



NO
15

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Brag Dept: stories, "A Board in the Other Direction" F&SF January 1974, "Coricopat's Demonstration of the Truth," Cats Magazine November 1973 (85¢?, PO Box 83048 Lincoln NE 68501); poems: "Defining Terms" and "Memorable Night," winter 1973 Windless Orchard (\$1, Purdue U. Ft. Wayne IN 46805); "Unmoved Sunflower" Fall 1973 Amanuensis (\$1, English Dept OT 1215 U. of Kentucky Lexington KY 40506); "For Douglas Rain, in Ontario," November 1973 Toronto Life.

((Back when No was still Nous, Len Bailes did most of a parody of Gilbert and Sullivan's "Gondoliers." It always seemed a pity to me that he didn't get round to finishing it. So, with apologies to Len, here is:))

The Gondoliers
Part II
by Ruth Berman

cast:

Roneo and Rex Rotary: faanish publishers
Serconio, Jophan, and Meyer: fakefans
Abscissa, Ditto, Tessa, and Fendetta: femmefans
Duke of Fanheimstrasse: a BNF
Duchess of Fanheimstrasse: his wife
Obliterine: their daughter
Grand Administrator: a Secret Master of Fandom -- the previous
TAFF winner
Chorus of Femmes and Fakefans

argument: All the Femmefans love Roneo and Rex Rotary, trufans extraordinary. They decide to marry any two femmefans whose mss. they can read, resulting in the engagements of Roneo and Fendetta, Rex Rotary and Tessa. Enter the Duke and Duchess with lots of stuff to huckster. Their daughter is pledged to wed the TAFF winner. The Grand Administrator tells them that the winner is either Rex or Roneo. Meanwhile, the two couples and chorus are celebrating.

song - Tessa

TESSA: When a pretty femmefan's printed,
Sorrow breaks and joy is splinted,
Every typo turns to wit;
In their spaces, illos fit.
Editor and editee kiss,
Find that they do both agree: bliss
Is in marriage that is meet
(He will crank and she'll slipsheet).
When you print a pretty femmefan
I assure you without flimflam
Ev'ry loc you may receive
Is profound and also terse.
Ev'ry op'ning you may leave
Fills with lino or with verse.

CHORUS: Fear not critic's blast nor BEM
When you print a pretty femme!

REX: And now our fanning's going to begin in real earnest. One editor can only do so much -- but two co-editors! (Especially if one of them takes care of the housework --)

TESSA: We'll coedit the housework, darling.

RON: Fanac is whatever two fans do together. Why didn't we start earlier?

FENDETTA: You were waiting for a woman with a cousin in envelope manufacturing.

(enter the Grand Administrator)

GRAND AD: Good morning.

REX: If this gentleman is going to tell us we can't sit here, it's a bad omen.

GRAND AD: I take it the Dum-dum is meeting here?

RON: No, they're down the hall. This is the engagement party.

GRAND AD: Somebody getting married, eh?

REX, RON, TESSA, FENDETTA: Yes, we are!

GRAND AD: But miroscoe! how extremely awkward.

FENDETTA: You don't mind, I suppose?

TESSA: You weren't thinking of either of us for a permanent co-editor, I presume? Oh, Rex, look at him -- he was.

REX: My dear fellow, there are plenty of femmefans at the con. You don't have to be a bnf or anything.

GRAND AD: I don't think you know who I am.

REX: No, but we're all very informal at Midwescons. None of your silly Knights of St. Fantony rankings or anything like that.

RON: Unless you count the Anachronists.

REX: No, they can't count past 1650. We're all equals here.

GRAND AD: One of you may be, but the other is this year's TAFF winner.

TESS & FEN: What!

REX & RON (drawing apart): Well, that's true, of course, but --

GRAND AD (as if leaving): But, of course, if you're all equals here --

TESS & FEN: Don't go!

REX: We are all equals! But some are more equal than others. I read it in a science fiction book.

RON: You did what?

REX: Well, not really sf. More an anti-Utopia, as you might say.

GRAND AD: Dystopia.

RON: Haven't read him. Anyway, a TAFF winner can do a great deal of faanish good -- if he knows how to treat others like equals.

GRAND AD: Then we'll consider it settled. Now, as a number of ill-advised neo's are running around claiming fraud in the voting, I think it advisable that you start acting jointly as winner.

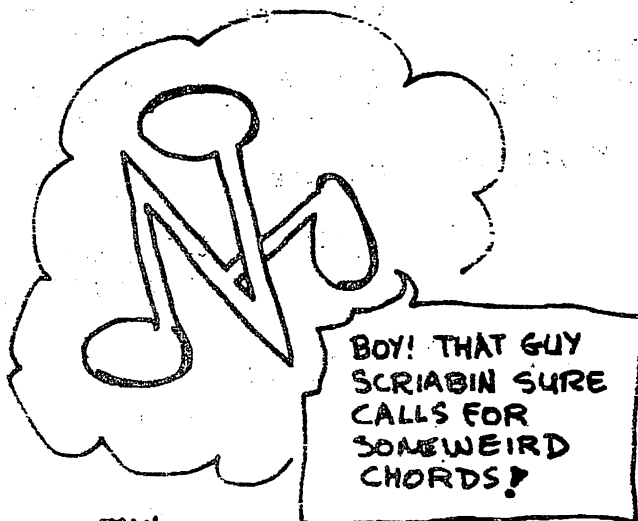
RON: You mean like co-chairmen?

GRAND AD: More like a hive mind.

REX (linking himself arm over shoulder with Ron): Like this?

GRAND AD (dubiously): Something like that.

RON: And we'll sit at the head table at the banquet?



GRAND AD: Of course. You're the Fan Guest of Honor.

REX: I'm convinced!

TESSA: Wonderful! We can wear our best dresses --

FENDETTA: And get our names in all the con reports --

GRAND AD: I, ah, don't think there'll be room at the head table for your ladies.

REX: What, and separate us!...

GRAND AD (aside): This is very awkward! (aloud) Only for dinner. There aren't that many chairs, I'm afraid. The Fan Guest of Honor is not usually a two-seater. And afterwards....

RON, REX, FEN, TESS: Yes, afterwards!

song - quartet

FENDETTA: Then one of you will speak for TAFF
 And fly to a foreign shore,
 With lodging free
 And a spot of tea
 From big-name-fans and more!
 And with courtesy at our jokes they'll laugh,
 Or at the least will smile;
 That's only fair
 When guests come there,
 Across so many a mile.

ALL: Oh, 'tis a glory by none denied
 To be a Taffman's bride,
 No common-law affair half-plied (No law affair half-plied),
 But a lucid, lady-like legal bride.

RON: We'll ride around on the Underground
 Take tea in the afternoon,
 And we'll have a blast
 With the future and past
 All under an English moon.
 It adds quite a fillip when you've found
 Millenial history
 Surrounding you
 As you go through
 A fannish "Space Odyssey."

ALL: Oh, 'tis a glory by none denied (etc.)

TESSA: We'll study the fannish foreign ways
 And learn just how to snog.
 With handsome fans
 And a-li-ans,
 I'm sure I will be agog.
 At flirting I'll win admiring praise
 (For foreign flirting's best).
 Already I know
 It's a lovely show
 (When we go I'll learn the rest).

(The two fiancés register alarm.)

ALL: Oh, 'tis a glory by none denied (etc.)

REX: A Taffman's an ambassador.
 He brings with himself goodwill.
 If his wife is base
 A dire disgrace
 Humiliates all of his skill.
 But if he and she know just how to score
 With cross-cultured address,
 Then everyone
 Will say: What fun,
 Their trek is a huge success.

ALL: Oh, 'tis a glory by none denied
 To be a Taffman's bride,
 No common-law affair half-plied
 But a lucid, lady-like legal bride.

(Exeunt.)

(A change of scene to the hotel bar. Ron and Rex discovered in one chair at one table, dozing. Enter Grand Administer.)

GRAND AD: Well, here you are.

RON & REX: Yes, here I am.

GRAND AD: May I ask what the devil you're doing?

RON: A couple of neos wanted to buy the TAFFwinner a drink --

REX: So we let them.

GRAND AD: A drink?

RON: A drink -- but the sixth neo.

REX: Fans are hospitable to a fault.

RON & REX: And we have lots of faults.

GRAND AD: Ooog!

RON: And then the con committee was meeting in here for a while to discuss what to do about the pro who can't get here in time to head the panel he was going to, so they want to ask one of the panel to head it, but if they do that it might offend the others, so --

GRAND AD: Yes, yes. What's that got to do with you?

REX: They thought we might be able to offer a suggestion --

RON: -- being fannishly experienced, as a TAFFwinner must be

REX & RON: -- and we did!

GRAND AD: You did?

REX: We did. We told them to invite you to lead the panel.

GRAND AD: (sarcastically) Thank you. You're being helpful, aren't you!

RON: Of course.

REX: It's only fair. (sings.)

Rising early by con standards
We observe it's 12 o'clock.
Then we practice on our fan words
To be used to write a loc.

RON (aside): Loc.

GRAND AD (aside): Ellosee, idiot.

REX: We embark without delay
On the fanac of the day.
First we sharpen up our penicils
And we dummy up some stencils
And make sure our corflu hasn't turned to crud.
Then we clean keys on our typer
And get nasty as a viper
As we read a zine that really was a dud.
Then we go review it for some other zines
(Locus, Granfalloon, and N3F's Tightbeams),
With the usual "lousy repro and it's late!"
It's not even worth the time it takes to hate."

After that we're feeling cloddish
 So we calm down with a Schottische
 (Ethel Lindsay has a sanity that brightens up the soul),
 Write some letters to the Glicksohns
 Praising Anderson's and Dickson's
 Earthman's Burden (how we wish they had new Hokus in
 the hole).

Then we fear we are too fannish
 So we read sf to banish
 Our anxiety of losing touch and getting out of date:
 There's a Silverberg to swallow,
 An anthology to follow
 (Knight or Gerrold, Elwood, Ellison, they come out in
 a spate).

Oh, we fannishly declaim
 That our fanac is the game,
 That to read and publish faanish zines is measurelessly
 great.

But although we feel like Ingve
 To be truthful we must sing: we
 Really like to read anthologies that come out in a
 spate.

CHORUS OF DRUNKEN FANS FROM BEHIND THE BAR: Oh, we fannishly etc.

GRAND AD: Yes, yes, yes, that's all very well -- in moderation,
 of course -- preferably in extreme moderation -- but
 what's this about your introducing the entire audi-
 torium at the Introduction of Notables?

RON: It's part of our belief that all fans are noteworthy.

REX: Q.E.D.

GRAND AD: Gesundheit. My poor fellows, I respect your
 idealism, but it's been done before.

RON & REX: It has?

GRAND AD: Certainly. You didn't think you were original, did
 you?

song - Grand Administrator, Rex & Ron
 GRAND AD: There lived a BNF I'm told
 In the wonder-working days of old
 When fans all s-t-f extolled
 And even read it, partly.
 He had no feuds in any club
 Whene'er a fanzine he did pub
 He charged the very lowest sub
 And sent it out quite smartly.
 And when he got his egoboo
 It filled his heart with grief and grue
 That crudzines could not be good, too,
 Instead of being shoddy.

REX & RON: -ing shoddy, Instead of being shoddy.

GRAND AD: He wished all fans well known as he
(And he was well known as could be)
So at the top, he did decree
Polls should list ev'rybody.

REX & RON: Now that's the BNF for me
He wished all fans well known as he,
So at the top he did decree
Polls should list ev'rybody.

GRAND AD: The Hugo rockets came in droves,
Fen burbled like the borogoves.
Prize-winning costumes were plain clothes.
The art shows had no losers.
Reviewers who dared criticize
A zine or fan he'd ostracize.
He said that all complaints were lies,
For fans were good straight through, sirs.
And pretty soon he lost his train
(For all fans sometimes will complain
Of other fans and call them vain
Or dumb or vague or random).

RON & REX: Or random, and call them vague or random.

GRAND AD: And so by making friends of fen
He drove all women and all men
To gafiate in flocks -- and then
We hadn't any fandom.

RON & REX: Now that's a fact that we must grok:
They gafiated in a flock

ALL: When one must praise and never knock,
Out goes the fun of fandom.

RON: That seems an unduly cynical conclusion, sir.

GRAND AD: You should talk. Do you read your own fanzine review
columns?

REX: He makes Coulson sound kindly.

RON: That wasn't a nice thing to say.

GRAND AD: Precisely! Now you apologize --

REX: Sorry, old fellow.

RON: Quite all right.

(Exeunt Rex and Ron arm in arm, calling "Tessa," "Fendetta")

GRAND AD: -- and go off the best of friends. Isn't that so...?
Oh. Come back! I haven't explained about your wife!

Oh, dear, I can see this is going to be difficult. I never should have agreed to Their Graces' bargain. Still, I don't know if there'd've been enough votes to send either of those idiots across the water on his own without Their Graces' puffing the proceedings. But here come Their Graces! (He starts to face up to meeting them, then decides he just can't.) No, I'd better tell her husband first.

(He hurries off after Rex and Ron. Enter Duke, Duchess, Obliterine.)

OBLIT: Well, I still don't like the idea. My only hope is that when my husband-to-be -- whoever he is -- finds out what a bunch of talky little blaggards we are he'll disappear. (Aside) Literally, I hope.

DUKE: Little blaggard? Me? Young lady, I am a chip off the old Bloch.

DUCHESS: Talky, maybe.

DUKE: My love!

(Here, if desired, to cheer their daughter, they may put on Bloch and Tucker masks and perform Bruce Pelz's version of "Replying We Sing...As I Find I'm a King," from his Filksong Manual #1.)

(Enter Grand Administrator, shepherding Ron and Rex.)

RON: But I don't want to --

REX: But I can't possibly --

BOTH (seeing Obliterine): No offense, Obby.

OBLITERINE: None.

RON: But the fact is --

REX: -- we're madly in love --

(Obliterine looks startled.)

RON: -- with Fendetta --

REX: -- and Tessa.

OBLITERINE: Oh. Well, that's good.

RON & REX: It is?

OBLITERINE: Of course. I want that trip to Europe my parents promised me, but I don't want to marry you. (turns so that her parents won't hear her) I have interests of my own, after all.

RON (sings): Here's a how-de-do. If I marry you --

RON (stopping him): Wrong operetta.

RON: Sorry. But what are we to do?

(All sigh, and gloom descends. Enter Tessa and Fendetta, dragging the TELLER.)

TESSA & FENDETTA: We found him!

GRAND AD: Mighty Pthallo! Where was he? I looked in all the bars.

TESSA: He forgot his name badge, and the guards wouldn't let him into the convention.

FENDETTA: So then we scoured the bars and found a committee member to make him a duplicate. Now, tell us, Teller--

TESSA: Which of us goes to Europe?

RON & REX: Yes, which one?

ALL: Which one?!

TELLER: Neither one.

ALL: What?!

TELLER: Neither one. The fannish vote split equally between you, and the sercon vote, being opposed to you both because you're ultra-faanish, and the First Fandom vote being opposed to you because you don't come from an ancient fannish family, and the women being opposed to you as male chauvinists -- a write-in candidate got the majority. (Consternation. The Teller hushes them to announce:) Obliterine won.

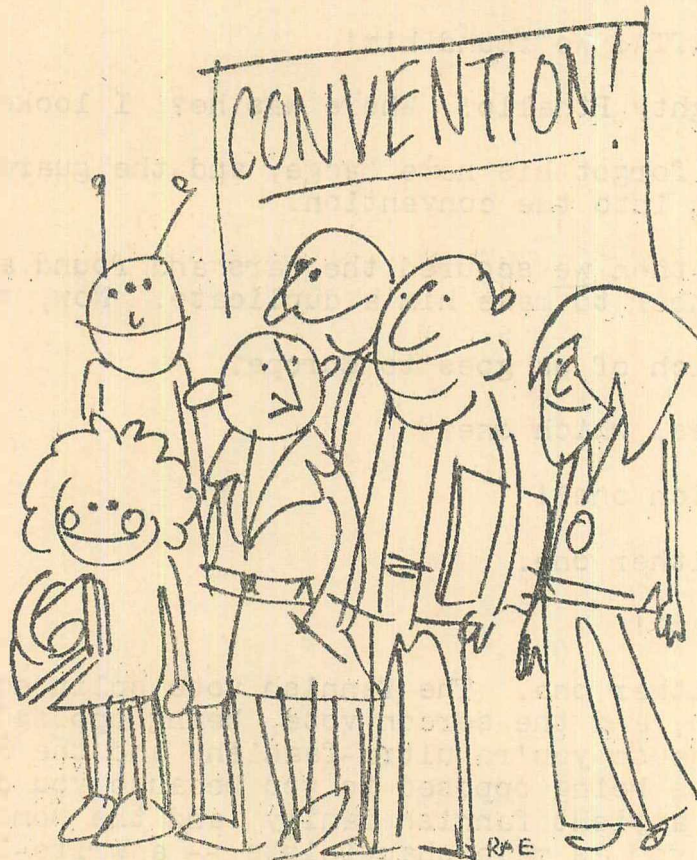
(Obliterine flings out her arms, and the Teller runs to her. They embrace. Rex and Ron look suspicious and start to object, then shrug and begin to sing.)

REX & RON:

Once more ultra-fannish
With no wants Britainnish
We'll work on our annish,
Our sweethearts and we.
Obliterine thanking,
Our mimeo's we're cranking.
On next year we're banking.
Who wins then, we'll see.

ALL:

So now dance a fandango (or some fannish measure)
And hope that our play gets revivals.
Obliterine goes off to England with pleasure,
And next year we'll re-play "The Rivals."



BERRY'S BAEDEKER
by John Berry
(cont.)

Our holiday was dispersed with tours via coach to some of the major areas of interest on this part of the Italian coast, known as Romagna. The first trip was to:

SAN MARINO. The route was through the seaside resorts of Cattolica, Riccione and Rimini -- the journey didn't take too long, because San Marino is only about a dozen miles from Cattolica. Of course, to a traveller like myself who has visited many countries, it is merely of academic interest that San Marino is actually a separate state. To my wife and daughter, however, it was very thrilling, more so because our passports were not stamped on arrival in Italy, but as soon as the frontier was crossed the San Marino authorities (on payment of 100 lire) duly embellished our passports with a rather garish rubber stamp.

The countryside was clean, and plenty of houses and hotels were in course of construction, denoting a healthy economic situation -- and this is really remarkable considering the country is so very small and has no heavy industry -- it is a classic example of a country almost entirely dependant on tourism, and making it pay.

The road started to sweep upwards, with a few alarming bends, because the town is situated on a series of hills about 2,500 feet high, giving a magnificent view of the countryside, enabling Yugoslavia (so we were told) to be seen on a clear day.

Several coach loads of tourists assembled in a square, with battlements behind, and we tourists were divided into our respective nationalities. About a hundred English people gathered in a huddle, and we were introduced to our guide. He led us through part of the town, past enticing souvenir shops, which he assured us we could patronize later. Eventually he came to a small area, gathered us round him intimately, and spoke to us, telling us about San Marino. It was a speech he had obviously given hundreds of times, and his English was impeccable. He was handsome, tall, broad and dark, and would appear sexually exciting to any female present (or any male so inclined...he was getting glassy-eyed stares from both sexes). Actually, his speech was a humorous tour de force. Because of his considerable practice, his monologue bore subtle pauses for effect, and coupled with clever facial expressions he quickly had his audience laughing at every thing he said. Principally, he spoke about the part San Marino had played in both World Wars. Twelve men went from the republic in WWI, and all came back After WWII, due to some oversight. San Marino was the only country that didn't sign a Peace Treaty with the Germans. Our guide pointed out, with a grimace, a group of German tourists nearby.

"We would be legally entitled," he said with a sneer, "to shoot them where they stand -- but we need their money."

He also made some scathing remarks about "those down there -- the Ities," but he was pleased with the Americans. Their ambassador had presented San Marino with the necessary finance to build the fine roads we had driven over -- France had built a reservoir, enabling the populace to have clean drinking water. And England? England had presented San Marino with twelve barrel-loading flintlocks early in the reign of Queen Victoriathese arms still representing the only offensive weapons the republic possessed.

We were then escorted to the most sacred place in San Marino, the chapel, in reality a facade built against the face of the rock -- each rock having cut into it two recesses, which he explained was the sleeping place of the original San Marino and Friend. Our guide spoke in pious tones, stressing the utter sanctity of the place, and then, suddenly, he whipped out some First Day Covers of San Marino stamps and commenced to sell them to the tourists. What perturbed me so much was that this mercenary action seemed to profane the chapel, and even worse were the huge lies he told about the great value and scarcity of San Marino stamps. The First Day Covers he was selling were dated 1965, and he assured the tourists that no San Marino stamps had been issued since that date, and in fact San Marino stamps were so valuable that postmen all over the world peeled them off the envelopes when they were delivering letters. Tourists started to surge forward and buy the covers, pushing 1,000 lire notes into his hands. It was on the tip of my tongue to harangue the crowd, to tell them that San Marino stamps were the scourge of philately, and were almost worthless, simply because the country issued sets of stamps almost every other week. I stress again the mercenary actions and outright lies of this man in the chapel to bring into perspective the incongruity of his next actions. He led us from the chapel to the cathedral next door, and whilst ushering us inside, he suddenly spotted my 17 year old daughter attired in so called "hot pants." The guide screamed hoarsely to a minion who rushed forward with a long shapeless green smock which he instructed my daughter to put on...he said that indecent dress was a sin against the cathedral and a sin against San Marino.

He took us into the "parliament" of San Marino, and told us something of the economics of the place, including details of an extremely clever income tax law...the pension obtainable at old age is dependant upon income tax receipts throughout life...if you make a lot of money but don't declare income tax on it, that's perfectly OK, you needn't declare anything, but many years later the folly of your ways will become obvious. It also takes 45 years to become accepted as a San Marinoite; therefore you are not allowed to vote until this time passes by....voting takes

place every five years, and no matter where you are in the world, the republic pays for your fare to the home country to vote and back again to your permanent place of abode. We were then "let loose" into the shopping centre. The final quip of our guide, and the best one, was as we left the parliament buildings, where one of the twelve San Marino soldiers was on duty in full plumage. Masses of people were jostling to be photographed standing next to him. "Ah," said our guide, "I see they've got the ugly one on duty today." The soldier wasn't pleased.

The shops were all clean, the assistants polite and helpful, the merchandise competitive both in price and variety. Naturally, souvenirs took pride of place; but my wife and daughter purchased suede skirts and handbags which they swore were only one quarter of the price being charged in Belfast.

GRADARA. The classical fans amongst my readers will know of the story of Francesca di Rimini, made famous by Dante, Lord Byron, and Tchaikovsky, etc. Francesca was a beautiful girl who married a deformed man named Gianciotta Malatesta in 1275, in order to cement relations between two noble families. She soon fell in love with Gianciotta's brother, a strapping youth called Paolo, and whilst Paolo and Francesca were in a clinch, the deformed husband perfected a successful coup de gras with a long dagger, bringing forth the highly theatrical and tragic comment (according to English playwright Stephen Phillips) "They loved each other against their will; against my will I have killed them."

This all happened at Gradara Castle, which is about three miles south of Cattolica. It is clearly visible from Cattolica, a many-turreted castle on top of a hill, surrounded by trees.... extremely picturesque in every respect. For details of the structure of this castle I can do no better than quote from the guide-book I purchased at the site: "The Castle of Gradara today presents itself to the visitor surrounded by a double enclosure without moat built around the fortress. The curtain-walls since 1300 have been crowned by Guelfic battlements resting on light corbels of blind arches with rectangular towers at intervals, while the large entrance gate at the castle is flanked with two pentagonal towers. The second enclosure, like the first, is attached to the fortress and has visible traces of recent restoration."

Inside the inner wall is a small village, and on each side of the narrow main street are small shops, bustling for custom, selling souvenirs and assorted cheap jewelry. I purchased a wooden plaque about six inches in diameter, with a leaf motif round the edge, with an embossed view of the battlements in the middle.

My wife, daughter and myself walked outside the walls, and went to a tree-shaded cafe, where a middle-aged grey-haired man had a stall, selling lemonade and ice cream. My wife fancied coffee, and the man explained in broken English that he didn't have any coffee in the stall, then his eyes lit up with sudden realization. He called and a girl about sixteen years of age came from inside the cafe. He instructed her to go to their house (she was obviously his daughter) and bring back coffee powder -- I could understand this from his actions -- the girl gave us a frown, and walked away uphill inside the castle precincts. The reason why I've mentioned the girl is simply this -- she was the most beautiful girl I'd ever seen in my life. Her hair was jet-black, eyes brown and wide, her complexion olive with just a delicate sallown suggestion underlying it -- she made Gina Lollobrigida and Sophia Loren look like rejects from the second row of the chorus of a third rate music hall. She came back downhill with a packet of coffee; her figure was magnificent, slender and lithe, with just a show of temper in her eyes as she looked at me, the cause of her journey. I must have been sitting gazing at her, my eyes wide open...definitely my jaw was touching my chest, and my lips were dry. I staggered back to reality as my wife tugged my arm.

"We haven't time for coffee," she panted, "our coach is leaving."

The girl was pouring the powdered coffee into the machine ...her fingers were long, and her eyelashes flicked up and down as she studied her work.

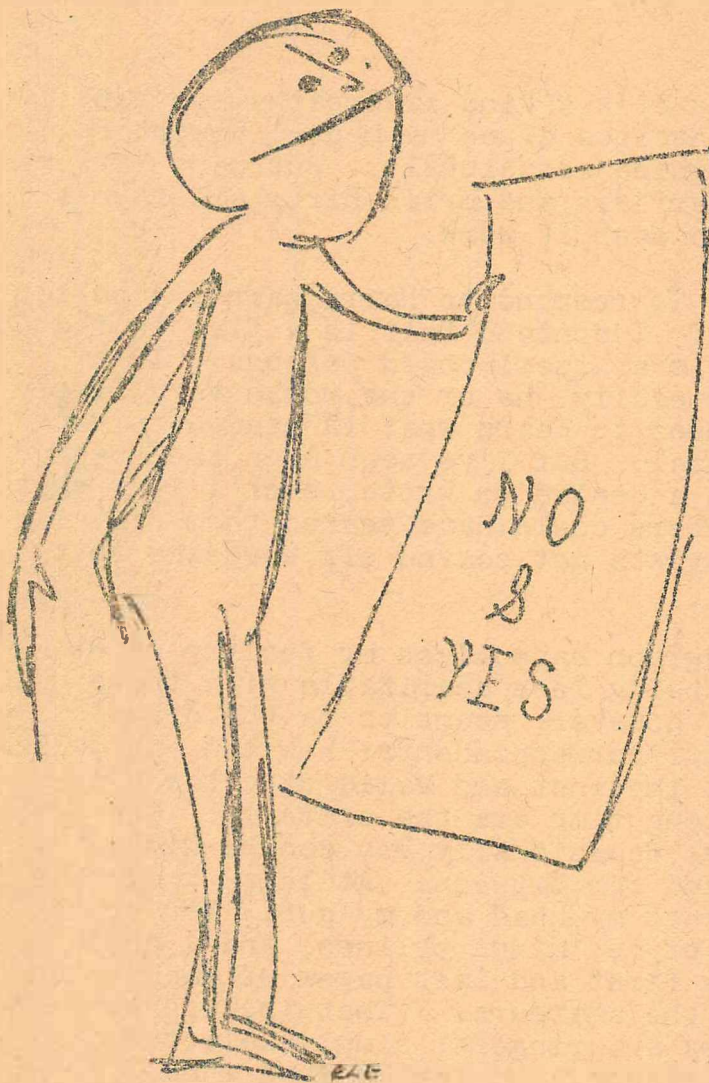
I went over to her, and touched her arm gently. I got the full impact of those eyes, innocent and yet confident.

"No coffee," I said in English, "coach leaving."

The siren on the coach sounded loudly -- her father came over, and I repeated myself. He held out his hands with a "that's show biz" look on his face. The girl's mouth closed in a firm move, as she looked at me again. Her eyes flashed -- and I've often seen that cliché in novels, and now I know what it means. As the coach wheeled round, I had one last glance at her, hands on hips, left toe lightly tapping the ground. She turned her head away with a swirl of black hair as our eyes met.

I wondered if her name was Francesca....

(to be continued)



from Harlan Ellison

The discussion on amateurism vs. professionalism seems to be going well, and -- happily -- without rancor. To the end of keeping it going (because I think it's an invaluable topic for discussion and it's getting discussed nowhere else at the moment) here are a few casual thoughts in response to the letters in No 14.

E.A. Arnason makes an interesting theoretical supposition, that writers are people who cannot express themselves fluently or self-satisfyingly any other way. She may be correct, but I think "express" is the less operable word when compared with the psychiatric term "communicate." As refutation of the theory, consider the following extremely expressive (successful) sf writers: Silverberg, del Rey, McCaffrey, Bester, Asimov, Disch, Spinrad, Sturgeon, Scortia, Ellison, Knight, Blish, Bradbury, Delany, Bova,

Campbell, Harrison and Russ. And that's just the tip of the iceberg of writers who have no difficulty whatever in communicating through various means other than writing.

As validation of the theory, however, there are writers who are shy and retiring, for any number of reasons ranging from lack of ego-strength to speech impediments.

So. I think the theory proves invalid simply because it cancels itself out over the long consideration of groups. There are many of us who "communicate" in multifarious ways: verbally, sexually, politically, literarily, artistically, etc. No, I don't think amateurism vs. professionalism comes anywhere near that consideration.

As to how I can tell who seems to me to have professional abilities as opposed to those who seem to me to be condemned

forever to amateurism, I guess it's a kind of empathy-cum-body language synched in with unconscious clues my mental computer understands that I don't recognize consciously. But many editors have it. Silverberg, Carr, Harrison and Brian Kirby are four I know for certain have it: I've seen it work.

Hochberg is dead right. To respond to Harry Warner's belief that writers can be scared off, I contend that is a flaw in the human, not the writer, which is a superimposed persona. If a writer can be scared off that easily, he or she would very likely never have had the staying power to learn what is needed to be learned to become a professional. But I've seen even the most timorous creatures fired with a desire to write, such a fire that not even the White House Plumbers could have scared them off. No, only dilettantes and hobbyists get scared off when the shit comes down.

Denis Quane's first paragraph capsulizes my feeling about aiding those with talent and being less charitable with those without. His first question, however, seems to be the draw-sticking point for many of your correspondents: how can you tell one from the other. I submit instinct and valid data based on working in the medium for a long time are the criteria. One simply knows! Oh, yeah, sure, occasionally you can be wrong, but those occasions are few and far between. At least they have been for me. I've come to trust my head and my gut. You could lay ten manuscripts in front of me, minus bylines, and I could tell you with readings of the first and last pages of each which were the pros and which were the amateurs. (That is, if you played straight and didn't try any ringers; simply selected ten scripts, pro and amateur, at random, and let me read them.)

((I think a wager like that would get away from the issue -- if "professional" in this context means a writer who's already started selling. More to the point would be to take five mss. by people who have been writing long enough without success to be reasonably tagged "hopeless amateurs" and five early, unsold, and unsellable mss. by professional writers and see if an editor could spot which were the ones with "promise." Judging by the fact that nearly all writers go through a stage of plain printed reject notes before developing enough skill to get the encouragement of the scribbled "try again" notes, it seems to me that the editor cannot tell promising from unpromising badness -- in the early stages -- except by such cues as determination and improvement-in-rewrites which show up in workshop situations, but are not available otherwise. RB))

Quane's desire for an accounting of why ostensibly "good" books were rejected by one or another publisher is a red herring. The reasons usually have nothing to do with whether the manuscripts were pro or amateur in execution.

Campbell was hardly unique in his encouragement of new writers. Hell, it's common practice. Done as a matter of course. Dues paying. You just remember the Campbell-Asimov thing because it's a classic, outstanding example. No editor is worth his or her salt without a string of writers' names to the credit sheet.

No, we haven't come to any resolution of the question yet. But I suspect the people who have the answers are the ones who won't even bother writing in. They understand already. They are professionals, whether they know it or not. Mostly, amateurs are the ones with the furrowed brows.

That's another way to spot them.

from Dave Hall, 202 Taylor Avenue, Crystal City MO 63019

Amateurs and "undiscovered" professionals....: Paula Marmor -- critic and poet -- and neither of them a "professional" nevertheless both make their point pretty well. "Amateur" and "professional" mean nothing very much, beyond who did what to whom and who got the five dollars.

I'm sure Indick has been unmanned by syntax; it certainly appears, however, that he is including Merritt, Chambers, Blackwood and other writers "all the way back to Orpheus" as being in Lovecraft's Chthulhu "Circle." Obviously, they were progenitors, not pastichists. The "Lovecraft Circle" was such writers as Frank Belknap Long, Donald Wandrei, August Derleth, Robert Bloch and etc. etc.

Fanzine as travelogue? Even by the celebrated John Berry -- I have no comment. I love all these deeply involved literary pieces, but for me a big trip is Poplar Bluff, Missouri. I'm jealous of their freedom, but not at all interested.

from Bruce Tornley, 2323 Sibley Street, Alexandria VA 22311

Good stuff: notably the Berry travel stories, the Digby and Rotsler things. The only questions that's left in my mind is why did the ancient Greeks (and ergo various people in the middle ages) use the Nabisco Trademark as the symbol for the earth? I've already figured out why the Saxons knew all the angles.

from Ben Indick, 428 Sagamore Avenue, Teaneck NJ 07666

I glanced with pleasure at John Boardman's excellent tongue-in-cheek response to Farmer's style of bio. The Jules Vernian cover was a cutie.

From Mary Schaub, Box 213
Apex NC 27502

I particularly enjoyed Ben Indick's piece on the relative nonattractiveness of Lovecraft's (and others') dreary fantasy creations. I did take to that amusing line querying the sort of travel agency that would book one into such a miserable place to begin with!

from Ray Nelson, 333 Ramona
El Cerrito CA 94530

I loved "Carving in Marble." When dealing with the poems of Paula Marmor and other such neo-pre-Raphaelites there is something to say besides "I like it" or "I don't like it." By working in a tradition, she accepts the challenge of being judged by that tradition, thus giving us the excitement of a game which, because it can be lost, can also be won. My long-standing contempt for the modern "little review" style of poetry stems from the habit of these "revolutionary" poets of depriving us of this game, but not giving us anything in its place. Her poetry, entering a world which, since 1914, has been dominated by the anti-poem, gives a feeling to me of freedom and delight such as one might experience from the first drops of rain after years of drought.

from E.A. Arnason, 3436 Norwalk, Hamtramck MI 48212

I didn't like J.R. Christopher's hormone theory of poetry: "Most male poets are stimulated by glandular energy at puberty and write until they're thirty, unless they are true poets.... But there is not enough evidence to argue patterns for women who are poets. I am not at all certain that parallels work. Of course, women who bear children often give up verbal creation for that other birthing."

First of all, there is plenty of evidence re. the habits of women poets. There have been plenty of women poets, esp. in the 20th century. Christopher apparently doesn't know much about poetry -- has heard of Wordsworth and Tennyson and Christina Rossetti, but not apparently of Erika Jong, Diane Wakowski, Sylvia Plath, Marianne Moore, Anne Bradstreet.

(As an aside, I am offended by Christopher calling women poets by their first names. Christopher may be on first name terms with Paula Marmor -- but hardly with Christina Rossetti.)



Secondly, I can't think of a single woman poet who stopped writing after having children. Sylvia Plath wrote Ariel after her second child was born -- that book is supposed to contain her best poetry. According to A. Alvarez, she wrote with amazing energy in those last months before she killed herself. Anne Bradstreet -- the seventeenth century poet -- colonial America's tenth muse etc. -- wrote a couple of her best poems on the deaths of grandchildren. Granted, a lot of women writers never married, but that is another question.

According to Arthur Waley, Lady Murasaki didn't even begin The Tale of Genji till after the death of her husband. She had two children by him. One can hardly argue that creation was a substitute for child bearing and rearing for her. (Though being a member of an aristocracy, she may not have had much to do with her kids. Aristocrats tend not to.)

As for poets topping at thirty. Well, by thirty, people know what they can do well and what they can't. Or they should. Also, if they're lucky, they know what they want to do. So it's not surprising that a lot of people give up writing, also other activities that simply don't interest them enough. Growing up is -- for most people -- a process of contraction. Dreams of glory and passing fancies are abandoned, one's energy is increasingly focused on a few activities. As you know -- when I was in high school, I drew, wrote poetry and prose, was interested in literature, art history, biology and I forget what else. I draw very little nowadays. I've forgotten almost all the biology I once knew. I know no math at all any more. I'm rapidly forgetting about art history. In the last few months, I've decided I'm not a very good poet. ((I disagree.RB)) I simply cannot work 40 hours a week, write stories, rap with friends, and be a universal genius all at once. The universal genius had to go. I don't know how da Vinci did it.

I will admit that most people give up writing romantic poetry circa 30. But how long can anyone stay stoned on melody, lush imagery and gushing emotions? That kind of poetry is tied into the moods of the young. Maybe that has something to do with hormones, but maybe it has something to do with innocence, too, and with the undisciplined and unfocused energy that kids have.

((Side-brag dept. EAA's had her first story publication, "A Clear Air Day in the Motor City" in New Worlds 6 -- British edition. Realistically, I can't suggest on the basis of one story in a publication hard to find, that you start considering her for a nominee for the Campbell award for best new writer -- but watch for the stories Damon Knight has bought for Orbit and think about it next year.))

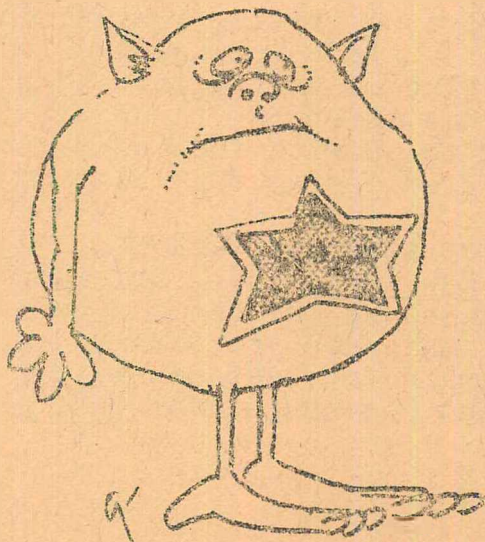
from Harry Warner, 423 Summit Avenue Hagerstown MD 21740

I read the 14th NO with mixed enjoyment and foreboding. I can remember when it was slim and young, something I could lift with one hand and caress its baby-limp spine. Now it is almost forty pages, and by the coming of spring, you will undoubtedly announce your intention to go offset, sell it for a dollar a copy, and make your living off the profits, after you've renamed it Ruth Berman.

Anyway, the covers were fine and if you hadn't ratted on yourself, everyone would have been praising you for imaginative editing, for putting the busier cover, the one that jumps out and smacks the reader right in the eyeballs, on the front, just as Beethoven started the Eroica with those banging chords to win immediate attention, then concluding the issue with Sheryl's restrained and delicate drawing, which causes the reader to realize that No is still its original self, despite such temporary deviations as Young Fletcher humor and almost forty *sigh* pages.

The article on Paula Marmor's poems was excellent. You ought to tell us something about the less familiar names which turn up in your bylines because I can't figure out if J.R. Christopher is a youngster with an extraordinary degree of insight into how good poetry differs from bad, or an individual who makes his living out of literature somehow and has an extraordinary degree of willingness to write for a small-circulation amateur publication. Paula's poetry can survive this kind of thoughtful analysis better than that of anyone I can think of who writes poetry for fanzines frequently; still, I'd like to see more criticism and analysis of fanzine material done as well as this.

((I'm not sure, but I think J. R. Christopher is a professor of English -- or are you a combination teacher/graduate student like me, Joe?))



It's not hard to answer some of Ben Indick's questions. Why do gargoyles behave so nastily and have such warped characters when they come to life and play a role in certain horror and fantasy stories? Because they're ugly. (I think I remember a couple of gargoyles behaving themselves in a Dickens Christmas story, but that's the only exception I can remember.) Why do misanthropes, old men, people with odd habits get mixed up in

such bestial events in horror stories? Because they're different or too antiquated to conform to normal standards of physical culture. It's the old stereotype at work, the same one that used to cause villains in prozine stories to be Russians or Germans or members of other nations. The handsome, healthy young man and woman in fiction don't get involved in Lovecraftian machinations because they are traditionally the good guys and gals, the ones the reader identifies with even if he doesn't resemble them physically. That leaves only the stereotypes whom the reader wouldn't want to identify with to be saddled with unpleasant activities.

It sounds as if John Berry spoiled the procedure which was repeated interminably in plays and operas and fiction about Italy for a century or more. That beautiful gypsy girl who offered John a golden object had obviously been stolen in childhood by the leader of the band from wealthy parents, and the trinket made of gold was the only jewelry she had worn at the time of her abduction, and if John had only accepted it, it wouldn't have been long before a strap would have broken or some other stroke of fate would have caused that girl's shoulder to be denuded revealing a distinctive birthmark which John would recognize because a melancholy wealthy German tourist had told him the previous evening how his infant daughter had mysteriously disappeared two decades before from the grounds of his mansion while playing near the lake and he had never found her despite his comprehensive advertising campaign to alert the entire continent about the disappearance of a child with a distinctive birthmark on the shoulder.

I was intrigued with the Horace L. Gold letter. In a very small way, I had much the same trouble with my name. I've always signed it Harry Warner, Jr., in fandom, because my father always used his middle initial in correspondence and during his lifetime this was a good way to determine whom a letter belonged to if someone addressed the envelope without including the Jr. or Sr. But my middle initial had the most inexplicable ability to turn up in fannish mail, almost always the correct initial. I can't imagine how that initial became known in fandom, unless I used it in prozine letter columns before entering fandom and some fans remembered it.

Federal restrictions on the firepower of vitamin pills don't make sense. The new rules won't stop anyone who wants more vitamins than science recommends from consuming lots of the little ones in one gulping. It seems as useless as the child-proof tops that Bayer Aspirin now has: any kid who is reckless enough to disobey warnings to stay away from the medicine cabinet is going to damage himself in other ways quite promptly. Besides, those new tops are close to being adultproof as far as this particular adult is concerned.

from John Robinson, 1-101 Street, Troy NY 12180

The Ken Fletcher cover for NO 14 was quite amusing. I'd like to see a story in a prozine based on this piece of artwork. It would probably win the humor award hands down. Boardman's letter reminds me of the argument that Phil Farmer is closer to being Kilgore Trout than Theodore Sturgeon could ever be. Trout is the writer with great ideas who never makes it with his words. And so it goes with Farmer. Just think, the Riverworld series starts with a great idea, but if Farmer hadn't given his heroes famous names they would never have made it. It is said that if Farmer cannot get Vonnegut's permission to use the name Kilgore Trout then he will change his name to Kilgore Trout. The more power to him. One way or another, he is the real Kilgore Trout -- right down to the porno. And in assuming the identity of Kilgore Trout Philip Jose Farmer will at last find his true niche.

In re editor's comments recognizing potential in writers: I got a "please rewrite because you have several good ideas in a letter that is too long to publish" reply from Ben Bova. Does this mean that I am about to make it among the ranks of prozine letterhacks, or what does it mean?

Where can I get a miniature giant walking rutabaga paper-weight? I've been wondering ever since Juanita Coulson said she had one, and that was back in 68. Loren MacGregor would bring that business up again just so I could be bothered.

from Denis Quane, Box CC East Texas Sta. Commerce TX 75428

Your anonymous correspondent should get her (? -- my assumption is doubtless sexist) facts straight about the FDA proposals concerning vitamins. The restriction on vitamin A is not 90 milligrams, but 10,000 International Units (IU), which comes to 3.44 mg if it is in the form of vitamin A acetate, or 6 mg if it is in the form of carotene, as found in vegetable foods. (The body breaks carotene down into vitamin A.)

The sweet potato mentioned likely has 5,000 IU of vitamin A. (Sweet potatoes are quite variable, ranging from 2,000 to 9,000 IU) If Dr. Carlton Fredricks stated that the sweet potato contains 5,000 mg of vitamin A, his credentials as a nutritionist ought to be re-examined. If he deliberately tried to mislead his audience (or readers?) by mentioning 5,000 units of vitamin A in a context where many were likely to assume that units and milligrams were the same, then his ethics should be examined. Or perhaps your correspondent is only confused.

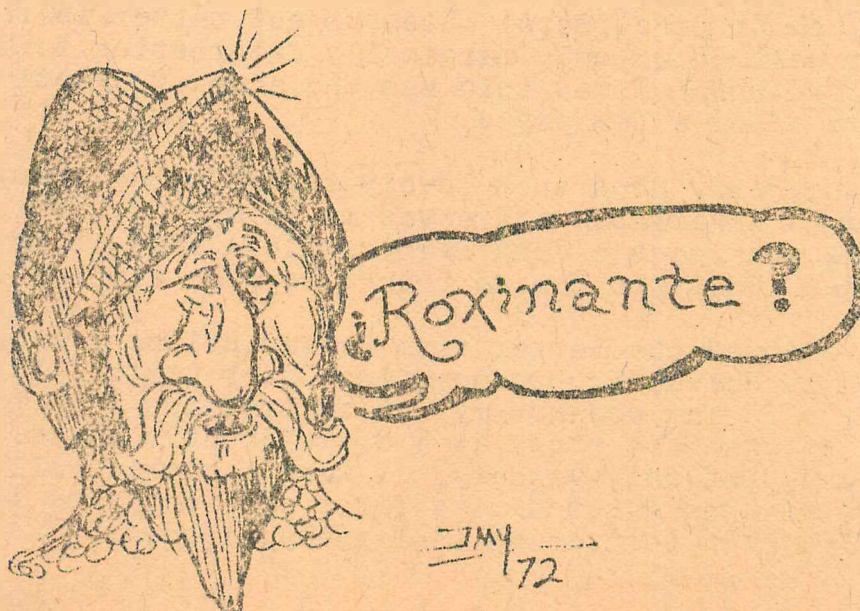
I don't want to appear to be too much on the side of the FDA. The entire question of whether the government should be meddling in the business of protecting people from their follies needs closer examination. But at least in this case the FDA does

have the facts on its side. No one needs to take pills containing twice the recommended daily requirement, when they are probably already getting more than the requirement from their normal diet (even if they don't eat sweet potatoes).

Arnason's letter starts off by seeming to disagree with Ellison -- but may actually be in agreement with him. The people who irritate her at poetry workshops are probably the same ones Ellison is referring to -- I think Harlan's point was not so much that they can't learn, but that they won't learn. Introduction of the term amateur into the discussion only confused the issue.

Agree with most of your remarks about The Flight of the Horse. The final story, "What Good is a Glass Dagger," seems different in mood (or perhaps only better executed) and closer to the mood of the old Unknown than the time travel fantasies. It seems a shame that Niven (or his agent, or his publishers, or whoever was responsible) did not include the earlier story (whose name I forget) to which this was a sequel. And, when he finally gets around to collecting the transport booth stories he's been writing lately, "Flash Point" will not be included because it appeared in this collection. This upsets people like me who like things nice and orderly.

((The question of what makes writing -- or any art -- distinctively masculine or feminine is an interesting one. You were right in thinking anon a woman -- but I corrected the pronouns in the paragraph re: Arnason; evidently your eye skipped over the mention of "Eleanor," and the style seemed -- masculine to you, or generally human or? I can't see anything distinctively feminine in anon's style, I must admit.))



from Ken Ozanne, 'The Cottonwoods' 42 Meek's Crescent
Faulconbridge, NSW 2776 Australia

Back to Ellison -- that seems to be the main commentable piece in #13, even if I enjoyed the con-film report and the heraldry piece. I don't think either you or he realizes just how much unprofessionalism there is among writers, even 'successful' writers. Like, could you believe in a woman who didn't know of the existence of either 'The Writer' or 'Writer's Digest,' has no US marketing guide at all? "Fair enough," you say? "Typical amateur." But this woman has had more than a dozen novels published! (Yes, she does have need for a marketing guide. She writes short stories for one single market and never publishes any elsewhere, never publishes them because she never submits.)

from Loren MacGregor, Box 636 Seattle WA 98111

NO has been languishing in my drawer for some time now, every once in a while shouting, "Yes! Now!" as I passed. Now that I no longer have even an unreasonable reason for not answering, I guess I'd best get down to it.

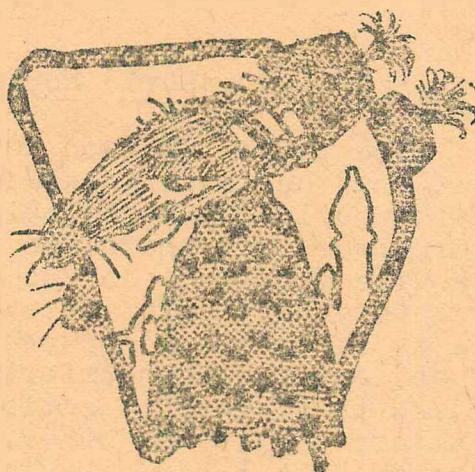
Sheryl's cover (I'm abiding by your wishes) was fair, but not one of her best. If you hadn't precluded the line with your title, I'd say I was negative about it. Jim/ken's cover, on the other hand, was marvelous; a bit "dirty" as to style -- Ken occasionally seems to get carried away with his pen. But then, who am I to judge. I loved it.

Ben Indick brings up some points I've been considering, and does it well. I seem to be in somewhat of a minority lately for, although I enjoy reading Lovecraft and sons occasionally -- very occasionally -- I can't be all that thrilled by him or his successors or precursors. His subject matter is remote, and, however well done, only marginally interesting to me. The King in Yellow, which I was told was the acme of creative endeavor, bored me after a few pages.

John Berry does such lovely things with language. Perhaps because he invariably addresses me in my own? Tell me, does everyone who reads a John Berry article read it in his own language? That would make things so much simpler...

I enjoyed the letter from Harlan Ellison; as a local tv station is currently broadcasting Outer Limits, I'll have to watch for it and see how my new information fits in -- and also try to imagine the story as a cross-country chase. I remember the story, but only vaguely. I wasn't terrifically interested in television when Outer Limits first came on. Now I'm interested, but think that television is largely misused.

from Laura Ruskin, 7928 South
Friends Ave, Whittier CA 90602



I never thought much about the middle ground between amateur and pro writing; the difference seemed to be whether you wrote for love or money. Writers who accomplished both on a steady basis became Renowned Authors. Talent, I thought, was necessary for amateurs as well as pros; an untalented pro being a hack, an untalented amateur, a dub.

If extremely untalented and still writing for the love of it, sick. Possibly in need of commitment or a good swift love affair. (Commitment either to some institution, or in one.) In any case, a genuine, 24-carat, Edith Bunker dingbat, found in Adult School writing classes for the 45 and unfulfilled, where she reads poems about white gulls, spring days, and The New Puppy. Every line ta-Da, ta-Da, ta-Da, ta Da. But it doesn't matter because she's a nice person and that's what counts. So what's the use hollering about the crime of vague writing; she isn't hurting anyone. You can either come on as the big know-it-all, or play Dummy, and say brightly that it was very nice. Which it was, after all. I never imagined how that person would be at fourteen, or eighteen -- Ellison's Clarion Workshopper who claims to be "experimental." Ellison did a thorough job on the dub, but what about the talented amateur who has no intention of finding his or her way into selling the stuff? Not through shyness, simply because the person writes For Love Alone. Or realistically, because the market for fic of any kind is small, let alone fan-fic, the writer doesn't want the hassle of postage and rj slips. Takes time from his or her hobby. Also, aspiration leads the amateur between Scylla and Charybdis -- between the over-critics who can smash your self-confidence to rubble, and the overgushers who can suck your vision down to oblivion. Emily was lucky if she never wished Charlotte had minded her own inkstand, even though it came out all right.

from Bruce Arthurs, 527-98-3103 5th Trans Co Fort Lee VA 23801

Ben Indick should read the ending of Dwellers in the Mirage again. Evalie does not die, and leaves the valley with Lief at the book's ending. In fact, I was in the middle of the book when I read Indick's article, and thru all the rest of it, I kept wondering when Evalie was going to be killed. In a way, it was rather disappointing when she wasn't.

Enjoyed Boardman's article highly. I heard him mention this to a bystander at the last Disclave, and am glad I got a chance to see the whole thing.

from Paul (Alpajpuri) Novitski, 1690 East 26 Ave Eugene OR 97403

The Harlan Ellison interchange is very interesting. I suppose what he meant in ADV was that there are writers he tends to scorn who lack a certain innate knack for writing, but persist and pester, and there are others he admires (and publishes) who are True Writers. As you and the others have pointed out, this is a very difficult and even touchy distinction to make, especially if one is a non-professional writer (in the "published" sense) and feels uncomfortable at the thought that one might be doomed to eternal rejection slips and lack of achievement of some literary quality or other. I once learned that a close friend of mine thought I had a basic miscomprehension of what "science fiction" really was and I would never become a good writer. This, based on reading my work and watching me struggle with it for the year we lived together. I found myself quite upset -- not so much at my friend, because it was an honest opinion based on his perceptions -- but more at the fear that he might actually be right.

I think it all comes down to the truth that in order to succeed at whatever you work at, ultimately you must be the judge of your own creations. If you allow others to decide for you, you might produce what pleases them, but then it is no longer really your own work. I tend to write stories about people that interest me, and try to create an sf background or plot afterwards, which might seem backwards and non-professional, but really the sf field is the only one I'm interested in selling to; it is the only audience I desire to write for, is the only field I wish to improve or expand or develop. I already have a fundamental idea of the kind of fiction I want to write, the kind of characters and interaction I enjoy, and I suppose that will be the basis for most of the writing I do in the next decade or two. My degree of success or "professionalism" will be determined by my ability to satisfy myself, and not by the willingness of editors to pay me for it. I do my trip; they do theirs; we each have our own standards and goals. My only compromise at present (if it actually is any kind of cop-out) is to "science fictionalize" my humanist stories in order to make them eligible for publication in sf magazines and books, and I suppose this too will pass away once I develop my writing to the point where it stands on its own.

(I do consider all my writing to be speculative fiction or extrapolative humanist fiction, but many editors have stricter definitions of what they will publish than that. But after all, sf is my favorite field and I always end up enjoying my stories more when they contain sf elements.)

Showcase Review
by Louise Valmeras

I was supposed to review another Elwood anthology -- The Berserkers, but after I read it, I found I had nothing to say about it, except that it bored me.

So here are my responses to Showcase, an anthology (the fly-leaf says) "in the tradition of Damon Knight's Orbit and Robert Silverberg's New Dimensions" with "no theme...no premise at all. There is no guideline but one -- that the stories represent the creative best of the writers."

The first story is by Robert Silverberg. It's done in his "Dying Earth" (or "Jac Vance") style, and is about a prosperous young stockbroker who is suddenly transported from 1972 to the last days of Earth, where he takes part in a mysterious expedition to a long-dead city, which turns out not to be dead, after all. I don't like Silverberg's writing. His style always seem slippery to me -- facile, imprecise and lacking in energy. For example, this is a description of a club on Wall Street: "Subdued light fixtures glowed like pulsing red suns; waiters moved past the table like silent moons."

In the first place, I doubt that the lights in a conservative businessmen's club would pulse, unless the wiring needed to be looked at. In the second place, moons are usually silent -- or thought to be, so Silverberg has put in an un-necessary (and somewhat confusing) adjective. What Silverberg probably meant to say is, "waiters moved past the table silently, like moons."

Also, the sound of that sentence is bad. Read it out loud. Its rhythm is jerky, and there are a lot of harsh consonants -- d's, t's and p's -- that don't fit with the quiet images. There are too many adjectives, too. They clog the sentence and almost stop its motion.¹

Silverberg apparently doesn't listen to the sound of his language or think through his sentences to make sure they say what he wants them to say.

His style has another defect -- very common nowadays in science fiction. He doesn't present the reader with an event. Instead, he tells the reader about it. The author is always in between the reader and the experience. There seems to be a wall

¹ True ease in writing comes from Art, not Chance,
As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance.
'T is not enough no harshness gives offence;
The sound must seem an echo to the sense.
(Pope, "An Essay on Criticism")

of language between us and the story's people. The wall is only partly transparent. The people are seen in a dim and fragmentary fashion. In these stories, conversations tend to be summarized rather than quoted. There tend to be long, analytic descriptions of the hero's mental processes and the implications thereof. As a rule, not much happens. Action is less important than the situation, and the commentary on the situation. Finally, these stories tend to be arty and obscure, full of huge, vague symbols -- significant in some way we can't quite understand. I don't know what the hell Silverberg is talking about. His hero reaches the mysterious city; revives its inhabitants, who are in suspended animation in the catacombs; and then -- somehow back in 1972 -- disappears into the Sahara, where he apparently causes the first rain in eight years, plus an aurora in New York and an earthquake in Sicily. Huh?



Well, on to the other stories. There's a Carol Emshwiller story -- an internal monolog by a mother about her son, science fiction and the future. I think that's what it was about. It was a little unclear. I didn't mind that one much. There is a competent and uninteresting Analog-type story by Joe Haldeman. There's a really rotten story by someone named Raylyn Moore. It's about God, and you know how awful science fiction stories about God are. R.A. Lafferty has contributed one of those terribly cute stories he goes in for, where a bunch of comic scientists sit around and babble. I didn't finish that one. After Lafferty's thing is a story by Bruce McAllister about a futuristic death camp, or something like that. I started skimming after the second page, so I'm not sure. Whatever it was, it seemed banal. I skipped the Barry N. Malzberg story, since I refuse to read him. In my opinion, his stuff is a con.

"The Birdlover" by Joseph L. Green is about a guy who gets turned off sex by seeing the roosters and hens on his parents' farm go at it. Then he goes to another planet, where the people are birdlike, and gets hung on one of the females, which ruins his diplomatic mission. But at least he's not a virgin anymore.

By this time, three-quarters of the way through the book, I was having trouble reading. My eyes simply slid along the lines and came to a rest on that nice, white, righthand margin. I have dim memories of Gunga Din, and people whose heads turned into the heads of animals, apparently because they had messed with the ecology. Everything else is blurry.

The last story in the anthology is by Joanna Russ, and I liked it. It's about being alienated and having a servant mentality, and I thought it was about being a woman -- though the hero wasn't a woman, but a man serving foreign masters and unable to break free of them. If you want to read this anthology, start at the back, read one story and stop.

After I finished this noxious mess, I realized that Showcase is very much like The Berserkers. The stories by people I've never heard of (such as the birdfuck man) are inept and awful. The authors whose names I recognize are, for the most part, going through the motions of producing a story. The stories they produce are without energy, conviction or interest -- wastebasket stuff. But why throw it out, when Elwood will buy it?

Good science fiction has two qualities I really like. First, it deals with real problems -- though not necessarily realistically. Second, because it is not confined to everyday reality, it can deal with problems the way the dream-mind does -- using bizarre symbols, startling conjunctions and so on. I love the economy and intensity of good science fiction (and of good dreams). Problems are stripped down to their essentials and then exaggerated, made more vivid.

There's none of this in Showcase. Except for Joanna Russ's story (and maybe Carol Emshwiller's), these bits of verbiage aren't about real problems. And -- except for the Russ story -- these stories are drab and confused. I've forgotten almost all of them, two days after I read the book.

The last I heard, Elwood had 40 anthologies out or in the works. We are all going to be knee-deep in this dreck, and some good writers are going to be helping him pile the shit higher. Ah well. This is what comes of needing the money you make from writing. Sooner or later, you have to make a choice between integrity and the rent.



chitterchatter
by Ruth Berman

What with this blank page sitting here (after I decided that typing the review in elite would be a bit hard to read), it seems reasonable to talk about where I'm heading in the next few years. Oh, I could do a fast review of some of the books I've read recently. I could say that Poul Anderson's Hrolf Kraki is altogether absorbing, his recreation of Scandinavian legend at once exciting and eerie; but that his Midsummer Tempest, although enjoyable (especially if you're familiar with his other books and with Karen Anderson's Flying Inn stories), doesn't quite work (writing the dialog in blank verse printed as prose is a clever conceit, but the shifts back and forth between prose and meter were so jarring as to be downright painful to read); that I gave up Zach Huges' Legend of Miaree halfway through because the main story seemed mushily sentimental and the classroom frame intolerably cute; that the Broceliande stories by Sylvia Ashton Warner appearing every once in a while in the New Yorker are magnificent and I wait eagerly for their (I hope) eventual book publication. Or I could ramble about the Hugo nominations and complain of the Gandalf award that it's illogical to say it's in memory of Tolkien and then include Tolkien among the nominees. Besides, if it can be a posthumous award, why Tolkien rather than Saint Thomas More, Shakespeare, Spenser, Carroll, Poe, or...?

But mainly what I've been reading is Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, from 1817 onwards. My temporary appointment at the U. runs out this June, and the resulting joblessness approaching is, I find, a great incentive to settle down and do the reading for a dissertation. I expect to finish the dissertation some time in the fall, look for a job for the following fall, and use the intervening months to work on a book. In the past months, I haven't had much time for fanac. While I'm jobless I'll have time but may not have money to publish any oftener than I've been doing. When (I think/hope not "if") I get a job, I'll probably have to move, thereby disrupting publishing, writing, correspondence, etc., for a while. Fannish prognosis: continued infrequent publication, followed by a break to move and settle in, followed by resumed publication. (It may still be infrequent, depending on how much teaching and writing I'm doing then, but I'm not likely to fold No -- having one's own forum is too pleasant.)

