded from a novella as told by Asimov in NIEKAS 22 (reprinted from TALKING BOOK TOPICS). He resumed writing about one novel a year in the 1980's and is exploring the ramifications of his two major series, the Robot Series and the Foundation Series, and is bridging them into a single timeline. This is an old idea of his, for his first published novel Pebble in the Sky (1950) hinted at the bridge.

Like the other robot novels (The Caves of Steel and The Naked Sun) it is a detective mystery set in the far future. The central character is a middling good family man, a police detective named Lije Baley. He is no super hero, but knows that good police work on Earth centers on one's common sense of the human situation of good and evil. He is not to work now on a far distant world called Aurora, the most advanced of the technocratic Spacer planets. The problem is murder--who killed one particular "humaniform" robot? The pace of the novel is slow and deliberate, respectful of logic and consistent in background and dialogue. Asimov knows when not to say too much, and gives the reader the sense of a concrete closed situation, and yet implies much for our sense of the human.

His old friend, the robot Daneel Olivaw, is re-introduced from the previous novels, and used to contrast with with his human partner in the art of detection. The final answer involved the revival of Earth itself--the basis for a new "dawn," despite its bigotry, overcrowding, and crime-ridden grubbiness. Humor and romance are here, and the story works well indeed.

There is, now, one more robot novel, which was reviewed last issue by Mike Resnick.

The origin and working history of Asimov's Galactic Civilization of millennia hence is set up in three early adventure novels: The Stars, Like Dust; The Currents of Space; and Pebble in the Sky. They trace the rise of feudal-like kingdoms on the planets.

Asimov's classics, though, are his Foundation novels created in the pages of ASTOUNDING in the 1940's and put into book form in the 1950's. New revisions appeared from Ballantine in 1983. The original trilogy describes the decline and fall of a wondrous future intergalactic empire of human civilizations, with no robots present, and modeled on the historical Roman Empire. Hari Seldon's famous plan tries to reduce the dark ages before the re-establishment of civilization. Asimov's 1983 Foundation's Edge brings the resolution of the "Seldon Plan" and psychohistory. More will undoubtedly follow.

The vast dimensions involved might scare some readers off, but are the glory of this enormous, both in number of volumes and in scope, series. Most of the books are available from Ballantine. THOMAS M. EGAN

CASTLEDOWN, Joyce Dallou Gregorian, Ace Fantasy Books, 1983, 331 pp., illus. by the author, \$2.95

This is a sequel to the author's first novel, The Broken Citadel wherein the basic situation of this "outer world" caught in a dimension linked to Earth is set forth. A young girl and her shifting identity in both worlds is the basic key, the catalyst, for both novels. In this tale of sorcery and high adventure there is an underlying theme of the interrelationship of fate and human free will; chance and skill come together here both as partners and as opponents. And all is set forth in the structure of a unique role-playing game.

"Castledown" refers to the basic parlor game of this world "next door" to ours. The structure is a philosophy of power and its consequences. It becomes too often a part of real life as Joyce Gregorian portrays it. Thus, the novel has five chapters, each being one of the parts of the game's progress. Basically, there are two armies of 18 men each, engaged on an 81 square chess-like board. To win, or make "Castledown," each player follows a centuries old order. First, "attack," in which each sets out his men (pieces) as best he can for tactical advantage of surprising his foe. Then, "capture," by skill and subtle moves, men are overturned and advanced in the game. "Wide game" follows, a time of peril controlled by the roll of the dice (casting a fate) which sees many a man lost on the Outer Board (feeding the Nagra). If you survive, there is "salge" with its many trials--till, finally, you reach the exciting disastrous climax of victory/defeat of "castledown."

In this world pictured as a mixture of Medieval feudalism, Celtic tribalism, and middle-eastern Arab type cultures, Castledown becomes real life. The heroine, Sibyl Barron, is caught by her fate to be cast back and forth between two worlds--ours and the "other." She is an American college girl of beauty and good family here, but born of a goddess and a feudal prince in the world of Castledown. She has strange powers that can be manipulated by magic when the conditions are right. The moon is full, the rituals are right, and then--"pouf"--away she's pulled into a kaleidoscope of intrigues, kidnappings, strange romantic triangles, brutal wars and murders, and a world's future at stake.

Here we learn of the deadly rivalry between true kings and usurpers, gods and goddesses, monsters and heroes. The forces of evil seem real enough but not in the world-shaking apocalyptic vein. There is the bracing down-to-Earth wisdom of the exiled prince, Leron, no muscle-bound hero he, but one who knows the perils strong decisions can make for the innocent. He faces the cunning brilliance of the usurper Odiskeard who rules fair Tredane. There is the strange ambiguity of the Robin Hood character, Clerowan the Outlaw. Priests and prophets work from ancient temples as gods (i.e., sorcerous beings) struggle for their hold over worshippers and worlds.

The tribal cultures are really well-drawn and their intrigues resemble our own world's history of Islam. The religious fanaticism of Ozil Ozil, the "holy reader," envelops the whole nation of the nomadic Karebdu. It's one more piece in the game of the evil Vazdz, most powerful of the gods--but never (wisely) seen by the reader. The locals of desert and palace, island paradise and hell alike are well drawn. The use of monsters such as the Moraganos (winged demons) and the fish-monster, the Nagra, is restrained but enticing to our imagination of wonders. Realism in politics is accepted while we are charmed by the very believable antics of Sibyl as heroine. She is never

the voluptuous show-piece of so many fantasy tales, but one very shrewd, compassionate, and intelligent actor in the great game.

For game this novel is, a set of actors and acts in the goal of winning Castledown. Deaths occur to the good "pieces" as well as the bad, and the role of logic is never weakened in the play sets. The game respects the small details of life and culture. Joyce Gregorian includes plenty of good examples of folk plays and verse and songs of her world--they are full of vitality, whether joyous or sad. The heroine bears a child, realistically, and comforts her husband in the normalcy of real marriage. Victory has its price even in a fantasy world and the author shows it well. The reader may be disappointed in the ending, but his/her imagination has been exercised to a degree that waits for games of its own to create and wonder for. THOMAS M. EGAN

EDITORIAL NOTE: At Confederation I held an editorial conference of as many of the people involved with NIEKAS as I could assemble. One opinion that was strongly expressed is that NIEKAS is a magazine of record and should be as interesting to read five years after it is published as it is immediately on publication. Book reviews have no place in such a publication.

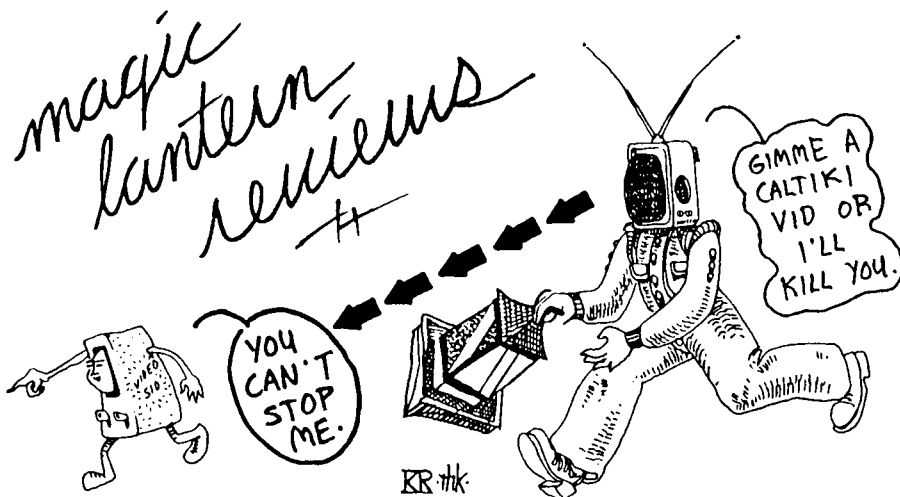
Also, even should we achieve our goal of three-a-year publication, the reviews would be too dated to influence book purchases. We should discuss books, for that is what we are here for, but not run routine reviews of routine books. Especially useful are the survey articles, like Anne Drauda looking at the books about Tolkien, or Fred at the books about Mainline. Comparisons, such as the first and third sections of "Dumbejimas," have their place. Finally there is the review pointing out a book others might never think of reading, like Anne Drauda's review of The White-Boned Demon in 34. We will still have RBC but it will be shorter, emphasizing long reviews of outstanding books, either spectacularly good or bad.

As for what makes a good review, let me quote from a recent letter from Anne Drauda:

"People generally want to know what kind of book it is. 'Is it the kind of book I like?' This is what I try to convey. I try to compare it to other books and writers. When I was reviewing The White-Boned Demon I compared it to Gene Wolfe's Book of the New Sun, and I compared the heroine to Anne McCaffrey's heroines. In other words, if you like this sort of thing, this is the sort of thing you like. And I try to tell something about the story: Is it a quest? Is it clearly plotted or is the plot muddled? Are the characters convincing? Are they terribly conventional? Are they quirky and individual? Is it generally a mythic story? A comic story? Does it move you profoundly? Does something about it annoy you?"

While Tom Egan's reviews of Vance and Asimov lack those aspects of a good review each had something I found of value. I had read Lyonessa, but did not know of its folklore origins, about Hy-Brasil, etc. The Asimov review tied together three sets of his novels in an interesting way. This review will not convince anyone whether or not to read a three-year-old book whose sequel was reviewed last ish, but does convey some useful knowledge.

The meeting pointed out that short reviews by miscellaneous persons, even if timely, are NOT a useful reading guide for the reader does not know the predilections of the reviewer. Columns by individuals



## MAGIC LANTERN REVIEWS

### MOUSE.REVIEW

THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE, a Disney Studios Cartoon Feature.

Short form: good. so see it.

Obviously, a Great Detective is a Sherlock Holmes parody. The mouse is named Basil of Baker Street, and he lives downstairs from Sherlock Holmes. We see Sherlock's shadow against the windowshade and hear his violin, we see his shadow and Watson's as they go off to the opera, and hear their voices then. Basil Rathbone's shadow and voice, of course, represent Sherlock, as he is the most famous movie Holmes, despite Jeremy Brett's definitive performances of the original stories on public television.

However, the story has nothing further to do with the humans. It is the story of Basil of Baker Street, his new friend, Dr. Dawson (just back from Afghanistan), and the child Olivia Flaversham, whose father the toymaker has been mousenapped by the evil Professor Ratigan. Vincent Price performs the voice of Ratigan, which should tell you something about the characterization. Ratigan's character is full of peculiarities; besides the somewhat bizarre fact that he owns a cat, he is embarrassed about being a rat; if anyone mentions it, the cat gets lunch. The cat's counterpart is Toby, the bloodhound Holmes uses occasionally and that Basil borrows for the case. Both the dog and cat are shown in proportionate size, that is, much bigger than the mice.

The characters of Basil and Dawson are not precisely those of Rathbone's Holmes and his Watson.

Basil is more the Conan Doyle Holmes: erratic, moody, prone to depression. Dawson is considerably brighter than most versions of Watson, even Doyle's. He frequently finds clues Basil overlooks, and keeps Basil from giving up. The child is a fairly typical cartoon child, getting into everything and annoyingly helpful.

The background paintings are magnificent. The abducted Mr. Flaversham's toyshop is, of course, in the wall of a human toyshop. The scenes in the human toyshop are particularly eerie when the toys are shown from the shelf's-eye-view of a mouse, and the toys are idealized versions of Victorian windups. The fact that most of them are clockwork relates to the plot and to the climax of the story, inside Big Ben.

The movie is accompanied by an opening cartoon, Clock Cleaners, with Mickey, Donald, and Goofy washing a large tower clock. It has clockworks, which relates thematically to the movie, and the figurines which come out to ring the bell are a figure of Saturn and a figure of the Statue of Liberty, which tells you the other reason it has been re-released at this time.

The Great Mouse Detective was way over the head of the four-year-old I took, and much of the adult level of subtle parody was over the head of the nine-year-old I took, but they both enjoyed the simpler comedy elements. There were, for them, long dull stretches. I enjoyed it immensely, though I did occasionally get impatient with Ratigan's long speeches. Windy Victorian villains, while in period, take an awfully long time to get to the point. Ratigan has a lot in common with

Captain Hook, and just a touch of Rube Goldberg. His trap-death for Basil is pure pulp adventure, parodied. I don't think even the weekday tv cartoons have quite that much overkill in the villains' mechanisms. TAMAR LINDSAY

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A REVIEW OF THE MOVIE: LABYRINTH

SHORT FORM: Good! Go see it!

LONG FORM: LABYRINTH is a fairy tale. One reviewer I heard of complained that that teen-age girl "didn't learn from the experience." I think he must have watched some other movie. He's also missing the point. The reviewer, apparently, was looking for a morality play. The producers weren't making that kind of movie. LABYRINTH is so completely a fairy tale that even the frame story is a classic fairy tale in modern dress. The girl, Sarah, is a fifteen year-old American Princess, rich, apparently coddled, showered with possessions (look at her room), and incidentally expected to babysit for her baby brother, Toby. Her step-mother complains of being considered a "wicked step-mother"--but she is, in fact, badly behaved. She has just claimed that she and the father "go out very rarely"--to which the girl protests, "Every single week!" Assuming that the protest is true, since the step-mother does not deny it, the step-mother's statement is thus proven false by ordinary standards. True, the girl is an hour late--but it is Saturday, she has apologized, and the ensuing fight makes it painfully clear that the step-mother does not even ask whether the girl might possibly have a date herself; she says, "I assume that if you had one, you'd tell me." She then adds insult to injury by claiming she wishes the girl did have a date sometimes, as an indication of normal behaviour--first, a badly-timed criticism on a sensitive topic, and secondly, a lie, since she would then have to hire a baby sitter.

The girl flies upstairs to her room. Shortly thereafter, we see that her father settles for the token gesture instead of real communication. And then we find that the step-mother has given the baby one of Sarah's old favorite stuffed animals--"again." They are obviously rich; the baby could have his own toys (of which we see absolutely none!)--but no, the step-mother takes Sarah's toys without permission to give them to the baby. The girl has a legitimate complaint here. Her other complaint, the

typical teenager cry that she is treated like a slave, is slightly less justified. No matter how rich or how ordinary, the usual suburban teenager who is expected to do anything at all insists on the term "slavery." They all identify with Cinderella. And this is one "spoiled," Princess-type teenager.

I wish that the producers had made it just a little less classically fairy-tale in this. The step-mother could merely have been angry at lateness without being quite so disgustingly inconsiderate. The teenage complaint could still have fit. Plenty of old fairy tales have a well-treated princess involved in magical adventure. Besides, inconsiderate treatment by parents would more properly provide motivation for wishing the Goblins would take the step-mother rather than the baby. As the only ordinary humans in the story, the parents don't provide a very appealing alternative to the Goblin world.

The girl herself has a flaw that could even more easily have been written out. When she goes in to see whether the baby has in fact been given her missing stuffed toy, he is crying, as he was when his father put him in the crib. The girl orders him to stop. The baby is about eighteen months old, just starting to toddle but not able to stand reliably alone. Obviously, he is in diapers. She does not even try to check to see whether he has a reason for crying other than the general level of emotional tension in the house. She neither checks his diaper nor tries a bottle (he has been fed, but might be thirsty), or a cuddle. Although she picks him up she doesn't hold him long enough to give him a chance to relax and stop crying. She is really a lousy baby-sitter. Presumably she has been sitting on weekends since the kid was born, so she's had time to learn how. It isn't a necessary part of the movie that she be this way; she could have checked him, tried to calm him, gotten frustrated, and then started being unreasonable.

Sarah does hesitate several times before wishing the Goblins would take the baby. This in itself is remarkable restraint for someone as heavily involved in fantasy as she is. Like the protagonist of the movie, *THE MOUSE, CLOAK AND DAGGER*, she is pretty close to the edge. One wonders how long ago she lost her mother. It was probably quite a while ago; those masses of stuffed animals indicate a father giving the symbols without giving true affection. There seem to be good reasons why she has her flaws.

Nevertheless, Sarah already has the main qualities she needs to succeed. After she makes the wish and realizes it has come true, she immediately knows she wants her brother back and refuses the magical toy she is offered instead. Along the way, her natural good nature makes her increasingly friendly to the creatures she meets, and it is by winning their friendship that she eventually has the chance to triumph. She must ultimately defeat the Goblin King by herself, of course. She wins by remembering the line, "You have no power over me," which may be seen as a rejection of the fantasy world she has been living in, at least as being her only option. Once she has chosen reality--real reality with crying babies, not the fantasy world of her escapist bedroom--she is safe returning to her room to play with the fantasy friends and acquaintances she has made.

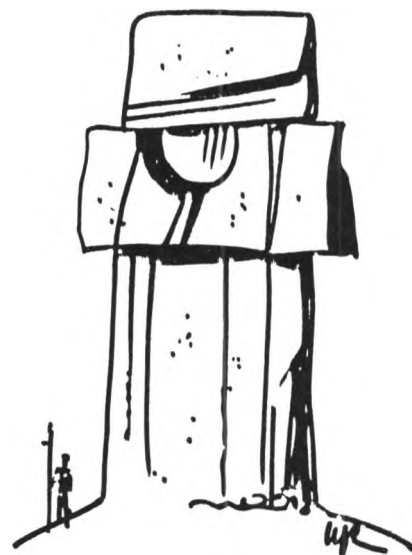
So perhaps it is a morality tale, but not the painfully obvious one the reviewer seemed to expect: you know, the remorse and the regret and denial of fantasy altogether. No, she did that--the remorse--immediately. The lesson here is more important to modern American culture, especially for teenagers. The lesson is that fantasy is fine, as long as it has no power over you. You can play with your fantasy friends, as long as they do not rule you. Do not let your fantasy world prevent you from taking care of real life first; people are more important than toys. The Junkheap Lady makes that point abundantly clear.

Along the way, there are other lessons that can be drawn from the incidents. Each new character or incident can be seen as teaching a lesson. Don't expect even friendly strangers to give you accurate directions. If someone tells you which way to go, ask why, and what lies beyond. Don't assume that homely, old, crotchety people are less helpful than those who are apparently friendly. Life isn't fair. It apparently is against the rules to mess with anybody else's head, though you can do as you like with your own. To make friends, be a friend first. Friends can help, but some things you must do yourself. Mere tantrums are a waste of energy, but similar behavior done with knowledge and clear intent can be very effective in opening doors for you. And it doesn't hurt to ask for permission; it just might be granted. Everything she asked for is eventually granted; as the Goblin King says, "I'm exhausted from living up to your expectations."

(Of course, that is precisely the sort of thing her step-mother and father might say, too, with as much truth, which isn't much on one level.)

There are, of course, the standard, obligatory fairy tale lessons. Help the beleaguered beast. Be polite to strange creatures. Don't give up, but don't be overconfident. Don't eat food from the underworld. Do be forgiving; sometimes the people who hurt you were forced into it.

As Jarath, the King of the Goblins, David Bowie comes off as peculiarly androgynous, despite his thoroughly male characterization and revealing tights. Maybe it's the hairdo. Still, as a goblin, he has some allowance for oddities of appearance. As the only really humanoid goblin, his appearance leads one to suspect that he may originally have been a stolen child. He even considers renaming the baby Jarath, after himself. Goblins are not known for either intelligence or organization; perhaps they are always ruled by changelings. In a song, Jarath refers to the child as "the babe with the power," which just may mean that Toby was picked as a target for having some latent magical talent; in the opening scene, Sarah was being watched by Jarath before she ever made the wish. Jarath himself is, in his own way, as poor a babysitter as Sarah; his way of making Toby stop crying is to do a rock song--which works--but he rather callously tosses Toby up about ten feet in the air and walks away, leaving it to a Goblin to catch him.





The song Jarath sings to distract the baby while he decides what magic to use includes a repeated line, "slap that baby, make him free." At first I thought that might be merely an indication of the general low level of Goblin child care, but my movie-going friend, Lynn Mims, came up with an historical source for it. In Rome, part of the ceremony for manumitting (freeing) a slave was to slap him. Part of the intended fate of the baby was to be turned into a Goblin. Slapping the baby, as a suggested magic spell, might, from a Goblin's point of view, be equivalent to setting him free by turning him into a Goblin and thus freeing him of human association. Also, the military slang for stealing something is "liberating" it. Other lines from the song have Jarath saying to a Goblin, "you remind me of the babe"--perhaps most of the Goblins were once stolen human infants. This relates to Sarah's early complaint of being treated like a slave. She was complaining of the fairly ordinary human obligations of belonging to a family. (Jarath says, "I can live within you" and offers to be Sarah's "slave" if she will fear and obey him--a truly paranoid situation and further evidence of the strength of the psychological interpretation.)

LABYRINTH is PG-13 which I fully agree with. Although I saw hordes of under-ten kids going into the theater, I also heard one kid screaming in terror at one point (the Bag of Stench scene), and there's no telling how many were being silently terrified. My original objection to a younger audience was the presence of a scene with Fireys (fire dancing Muppets representing the party-nimal type of Goblin) in which one of them plucks out his own eyes and replaces them. Yes, it's a fairly obviously non-human puppet, characterized as a Goblin--but there are a lot of really dumb kids, and I'd hate to have any attempts made to imitate that scene.

For those who worry about such things, three times in the movie a character swears. Twice, Sarah says "Damn" rather quietly. Once a friendly Goblin says "Damn you, Jarath, and damn me too," for good reason.

Most fantastic scene: the final confrontation in the heart of the castle. The estate of M. C. Escher is given thanks in the credits.

An alternative hypothesis for Jarath's origin may be in the music video ad for the movie; he is apparently an unsuccessful singer in

a seedy lounge, walks out, and is led by a Goblin into the Underground. That is a slightly less sad concept than the one that he is a stolen child who managed to survive long enough to take over, but who is terribly lonely and has no knowledge of how to be otherwise ("Lost and lonely, that's Underground"). However, the video is also showing Sarah's paranoid state of mind. TAMAR LINDSAY

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#### LEGEND VERSUS LABYRINTH

An obvious comparison to make. Both are fairy tales. Both have an underlying message that is really very modern.

LEGEND was entirely European-made. There is a story that certain expository sections were cut for the American release on the theory that Americans only want action, not understandable plot. LABYRINTH was as American-made as most modern movies with technical effects done in labs that could be anywhere, but happened to be in several countries.

LEGEND tells of a princess, or at least nobly born girl, who causes an imbalance between the forces of Light and Darkness by touching a creature of Light, the unicorn. As soon as she realizes the consequences of what she has done she knows she must restore the status quo, and begins her quest. In the course of it, she must also touch Darkness, at least briefly, to get the chance to restore the balance. She is aided by her peasant boyfriend and by his Elfin friends who can be seen as representing the lesser forces of the universe. Along the way, they gain the aid of a Dark elf, a gray-area being allied with Darkness. However, though the boyfriend and the faery folk are helpful in the final confrontation, the heroine must do certain things entirely alone and unsupported, winning solely because she is determined. She does successfully rescue the unicorn, which was the object of her quest. The boy and his friends have done the work that then makes it possible for them all to escape. The hero and heroine are openly described as knowing nothing of evil. They learn rather a lot about it in the course of the story, and become somewhat more adult by the end of the movie. They end with a betrothal, a ceremony of adulthood, and are last seen in a group with their Elfin friends.

LABYRINTH tells of a modern girl, an American "princess" which has come to mean someone who was not given a correct emotional upbringing, and then was given far too many material possessions--"spoiled"--as a poor sort of compensation. She has an inconsiderate step-mother and an ineffectual father, like most fairy tale children. Having no boyfriend, she has a fantasy of the Goblin King's having fallen in love with her. Frustrated by an unpleasant family scene and a crying baby, she has a temper tantrum and makes a foolish wish, which comes true. As soon as she realizes what she has done, she knows she must restore the status quo, and begins her quest to rescue her baby brother. She begins alone, but makes friends along the way. This is a somewhat purer form of the fairy tale, though sometimes fairy tale heroes begin with a companion. She wins her companions among the Goblins themselves and some other creatures who live in that reality without owing complete allegiance to the ruler--gray-area creatures. She ultimately must defeat the ruler by herself--her companions can only help her get there. Having won, the heroine is immediately transported home with the baby. At the end, she has learned the relative value of people and objects, and has willingly given up her attachments to childhood possessions for the sake of the baby, in reality as well as in the other realm. Although there is no betrothal ceremony to emphasize adulthood, she communicates with the friends she has made and they join her for a party in her room; having a party is a modern American ritual of adolescence, and she is last seen in a group with her non-human friends.

Neither opponent is defeated. Both of the opponents are cast out; Darkness goes spinning into the darkness between the stars, and the Goblin King is outside the house at night, looking in the window briefly, before returning to his realm.

The heroine in each case must triumph essentially alone, having gone into the center of the opponent's realm. They win by learning the rules and using them, and by exerting self-control. Each has a moment of giving in, from which each recovers. In LEGEND, the heroine is tempted by the false (and bizarre) glamour of Darkness (and the hero is also tempted by a faery glamour). In LABYRINTH, the Sleeping Beauty method is used--the heroine eats a magical fruit and falls into a hallucinatory dream of a bizarre masked ball--again, false

glamour and fine clothes, with the "mask over reality" symbolism made more obvious.

In each case, the protagonist must go into the center, meet and defeat (without destroying) an opponent who is attracted by the protagonist and gives her the chance to win because he is trying to win her. Both are risking having to stay in the other realm for eternity as playthings of the ruler.

The psychology of the form is essentially the same--the adolescent maturing by learning to take responsibility. In this psychological interpretation, the method I use is that of modern dream work: everything in the story, including the physical surroundings, is a part of the mind and inner character of the protagonist. For the general audience instead of one person's dream, they are available to be interpreted as a sort of group message or teaching for the intended audience--the teenagers who go to movies.

Though the messages seem very similar, there are some differences.

In LEGEND, the surface is Manichaeism, beneath which the imagery is of an Aristotelian universe, with equal and opposed forces, beneath which is a Modern Taoist universe in which the balance must be maintained, but it is not Good versus Evil but Light versus Darkness. After the heroine happens to be captured and is already in his realm, Darkness decides he wants to win her and tries relative subtlety instead of brute power. It is clear from the beginning that the most the heroine can try to do is rescue the unicorn; Darkness is indestructible. Darkness even tries to win her over by offering her his version of love. Beneath all that, one can find the psychological message of the headless adolescent who does not contemplate consequences, who must go within, conquer her own self-indulgent Id tendencies and be willing to lose all in the process, in order to mature.

In LABYRINTH, the surface is a European Fairy Tale of a confrontation with Goblins. The imagery involves a universe with opposed forces, of Human versus Faery, in which, however, the forces of faery do grant wishes that humans make. This places it in the universe of Consciousness, rather than Taoism. The opponent apparently tries to buy her off before she enters his realm and the game is more overt from the start, but the opponent's most overt

attempt to win her over begins nearer the climax than it does in LEGEND, and it is then that we see the real meaning of his earlier offer. The question of personal destruction never comes up--it is clear that she can retrieve the child if she can perform the task, and the Goblins will remain Goblins. The opponent is less obviously powerful, but he is correspondingly more dangerously seductive. He stops just short of the word "love," but he says he has done everything for her. The psychological message is that of the adolescent who did not realize that wishes come true, and who must go within, conquer her impulsiveness, and be willing to give up her jealous selfishness, material attachments, and unreal romance, to rescue her inner child, in order to mature.

The philosophical differences are potentially greater than the psychological similarities of message.

The European movie, LEGEND, has an essentially impersonal universe with balanced forces. Darkness is looking for any chance he can get to try to take over, even though he knows it isn't possible. Ill-considered human actions can upset the balance, give him his chance, and cause disaster. He has considerable power over humans. The universe requires balance, and individuals may be sacrificed to restore it. Human love is seen as valuable, almost excusing the behaviour that upsets the balance; however, when it seems that loss or love may be necessary to restore the balance, the forces (elves) are quite ready to sacrifice the heroine. In LEGEND she wins ultimately by lying, by apparently being won by Darkness in order to get close enough to the unicorn to save it. It is this deception that makes it seem as though she may have to be sacrificed.

The American movie, LABYRINTH, has a rather personal universe; the opponent's side has rather more apparent personal freedom for the individuals in it. The Goblin King is not apparently trying to take over the universe, he only wants new subjects. He doesn't steal by force, but by listening for and granting ill-considered wishes. Both Darkness and the Goblin King wanted the respective heroines to acknowledge them as ruler, with a promise (implied, in Darkness's case) of being given anything the heroine then asks for, except independence. The Goblin King makes the offer quite specifically: "Everything I have done, I have done for you. Fear me, do what I tell

you, and I will be your slave." If the heroine had accepted, she would have been in a pure paranoid situation. A classic paranoid schizophrenic is, at once, the King and the Lowest Slave of his universe. On this level, the Goblin King, as the inner animus and Id of the heroine, is actually trying to take over her universe. As a part of growing up, the heroines of both movies must learn of their own inner potential. In LABYRINTH she wins with a truth, that the Goblin King, in fact, has no power over her that she has not given him.

The European heroine must save her belief in innocence, represented by the unicorn, or become evil; the American heroine must save her inner child, her innocence, or go mad.

I suppose it is possible that the European production's attitude is partly shaped by their history of wars set off by rash individual acts. The American production would then be affected by our still firm belief that things really happen more on an individual level than on a global level. The European story requires rescue of a unicorn, an almost angelic being; the American story gives a baby the position of primary importance, and it isn't going to be deliberately slaughtered, it's "merely" going to be made non-human. The American story values human potential itself (represented by an infant, which is a bundle of undeveloped potential), enough to make it the subject of rescue.

SUMMARY: I liked LEGEND at the time. I like LABYRINTH even better. Given the choice, I'd take LABYRINTH.

But then, I'm American. TAMAR LINDSAY

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### THREE FACES OF TREK

#### STAR TREK, THE MOVIE.

What can you say about a sentient intelligence that is nigh unto omniscient and next best thing to omnipotent but has never managed to wipe off its nameplate?

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Oh boy! Now I've put my foot in it! Wrote a LoC describing myself as a media fan, that's what I did. Next day comes the fanzine HOLIER THAN THOU #17 in the mail. I read the lettercol and discover that the printed word is no longer considered a medium, and that I've in fact announced to the world that I run about the halls of cons breathing sturteously through a black helmet. Corpo da Bacco! What will become of my credibility?

Honest, folks, I love science fiction movies, but good ones. FORBIDDEN PLANET. 2001. GODZILLA VERSUS THE THING....nope! Goddammit, I'm serious. I've nominated this for a Balrog twice. You have to think of it as a fantasy movie or a fairy tale, and you have to see it in color, and in a theater. I think STARS TREK and WARS are very annoying, and I've seen the five movies a total of eight times.

I never go to cons because my mother thinks it will be a bad influence....er, because I'm an entertainer and work weekends. The only light sabers I carry come in a paper roll and as recently as 1968 still cost only 5c.

Sigh! No one believes me. The last good hope for my reputation is the following, and may it be scathing enough, review of STAR TREK 2.

This was not a bad show--for the matinee price. About like one of the few decent TV episodes. Double length, fancier production, and the characters get a bit more depth. They've dared to make Kirk almost human. He deals with aging, wears spectacles to read, and, by God!, turns up an illegitimate son resultant from a long ago ST episode.. Spock is pretty tame, this time, but as Leonard Nimoy gets older and apparently uglier, Spock looks more and more alien. I say some character is creeping into the show.

But then, there was the plot.

Look, since this is going to go on in the new medium (they've let us know that by a change in the intro,

which is now the extra, "These are the continuing voyages....") that I think it is time for STAR TREK to grow up. The production values are fine if you don't go in for nit-picking the way I do. Then there's this cast of characters we've become comfortable with, and who even show signs at this late date, or new evolution, of becoming interesting. So there's a vehicle for some science fiction, and all Roddenberry, or whoever is responsible for this one, can find to do is, "A megalomaniac superman gets hold of a terrible weapon but Kirk ego-traps him into destruction and the crew jury rig the damaged Enterprise just in time to escape the explosion." Yark! There must be fifty of these back in the video cans from the 60s, and fifty more of "A mysterious force in the form of (check one): a giant hand, an amorphous cloud, a bald alien in a toga, a beautiful woman, a disembodied voice with a Shakespearean accent, takes over the Enterprise...." Why waste any more time with this tripe?

I'll tell you something. I never liked STAR TREK. It was that it was the only game in this quadrant. I mean, LOST IN SPACE? It was almost always dull, like I've just been talking about, but it doesn't have to stay that way now.

The movies work. The money's there, and I haven't heard anything about the second's being an overpriced fiasco as I did about the first. So they're getting ahold of the production and the form, and they could do anything they want to. Are you listening, Mr. Roddenberry?

Twenty years ago I read an explanation of why written SF was so much better than filmed SF. "Writers can freely describe galactic empires, space wars, planetary vistas, hyperspace, but that stuff just can't be done on the screen..." True then. Not true any more. Effects go up by a magnitude every six months, it seems. You can get it onto the screen now, you can. I think Roddenberry ought to comb through the literature from back when the paperbacks cost 35c, and find some ambitious adventures for the Enterprise crew.

Meanwhile, of course, how could I be so unfair? Of course the story was different from all the rest. They killed off Spock.

Well, sorry folks. I just wasn't emotionally convinced by his demise, and neither should you be. When they run a series as long as they have this, and get out of endless engine room failures and varied

scraps, through one bit of timely scripting....er, I mean ingenuity or another, and established that no one central over buys the farm, and then they want to knock off one of those central characters, I say they have to work hard for it. I mean, the circumstances have to be unprecedented, the heroics magnificent. Look at El Cid, for example. His greatest feat was performed by his corpse and his legend after his death.

Spock's demise here is, what you could call, weakly engineered. He goes into the irradiated engine room and does something to supply power so the Enterprise can get away from an explosion scheduled to happen in four minutes. Have we heard this dramatic device somewhere? He's got to do it because a human couldn't withstand the radiation long enough, see? Right! We're in the 23rd century, with FIL, matter transmission, hardware up the wazoo, software down the bazanga, and we don't have a suit of radiation armor at the engine room, or Wados, or a robot, for Christ's sake. No. Spock has got to go in there and reach into some blazing reactor whtsit with his bare...excuse me, gloved hands and fiddle the wires personally. What a guy. Pfooy.

Since the script cannot support Spock's death we must assume other circumstances, such as Nimoy's being sick and tired of the role. But don't you believe it anyway. At the end of the flick the coffin lies in a gorgeous Eden awaiting ST 3, currently in production with Nimoy directing on a closed set and mum the word and the title THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK. If viewer demand doesn't resurrect him, Paramount bucks will.

Final snips. They used a different Vulcan dialect this time, folks. I could tell because it annoyed me in ST 1 that a simple syllable for syllable substitution was employed. "Whndryaknow?" comes out "vidalnhop?" including interrogative inflection. This time it really sounded like Russian.

As usual, this episode was filled with horrible astronomy but nobody cares. And did you ever wonder what people do while they're in beam? I can't answer definitively but at one point what'shername emerged with her lipstick noticeably freshened. Any time you want to hire me for a continuity editor, Gene....

----STAR TREK 3, THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK

Let's get in a few words about #3 for symmetry or completism or something.

I liked it. It's a pretty movie. The film making seems of higher quality than before. It was a pleasure just to watch the dramatic lighting in the two-shots. Perhaps they should keep having Nimoy direct.

Speaking of which, one realizes that they planned Spock's death and resurrection long ago. It is pointed out to us in flashback that Spock parked his personality in McCoy's mind back there in STAR TREK 2. Under our very noses, had we but known Vulcans could do that.

The Nimoy directorship was part of the plan, giving away as it did nothing at all by having him on the set each day. Sneaky sons o'guns. Well, they successfully raised a furor.

Of course, the actors in the afore-touted two-shots were still talking about the same old stuff. This one is just another story about the crew's interrelationships, paced with a couple more space battles, and yet another hand-to-hand Kirk to Klingon duke it out.

Let me make this one thing perfectly, er, let me make this clear. STAR TREK is still being written and produced on the level of television where, unfortunately, a little hoked up emotionalism, Dr. McCoy's being moved enough to call the captain by his first name, and a plastic monster or a mad sociologist or a martinet space captain are sufficient to hold the kids from one commercial to the next. It is not being produced up to the potential of the movie medium. The crew and ship and Star Fleet and all that background make a good framework, but by now that is all they can make. They have been milked, skimmed, condensed, powdered, separated, homogenized, ultra-pasteurized, and made into cheese. And STAR TREK 3 with the whole entire mind boggling unthinkable universe at its disposal, can only tell us for the 31st time that Spock's friends care about him. It shows us no great wonders, or fate-rattling monsters, nor boundary stretching adventures. And believe you me, as Sheriff John used to say, in this it is running behind STAR WARS and RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK and ALIEN and so help me, ET, and in some sense even DOCTOR WHO. And it is positively in mortal danger of being lapped by FORBIDDEN PLANET.

Gene! Are you listening, Gene? Send the Enterprise on an adventure. I'll lend you my copy of Voyage of the Space Beagle.

Do I froth at the mouth? Sorry. I still enjoyed the picture. They're creeping up on higher quality content in their TV sized pond. Kirk actually did the Klingon in at the end of the hand-to-hand. Didn't strictly have to, either. Wanted to. Thank God!

The powers in charge have got ahold of the truth, that to make real drama, people eventually must be mortal. All the Klingons can't be given quarter, nor all the good guys ride into the sunset.

They jolly well can't knock off any of the main characters. I wouldn't want them to. But they introduced Kirk's son last time out and killed him this time, and that was meaningful enough.

And, Roddenberry can't send the Enterprise on an adventure next time. Nor anywhere. Kirk--this is not easy to say--in one last tricky desperate escape in reverse, Kirk and Scotty, and was it Sulu, speak a never before heard sequence into the computer, beam out of there as Klingons beam aboard, and actually and irrevocably blow the good and faithful old lady up.

The finest moment in the flick is the starship's stately fiery descent, induced by no known law of physics, out of orbit into the pastel upper atmosphere of the Genesis Planet while Kirk laments below. This and the death of Kirk's son are suspension of disbelief trade-offs for the makers having pulled a live Spock out of their, er, ear.

The adventure will continue in a new ship, just as soon as Mr. Scott unscrambles the wiring he had to sabotage in this episode. She has super duper warp drive or something. I think she is called the Excelsior. They're sure to send her packing right out of the galaxy in ST 4, away and beyond, into some real adventures. Perhaps Kirk and Spock will have an argument. DENNIS D'ASARO

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THE FLIGHT OF THE NAVIGATOR, from the Disney studios, is a genuine Good Movie For Kids. The 11 year old girl and the 9 year old girl enjoyed it. The 4 year old boy only had to go out for a drink of water four times, mostly from boredom when things were over his head. The story is very straightforward, with no subplots at all. The action that is shown takes place entirely on and around the Earth, although the story includes the off-screen fact that

the boy has left the planet. The plot combines the story of "the boy who came home" and his parents were gone" with the story of "the boy who found a spaceship and got to fly it". There is a vestigial subplot, actually, in the story of "NASA found a starship and didn't get to fly it, but they did figure out where the kid was". It is a science fiction, based on the film dilution effects of faster than light space travel. That being a fairly heavy concept for an audience of American children. The

decision not to include any confusing subplot was justified. The actual action of the movie combines a certain type of childhood fear with a certain type of childhood dream: the fear that your parents will move away when your back is turned, and the flying dream. There is a hook for a potential sequel, but none is required. It is not a sticky-sweet movie. Adults should not be bored. (An adult who is bored will be required to watch FRIDAY THE 13TH, part II to the 1000th, with an avid 13 year old.) TAMAR LINDSAY

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BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA is a comedy adventure fantasy with magic. No, not Jedi-style psychic training-magic.

The basic plot is Trucker Meets Girl, Girl Is Kidnapped, Trucker Rescues Girl. It's faintly Lancelot-like in that he does not marry the girl at the end, but there the resemblance ends.

It is rated PG-13 for violence and the idea of white slavery, and the brief side semi-nudity of one female minor character.

The comedy element is very strong. The producer parodies trucker movies, Kung Fu movies, adventure movies, ghost movies, "downton girl reporter/lawyer" movies, buddy movies, and yellow peril movies.

The action is non-stop and I only began to get bored when some of the martial arts got too long. (I don't consider martial arts action unless it directly advances the plot. Like most songs and romance, too much slows the movie down.) There is plenty of fighting and killing, but so nearly bloodless (visually) that it didn't really bother me, especially since the PG-13 rating should warn parents to keep the little ones away. The assorted traps and mummified corpses could cause a few nightmares.

Yes, there is a dauntless female

lawyer, and a dauntless female reporter, and a dauntless female Chinese bride, and a buddy, and a trucker, and a whole lot of martial arts stunt men, some of whom are female. On the whole, except for the cat house scene, the female role models are pretty good.

It's a typical 90 minute length. I had to see the 7:30 pm show, because the only cinema that is showing it only shows it then. The audience was quite small, though that is understandable on a Wednesday night.

I came out, got in the car, and started laughing like Woody Woodpecker with a touch of Renfield. This went on for about ten minutes, while I drove to the gas station. Bursts of uncontrollable laughter continued for another five minutes. This doesn't normally happen to me.

I didn't like the end, really. The hero has an option on the girl, but he says he'll have to think about it. That might have been OK, if only because it leaves room for a sequel with a different female lead, but they did the old disaster movie number of having one last kick. Yes, it's something that wasn't taken care of, but it could have been taken care of very easily had the producer so chosen. I still don't like it.

Nevertheless, I loved the movie.

The end credits have a song on the soundtrack for the obligatory music video advertisement. The movie has no songs in it all.

The credits apparently have a typo also. Unless there's a record company called Engine, the album is from Enigma records. TAMAR LINUSAY

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#### THE SWORD AND THE SORCERER

This movie is gory. The acting is bad. The sorcerer is ugly. The plot is stupid. The princess is a twelve.

What? A few details? OK. Mostly, this is a waste of your time. The plot is so stupid and the acting so bad--have you ever seen a movie where the acting was all bad? I mean 100%? I mean, everybody?

Well, we'll give George Maharis, one of the villains a 6...no, a 5. But nobody else gets even a 2. Honest.

Most of the movie is comprised of idiotic running around and skirmishing. Badly choreographed skirmishing, at that. Where is Run Run Shaw when you need him? This is a rotten movie.

But, does it have any redeeming grossouts, er, graces? Yes, actually, about three, not even counting the princess. For one, it opens with a By God! horrendous scene. Torches in the spooky cave, bleeding faces in the stone, and the scuzziest sorcerer you'll ever cross, raised from the dead to perform a telekinetic disembowelment of the witch who waked him. But if you like that sort of thing, and I rather do, you can go out for a hot dog, a cup of coffee, a newspaper, a phone call, and a shoe shine before it happens again. How a flick can go from people waving handfuls of actual liver or whatever, to 1951 Crusades movie coy off-screen violence (sword descends, cut to face of horrified onlooker, as soundtrack goes "kachunk," long shot of body on ground) is beyond me. And then back again for one humungous shape changing scene at the end. Oy vah! That final scene is the hair raising third saving grace. The second, well you must see what you think.

I myself was sitting in the theater feeling abnoxious and bored when, sometime in the middle of the show, the hero, Talin, leads his band of mercenaries through the sewers to the dungeon to rescue the prince. The mercenaries camp by the entrance where they are immediately apprehended by the palace guards.

Talin has gone on alone. He encounters a guard with a sword and punches him. He encounters a guard with a knife and punches him. He encounters a guard with an ax and punches him. He encounters...you get the idea. OK, OK, he has a steel gauntlet, but if you want to see a sword fight in this movie, don't hold your breath. You'll turn blue. Somehow, a scene comes to mind from SANDERKAN THE GREAT. Steve Reeves, with all his muscles which he is putting to no good use, running back and forth carrying a ridiculously small revolver, which he never fires.

Talin makes it to the dungeon door and knocks. Knocks? When the guard sticks his head out--the guard sticks his head out?--Talin grabs him by the throat and forces an entrance. Then, with one punch he knocks out all three guards. Really. He finds his men, who have during their incarceration (30 minutes) learned several important pieces of information. Talin lets

out that little mouse, well a lollypop if you can identify that illusion. He lets out all the prisoners. They kneel at his feet but he says something democratic and they get up again. Then up comes the eldest prisoner, who just happens to be the palace architect and knows where all the secret passages are. Talin goes and rescues the prince, who is already being rescued anyway by the king's concubine. They pack the prince off by way of the sewers, but Talin and his men set off to fight their way out of the palace. Why? Talin finally draws a sword but it is knocked out of his hand directly, so he goes back to punching guardsmen. They're coming at him with most of the edged weapons known to the medieval world. They don't lay a one on him. He keeps ducking. They never adjust. The fight races down the corridors and into the harem. Onto the harem, actually. Liver and bedroom slapstick all in the same movie? Oh yes! A few more punches, now how can you not be enjoying this, and who should Talin see but the princess. And boy, is he

flabbergasted. I told you she was 12. This gives three guards, can it be the three from the dungeon, time to get in one triple blow, but none of these guards has the sword, see, and knock Talin out a window.

"Yaannnnnnh" he says for a count of about four.  $H = 1/2 g t$  squared = 256 ft. He falls through a roof, and lands on a sack of grain, runs out a door, down a path, and into 50 of the king's guards. Wups! Back up the path, 50 more guards. Talin halts. Guards close in. Is this it?

Talin assesses his chances, looks determined, and, you guessed it, begins to put up his dukes. But, out of the crowd steps the oily old king who, thinking Talin is the resurrected sorcerer in disguise, and with profligate disregard for his own liver, challenges the hero to a sword fight. This, however, is not the sword fight I promised earlier, for after exactly two parries Talin's sword is knocked away, again. This happens twice more during the picture.

He runs for the upper path where the fifty guards have somehow become five. He punches three, stabs two with a snatched sword, and finally gets away, re-encounters the king, fights him in a wading pool for about three minutes, and is knocked unconscious by the king's henchman, who might as well have stuck him with a sword, but this is only the middle of the third reel.



Well, friends, by this time in the flicker I wasn't bored any more. Incredulous, perhaps, but not bored. Was loosened up, had cut free with a few snickers, was ready for better things if only the screen would serve them up. And sure enough, after just the right few seconds to breathe, we cut to the mercenaries.

Remember the mercenaries? How did they get out of the palace? Who knows. Who cares? Now they're in a brothel. One of them keeps trying to pay attention to his whore, but another of the soldiers (remember W. C. Fields and the three foot long French bread? That's what they're trying to do.) keeps interrupting because his conscience is bothering him. Talin is due to be executed at the banquet/wedding/assassination tonight, and shouldn't they really go save him, instead of having a good time?

And folks, I got to say that the next six or eight minutes involving the inept mercenaries, the politically conscious whores, a handy band of corsairs, their chief, the roughest, toughest son of a bitch on the seven seas, howlingly and not probably according to script, delivering all his lines with the flittiest demeanor to hit the screen since the dance ensemble sequence from BLAZING SADDLES, and the ominous dungeon keeper, pitched me into such fits of giggles that I embarrassed my date.

Yes, boys and girls, either I have some tremendously esoteric sense of the absurd, or else we might have here a specimen of that rare and wonderful phylum, the movie that is so bad that it is good. Tell you what. Don't plan your evening around it, but if you can catch this buzzard on the rebound for 99c, or at the drive-in on a double bill with DRAGONSLAYER, or on BHT or BTU or EMOC or whatever it's called, there might be a laugh in it. Or a liver. And there's going to be a sequel. DENNIS D'ASARO

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#### BLOOD SUCKERS FROM OUTER SPACE

I wasn't expecting much from this Texas made low budget film. Was I surprized. If this movie ever gets marketed properly it could be the AIRPLANE of horror spoof comedies. Looking back on the pathetic attempts at such films in the past, one almost got the impression these types of films just weren't supposed to be good. After people see what can be done with no money but lots of talent their standards will never be lowered again.

NIEKAS 35:56

The film opens with a farmer going through his daily routine. As darkness approaches a sudden gust of wind blows in, and the next thing you know the farmer is spitting up blood like a gushing oil well. He collapses and is transformed into a makeup reject from DAWN OF THE DEAD.

Cut to a country road where police officers survey the scene of a gruesome murder. When an onlooker asks what killed them an officer replies "They have been sucked." With that he tosses a few greasy ribs onto the corpse as he drives off.

We are slowly introduced to Jeff, the nominal hero, and his new lady friend, Julie. Jeff is having trouble with his foster parents. They want him to stay on the farm but Jeff has his sights on being a photographer. Before long Jeff's parents become blood suckers and attack the young couple. Fortunately they escape and begin a trek to find Jeff's brother, who just happens to be a scientist at the local research center.

At the center the scientists have Jeff's brother tied down and are studying him because he's become one of the blood suckers. By this time the army has gotten wind (bad pun, I know) of the situation and dispatched General Sanders to deal with the problem. His simple solution is to "nuka 'em!" He obtains permission from the president (Pat Paulsen) and accidentally nukes a Methodist retreat.

Meanwhile Jeff discovers that the only way to defeat the invisible creatures during an attack is through the intake of nitrous oxide (Julie always carries a tank in her car). Unfortunately the blood suckers are rapidly becoming a majority as the film comes to an end.

OK, that doesn't sound too hilarious but as in AIRPLANE there is a lot going on in the background. There are ample amounts of nudity and several gory murders for the R rated crowd. When Jeff's father becomes a zombie and is about to attack Jeff they go into a hilarious kung-fu battle. Later on, when Jeff is battling a zombie cop, another kung-fu fight begins. By this time Julie has had enough and remarks, "Oh, not another gratuitous kung-fu scene." Where else would you find a zombie remark "You cut my fucking arm off" right after the gruesome action takes place? Also a group of zombies are run over by a car and their reaction to the culprit, as he speeds off, is to, in unison, shoot him the finger. Finally there is

the scene at the research center where the scientists are trying to get a zombie to talk and all it's doing is grunting and growling. So one of the scientists remarks, "I think it's time to give it a barium enema." Instantly the zombie becomes rational and begins to talk quite coherently.

All in all, this is a funny, well made film. CRAIG LOUBETIER

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EDITOR'S NOTE: See note at end of "Review & Comment"--as with back reviews, so also with film reviews.

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#### REVIEW & COMMENT, continued:

are much more valuable, as are reviews by regular contributors to NIEKAS (like Anne Braude) whose views are already known. And has anyone published a better review than Anne's of Heinlein's *Job*? a few issues back? ED MESKYS

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#### LAISKAI, continued:

there are stories by him where I could never get past the first few pages. I seem to recall his short stories in FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION years ago and that I did enjoy nearly all of them. I guess that as the years went by and his life style took him over he seems to have become totally self indulgent in a writerly sense, and one either likes it or one doesn't. Much of the time I just didn't care for it. But he was an interesting man and it is sad that he should have died so young.

I wish a lot of luck to your associate Fred Lerner who is achieving some of his ambitions, and I certainly wish all the best to Harry Andruschak. I hadn't realized that he had had an alcohol problem. He certainly isn't alone, even in the fantasy field, and certainly he should be encouraged by the success of some of our others. Harry has always been an exemplary writer in the scientific aspect of fandom and I hope he continues free of the demon rum.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: MAXIN JAKUBOWSKI (I particularly enjoyed the material on P K Dick), KENNETH JERNIGAN (With the publication of NIEKAS you have, in my opinion, made a real contribution to the field), NAN C. SCOTT (I've enjoyed what I've read of the new NIEKAS so far), VERA CHAPMAN (I am always glad to receive NIEKAS. By the way, I am also very glad to know the meaning of the name. May all the Gods of the British race give you their special protection), ALEXANDER YUDENITSCH, WAYNE FORDMAN, NICK & AUDREY SHEARS.

