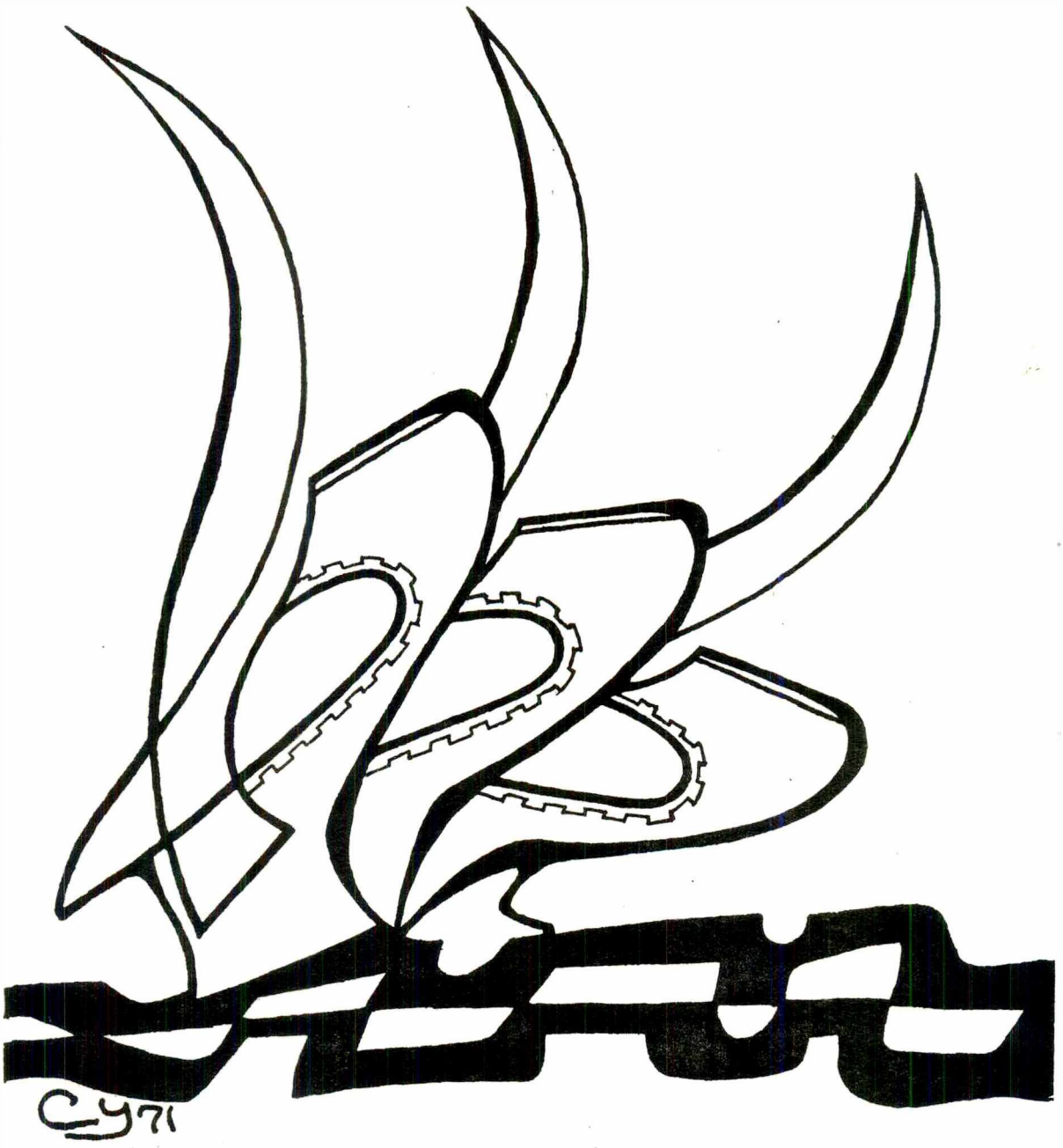
phantasmicom II



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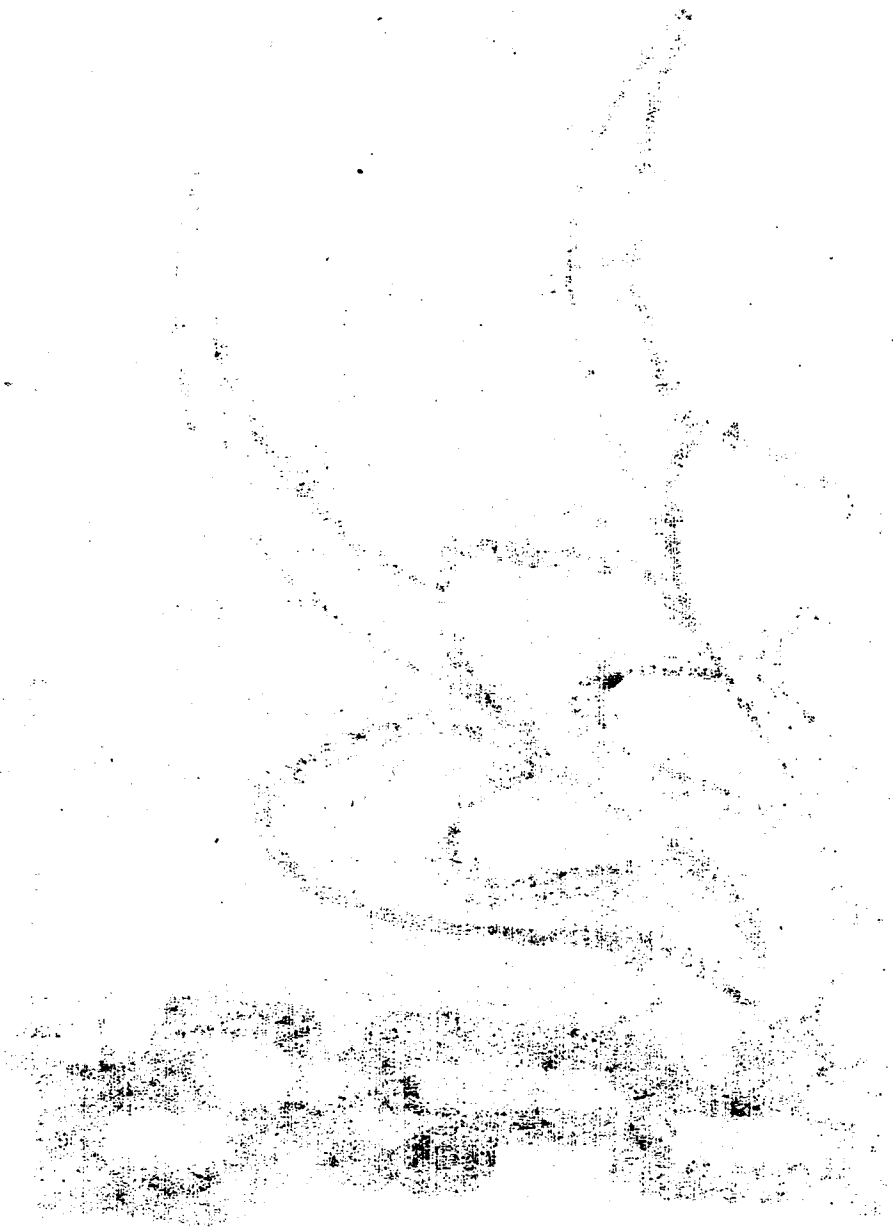

Jeffrey D. Smith
1339 Weldon Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21211

For Americans, at least, I suspect that
the Day of the Large Fanzine has ended.
--Bruce Gillespie
SF COMMENTARY 39

PHANTASMICOM II

Jeffrey D. Smith
4102-301 Potter Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21229

cover drawings by Cy Chauvin and Alex Eisenstein, lettered by Judith Weiss -- interior artwork by Mike Archibald (fp 48), Paula Marmor (78-87), Dan Osterman (fp 31), S. Randall (fp 10, 54, fp 68), Bob Smith (99), Steve Stiles (93) and Judith Weiss (fp 89).

Phantasmicom Press Publication # 30

Paul Anderson, Australian agent
21 Mulga Road/Hawthorndene, S.A./Australia 5051

 An annual publication, this one produced in May 1974. Available for contribution, trade, and money. $1 a copy. Back issues available @ 75¢, 3/$2 -- 6,7,9,10. Electro-stencils by Jack Chalker.

EPILOGUE

JEFF SMITH

It's now over five years ago that four high-school-or-just-out-of-it kids, after looking at a handful of ALGOLs, one SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW and a small collection of Edgar Rice Burroughs zines, decided that they could publish a good fanzine.

Unblushingly, I feel they were right. PHANTASMICOM 1, in August 1969, was entirely editor-written, hand-cranked on a ditto machine by a friend with no interest at all in science fiction, and collated in Don Keller's miniscule room--all 67 pages of it. Nobody called it a crudzine. There was a certain amount of goshwow, to be sure, but there was a fair bit of intelligence, too. We didn't quite take fandom by storm, but we had nothing to be ashamed of.

This was the era of big fanzines, and of course we published a big fanzine. But big fanzines are expensive, and soon we reached the point where I was footing the bill for the entire thing, earning about three dollars in subscription money per issue. I was very glad when Don got a job. (I was working two, part-time, and not doing too well in college.)

But we rolled along, two more ditto issues, in 1970. For Christmas that year I got a mimeograph.

In 1971 we were publishing jiants, of a sort. We still weren't all that well known, but we published five issues that year, three hundred and fifty-eight pages. It was a good year. We published the first fanzine work of Jeff Clark and the incredible James Tiptree, Jr. The poetry and artwork of Paula Marmor. Charlie Hopwood wrote the first of his travelogues. There was an interview with Roger Zelazny in which Don forgot to stencil one of the questions, and I wrote "Then why was he maligned?" in each copy. We ruined some Tim Kirk artwork in an experiment with cheaper paper. I worked a small Steve Fabian drawing into a highly-controversial cover; I'm still very proud of it.

Late in 1971 Don decided to leave PHANTASMICOM. (I had left in the middle of the year, but now I had to come back.) The days of the Keller/Smith publishing jiant then ended. Producing became tougher and tougher. The February 1972 issue was so difficult that it lay printed but uncollated for over a month. I was sick of it.

Don finished it up.

I don't think Don and I will ever realize exactly how much of a team we were. I know that a large fanzine was a lot of work for the two of us. It's an enormous amount of work for the one of me.

So I decided to do a little fanzine, which I called KYBEN, and I published many good articles in the first couple issues, and everyone said KYBEN was a great little fanzine. But I ran out of articles, and no-one said KYBEN was a great little fanzine anymore. It wasn't. But it is still a good little fanzine and I'm starting to get articles again, so we shall see.

I planned a PHANTASMICOM for November 1972, and had it all run off except for the middle ten pages. These ten pages were for Don's "It All Started with Tolkien" article, eight pages of text plus illustrations. The illustrations were done. And we waited for them. In February I typed up a recent Bob Sabella article and a little piece by Darrell Schweitzer I had saved for just such an eventuality.

Discouraged, I announced that PHANTASMICOM 11 would be the last PHANTASMICOM. I had had all the pain from the monster that I was going to take. And now I'm writing this epilogue to almost five years of a science fiction fanzine.

(But I had a change of heart. Later we'll come to the prologue to the next five years.)

This issue is the culmination of five years of fanzine production. It is a direct descendant of PHANTASMICOM 1. The listing of "Contents: 1-10" should prove that, of which I'm rather pleased. For all the many, many changes we made (not the least of which was deciding whether an issue was going to be edited by Keller, Smith, or both), it is still the same fanzine. Bigger and better.

Everyone who has ever contributed to PhCOM has added to its flavor, of course, but it tastes mostly of four people--and if James Taylor hadn't decided he wanted to be a Poet instead of a Fan, it would have been five:

JEFF SMITH -- the current proprietor of PHANTASMICOM. It was his meager 1968-9 collection of fanzines which served as the model for PhCOM 1. He has typed hundreds of fanzine pages at over forty words per minute using only his left thumb and the first two fingers of his right hand. This is quite a spectacle, and his friends when bored ask him to type so they can watch in amazement.

DON KELLER -- the Founding Father. The scrawny high-school kid who opened Pandora's Box by saying "Let's start a fanzine" has gained a pound or two and moved to Philadelphia--apparently in the belief that it is half-way to California, where he hopes to become a Big Name Fan.

JEFF CLARK -- an integral part of PhCOM since his first pretentious reviews appeared in PhCOM 5. More than one person has mentioned him as an "editor," though plans for that fell through. He is currently considering moving from California, and being pretentious in Chicago or Boston or something.

JAMES TAYLOR -- one of the four original editors of PhCOM, and the second to relinquish the post before the first issue was published. PhCOM started out ditto rather than mimeo because Jim happened to have a large supply of liberated ditto masters, and only a small supply of liberated mimeo stencils. He has now contributed prose, poetry and artwork to five widely-spread issues--generally under the threat of grievous bodily harm.

JAMES TIPTREE, JR. -- depending upon whom you listen to, the best writer in fanzines, the best of the newer science fiction writers, or one of the best short story writers in America. (Or a crashing bore.) He is a private person not given to blatant autobiography, so his reminiscences this issue take a slightly different form from the others. Tip is sometimes too original for his own good.

While we five have each prepared special articles for your delight, I have also put together an issue of a science fiction fanzine typical of my science fiction fanzines. We have our interviews among the new generation of sf writers, our book reviews (though not quite so many as usual), our Paula Marmor poem, our non-commercial short stories (I don't publish amateur stories anymore--non-commercial ones...). Also, the Donald G. Keller article that was supposed to appear last issue. Some of the Paula Marmor artwork for it is that which also was to appear last year; others were done when we assumed the first batch was lost forever. This does put us a year behind in fantasy reviews, and it is a year lost to PHANTASMICOM forever. Part VI of the series is appearing simultaneously with Part V here in THE EILDON TREE 2, edited by Don, and available for one dollar from The Fantasy Association, P O Box 24560, Los Angeles CA 90024. The Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series is now in its death throes, so Don will not be writing this particular series much longer anyway.

Two items in this issue are reprints, which I should explain to you. The reviews by Roger Zelazny were written for the Baltimore SUNDAY SUN. I thought the review of the Clarke novel was excellent and wanted to share it with you, and I threw his other two pieces in as a bonus. The story by Charlie Hopwood was sold to the semi-pro anthology FULCRA I was editing three years ago. The publisher ignored the book into non-existence, though, and I returned all the manuscripts. Charlie's was the only non-professional one I liked well enough to keep for PhCOM, and Charlie agreed. At the same time, though, he used it for a creative writing assignment and from there it went into the Towson State College literary magazine. So I am "reprinting" it. It has nothing to do with either science fiction or fantasy, but it is good.

I could not get all the artists I wanted; they're all doing pro work in some capacity or another and don't seem to have all the free time they used to have. But you should recognize Mike Archibald, and Paula, and everyone. New to PhCOM are Alex Eisenstein, and Steve Stiles, and that lackluster old fantasy artist Judith Weiss.

It isn't quite what I had in mind a year ago--but in many ways it's even better. I hope you won't skim through this issue. You're quite welcome to leave it beside your bed and read twenty pages a night before turning off your light. Just start at the beginning and glide through.

I did this for you, after all.

THE JET GAZETTE

JEFF SMITH

In the eleventh grade, before I had any idea that Dick Geis was forming part of his reputation in fandom by his rather incredible manner of talking to himself, I wrote for English a homework paper in dialogue form. The paper was based on a very dumb assignment, one that seems to be a favorite of English teachers--most people seem to have written at least one. The teacher gives the class a list of a dozen unrelated words, each of which must be incorporated in a paper. "A real paper," she said; "I don't want you to cram them all into one sentence and think you're done." I don't remember what all the words were (get used to it; I don't remember half the stuff I'm going to talk about here), but by pulling some at random off the liner notes on this record album here I can give you an idea of how my paper started:

--Attracted by music from a beach party, seventeen green garbage monsters jumped from an airplane over the river and killed the mother very dead by rolling her into a little ball.
==What do you think you're doing?
--My English assignment.
==You idiot. You were told not to put them all in one sentence. And why that horrible green ink? Ugh.
--I left my pens in my locker, and this is the only one my mother has that writes. And I think it is more challenging to try and get all of them into one monster sentence. Any fool could squeeze them onto a page somewhere.
==Yeah, well you might as well ball that piece of paper up and toss it in the garbage can. You did the assignment wrong.

...As you can see, by the time I reached the bottom of the third page I had managed to sneak all the words in again at least once. And I had a ball writing it. (Sorry.) Everyone who saw it before it was handed it thought it was brilliant and by far the best in the class.

I got a C+, and the following comment (which to this day I find inexplicable): "I do not expect to be entertained by everything you write." Jesus Christ, what was I supposed to do? Bore

her to death? What did she expect from that dumb assignment?

Fortunately, my creative urges were not stilled. I persevered into the twelfth grade--where I met an even more humorless teacher. I don't even want to talk about her--except that we students speculated wildly on her sex life. We couldn't imagine anyone who was that cold and who disliked every one of her male students (and yet liked the girls) married, yet she was. We hypothesized shamelessly. (She was a big BEOWULF fan; my two major papers for her were a comparison of BEOWULF and Andre Norton's STAR GATE, and a history of sword-and-sorcery dating back to--of course--BEOWULF.)

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Bruce Gillespie and I were talking on the way home from Don Miller's. (That casual phrase is supposed to make me sound like a fan-about-town to those who don't know me. Those who do know me know I don't often find myself in fannish company outside my three or four cons a year.) Bruce said the reason he continues to write criticism and doesn't plan to try and write fiction is because there are a lot of mediocre fiction writers but few good critics.

Similarly, I suppose, I am working on PHANTASMICOM 11 instead of on the novel I was hacking out in hopes of picking up a few extra dollars to subsist on. I would be very pleased with myself if I managed to finish the book, but the novel would be mediocre at best. PhCOM 11, if the reality comes even close to the plan, will be quite an above-average fanzine.

So which is more important?

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Ah, suffer! I remember my first poem. I wrote it when I was ...very approximately...eight. It was called "The Broken Gate" and it went: "Our gate is broken/We have to leave it open/Our dog gets out/And runs about/But we see her once more/When she comes back to the front door."

The poems I wrote in my later years were not much better, so I gave up. I switched from one non-talent to another, and started drawing. *nostalgic sigh* Does anyone remember the early PHANTASMICOMs, chock-full of my artwork and Don's poetry? Ah, for the good old days...

What I drew, back in my youth, was comic books. Tons of them. My first hero was Changeable Chuck, patterned after Tom Terrific from the Captain Kangaroo tv show. (As my previously non-existent artistic abilities have atrophied over the years due to misuse, I shall not attempt a portrait of Chuck.) CC's super-power was that the antenna on his head enabled him to turn into anything he desired to turn into. His sidekick was Little Head, who was drawn to match his name. I don't remember if he had any powers or not.

I had a whole organization of heroes, called the Justiciers, but for the life of me I can't remember who was in it. I know they lived in Starland, which was shaped as a five-pointed star, and that each major hero lived at one of the points--but the only other one I remember is the Flying Bucket.

The Flying Bucket had his origins in a pre-Justicier creation called "The Mountain Climbers." Now, bear with me; I swear that what I'm about to tell you is true. Every Mountain Climbers strip was identical--and there were dozens of them. In every single goddamned episode, four stick figures, roped together, climbed a mountain. The mountain would always rise to a point, and at the top there would be a huge, round boulder. As our intrepid heroes neared the summit the boulder would lose its precarious balance and roll down toward them. And they would run back down the mountain with the boulder in hot pursuit. Undaunted, next time they'd go back up another mountain with a boulder on top.

Eventually, I don't know why, I got bored with them, and I had them bowled over by one of the boulders. Three of the four were crushed and the other somehow fell off the mountain. As he was hurtling to his death he was suddenly transformed into...The Flying Bucket! About the only thing the Flying Bucket could do was catch falling people--he could change size at will--and he did a lot of that. I don't remember if my villains ever realized my heroes would never die from a fall. Not with the Flying Bucket around! (He might even have been able to save Gwen Stacy.) Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the Flying Bucket, though, was that when he resumed his human form, which he eventually learned to do, he was still a stick figure, even though the rest of the Justiciers had meat on their bones. I'm sure there was some sort of logic to that ....

I mostly drew the Justiciers on folded pieces of paper, little comic booklets. I don't know the speed at which I produced them, but it was prodigious. Ghod only knows where I got all the plots--they were slightly advanced from The Mountain Climbers, I'm sure. But I had enough ideas to run two series. One series was the booklets. The other...

I started to write letters of comment on every issue of JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA--the model for my banding together all my heroes. These were handwritten--as I assume most locs to comic books are--on one side of a sheet of white paper. On the other side was an installment of a Justiciers epic. I assume that was supposed to impress editor Julius Schwartz somehow...every month a new chapter. (Again my memory fails me: How did I know where I had left off the month before? I guess my memory was better then.)

So far as I know, none of those letters was ever published, for some strange reason. Eventually I stopped drawing on the backs of them, but I kept writing them. And they started being published.

Again, I must confess to not remembering. I know of three letters I had published in comic books (one was a letter in THOR suggesting Marvel do Conan in comics form); there may have been more. My magnum opus was a long, rambling (you think I ramble now?), practically stream-of-consciousness letter in defense of Gardner F. Fox, My Hero. Schwartz cut it to fit on one page.

Things started here with a HAWKMAN story about a lost city of flying gorillas, written by Gar Fox and drawn by either Murphy Anderson or Joe Kubert. As I was at that time deep in my Edgar Rice Burroughs period, the story was very much to my liking. A couple issues later, though, when the letters concerned the flying gorilla story, one letter-writer criticized the story in very strong terms--

and not just the story, but Gar Fox in general.

I will not try to hide the fact that in tenth and eleventh grades Gardner F. Fox was one of my favorite writers--he was my favorite comic-book writer, easily, and I read all his paperback books, too. (I liked his two Burroughs pastiches, WARRIOR... and THIEF OF LLARN, and a historical novel, THE LION OF LUCCA, best.) So I wrote this long letter explaining how good Fox was.

A couple years ago I found a copy of the issue with my letter in it, and...well, if I never find another copy I'll be quite satisfied. It's pretty awful. (I also found a shorter letter that wasn't bad at all.)

I don't know whether it was my good letters, my weird letters, or the Justiciers, but Julius Schwartz did take notice of me. In one of my letters I asked if there was any chance I could write for DC. Schwartz said yes, and sent me a Fox script so I could see the form. I immediately launched into a two-part JUSTICE LEAGUE epic of immense complication. A time-traveler on the Planet Rann went into the past and while there killed Adam Strange. A descendant of Adam's from the killer's time traveled back to our time to get the JLA to go into the future to save Adam. Some member's also had to go to the descendent's time to finish up the descendent's battle with somebody-or-other in his own time--in which he no longer existed due to the death of his ancestor. Vaguely, that was the basis.

I had finished the first half, and my neighbor was typing it up for me, when I got a note from Schwartz suggesting the JLA was a rather advanced comic; why didn't I start off with an ATOM or ELONGATED MAN script?

And that was the last letter to pass between us. I was an immature high school kid, and if I couldn't do JLA like I wanted I wasn't going to do anything. And so my career in comics ended before it began. This is something I could kick myself for now, because I'd love to be writing comics today. But after that one time I never tried again. (These last couple years, since I've started buying comics again, I've learned a lot about how a comic should be written. I had no visual sense back then, and my script must have been quite static. Wish I still had it.)

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My first real publication--something of more than one copy--was a newspaper I did in fifth grade. I lived a little south of Baltimore then, in Glen Burnie, a one-year exile. Across the street from me lived Gary Lake, and he had a sort of "printing press": an ink pad and a stamper that letters could be placed in--a tedious operation at best. We occassionally used it for headlines; but even though we realized we couldn't use the kit, we had decided we were going to do a newspaper, and so we did. Gary typed, and I hand wrote--carbon paper was employed as much as possible, but to get enough copies we had to write each pages out several times.

Gary was editor-in-chief and news editor. I was features editor. Every week Gary would choose the most interesting stories off the news-summary pages of the MORNING SUN. I did a comic strip and a feature article--generally a piece on some foreign country or other, complete with map. We'd sit in Gary's room and do up a

stack of these things to sell to our classmates.

Gary's "press" came with three pre-made stamps: one was a lion and one an airplane; I forget the other. One of these had to be our symbol, and tie in with our title. Lion News? What? It was Mrs. Lake who came up with the winner: THE JET GAZETTE. Not only did it sound not too bad, the JG initials stood for Jeff and Gary. Gary was upset that his initial came second, but he got over it. (If this were happening now, I think I would call it PAPER AIRPLANE. But what can you expect from the fifth grade?)

In my senior of high school I was one of the major editors of the literary magazine, WAWOYAKA. There were two co-editors (one of whom did no work), three assistant editors (ta-dah!) and the rest of the Advanced Composition class. We turned out a pretty good magazine, but if I had had my way it would have been better (of course!). I had submitted a story (now lost) called "The Waters of Oblivion." I had to push to get it through--one of my colleagues disliked it because I'd used the word "infanticide" and she didn't know what it meant. But it was tentatively accepted. Then, when a physics class went way over my head fifteen minutes before the end of the period, I sat down and created a little thing that looked like a crossword puzzle. When I showed it to the WAWOYAKA people they went ecstatic and used it in place of my story. Rats!

The major problem, though, was over a surreal space fantasy by the most disliked guy in the school. It was a really neat, trippy piece that was one of the best prose pieces submitted to us. I didn't like the guy, either, but it was a good story.

Our system was that all submissions went into a basket, and the class members were supposed to pull the pieces out, read them, initial them 'yea' or 'nay,' and return them to the basket. If a piece got five nays it was rejected, if it got five yeas it went to the editorial board. One of our people took the fantasy around to people, said "You don't want him in the magazine, do you?", and people would nay it without reading it.

I took the piece to the editorial board, and we managed to pass it three to two. Out "tolerant" friend, who had passed it around, said it was ineligible, that he had gotten five nays and it was rejected. From the front of the room, I charged him with finding five nays who had actually read it. He said he had the initials. I said the board passed it. We yelled and screamed at each other. Then our advisor did me in. "Jeff, I've read the story, and I don't understand it. Can you explain it to me?" In the heat of battle, on the spur of the moment, I just couldn't come up with a lucid explanation for a story about a philosophical rock floating in outer space. The story did not go in.

Instead, one of the advisor's dumber students had written a passable paper. The advisor wanted to reward him by publishing it. We didn't like it, but we published it.

It was plagiarized from the Baltimore NEWS-AMERICAN.

You can't win 'em all.

All the above represents some of the outlets my creativity found to leak through. I also wrote some science fiction for a couple years. I have a nice selection of rejection slips and letters you can look at the next time you stop over. That died out, though. The last few years have found me stuck in the second paragraph of almost everything I've attempted. I don't worry about it. I still start stories; someday I may finish one. If not, what's the loss? You can't miss something you never really had.

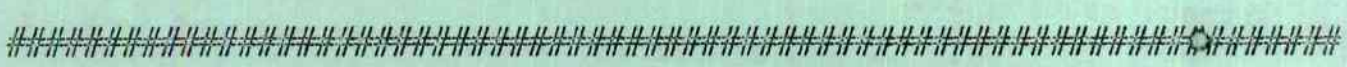
I have found my current genre in the fanzine. I believe I am more an editor than a writer, but I enjoy doing something in which the editor is expected to write, to set the tone for his publication. The best of both worlds. Almost the best of all possible worlds, in terms of restrictions and limitations, and the lack thereof.

I could not express, in twenty-five words or less, what I hope to achieve with the Phantasmicom Press Publications. For one thing, I have no consistent goal. PHANTASMICOM has a specific broad form, but is capable of infinite variety within its range. I point it in the direction I wish, but I'm always changing that direction. I'm not saying that is either a good thing or a bad thing--only that it makes it quite impossible for me to define my goals.

At this stage in time I see fanzines as the most creative and suitable thing I could possibly do. Not the most important, surely not the most lucrative!, but the project that could give me the most satisfaction. (So maybe it is the most important.) I could write, but I am consistently discouraged by the quality--I might enjoy my stories if other people had written them, but they do not satisfy me. I write a couple pages, look at them, and say: That's not bad --but it's shit. I could be a good commercial editor, given the chance--I'd love to do that...but even that couldn't substitute for the freedom I have here.

So. I can't tell you what I'm doing here. But I can tell you I'm enjoying myself tremendously.

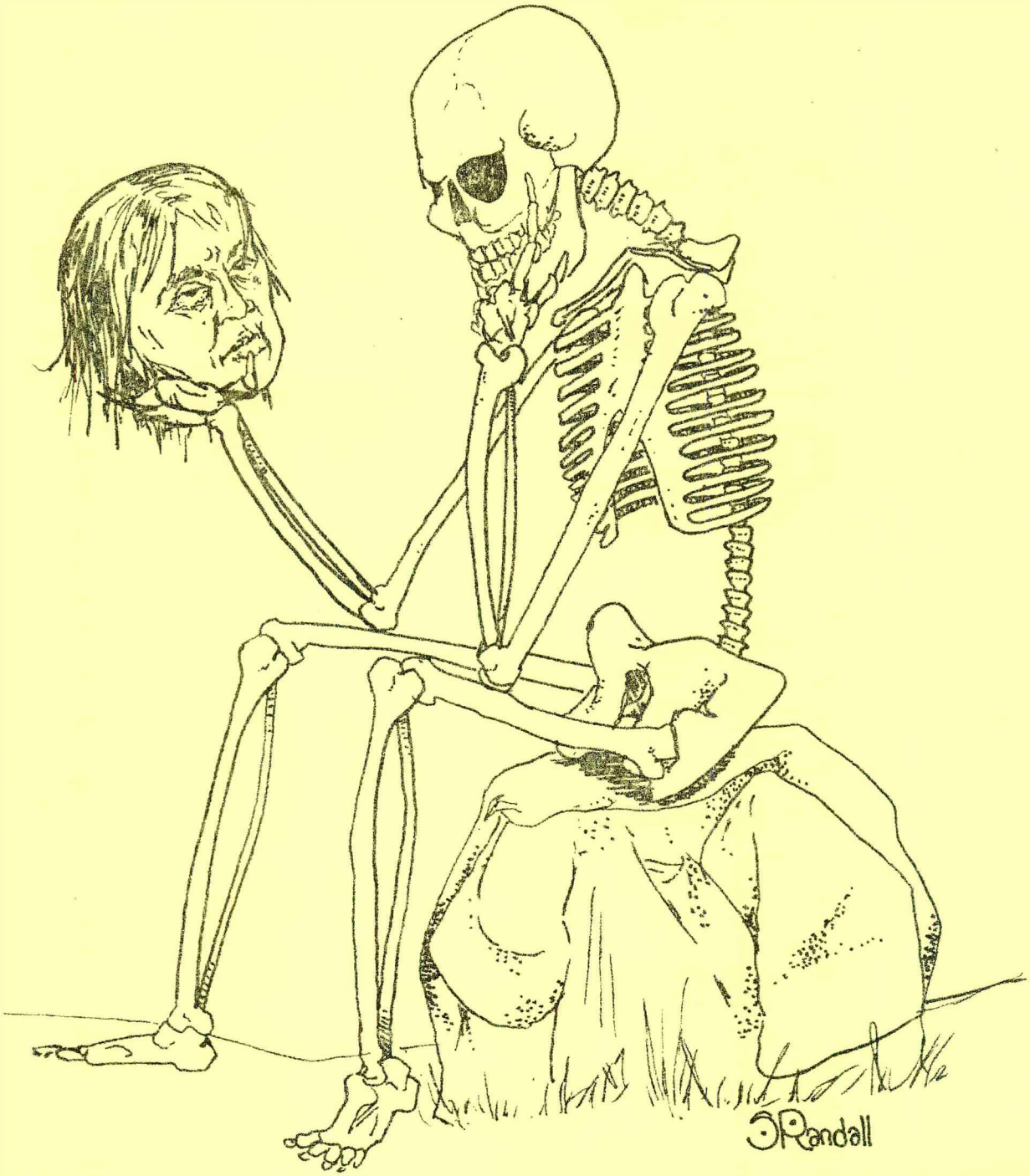
Hoping you are the same...



FOUR-THREE

PERHAPS HAD HE BUT KNOWN THE TRUTH,
WOULD
BUT, HE DID NOT STAY,
WENT, HAVE
GONE.
FOR
AND THE WORLD IS A POORER PLACE,
CONVICTION
HE TOO
HAD IS RARE,
TO
BE
IN OUR LOST TIMES.

--from WAWOYAKA 1968


J Randall

THE CREATION OF CARLTON BALFOUR

DON KELLER

Looking back over the five years in fandom for me that this issue marks, I find that they have been the most changeable and turbulent years of my life. The person who co-edited that first issue of PHANTASMICOM bears only a vague resemblance to the person here at the other end of the tunnel. And I owe the vast and beneficial changes I have been through largely to fandom.

At eighteen I was much the same as I was at twelve; true, I had graduated from high school, and had acquired on my own a lot of knowledge on more or less useless subjects, but at bottom I was no different. Introverted, nose always in a book, uneasy around strangers (particularly girls), I was a social zero. The seventh-grade get-acquainted dance (where I danced around all by myself) was the single social act of my entire adolescence: I missed out completely on the whole phenomenon of dating, dances, and parties. I never went "out" at all, beyond to an occasional movie, and that was almost always with my family. My experience, such as it was, had come vicariously through reading.

For like most fans (of which I am a typical example), I read voraciously in my youth, so much so that my mother despaired of my ever getting enough "exercise and fresh air." She also used to limit the number of books I could take out of the library (creating a feast-and-famine situation in the time before I started buying paperbacks), and her direst and most potent punishment, only imposed once or twice, was to forbid me to read. Ah, lost are those bygone times when I would read sometimes three or four books in a single day, and still find time to eat and sleep and play sandlot ball with the neighborhood kids. (Unlike a large percentage of fans, I am a reasonable amateur athlete.)

Despite parental badgering, I had never held a job by eighteen, apart from helping out in the shcool library for a few dollars and the like. I had never traveled farther than New York or Richmond, and these were anomalies, special trips; I hardly ever left the environs of Baltimore's western suburbs.

Thus we have a portrait of me at my eighteenth year; I had little to recommend me except that I read a lot, mostly science fiction; and indeed, the only close friends I had were sf readers as well. Literary discussions were (and still are) the best method of opening me up.

Chief among my friends was Jeff, whom I had met when I was seventeen. We fell quickly into the pattern of ceaseless conversation about books, lending them back and forth, and keeping an eye on what was coming out next. His consuming interest in Bur-

roughs led him to start getting ERB-DOM, and this in time led to his getting SF REVIEW and ALGOL, the first real fanzines I ever saw.

I found the whole concept immensely exciting. I had just begun writing seriously, and of course the obvious daydreams of professional publication had followed; but as well, I wanted to do my own publishing. I was interested in books as aesthetic objects as well as containers of entertainment. Now, most daydreams of Being a Professional (whether it be a baseball star or guitarist, to name two I have also had, or whatever) are safely indulged because they are all well out of reach. But here I suddenly found my daydream possible to realize, and never being one to stem my entusiasm, I suggested to Jeff that we do our <u>own</u> fanzine.

Jeff was cautious at first, because he was always better at recognizing the difficulties that lay before us; he knew why the angels feared to tread where I wanted to go. But the enthusiasm was infectious, and we embarked on our first issue. We had to teach ourselves everything: how to write book reviews, articles and editorials; how to arrange pages and fit in type around illustrations; how to run a ditto machine and type the masters; and we learned quickly. The first issue came out in September 1969, in time for my eighteenth birthday, and I think it rates pretty high as first issues go. However, because our connections in fandom were limited, and we had only our own writing to offer, it did not do so well. We lost money on the effort. (Little did we know that this was going to be standard procedure.) We even contemplated folding it after the second issue, except that an important event occurred.

An inquiry about a Roger Zelazny radio interview had gotten Jeff in touch with radio announcer Pat Kelly, who proceeded to take Jeff to his first convention, Philcon 1969. So when Balticon 1970 came around, we both attended, and an encouraging sale decided us to continue PHANTASMICOM.

The convention was important for me, because I realized that there were a lot of people in the world who read sf and liked to talk about it. The discovery of like souls was immensely heartening, and only my total lack of money prevented me from attending more conventions immediately; the next one I made was the Balticon a year later.

But by that time my world had changed completely, because 1970 turned out to be perhaps the most eventful year of my life. I finally got myself a part-time job in a bowling alley, and typical of my laziness and lack of ambition, I held it for two years. My three-years-younger brother, tho had dominated the family, tragically drowned; this hit me hard and brought on a good deal of deep thinking and emotional maturing, not least because I had to take on a good deal of home responsibility his presence had taken care of. And most importantly, I gained a social life.

My first year of college had been much like my last year of high school: I dutifully went to classes and spent my free time in the library pursuing my own studies. I also had a ride back and forth with a friend, so I was still leading my sheltered, introverted life. Paul Simon's great song "I Am a Rock" was a great favorite of mine because it described my situation so perfectly.

But early in my second semester my ride fell through, and I began having to take the city busses back and forth. This was very good for me, because it threw me out into the city, in contact with all its advantages and services as well as its dangers and unpleasantnesses. I explored new bus routes and created intricate itineraries to take me downtown to the libraries and book stores, which meant I could go any time and not depend upon someone with a car.

Most importantly, though, early in my second year I met the Towson Table Gang. Jeff had transferred to Towson, so we were in school together again--for a while. He met Mike Archibald, one of the Table's charter members, and I subsequently met him in a bookstore, and it was he who started me coming to sit at the Table.

My integration into the Table must stand as one of the central events of my life; the members' ready acceptance of me completely for myself was a much-needed egoboost, and I began sitting at the table rather than going to class. My grades gradually but steadily diminished from that point, and college became for me, as it often is, more a social event than an educational one.

Still, I did learn a great deal. I learned how to play cards properly, and began seriously practising guitar after seeing how good Mike was. More seriously, I watched and observed the social interaction of the group, and started to open up and participate myself. I learned that girls were not some aweful alien race, but people you could talk to like everyone else. I went to parties (mostly at Charlie Hopwood's; I'll never forget that first Christmas party) and learned how easy it was to get roaring drunk. In short, I was going through my adolescence rather late.

So a whole gang of us went to that 1971 Balticon, with the first mimeoed issue of PHANTASMICOM. The medieval revel there led me to change to a more appropriate hairstyle that looked better the longer it got, and so I was in style with the times. Jeff and Ann got together at that con, which had a decided influence on my life from that point.

Also in 1970 I had begun exchanging letters with Darrell Schweitzer, and discovered the pleasures of fan correspondence. We traded hundreds of pages of letters (to say nothing of books and opinions) before we finally met over a year later. In the summer of 1971, following up an ad about a linguistics fanzine (languages being a favorite subject of mine), I got in touch with a Los Angeles fan, Paula Marmor, who introduced me to the wonders of fantasy fandom out there, and profoundly influencing my eschatological thinking from that point on. Between these two and several lesser correspondences I learned to write letters and how to communicate strictly on paper, which helped my pedantic writing style to loosen up.

For PHANTASMICOM it was a year of consolidation; we refined our techniques and produced issue after fine issue, and carved our niche in fandom. We began to get good reactions finally, and when we took an issue to Noreascon, our first worldcon (and still one of the best cons I have ever been to), we were recognized, people knew us.

Socially, Noreascon was important at the time only. I met a

lot of people, and became easier with talking to strangers, but no one I met then did I ever see again. (Conversely, many of my closer acquaintances were there, and I did not meet them till later.) My other con for the year, Philcon, led me to meet Darrell, and also Bob Whitaker, who became one of the PSFS gang. I also learned how to find a place to stay in a far city (fannish connections), and that it was possible to approach pros like Lin Carter and talk to them.

The next year was even stranger. At my third Balticon I met Geo. Alec Effinger (Piglet), the first pro I got to know well, and also Judith Weiss and Morris Keesan, still very close fannish friends, and got in touch with Bob Dills, another important friend, whose artwork adorned my first solo fanzine, HOLWE LOND. For Jeff and I had come to an amicable parting to pursue our differing goals; my fantasy influence was getting much stronger. Lunacon '72 was immensely important: I met Dills for the first time, got to know Judith and Morris better, and learned to sleep on peoples' floors and stay up all night. From that point on I was a true congoer.

Judith and Bob both lived in Philadelphia, and they convinced me to start coming to PSFS meetings every month, and it was the best advice I ever took. Darrell lived there, too, and Whitaker came from Delaware every month, and Nancy Harris (soon to be Bob's fiance) lent her unique personality, and this made a regular social gathering that vied with the Table in its contribution to my growth. It also refined my skills in arranging transportation to get there.

And the best con I ever went to was LACon, the 1972 Worldcon. (It also vied with the following Balticon as the most emotionally upheavalful.) I had the time of my life, meeting Harlan Ellison, as well as the LA people I had been getting to know by letter, and grooving on LA as a place; I decided I wanted to move there. It was also the first time I ever flew. The power the con exerted on my mind, both before and after, cannot be exaggerated. And as a result, I came by a complicated process to adopt the pseudonym Carlton Balfour; it seems in retrospect to be a most appropriate baptism, because I was a new person in many important ways.

Not that I have not continued to grow, and still have room to improve, but I reached a plateau where new growth was easier. Since then I have been through a number of strong emotional experiences, of which my move to Philadelphia to share an apartment with Judith was only the most important. I got to know Gardner Dozois, a writer whose work I worshipped, and I discovered that even the best writers are people, too. I got acquainted with the hip world, acquired a full-time job, and learned how to live on my own in the city. And, with my moving to LA after Discon, my life still changes.

Whatever the future holds, I am grateful for how Carlton Balfour is different from Don Keller: he is traveled (even out of the country to Toronto), secure in a job, more emotionally adjusted, confident of the respect of his friends, in short, a more complete person. And I owe it (either directly or through Jeff) to my connection with science fiction and fandom.

TOM SWIFT AMONG THE HEATHEAN

JEFF CLARK

It was called "The Untimely Death of Arthur J. Kronos" and, though the piece is no longer within my grasp, I remember that it was about a man (Arthur) who invents a time machine that's a sort of dial-and-wristband affair, with a cubicle as home base--to launch him from the present, so to speak. He goes into the distant past where a Neanderthal does him in with a mortal wound and, in his final dying reflex, Arthur twirls the dial and transports himself to the far future, after the final atomic war. He lies dying on top of a small mound-like hill, with the fall-out, like snowflakes, drifting down about him. I seem to remember that the last line went something like: "And somewhere far away, a distance of time, eons removed, a dog barked expectantly." That was Arthur's dog, waiting for his return.... Ahhh, such a beautiful touch. It struck me at that time: Jeff, you're pretty damn good.

Not too many years ago I was to write an end-of-the-world short, "Grand Finale," about a second-rate research scientist who causes the inadvertant end of the world with a revolutionary new sudsing cleanser for housewives. His first experimental demonstration proves to be the last thing ever seen, and the story begins: "The vats were infinite--nohow could the bottom, the stainless-steelistic nether-surface, be glimpsed. The liquid depths were perspectiveless, this effect enhanced by gas bubbles, drifting singly and in myriads, glinting slivers of reflected light from the intangible thrumm-thrum quasar pulse fluorescents, appearing as a cosmos of star-patterns, form-shifting and disorienting." And this one ended: "At any moment now the world bruises, dissolves, diffuses, perhaps to shroud its satellite, unobserving." Now that last line is even better. I submitted this piece as a final assignment in a literature class, whose teacher I respected, and who wrote in part: "Excellent in style and imagery, description and dialogue, etc., with good satire..." Well, I didn't quite agree with him afterwards, and neither did my best critical friend...but inside I knew, and had occassional outside verification, that there was some talent.

But to go back...

"Arthur J. Kronos" was written by me at about age 13 or 14. I composed it in my basement room of my family's suburban home in the small town where I've lived most of my life so far. It was done at the same desk I'm sitting at right now--an old, flimsy thing with scoring and patchy varnish across its surface. But it's

served me well, and I think I may have written my first review for PHANTASMICOM on it, and in that same room. That room, which was the only non-temporary part of the basement for me, became a point of concentration for a kid who was usually introverted. There, I could escape the more superficial, social problems caused by unwanted adult visitants, as well as distractions to reading. It was a good place for hours of reading, but earlier things had been a little different.

A couple of friends and I used to have speed-reading bouts at about age 9 or 10. Mostly Tom Swift, Jr.--though I did read a few Hardy Boys and even a Nancy Drew once--and these books were probably my first SF reading matter. One day, however, I decided to stay indoors instead of playing, and read, straight through, TOM SWIFT, JR., IN THE CAVES OF NUCLEAR FIRE. I spent the better part of the day doing this, lounging about the livingroom and gulping it all down with perseverance. It was very satisfying. This was about the time I began to realize the pleasures of reading are more pleasurable as a solitary activity--if not solitude in physical fact, then at least in the all-important mental atmosphere. With this deduction there could be no more seeing who would finish a book or a chapter first.

Hence, the blessing of a private basement room.

But the beneficial atmosphere didn't make me turn from reading to eventual writing...not in any voluminous sense. Writing was always a tough chore, just in the act of handwriting till my hand was sore from the unneeded pressure I exerted, not to mention thinking things up I was sufficiently interested in. Most of my creative writing was for school, when I had to do it for a class assignment. Reading was an easier thing to do.

And of course, there were other interests. Sports for a while, rag-tag amateur baseball, which fallaciously caught my interest when I hit a home run one day, much to even my surprise; that made me a valuable player for a while, though I hardly ever hit one again. And there was an early passion for insect hunting and collecting, and the formation of a little zoo of jars. My family owned a large open field or lot for a yard and there was plenty of opportunity for that. The praying mantis was a favorite as a pet: I used to feed whatever one I currently had white bread and pound cake, a dubious diet at best. And I caught large, impressive black ants from the colonies under the slate sidewalk, and terrorized my sister by occassionally putting one--with its positively gargantuan pincers--onto her young and repulsed flesh. I was sure she had to love it...at least a little. Finally my parents sold the lot to be built upon and the backyard wilderness dried up, and with it the avid interest in insects.

But later on I discovered "the cinema." Always an impassioned, mindless fan of every horror movie, I had previously made treks into the nearest large city most weekends with friends to see the latest opus at Leow's or RKO's...even if it turned out to be ATTACK OF THE FIFTY FOOT WOMAN, which I knew even then was really bad. But I loved to watch. My first viewing of FRANKENSTEIN on TV had scared hell out of my sister and me, and I got into the habit of catching everything, whether on the tube or in the theatres. When (John) Zacherly first sported his antics in and about such movies on local TV my friends and I were prompted to set up a secret sanctuary in the basement room and perform raucous, argumentative brain operations with large chunks of raw cauliflower.

But that was not serious activity; its impulse didn't spring from a fearfully intellectual basis. As I said, I at least discovered the cinema. One day I felt somehow compelled to go and see BIRDMAN OF ALCATRAZ....It seemed like a fascinating subject. It was. Wow! It was the best film I'd ever seen; it even made me read the book. For the first time, I told myself, I had begun to notice direction, photography, acting, the works. The works! It was a positively eye-opening experience, and I pursued it further, through other films and other revelations.

I was pushing my way up through high school soon, and I knew that some day I'd have to make a career choice--if for no other reason than to have a direction once I encountered college, which seemed to me inevitable: one couldn't conceive of not going, it wasn't done. Film became a serious enough interest for me to opt for it, first as an acting career (I was truly mad), then as a directing and general filmmaking activity. It seemed reasonable to follow such a passion. I would be an artist in the newest art there was.

I had wanted to be a chemist before that. That is, until I had to take high school chemistry; all that nitpicking and turgid ritual became too discouraging. But as a childhood activity, with a Gilbert chemistry set, it was passionate fun, another kid-community project, random and reckless. We came oh-so-close to making that old charcoal/sulphur/potassium nitrate combo work properly; but we never really discovered the missing ingredient. I used up more of the nitrate than any other chemical, though I tried to fairly employ some of the less-interesting-looking ones in various concoctions for balance, anyway. My cousin and I even conjured up hideous mixture after mixture to pour onto a large flat tree stump, cut down close to the ground, in an attempt to destroy the poor thing. We probably thought it would wither and somehow fall apart astonishingly.

I watched MR. WIZARD religiously on TV. Even attempting to duplicate his efforts was less taxing than suffering through chemistry class.

So the cinema seemed like a good bet. As I look back upon it now, I realize it was the big mistake I made in terms of my later life. It routed me in the wrong direction for four years, while I tried to first prove to myself, then to fool myself, that I was interested in making movies.

I know better now, but I had what I felt were genuine impulses of dedication at the beginning. I started fooling with 8mm film and the animation of plastic models and dolls (thanks to that ubiquitous inspiration, Ray Haryyhausen) even before attending school. I suppose that, way in the back of my mind somewhere, and beyond the simple felicities of animation, I had big plans to whip the old celluloid into the shape of my visions. But then, working my way through two schools and doing more and more the bare minimum of what was expected of me, I became increasingly alienated from the technical orientation of film, the bleak prospects of commercial enterprise. I was still a reading man. My last effort, my farewell performance in film, was as assistant editor on a "pilot reel" for a feature film, a project which eventually proved to be almost a skin flick. It was a hell of a lot of fun, but I could no longer fool myself that I was interested in sticking with film as a mode of expression and livelihood. It is much too unstable for someone who likes to center his concentration in one room. Writing

is a more personal medium of expression, and it's an awful lot easier to work with physically, because you only have yourself and the paper.

Writing... I can't say it was a revelation. I had really always known it was lurking just behind the reading which had never faltered over the years. All along I had received favorable comments concerning my "creative" school assignments ("You know, Jeff, you really ought to try writing sometime"), which usually indicated that I could do a better snow-job on term and thesis papers than anyone else. Yes--I had real style...and some substance, too.

There once was a lamb named Mops,
Who thought that he was tops.
He strayed one day and then
Landed in a bad wolf's den,
And Mops, who thought he was tops, turned into lambchops.

That was a limerick done in the fifth grade. My younger sister used it three years later for the same teacher, and the woman remembered it. "Try to be more original," she wrote on my sister's paper. I remember it, and quote from memory, over many more years. It's strange what the mind chooses to proudly recall.

But to consider writing as a prime activity: how long and at what pace could I expect to go on being clever? And secure in that cleverness? (I am nothing if not threatened by insecurity.) Having rejected film, I still couldn't consider writing in a serious career light.

But my bout with film had done some subtle things with my outlook. BIRDMAN OF ALCATRAZ had brought me to a small sense of artistic awareness. In time I found myself becoming really critical. (What else would an introvert who's serious about concentration become?) This carried over into my reading, and I began to examine SF more closely and with better (I think) pretension than I had film. At least, I think the results were, and are, more worthwhile; cinema has a long way to go before it becomes as accomplished a medium as literature. (No, I am not going to elaborate on that here. That's a tirade.) I had forever felt since first reading it that SF has something really going for it, something special. That's what all of us feel one way or another. I had secretly sneered at my elders for either ignoring or shaming me for my choice of reading matter. I knew I was right. I snuck science-fictional subjects into school projects whenever I could. I was meek but righteous.

Soon after artistic awareness, I became righteous but intellectual. I still am to a great degree--"righteous," that is; the "intellect" goes without saying--but with a better sense of proportion and vindication, I feel. (Do I hear some dissent out there? Silence yourself or I'll put large black ants on you.) I was beginning to attempt a justification of my love of SF, what I had all along felt to be good about it. An attempt at a definition of these things, but working from the particular to the general in isolated works. And further, I wanted to pinpoint what else I thought good and valid about various SF works--on their own terms as far as fiction is concerned.

It was a little exciting to feel I was intensifying and sophisticating my original bliss with SF. Yes, I was becoming intelligently righteous and was able to put up (therefore not having to shut up), but I didn't really acquire a head of steam until I quite

tentatively submitted a first review to PhCOM via Jeff Smith. He was awfully nice about letting me in at the time, though I felt I was being a little stuffy for fandom. Such is the monster he created, however, that I no longer care about seeming stuffy. I positively flaunt obtuse crotchetiness at times.

Here I border on my relations with fandom. I'm not sure what they are, or what to say about them, except that we keep our distance much of the time. My first con quite a few years ago was the Lunacon at which Don Wollheim was guest of honor and in which Delany and Clarke took part. The year of 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY. It was a veritable paradise--discovering all the people and all those fascinating things in the huckster room. I could observe without really being observed myself. I still maintain it was probably my most pleasurable convention, for they seemed to become less and less so, overall, the less anonymous I became. They seemed less appreciable as whole entities the further in I moved, the more familiar I became. The general flux of cons often somehow remains alien to me...though, on the credit side, it's become very important to me to see again and again the friends I can share enthusiasms with. One of them I met at Noreascon, probably my second favorite. But there I was back in a congenial element: I was living on the cheap for a week at a flea-bitten hostel and, after the con was over, I spent the rest of the time losing myself in discovery of Boston.

The isolation and independence was always there, one way and another. Having begun to review critically, I could no longer read books with completely the same simple pleasures; but the new ones I discovered made the entire experience more important to me. There was more than ever reason to take up that independent, personal activity, writing. Unfortunately, I was becoming so self-consciously critical that writing was a laborious, difficult activity--as it yet remains.

As I poked my way along, film had fallen by the wayside and had died a quiet, neglected death. It's strange, but I hardly ever go to films anymore except for curiosity about certain subjects, or the echo of a preference for a formerly favorite director--or the still strong and happy need for horror and SF movies. But I don't now go to see them with the same intent seriousness, wanting to be devastated by something magnificent. (At best, they usually hover not far above the pleasure-level of ROGER TOUHEY. Ask Jeff Smith about him.)

Yet apart from those two tracks of interest since childhood--one mounting while the other surged and finally fell--random things spring up under odd pressures. For instance, I've recently renewed with a vengeance an almost unrealized and ancient interest in the pre-Columbian cultures of Central America. This had begun because as a child I was gruesomely fascinated by the imaginative gore of the Aztec sun-sacrifice in particular--you know, slicing open chests and pulling out palpitating hearts, the sizzle of frying blood and the aroma of ecstacy--but it's gone far beyond that now, I'm glad to say. The Maya were more highly developed, and so am I. Then again there are maverick interests in both rock and classical music which hit upon odd conclusions. I'll maintain to you any day that Charles Ives was doing raucous, superimposed rhythmic patterns to better effect (see especially the pieces "The Fourth of July" and "Symphony #4") fifty and sixty years ago than most any rock group today has been able to achieve, for all its amplified force. And I could expound--once we've pinned down or set aside consideration of what "rock" is--on the fact that Procol Harum is beyond the sha-

dow of a doubt the best (rock) group working in contemporary music today. Undoubtedly, I say stubbornly. A great deal to do with the fact are the lyrics of Keith Reid, who is about the only writer on the scene having more than pretensions to his work, which is able to stand up under closer scrutiny...though I won't give you that term paper now.

But perhaps by now you know whether you might want to read such a piece some day. That's the point.

The basement room I had was about 10 x 14 with a window each on the longer walls, one of them a sort of picture window I could look out of over the desk, into the backyard. Apart from this desk, lamps and bookcases, there was a horizontal file cabinet on a wooden dolly in one corner, full of collected, plastic-bagged comic books of the FLASH, GREEN LANTERN, MYSTERY IN SPACE and ATOM ilk. I liked some of the artwork very much, and still own them all. Around the walls were bracketed shelves with plastic models, an early hobby requiring skill and concentration to do well. My favorite type of model was military ordnance stuff--howitzers and tanks and half-tracks and such. They had begun to decay from more than clogging dust once my kid brother had reared his ugly little head and gotten his uncomprehending hands on them. But they still afforded pleasure: I took the broken ones, one by one to relish them all, and burned them beautifully and esthetically. Once I took a half-finished aircraft carrier, the "USS Forrestall," which had parts all in a sickening neutral gray that I refused at last to bother painting, and blew it apart in front of my young friends with a one-and-a-half incher. It was a good blowup; the others were good burns. These were small sacrifices which could always be replenished in the room, they were pieces of atmosphere touched upon by those who invaded my domain, imposing upon me even as relatives or friends, and unstabilizing things briefly, like removing the powder from a butterfly's wings just by touching them. Jabs of unconsidered and sometimes inconsiderate curiosity. They didn't actually mean it; the things of my domain did not mean the same to them. But it was usually all right with me in the end, I was always accumulating new stuff, and I often gave up the sacrifices willingly after an initial fit, perhaps, so I could appreciate them myself. Yet I don't know whether that was how I considered the thing at the time. The perspective is much clearer now.

I try to write a lot more now, and I haven't built a plastic model in years and years. I've made a temporary truce with the desire to be a pen-and-paper artist; I go about it slowly and part-time, trying to grasp only when I'm being seized by the conception before me. My character names have evolved from Arthur J. Kronos and John Starmer through Jason Crimpson and Winthrop Farnington to Rudger Falcoven, Norton Mackley and Wilma Deery. There is a difference in the sound of those names, even out of context. I think I've got some style. I gave up the basement room quite a time ago, but discovered that isolation could be gained in cities if and when I wanted it. Cities are full of people, true, but past a certain density you needn't be bothered for long stretches at a time if you prefer, like attending a con for the first timid time. With nothing much more than my desk and ever-increasing collection of books left from my original environment, though, I am now and then aware of what I'm doing and where I might like to go--and at times I can even control these things, as well as the degree of anonymity.

But, more often than not, it takes a lot of concentration.

IN THE DIRECTION OF NOTHING

JAMES TAYLOR

Once upon a time long long ago in the dark woods there lived a group of singular animals who called themselves the Berserkies and who were lithe and fair-haired and who made their living destroying state property and getting screwed on hash, grass, PCP and many other rare and exotic rainbow-producing chemical agents. There was Zonzo and Lizard Man and Bullweenis Kareenis and many many fine furred creatures too unhealthy to mention even at this late date. As spring dawned each year on the now long-incinerated Grayhouse (home of the roach, the mouse, the Volta Fiore, the Tricycle Magician and at one time even Bucky, though he preferred the library after hours or unlocked anonymous vans) one could hear the pearly tones of guitars and recorders and allthreads (lobbing off sundry non-essential portions of the aformentioned house till all hours. And the police kept away from all these fine proceedings because gentle and understanding and because they had been bought off long long ago. And all this went on for many many years (at least three anyway) till the arrival of Pope Little Winge (which mattered little if at all.....)

Well.....that was the fairy tale I lived for a couple of years anyway....until the old art building burned down at college and took a greater portion of my accumulated mental debris with it (as well as depositing at least twice as much to fill its place). Since then (spring of 1972 for all of you history/fact/time/"id state of the artist" people) there's been a trip to Europe (second lost love of my life), a master's degree in creative writing (none of which is evidenced here.....as if its acquisition could or will be evidenced qualitatively), a national poetry publication called CAIM (a "thing" whose existence, rather than the garbage/weird feelings/strained relationships which its birth involved, I will crow about), a trip to L.A. (a nice place to shit but I wouldn't want to get killed there), a $1000 poetry prize (the poem was worth that much even if

the contest wasn't.....the other thing I'll crow about), a mannequin named Esmerelda (the lady on the bus, lady of the moon, the queen of ice),countless love affairs and a couple of "in love" affairs (oh well) and _____ (fill in the blank). But all of this, really, is so much horseshit. History is, after all, just history. People come and go, degrees come and go. College (this country anyway) teaches you that you must somehow validate your existence. Not how or why, just that you must. History becomes important. "Social milieu" becomes tragically "relevant." Whether one's work/life/etc. is worth "looking into" becomes the topic of debate even before discussion of the work itself. Whether one is reading the right books (as in college), whether one is aware of the recent developments (as in politics) or whether one is "up on" the innovators (as in "science fiction") takes on the responsibility of somehow "proving" one's existence. I'm not against discussing (whatever that means) literature, but, mostly, I don't anymore. I don't really care whether I "got" the "meaning" behind what somebody was "really" doing. Mostly, I just try to enjoy what I do (a hard enough thing to do today even without all the academic head clutter that's so prevalent) without giving a good fuck who sees what I make, who knows what I read/have read or who cares. If my existence is "validated" writing "artistic" poems and fiction, I really don't see how or whether that places it above a "science fiction" piece I write. Or if that whole thing rates above not writing at all. I gave up on making art "in the garret" waiting for that little man to come in through the one window, tap me on the shoulder and whisper in my ear, "Hey fella....you're an artist now." That's a New York art critic trip I can live without. I can do without getting a college teaching job just to prove I'm a "real" writer. I can do without talking about my fiction as "science fiction" to get a handle on it or saying my "science fiction" is getting closer to "mainstream" to prove I really was trying "to write good fiction." I try to look impressed whenever somebody shows me where some college or other is teaching a science fiction course, proving (I guess that's the point) that "science fiction" is finally "being recognized." Mostly, I've been trying to do away with titles. In my last semester of bachelor's work, I had to take a course where I was required to ("...in my own words and as a result of what you have learned in this course...") define "Art." I concluded by saying that there were no "...objects of art (a set of objects beyond adequate definition and thus without members)..." and that art should be "...people making objects no aesthetic definitions, in their narrowness, could ever fully satisfy."

P.S. The instructor didn't like the paper.

PAGES FROM THE JUNGLE ASSASSIN'S NOTEBOOK

MORNING

The return.
Rifle scope and gun
in case, I set foot for home weaving
through underbrush thick with morning.
Sun over left shoulder, I make my
way to camp--a day's rest.
The sun raises the blood in the world.

DUSK

The sun, gorged, drops
blood. The jungle
beats like
a heart--
my time.
Cut with paths and diced
into rice paddies, the marshes
bubble in the wet dark.
I'll halve the sky with steel.

NIGHT

The departure,
infra-red scope in palm.
Sun's brother,
brother of sun's
fire. Moon
over left shoulder. The world
turns on a steel pin.

DAWN

The moon drops.
Sword and angry face, the
sun cuts through the clouds.
Here, at the left hand edge
of the world, in the sky behind the sky,
the saw tooth clouds gnash the wet ground.
An old weapon, an old fight.
Unturned, the sun and moon,
those twin eyes, watch and turn the world.

James Taylor

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Summer 1969
Edited by Donald G. Keller and Jeffrey D. Smith
Ditto/front cover offset/68 pages incl. covers/100 copies/"quarterly"
Front cover--Apollo 11 moon plaque/Back cover by R. Pennington Smith

Contents: "Editorial" by Donald G. Keller; "Ad Astra" (fiction) by Donald G. Keller; "State of the Field" by Jeffrey D. Smith; "Parallel Lines" (fiction) by James R. Taylor; "William Morris and Heroic Fantaay" by Donald G. Keller; "The Walden Report" compiled by Jeffrey D. Smith; "From the Sin Bin" by R. Pennington Smith; "The Kindness of Strangers" (fiction) by Jeffrey D. Smith; "The Late Show" by Jeffrey D. Smith; "Sonnets on Time" (poetry) by Donald G. Keller; "Book Reviews by Donald G. Keller, Jeffrey D. Smith and James Taylor III; "Caveat Lector #1"(feghoot) by Jeffrey D. Smith; "Editorialitis" by Jeffrey D. Smith.

Artwork: Jeffrey D. Smith, R. Pennington Smith, Randy Smith.

PHANTASMICOM 2
Winter 1970
Edited by Donald G. Keller and Jeffrey D. Smith
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Contents: "Editorial" by Donald G. Keller; "State of the Field" by Jeffrey D. Smith; "How About This? Roger Zelazny" (interview) by Patrick Kelly; "Sonnets on Time" (poetry) by Donald G. Keller; "F. W. Bain's 'Hindu Fantasies'" by Donald G. Keller; maze by Jeffrey D. Smith; "State of Mind" (fiction) by Janet Fox; "Caveat Lector #2" (feghoot) by Jeffrey D. Smith; "Philcon 69" by Jeff Smith; "Prosoversepix" (book reviews) by Donald G. Keller, R.J. Raub and Jeffrey D. Smith; "Phantasmicommunications" (letters); "Editorialitis" by Jeffrey D. Smith.

Artwork: David Keller, Jeffrey D. Smith, R. Pennington Smith.

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Artwork: Derek Carter, Tim Kirk, William Rotsler, R. Pennington Smith

PHANTASMICOM 3.5
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Contents: "Crocodile" (fiction) by R.A. Lafferty.
((The version published in PHANTASMICOM 3 was incorrect.))

PHANTASMICOM 4
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Phantasmicom Press Publication # 1

Contents: "Speaking Of..." by Donald G. Keller; "Aenon and the Air-Maiden" (fiction) by Donald G. Keller; "The Quest of the Golden City" (fiction) by Darrell Schweitzer; a poem by James R. Taylor III; "Midnight Fantasy" (poetry) by Darrell Schweitzer; "Sonnets on Time" (poetry) by Donald G. Keller; "It All Started with Tolkien, Part Two, 1969" by Donald G. Keller; "Like the Title, Baby" by James Taylor; "Prosoversepix" (book reviews) by Donald G. Keller and Jeffrey D. Smith; "Phantasmicommunications" (letters); "Editorialitis" by Jeffrey D. Smith.

Artwork: Mike Archibald, Charlie Hopwood, Tim Kirk, Dan Osterman, S. Randall, William Rotsler, R. Pennington Smith.

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Contents: "Speaking Of..." by Donald G. Keller; "State of the Field" by Jeffrey D. Smith; "How About This? Roger Zelazny" (interview) by Patrick Kelly; "Sonnets on Time" (poetry) by Donald G. Keller; selections from A DIGIT OF THE MOON (fiction) by F.W. Bain; "Prosoversepix" (book reviews) by Jeff Clark, Donald G. Keller and Jeffrey D. Smith; "Phantasmicommunications" (letters); "Editorialitis" by Jeffrey D.

Smith.

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Contents: "Speaking Of..." by Donald G. Keller; "If You Can't Laugh at It, What Good Is It?" James Tiptree, Jr., interviewed by Jeffrey D. Smith; "Bibliography as of April 1971" by James Tiptree, Jr.; "And Shooby Dooby Dooby" (fiction) by James Tiptree, Jr.; "Sonnets on Time" (poetry) by Donald G. Keller; "Kangaroo" (fiction) by Jeffrey Diven Smith; "The Secret Place" (poetry) by Darrell Schweitzer; "Eunuchs Arise" (cartoons) by Michael S. Archibald; "Some Comments on the Hugo/Nebula Awards" by Robert Sabella; "Prosoversepix" (book reviews) by Jeffrey D. Smith, Jeff Clark and Donald G. Keller; "Phantasmicommunications" (letters); "Editorialitis" by Jeffrey D. Smith.

Artwork: Mike Archibald, Jeff Cochran, Charlie Hopwood, Dan Osterman, S. Randall, Bill Rotsler.

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Phantasmicom Press Publication # 6

Contents: "Speaking Of..." by Donald G. Keller; "The Folk of the Mountain Door" (fiction) by William Morris; "Glastonbury" (poetry) by Paula Marmor; "The One True God" (fiction) by Darrell Schweitzer; "I Was a Partner in Wonder" by Avram Davidson; "Voices in the Sky" by Robert Sabella; "Dark Odyssey" (poetry) by Darrell Schweitzer; "Prosoversepix" (book reviews) by Jeff Clark, Donald G. Keller and Jeffrey D. Smith; "Phantasmicommunications" (letters); "Ah! The Cerealand Parade!" fanzine reviews by Jeffrey D. Smith; "Associated Editorialitis" by Jeffrey D. Smith.

Artwork: Mike Archibald, Dan Osterman, S. Randall, Bill Rotsler.

PHANTASMICOM 8
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Phantasmicom Press Publication # 8

Contents: "Speaking Of..." by Donald G. Keller; "It All started with

Tolkien, Part III, 1970" by Donald G. Keller; "For Bedwyr" (poetry) by Paula Marmor; "Alternate Wordline" by Jeff Glencannon; "The Last Meeting" (fiction) by Darrell Schweitzer; "Ah! Boston: Noreascon '71" by Charlie Hopwood ***KYBEN 1 edited by Jeffrey D. Smith (pp. 27-46): "Associated Editcrialitis" by Jeffrey D. Smith; "The 20-Mile Zone" by James Tiptree, Jr.; "Parallel Worlds" by Jeffrey D. Smith*** "Prosoversepix" (book reviews) by Jeff Clark, Donald G. Keller and Jeffrey D. Smith; "Ah! The Cerealand Parade!" fanzine reviews by Jeffrey D. Smith; "Phantasmicommunications" (letters).

Artwork: Mike Archibald, Cy Chauvin, Charlie Hopwood, Tim Kirk, Dan Osterman, S. Randall, Bill Rotsler.

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Phantasmicom Press Publication # 11

Contents: "Speaking Of..." by Donald G. Keller; "How Do You Dream Your Dream?" by Jeff Glencannon; "The Rock Scene" (cartoons) by William Rotsler; "The 20-Mile Zone" by James Tiptree, Jr.; "The Reaper" (poetry) by L. Sprague de Camp; "It All Started with Tolkien, Part IV, 1971" by Donald G. Keller; "The Story of the King Who Lived Forever" (fiction) by Darrell Schweitzer; "The Sea and I" (poetry) by Paula Marmor; "Prosoversepix" (book reviews) by Ted Pauls, Jeffrey D. Smith and Donald G. Keller; "Gothic Corner" by Angela Sordillo; "Ah! The Cerealand Parade!" (fanzine reviews) by Jeffrey D. Smith; "Phantasmicommunications" (letters); "Editorialitis" by Jeffrey D. Smith.

Artwork: Elman Brown, Grant Canfield, Jeff Cochran, Cy Chauvin, Jack Gaughan, Dan Osterman, S. Randall, Bill Rotsler, Bob Smith.

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Phantasmicom Press Publication # 20

Contents: "Editorialitis" by Jeff Smith; "The Universe; R. Zelazny, Owner" by Stephen Hunter; "Up Against the Wall, Roger Zelazny" (interview) questions by Jeff Clark, Don Keller, Jeff Smith; "Making Waves: Malzberg Scales an Apogee" by Jeff Clark; "The Rag-Bone Man" (fiction) by Michael S. Archibald; "Spaceships, Dragons & Secondary Universes" by Cy Chauvin; "Clarion West: A Look from the Inside" by Bob Sabella; "On Lowering the Cost of Hugos" by Darrell Schweitzer; "The Moor Ghost" (poetry) by Paula Marmor; "Ah! The Cerealand Parade!" fanzine reviews by Jeff Smith; "Had We But World Enough, And Time..." (book reviews) by Jeff Smith; "Phantasmicommunications" (letters of phcomment); Smith Pulls A Glicksohn" by Jeff Smith.

Artwork: Mike Archibald, Cy Chauvin, Seth Dogramajian, Jim McLeod, Dan Osterman, S. Randall, Bill Rotsler.

PHANTASMICOM-MUNICATIONS

LIN CARTER

It's certainly discouraging to hear that PHANTASMICOM, under new management, is re-orienting itself away from fantasy and fantasy criticism, towards science fiction criticism. I had regarded the magazine as about the only fan journal that was not already oriented towards science fiction, and as about the only fanzine in this country which discussed fantasy at all (and I do not except AMRA in this, as AMRA at best gives miniscule book reviews, and no criticism worthy of the name); now to learn that it, too, was turning to science fiction strikes me as very sad news indeed.

Does anybody really care much about science fiction these days --or, Crom help us all, actually read the new stuff? I can hardly believe it. I seldom read more than four or five science fiction titles a year these days, so dreary has the stuff become and so uninspired the current crop of authors.

With PHANTASMICOM turning away from fantasy, to peruse the works of Barry Malzberg and his peers, all I can say is, thank Crom for Morris England! At least SHADOW and BALTUS and ANDURIL are still flourishing!

(S(While science fiction will be our primary interest here--we PhCOM-people, at least, find modern sf vital and important--fantasy will remain a major concern.)S)

DENIS QUANE

The Zelazny section was good, particularly the interview. While Zelazny is not one of my favorite writers (I'm one of the old-fashioned type, who prefers the Heinlein-Asimov-Anderson-Clement axis, and subscribes to ANALOG), he is a damn good writer, and knowing more of him will certainly not hurt appreciation. One of the reasons I started getting fanzines was precisely that they included this type of material. After reading Alexei Panshin's Advent book on Heinlein, and learning that the material in it had originally been published in fanzines, I felt that if this sort of thing was going on, then fanzines might be worth looking into. Well, I find that sort of thing is being done, and done well, in some fanzines, but not enough.

Chauvin's article left me with the feeling that what he says has been said before, at least approximately, by others. But even if it isn't original, he does express clearly one of the most impor-

tant aspects of what makes sf distinctive. With so much nonsense being written on the subject these days such a clear statement is valuable. As usual with efforts to make distinctions, there are some cases where assignment into categories by fixed criteria leads to unsatisfactory results. I have this compulsion to make lists and keep records of everything imaginable. For ten years I have been keeping a list of sf books read. Going back over the list, I find that books in the tradition of Campbell's UNKNOWN, such as Heinlein's "Magic, Inc." or de Camp and Pratt's Harold Shea stories, were included on the list, whereas other fantasies, even by established sf authors, such as those Conan stories written by deCamp or Leiber's Grey Mouser series were not listed. What is it about the first set that made me unhesitatingly class them as sf on first reading? It could not be the symbols themselves; the usual mythic symbols--demons, knights in armor, magicians, etc.--are present, whereas the technological/scientific symbols are either absent or only minimally present. Rethinking the question, it is obvious that it is the attitude toward the symbols, rather than the symbols themselves. In "Magic, Inc." or the Harold Shea stories, the "laws" of magic are used as if they were scientific laws, the mythic symbols as if they were technical phenomena. This tradition is a continuing one, Anderson's OPERATION CHAOS being a recent example.

DARRELL SCHWEITZER

I have to disagree with Cy Chauvin on the major premise of his article, namely that sf and fantasy work in the same way only using different symbols. A point like this came up a while back in a science fiction course at Villanova which I helped design, sat in on, and half taught. The class was reading THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS this week, having read THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES the week before. I suggested that the Bradbury book wasn't really science fiction because it wasn't serious about its premises. Much discussion followed, basically to the tune of what the hell did I mean. I mean simply that the Bradbury book makes a poetic statement using scientifically derived symbols. The Heinlein is about colonizing the moon. Bradbury didn't really think that the colonization of Mars would be like that (or at least I hope he didn't). He didn't care because a hard look at the possibility of interplanetary settlement wasn't what he had in mind when writing the book. It is very significant that Clifton Fadiman compares TMC with Lord Dunsany in his intro, rather than assorted science fiction writers. The book probably qualifies as sf because it is not impossible, but its intent wasn't towards serious speculation of a possibility. ("Speculative Fiction" is a misnomer, by the way. Heinlein coined it to describe what we call science fiction, and it best fits his own work, not the new wave stuff that has borne the label.)

MISTRESS was about political, social and scientific realities resulting from its premise. It is essentially what we'd have to call "true" science fiction, as opposed to the kind of thing which merely uses the science fiction vocabulary.

Fantasy and science fiction do not work the same way. Science fiction is not symbolic. It takes its basic premises seriously on their own terms. Of course in order to be taken seriously, such ideas must be within the realm of possibility. In other words they must be <u>not impossible</u>. When this is the case, the author treats his material in a certain way, so that it doesn't <u>feel</u> like fantasy.

(Thus old and outdated science fiction about promises we now know to be faulty can still hold up if well enough written.) Fantasy works exactly as Cy says it does. It evokes symbols, it works on the subconscious and the emotions. It seems to me that real science fiction must be by its very nature literal and intellectual, the polar opposite of fantasy. It also seems that there is a lot of material published today labelled science fiction that really isn't. THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION is a classic example. I don't think Delany considered the possibility or impossibility of his premise. That didn't matter; the story was supposed to produce an effect from the symbols it used. It was fantasy.

CY CHAUVIN

Jeff Clark's reviews and articles are always interesting. Like someone pointed out, Jeff's style tends to be overly complex and cluttered (like the piece you quoted on page 78, "overall staggeringness of conception," when "staggering overall in conception" would be so much easier to read), but I'm sure Jeff will eventually get that straightened out. (S(It's not quite fair of us to criticize Jeff for a line he dashed off in a letter, rather than a line in one of his polished articles. And while I agree with you about the awkwardness of Jeff's line, I disagree with you in that I don't think yours is any better. My turn? If I add a couple words I got: "the staggerring qualities of its overall conception." Next?)S) Anyway, I'd rather read any of Jeff's articles, despite the stylistic barriers, than most other people's serious stuff because Jeff puts a lot into his material. He doesn't do an off-the-top-of-the-head review like too many people--even Ted Pauls, I'm afraid. Sometimes I wish Jeff would direct his energies toward more worthwhile books, though. He really should consider doing a series on the "classic" sf books--A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ, THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, A CASE OF CONSCIENCE, etc. I don't think I've ever run across any in-depth articles on any of these books, and whether Jeff's conclusions were favorable or unfavorable, I think his views on them would be most interesting.

Jeff makes some good points in his latest article. I've liked some of Malzberg's short stories, and his style is dense, and in such short pieces as "A Soul Song to the Sad, Silly, Soaring Sixties" (FANTASTIC, 2/71) he seems to be constructing prose poems rather than stories. Some of his material is quite intriguing. However, I don't regard Malzberg as an important writer of sf--not important in the same sense that LeGuin, Lafferty, Dick, Clarke, Cordwainer Smith and quite a number of other writers are. I recall that Jeff mentioned in a previous issue of PhCOM that he had read a lot of fiction outside sf, but was drawn back into it for some reason, because he felt it held something unique. I can't pretend to know what it was that Jeff found unique in sf, but I would gather that it's imagination--I hardly think that Jeff's a hard science nut, and unless you want to talk about even vaguer subjects such as "sense of wonder" there's hardly anything else but imagination. And it is precisely in this area that Malzberg falls down, particularly in THE FALLING ASTRONAUTS.

On page 12 of this issue, Roger Zelazny says, "Science fiction has evolved from what it was back in the Thirties and Forties; now, a novel about space travel is passe." More than passe; clichéd even. In an article I wrote recently, I remarked that people con-

demn writers when they use cliched or stock plots and characters in their stories; why should we treat writers who use cliched imaginative elements in their stories any better? Or at least, why should we call them great sf writers? Malzberg is an sf writer, but I certainly don't think he exploits sf's imaginative potential to the fullest, nor do I think it should be implied that he does.

On a purely imaginative level (as opposed to a purely literary level), THE FALLING ASTRONAUTS strikes me as being about par with MAROONED. Perhaps Jeff would regard it differently? Of course, a novel's imaginative worth isn't everything. If it doesn't have some literary worth, too, I don't think it should be praised--I'm not the type of fan who slobbers over Niven's RINGWORLD or Farmer's TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO. But it seems to me that the best kind of sf work--the kind that LeGuin, etc., most often write--combines literary virtues with sf's imaginative ones, and this is why I don't think Malzberg is an important writer of sf.

Of course, maybe Jeff doesn't either. I don't really wish to condemn Malzberg; I just think he should be kept in proper perspective.

HARRY WARNER, JR.

The essay on THE FALLING ASTRONAUTS was splendid. If every new science fiction paperback could receive just one fanzine article along the lines of this one, it would be possible eventually to prove the long-held theory that all knowledge is contained in fanzines. About the disclosure of the outcome of the story: I'm naive enough to prefer to be surprised when I read a story for the first time, but I'm not mean enough to expect all essayists to refrain from discussing the ending just because it takes me years to get around to reading most stories. Maybe fanzine editors could adopt an informal agreement on a sort of statute of limitations: perhaps five or six months after first US publication of any fiction would be a protected zone during which the fanzines wouldn't reveal anything which the author clearly meant as a big surprise to his readers, and after that there would be no holds barred on the theory that most of the fanzine readers had had a fair chance to read the book.

Bob Sabella's article may be the best of the many articles that have been published about the writers' workshops in fanzines. Not the funniest, perhaps, but the one that gives the most complete-sounding description of how things go and conveys the strongest emotions to the readers out of the experiences of one participant. I'm very glad that Bob didn't take Harlan's advice. But obviously that advice could be valid only if Harlan had the ability to see into the future. What Harlan probably meant, whether he realized it or not, when he told people they should give up writing was: "You haven't made any progress as a result of writing under these workshop conditions toward writing the kind of science fiction that magazine and paperback editors are buying this week, and if you keep on writing and gain the ability to sell fiction, you'll damage the reputation of workshops as the place where a fellow can learn how to write better." I feel certain that a lot of workshop participants need badly the barrage of candid criticism and the orders to write stories on specified topics in next to no time at all. This must shake them out of lazy writing habits or destroy any fond delusions that their stories in the past were rejected because all the editors

coincidentally were overstocked at the time of submission. But a lot of excellent writers simply can't write rapidly, and some writers' reactions to criticism in fanzines leads me to suspect that they would never have become good writers if they'd undergone the experience of one of those workshops.

Like you, I suspect that either vote-buying or vote-buying accusations would cause all sorts of trouble, if Darrell Schweitzer's Hugo ideas were adopted. Maybe things could be changed from the other direction: leave the rules exactly as they are now, but put the stress on the nomination rather than on the Hugo. Everyone can nominate without paying a penny. So there goes the cost objection, if a propoganda campaign succeeded in making the honor of nomination virtually as great as the honor of receiving the Hugo. Instead of the quiet announcement of nominees in fanzines, trumpet them forth in some special kind of publication, complete with pictures and biographical materials and so on. Give the nominees something in recognition of what they've achieved: a certificate or a distinctive pin or something else, and present these awards at whatever cons the nominees happen to attend during the summer months before the worldcon. Put the nominees into the worldcon program officially somehow: an official party honoring them, maybe, a display of the nominated artists' work at the artshow, a room where nominees could stage panel discussions. I think this would be much better than the attitude which now prevails, the one that Bill Rotsler expresses in his letter, that finishing second is meaningless. I think finishing in the first five means an enormous amount, particularly just now when there are so many worthy candidates for Hugos in most catagories in the typical year.

The letter column contains some things too good for inclusion there. I mean, you hardly ever find prose like James Tiptree's anywhere, and how much chance is there that fanzine editors in 2001, looking through old fanzines for outstanding stuff to reprint, will ever think to leaf through your letter section? Christine Kulyk's poem there is superb, better than all but a trivial half-dozen or so poems I've seen in fanzines in the past six months or more.

MIKE GLICKSOHN

The Zelazny material was extremely interesting, both the original article and your interview. While I don't really give a shit what sort of typewriter Roger uses (this is being done on a Simpson-Sears "Speedwriter" portable with pica type, by the way) I did find some of the background on his novels interesting. What I'd like to see some courageous interviewer ask Roger is how he reacts to the widespread opinion in the fan press that he has failed to live up to the potential shown by his earlier works. When I first entered fandom, Roger was one of science fiction's bright hopes. (The other was Delany, of course.) Nowadays it seems that fan reviewers and critics are increasingly disallusioned with him. What is his reaction to this? How does he view his own development as a writer? Is he satisfied with the books he's now creating? Is there any truth to the allegation that he's to some extent copped out on that initial promise? You skated around the area a wee bit, but understandably didn't become too direct. I wonder if someone will some day?

Ahem. I've just gotten to your addendum to Darrell Schweitzer's article. Might I ask what the fuck you mean? If you're referring

to Sapiro's attempt to buy a Hugo, I'd appreciate it if you'd point out that the reference to me was your half-witted attempt at a joke. If you're not referring to the Scourge of Saskatchewan, then just what the hell are you talking about? That's a pretty low blow, friend, and it hurts, believe me. I've been very, very careful not to overly push ENERGUMEN for a Hugo--if you'll check recent issues, you'll find that nowhere do I ask people to vote for it. And I've certainly never attempted to buy votes. So please retract the allegation, or at least explain it. Perhaps I'm dour, but I fail to find it amusing. (S(That reference would have been okay in a letter when I knew the other party would recognize the truth behind it--that I was referring to Sapiro--but was inappropriate in a large-(well, medium-) circulation fanzine in which I couldn't know how many readers would know that it wasn't a serious comment. I apologized to Mike immediately, and I now apologize to any of you whom I might have confused with my slashed-out reference.)S)

BOB SABELLA

I especially enjoyed the Zelazny section. It blew my mind to know he typed in a reclining position with a typewriter in his lap. Being very lazy, I do some of my writing in a rocking chair, but that can be quite awkward, usually forcing me to retreat to a hard-back chair and a desk.

I really wish Roger had not turned fulltime pro. Now he is forced to churn out novel after novel merely to make a living, rather than lingering over shorter pieces until they are perfected. I wish he would write a giant bestseller soon so he could get back to the shorts. (S(New short stories from his typewriter should be coming along soon.)S)

My opinion and yours are completely opposite on the merits of THE WORLD INSIDE and A TIME OF CHANGES. I found the former novel very worthwhile in content but extremely dry in execution. So while I was easily able to read all the original novelettes, I could not get through the novelization at all. CHANGES was much better, but I don't think it was nearly the best novel of last year. Compared to Silverberg's two 1972 novels (THE BOOK OF SKULLS and DYING INSIDE), it pales terribly. Still, I enjoyed it much the better of the two.

However, we tend to agree on the merits of THE GODS THEMSELVES. I was very disappointed in it and hope it is purely a result of Asimov's rustiness rather than a true picture of the 1973 Asimov. I fear it will win the Hugo, though, and I cringe at the thought of what that will do for critical opinions of sf (about comparable to what THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN's winning a Hugo would have done for the field).

MURRAY MOORE

Look at all of the great fanzines, and you will see that they all have one thing in common: simple, one or two syllable titles. WARHOON. HYPHEN. OOPSLA. YANDRO. Now you know why LOCUS wins Hugos. What's in a name, indeed? You've stated in print that KYBEN brings in more egoboo than that other thing, PHANTASMICOM. There is little a reader can do with the latter in the way of breaking it down into something more familiar. (S(What's wrong with PhCOM?)S)

GARDNER DOZOIS

INTERVIEWED BY DONALD G. KELLER

KELLER: Which are your particular favorites among your own stories?

DOZOIS: That's kind of a dangerous question to ask an author, because stories are like children to him. It's like asking a mother which child of hers is her favorite. She may actually have one that on balance she would consider to be the favorite, but certainly all of them have their good points and their bad points, so it's hard to actually say. I would say, if absolutely pressed to it, that "Chains of the Sea" is probably my favorite of my own stuff so far. I kind of like "A Kingdom by the Sea," and I'm somewhat partial to "Flash Point," which just came out in ORBIT 13.

KELLER: Why do you like "Flash Point"? That one struck me as one of your lesser ones recently.

DOZOIS: I don't know. I liked--it's rather ridiculous for an author to talk about why he likes his own work--but I liked the philosophy that I put across. I thought I put it across fairly economically, and in a fairly interesting way. Almost disaster-by-implication, since nothing is ever definitely stated in the story about what's happening. However, if it works the way it's supposed to work, you get a definite sense of the catastrophe that is about to sweep upon the world and why it has come, and what the causes of it are, which I think is a good way to do something like that. If you take it at too direct a focus, if you just concentrate upon that one element, then you tend to belabor the obvious a little bit.

I like stories that make the reader work a little bit, and yet are not written in such a private language, or so enigmatically, that he doesn't have a good chance of being able to figure out what is going on. I think there's a happy medium or balance that you can strike between the two. I think a story that doesn't make its reader work a little bit is probably pap, or at least a lazy story where everything is prechewed for you and you don't have to think about anything that's going into it. On the other hand, certainly there are any number of stories written that don't really give the

reader a fighting chance to understand what's going on, because they're written in such a private language of symbols that they are in fact uncrackable to anyone except the author and whoever of his friends have been let in on the secret.

KELLER: Can you give any examples of stories like that?

DOZOIS: Oh boy. Nothing really comes to mind. A lot of the stories that were published in NEW WORLDS originally. I used to get NEW WORLDS when I lived in Germany, I got it in the original magazine form, I received that for several years--and it was a magazine of amazingly uneven quality. At the very top level it was better than most of what was being done in the United States, and then the rest of the magazine was made up of agonizingly awful crud.

I don't know. There are stories you see that are in effect prose poems rather than stories. They are obviously meant to have an effect similar to poetry's, and I think whether these stories are good or not depends frankly on how good a poet the author is. Many of them, however, are excuses for ambiguity and lack of discipline. Perhaps I shouldn't say this, because I have been accused of being ambiguous and cryptic and New Wave, and of writing incomprehensible stories. But I don't really think that I do, obviously --I wouldn't write if I did. I think some of my earlier stories are written a little more cryptically than I would write them now, but I really don't think I've ever written anything that wasn't accessible to the reader if he were willing to put a little effort into reading it.

KELLER: You certainly are much clearer than a lot of the others. You have also been accused, by Alexei Panshin especially, of writing almost literature of despair, very pessimistic stories with no light at the end of the tunnel at all.

DOZOIS: I think this is...well, maybe not a mistake on Alexei's part, but a difference of opinion or of taste. I am actually fairly optimistic if you are willing to concede me my own rather grim brand of optimism. I remember I had a story called "King Harvest," which appeared in NEW DIMENSIONS II, and Alexei did a review of that for F&SF wherein he quoted a line out of context from my story as a sort of quintessence of the negativeness and decadence that he was accusing NEW DIMENSIONS of purveying. The line was: "Now his fury had drained away, leaving only a scummy residue of futility. There was nothing he could do--it was too late for anything." The implication was that my story boiled down to nothing but someone staggering around in futile despair and then dying and rotting, etc. But even within the terms of that individual story that wasn't true. The line taken out of context only indicates the state of mind of the character at the beginning of the story....

KELLER: Because it <u>is</u> from the beginning of the story.

DOZOIS: It is from the very beginning of the story. But by the time you get to the end it is quite clear that the entire story is in fact the psychic or spiritual odyssey of the character. He's put in a totally endgame situation where there is no hope, he's not going to survive, he's not going to escape, he's not going to go to the country and raise mushrooms and children the way they do in a lot of after-the-bomb stories. I mean, he's dead, walking around dead from the first part of the story, because obviously there is

no physical hope for him. And yet in spite of this, in spite of the fact that throughout the course of the story he is stripped of all his illusions of escape and continuance and he comes to the realization that civilization has died completely and that humanity and life itself may in fact have died completely--in spite of this he comes to some sort of spiritual reconciliation with himself, so that by the end of the story he actually is at peace. He dies, but he dies in a fairly hopeful manner and at peace with himself, and I don't consider that to be indicative of despair. There are so many situations that we face daily, as individuals and as a race, that don't have any solution.

I mean, we are all going to come down to death eventually, so any grace we get depends on how we face it. I was greatly into Norse mythology when I was a kid, and this is sort of the same philosophy. Ragnorak is going to come, and what counts is how you face it. And how you live your life in spite of Ragnorak. I think that a lot of my stories that are called despairing stories actually have this sort of very bleak optimism in them. For instance, "A Dream at Noonday," which is the reminiscence of a man after his death on the battlefield, has been called a grim, pessimistic story because the character is dead from the start, and there is no hope for his recovery. But although he's dead he remembers life with fondness, which is I think what makes that an optimistic story, rather than the embittered story it's supposed to be.

KELLER: What about "Machines of Loving Grace"?

DOZOIS: "Machines of Loving Grace" is also, I think, an optimistic story, although I have had people tell me the story made them feel like killing themselves when they read it. It is an optimistic story because the woman keeps fighting against the forces of unlife and oppression. By the very act of killing herself every time they bring her back to life again, she is fighting them, and even though it is hopeless she is continuing to fight them in the only possible way left for her. I think the story would really be pessimistic and futile if at the end she resigned herself to the fact that she was going to have to live like this and that she had no options. But it's quite clearly indicated that she will in fact keep killing herself over and over again, because that is the only means of human contact and rebellion that she has left. Which again is a sort of bleak, grim optimism, but is indeed, I think, optimism.

The type of optimism that is often touted in science fiction is, I believe, a rather cockeyed optimism that has little basis in reality. It's too easy. This whole business of heroes and high optimism in science fiction is a little wonky. There are heroes, but they're not the type of creatures that abound in old pulp fiction with the huge muscles and the steely grey eyes and the unblinking gazes. They're people who are pretty fucked up in their own way, like everyone else, and have their faults and virtues like everyone else, but who for one reason or another manage to do something heroic. And it's this groping for transcendence in spite of your mortality, this aspiring for something in spite of the fact that you're made of mud and shit and clay, that's where actual heroism and actual optimism lies. The other stuff, the blind, easy optimism, is fantasy. Things just aren't like that. The way the mechanism is set up, from our point of view, there are many, many more ways for something to go "wrong" than there are for it to

go "right" and that's a fact of the universe that we have to face. Now how you face it, I think, and how you deal with things in spite of it are where your actual moral worth lies.

This is funny, because I find myself caught in the middle of this ethical struggle between optimism and pessimism, because the proponents of optimism like Alexei hold me up as a demon of pessimism and futility and black despair, while the more avant-garde New Wave proponents hold me up as a model of naive cockeyed optimism and sentimentality, so I'm sort of flayed in half, damned if I do and damned if I don't. I just try to cleave as closely as I can to whatever conception of reality I can distill in my own head, which is of course what every writer must do.

I write a lot about empathy, what the lack of it does to people, how people keep struggling to reach others in spite of the sometimes overwhelming coldness of the world--somestimes they make it, more often they fail, because the odds are on the side of the house, but they keep trying because it is the human condition to do so. Sometimes they are forced by the warping processes of society to try to touch each other in weird or grotesque ways, even destructive ways, but it is basically the same impulse.

KELLER: As a kind of corollary to this, you are known to people who go to conventions as one with a very wild sense of humor, yet very little of this comes across in your work. Your work tends to be deadly serious, in fact. Can you explain this discrepancy at all?

DOZOIS: I suppose I could explain it using the old bit to the effect that I am large enough to contradict myself, but that's a rather chintzy way out, so I guess I'm going to have to think of something to say after all. Well, actually there is some humor in my stories, but it's a very dry, deadpan type of humor that perhaps doesn't come across all that well to some readers. Why I don't write primarily humorous stories...I don't know, really. I suppose that says something about the difference between a public persona and a private persona. You have to have a way to bite into your material, a way to bite into the world, before you can actually get anything down on paper. An avenue of attack. My avenue of attack has not, to date, anyway, utilized much obvert humor, although I somewhat relish the rather black humor of some of my fictional situations.

Maybe it's because I'm basically an introvert at heart. I have my extroverted side, too, but most of the serious thinking I've done about the world, and life, and all that, all the sophomore questions, have been done by myself, while I was walking around in a mood of rather bleak solitude. So maybe it's because the stuff springs from that kind of soil that it bears the kind of fruit that it does.

I think that humor is a tool that has to be used very carefully. It's mostly not used very well in science fiction, or in regular literature, either. In a way, the ultimate vehicle for the expression of complete despair is humor. And perhaps I have not yet gotten down to the level where I feel that much despair. Certainly the funniest books I can think of are all completely black pictures of life and humanity. Robert Heinlein in STRANGER makes that comparison between humor and pain, and it seems fairly

valid as far as I can tell.

The things that I consider funny in my stories are things that very few other people have considered funny.

KELLER: Well, for example, what?

DOZOIS: This is hard to explain, but I believe that a story can work equally well on several levels. I think a story should be constructed that way, so that it works in a multileveled fashion, but it has to operate without the levels interfering with each other. If it doesn't then I don't think you have a successful story. This is why many of the stories I decried earlier as depending too much on a private symbolic level are to me failures: because they operate on the symbolic level, on that metaphysical level, so obviously and with that level so much in the foreground, that they don't function on a level of real-world time. I think you have to have all the levels integrated to have a really complete story. First, you have to have the story that is on the surface and exists as a seperate thing, so that someone can read straight across and be perfectly satisfied with the story. Then you have to have an underlying symbolic structure, a metaphysical structure, a philosophical structure that functions consistently on its own and is there, to be picked up by any who want to read deep enough to pick it up--but yet which does not interfere with the mechanics of the overstory.

There are many examples of this. I do it all the time in my stories. Mostly the underlying stuff comes in unconsciously, although I do work at codifying it, trying to integrate the two levels, perhaps more than some writers do. There are elaborate structures of religious symbolism and metaphysics in several stories that work quite well, I think, on a surface level without the reader necessarily even having to be aware that something's going on underneath. "Machines of Loving Grace" is loaded with religious symbolism that I think is fairly well codified. So is "The Sound of Muzak," and even "Chains of the Sea" for that matter.

I don't think that this is something that the reader should be beaten over the head with. It has to be something that comes in almost subliminally--although not quite subliminally, of course, if you are a conscientous reader. Without one element or the other the story will fail. If it has the surface real-world action but no thought-out understructure of symbology then it will ring hollow. If it has only symbolic structure pushed to the foreground and unrelated to a real-world structure, then I believe it will bore most readers. Or put them off.

KELLER: Is the circular and entropic symbolism in "The Sound of Muzak" deliberate?

DOZOIS: Oh, certainly.

KELLER: That's one of the few times I've noticed that sort of thing right off. And "Muzak" has always struck me as one of your stronger stories for that reason.

DOZOIS: This is one of the reasons it takes me so damned long to write anything. If I was just going to write the upper structure of my story, then I could rip them out fairly rapidly, but you

you have to put in the thought, you have to evolve your understructures. It's hard to explain, without getting too esoteric, but language is a codifying process, a symbolizing process, and whether you are aware of it or not every word you put down on paper, every sentence you put down on paper, has its symbolic undertone. It functions as a symbol in fact, simply because of the way language is structured, whether you are consciously using it as a symbol or not. I think your bad writer or your unpracticed writer is one who is not aware of what his symbol structure is doing under the surface of his story. There are many, many stories that seem incomplete or unfinished or somehow clunky because the implications of the words, the symbolic structure of the words, is clashing on some level with what the surface of the story is supposed to be saying. I think this is a fault to be avoided.

I must hasten to say, for the benefit of people who don't think much of this kind of thing, that I think a story is also a failure if it needs to be read primarily on a symbolic level in order to be understood. There are many, many things that I put into my stories that I don't ever expect anybody to dig out of them, except that maybe they will resonate appropriately in their subconscious. Now if they dig them out, then that's fine, that's an added benefit, perhaps the story will take on a somewhat deeper meaning for them; but if they don't, I think the story will work on its own surface merits.

There is a thing in "The Sound of Muzak," for instance, which no one has ever mentioned, because no-one will ever discover it. If you check the dates on his diary entries you will find that, given the day and the date, the rest of the dates in the story are equivalent to the Lenten season. If you check the diary entries across you will find that the final confrontation scene between the major and Mark corresponds to the Crucifixion, and therefore the scene at the end where they can't open the door of the vault would correspond to Resurrection Sunday, and is perhaps a symbolic way of saying that the Resurrection is not going to arrive. But as I say, this is very obscure. I don't think that anyone needs to get this in order to appreciate the story, or to enjoy it. In fact, I don't think anybody could get this, just off the top of his head, unless he just happened to be very familiar with the dates involved. And yet it's there.

KELLER: And it very definitely adds a huge dimension to the story if you know about it.

DOZOIS: Yeah, it's there, it's an underlying resonance that adds something if you want it. But if you don't want it, you can do perfectly well just reading the surface of the story, about people who are locked up in a bunker during the atomic war. I think a story has to function on both these levels, at least, if not on many more, if it's going to have any success as a story.

Perhaps this comes from the way that I write many of my stories. It's a process of--well, it's sort of the way an oyster makes a pearl. For instance, I may start off with a germ of an idea: it may not even be an idea, it may be a scene, an image, a fragment of action, a mood, who knows, maybe even a word. These will sit in the back of my mind for years, sometimes. Slowly other data will impinge into my mind and something will connect up with something, and a layer of sediment will form around the dust germ

of the pearl. This will continue on, layer after layer, for weeks or months or years, or however long it takes, until a final bit of information coming into my head or rising up out of my soul will connect with the rest of the layers that have built up, and suddenly the pearl will be complete and the story will be born. At which point I sit down and start actually working on it on paper, a whole other process which really doesn't have all that much to do with the business of actually coming up with the stories.

If there is any art involved, or any real creativity, it is in the process of generating that pearl in your head in the first place. After that comes the workmanlike, craftsmanlike problem of translating what you've got in your head down on paper in such a way that people reading it are going to be able to get some sort of approximation of what you're doing. So it's two different processes, although sometimes during the setting-down process more of these creative informational bits will pop up and be absorbed into the story. So sometimes it doesn't come out quite the same way as it was in your head after all. In fact, often, ironically enough, the original germ for the whole thing will turn out to be not applicable any more, and will be lost somewhere along the line by the time you get through writing the story. You'll find out that the big scene that had caused you to write the whole story in the first place is actually rather banal and shouldn't be included after all. But that was the spark that set everything off.

KELLER: You indicated earlier that you thought "A Kingdom By the Sea" was one of your favorite stories; it has also been one of my favorites, and I was wondering if you could explain how that one came about, in light of what you've just said.

DOZOIS: This all refers back very cumbersomely and involvedly and obscurely to what I was trying to say about humor and stories working on several levels. I believe it's possible for a story to be completely serious, a very earnestly-meant, earnestly-felt story and at the same time be almost a satire on itself, which in one way describes "A Kingdom By the Sea." I mean, if you strip it down to its basic idea, it's pretty absurd. Yet it's an absurd idea handled with a complete earnestness of feeling on my part, which I think produces one of the weird effects of the story. The story actually came about--well, some of these germs come to me in dreams. "A Kingdom by the Sea" started off in this way. I had the dream that the man in the story has at one point, where I dreamed of contact with a disembodied feminine presence, and that was the basic bit of the story. That was in the back of my mind the next day, and I had also been thinking about something else for awhile, and they connected. This will show you how trivial and banal these processes often are, regardless of how the story that comes out of them turns out. I was planning at that time to take a trip to Chicago to visit some friends, and I was thinking, well, while I'm in Chicago I ought to write a story to make some money, so "story" and "Chicago" became associated in my mind at that point. And I was thinking, what is there in Chicago that I can write about?, and I thought to myself, I suppose I could write a story about the stockyards, the slaughterhouse--that being what I, who had never been to Chicago, mostly think of when I think of Chicago. At this point the lightning bolt went across and connected up the dream that I'd had the night before of the disembodied presence with the idea of writing the story about the stockyards. It became instantly clear to me that if I was going to sit down and write a story

about a man who dreamed of a disembodied female presence, that the only way to do it would be to have it work out the way that it does in the story. Which again, I think, is a story that can be taken on any number of levels, quite deliberately.

This brings up a point that readers often don't understand; namely, that the author is not the final arbiter of opinion as to what a story means. Once he lets it out of his hands, so to speak, he can have an opinion as to what it means--and considering that it comes from inside information perhaps it is a better opinion than most. But he can only have an opinion, because there's actually no such thing as one story. The story that you read and the story that I read may be two completely different propositions, because each brings his own mind and experience to the story and each gets something different out of it. People come to me at conventions and they ask me what this story means or that story means, and I tell them what I think it means, but I hasten to point out that their opinion is probably just as good as mine, and if they have a different opinion they might very well be right. In fact, they are right, as far as they're concerned, and since it is, in that respect anyway, a subjective process it doesn't really make any difference.

Now you can consider "Kingdom" on any number of different levels. You can consider it , as I do, to be a psychological fantasy. Mason is so downtroddem and so trapped in his life and has such an intense, frustrated urge for transcendence that he has no practical way to act out in the real world; he reaches a point in his life where he can't go on any more. And because there is no way out there is no way for him to escape the pressure. So he builds the whole fantasy construct of the beautiful disembodied female, which is obviously a symbol of his coming transcendence, of how he is going to be led out of his life and she's going to come down and take him away and all that. And then of course because there is no way out for him--and for so many of us there really is no way out--he projects all of this onto the cow. Which is in his mind--he feels guilty about his slaughterhouse work, and by projecting the fantasy of the woman and his hope of transcendence onto the cow and then destroying the cow, he in effect destroys himself--although he may go on physically living.

Now this is all very fine, of course, and hidey-ho and everything, but you don't have to interpret it this way. You know, if you want to interpret it as a man who falls in love with a telepathic cow, you can do so. Several people have criticized the story on those very grounds, and they've told me they didn't think it very likely that a cow could develop telepathy. And, well, I can't argue with them. I mean, they are welcome to their interpretation, and it does work either way. I very deliberately structured it so that it could work either way. I think stories have to be mutable to have any value at all.

This is like my story "Horse of Air." I know my interpretation of it, but it can be interpreted other ways. A gentleman at the Milford conference one year came up to me afterwards and told me that he didn't think it would be possible for the Others to melt the icecap that way with the thermal charges and--well, if he thinks that there actually were Others who actually were melting the icecap, he can interpret it that way. It works that way, although I personally think that would be rather ludicrous. But who am I to say? I'm only the author, after all, and fiction is so much

a collaboration between the author and the reader. This doesn't excuse the author from doing his work, because if he doesn't do his work right the reader isn't going to be able to do his. Many people take it as an excuse for not doing their work, which I think is rather shoddy.

To get back to the religious symbolism again, just that aspect alone, there is a great deal of it in "Machines of Loving Grace," which no one (except one person a couple of days ago who is not even a science fiction fan) has remarked on to me. I'm not sure anybody even realizes it, bu then that's cool, too. There's the whole bit with machine transcendence, where the machine stuck the woman out on an iron tongue like a rejected wafer. It's a symbol of the high mass. I remember as a kid, as a real young kid, I thought that everything was alive, because no one had ever bothered to tell me any differently. This is reflected somewhat in my stories. We're all neolithic in our subconscious, and I think that however rationalistic the surface structure of my stories may be, underneath it is infused with a kind of primitive neolithic animism. I notice that my people keep turning into things and my things keep turning into people.

Oneof my first memories, when I was very very young, is of being in a crib--I must have been at least two, I guess, because I could walk--and it was at night, and I was trying to crawl out of my crib to get down to the floor to play. I remember teetering up on the edge of the crib with one leg over and hearing a phone ring off in the house somewhere. That's hindsight, because at the time I didn't know that it was the telephone--I thought it was some sort of strange bird, a kind of odd, dark bird crying off in the night somewhere.

Everything was alive to me then. I don't know, maybe it actually is. I alternate. On some days I'm an animist and on some days I'm a pragmatist, and I have a sort of werewolf relationship with those philosophies. But certainly everything is more alive than Western philosophy will admit. Western philosophy says in effect that everything is dead, including man in most cases, and I can't quite agree with that. So that's one of the underlying threads.

You must realize that in childhood, as in neolithic times, everything was not only alive but everything could affect you. Everything was magic, and you can see where this comes from. Try to imagine yourself as a primitive man some time, or as a child again. Looking around you you can see that the universe is magic. There is this huge flaming thing that goes across the sky, you can see it move; there is another face in the sky at night; the wind moves and speaks, obviously that's alive. Rainbows--what are they but magic things drawn across the sky? And you can see where, on that level, this response gets its power, where it is emotionally valid.

I think one of the challenges to modern science fiction is to somehow combine the strengths of both. If somehow you can combine the knowledge of what a rainbow actually "is," in its physical sense, in its scientific sense, with the emotional impact of what the childhood or neolithic mind thinks or feels when it sees the rainbow, without making them mutually contradictory, then you have something that works on all levels, and is much more powerful than

something which works only on one. I think a lot of modern science fiction is tending towards this, and I think it's a very hopeful sign. In the old days you would have one or the other, usually. You'd have Bradbury, who looks at everything from the emotional mind, the childlike neolithic mind. His machines aren't really machines, they're big things that thump around in the dark, which is the way you look at it when you're a child. He sees everything through the focus of magic, and has nothing of the pragmatic intellectual process. Then you have some of your other science fiction writers like--oh, I don't know, I hate to name someone precise. I suppose some of Poul Anderson, although he breaks through into the magic side occassionally. Anyway, you have the very cut-and-dried process; some of Clarke, a lot of the old science fiction, where you know how everything works in an intellectual sense, but the emotional magic is gone. You look at it through too adult a mind, where you know why a machine works and what it is, but you miss how the machine makes you feel, how it resonates with your own life and emotions.

And I see a melding and a synthesis of these two factors, the emotional and the intellectual, the science and the magic, and I think it's the most hopeful thing on the horizon for science fiction. If it works, if you can in fact mold pragmatism and emotionality, and intellect and magic, then we'll have something that's very rarely happened in any form of literature. I think in one way this indicates the difference between science fiction and avant-garde fiction, something it's often hard to pin down. The Judy Merrill anthologies thrashed around a great deal trying to distinguish one from the other, and with all this New Wave business the question often comes up: How can you tell one from the other? You will find that many people can intuitively recognize science fiction when they see it, but they find it awfully hard to put the distinction into words. It's more a viewpoint, a way of looking at the world, than it is any concrete thing, like a science fiction story is something that has robots in it. We can distinguish as science fiction those stories that bear a certain stamp, a certain attitude towards the world.

And that attitude is evolving, as I say; it's somewhat different now than it was twenty years ago and yet there's still a connective thread there, you can see how one evolves out of the other. Avant-garde fiction to me is capable of delivering the emotional or poetic or magic side of modern life--in other words, it tells you how things feel--but often it can't tell you how things work. I still think there is a strength in the melding of the two. This is also a difference between science fiction and poetry.

Of course, there is the vast dead area of most "mainstream" fiction--as differentiated from avant-garde fiction or science fiction--that tells us nothing about modern life, neither how it feels nor how it works. Or where it's going or how we're going to feel when we get there. To my taste, science fiction can be--potentially, at least--more complete than the type of thing you read in the little magazines or NEW AMERICAN REVIEW, because it does get both aspects in. And I want both aspects in. Many people don't; many people are bored with the real-world aspect, the intellectual or practical aspects, and they want only the emotional magic aspect. I get the feeling that many of the really rabid NEW WORLDS fans are bored by the real-world aspect, and they would rather just have the emotional aspect.

On the other hand I feel many science fiction readers are bored by the emotional magic aspect of it, which to me is a very dead point of view, and I can't quite sympathize with it. The type of sf that leaves out the emotional aspect makes the universe such a cut-and-dried place that it's no wonder the sense of wonder doesn't live there anymore. Earth in reality is more interesting than the whole universe is in one of those stories. There'll always be that type of sf, just as there'll always be avant-garde fiction, but if the writers can get their heads enough together the synthesis will end up being more viable. And more rewarding.

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GEO. ALEC EFFINGER

INTERVIEWED BY DONALD G. KELLER

--This interview was conducted by mail over a year ago, in February 1973. What actually is here is a brief set of initial questions which I intended to follow up with more in-detail ones. Unfortunately, subsequent to this both Piglet and I moved, and in the ensuing chaos that always follows, we managed to lose touch completely, and were never unbusy enough to resume it. So this is only a fragment, though I feel an interesting one nonetheless, worth printing even in this form.--DGK

KELLER: Your excellent first novel, WHAT ENTROPY MEANS TO ME, was published in 1972, but received very little notice. How do you feel about this?

EFFINGER: That book may well be one of the most frustrating experiences of my life. I think it's a doggone good book. I generally don't care much for my own stories after a while, but ENTROPY still gets to me. Unfortunately, thanks to the publisher, it's one of the most invisible books in sf history. And the paperback in June is too late to influence anybody's judgment, as far as award recognition goes. I've already conceded to Asimov, but I'd sure as heck like to make the ballot.

Bah. Humbug.

As a matter of fact, I've never seen a review in a fanzine. I don't know if nobody ever read it, or if they just didn't send me copies of the zines.

KELLER: An interviewer's cliche: How did you get started writing?

EFFINGER: I don't really know. When I left college the first time, I just knocked around the Village in New York.

That sort of stuff shows up in my earliest stories, the Clarion things and a few others. I've pretty much worked through that material, now. I always wanted to be a writer, because I liked doing it. I wrote morning announcements for the PA system in high school, and stuff like that. What I really wanted to do was go to medical school. I found out fast that I wasn't set for that. That's when I left school, in a grand confusion. I had been geared to be a doctor for six or seven years; now I had to decide what I was really going to do. It took me about three years, during which time I did a whole lot of sordid things. A lot of writers are proud of their various occupations, listing weird things in their bios. If I ever did that, I'd never sell another story. I knocked around, let's say. So, one night, like it says in CLARION, I had a nightmare, got up, wrote it down, showed it to Damon Knight (a good friend of my wife, who was born and raised in Milford, Pa. Some day there'll be a real SF Hall of Fame, right there, with busts of famous writers, and lockers and shoulder pads of Andre Norton and Murray Leinster, and little telephones that you can pick up and hear the recorded voice of Samuel R. Delany going on and on incomprehensibly about the taste of reality....) Damon suggested I apply to Clarion, I did, I went, I was discovered, and the rest is tedium. That's how I started writing, that and the fact that I wanted a job where I could sleep late.

KELLER: What writers have influenced your work? Who are your favorites?

EFFINGER: My favorite writers are not necessarily those who influenced me. Influences we all have; for a time, we all have the same ones, too. Everybody has a J.D. Salinger period. It's usually first, unless you're a girl, then you go through Kahlil Gibran first. At least, that's how it was when I was in high school. I don't know what's going on, these days. After Salinger you go through a whole string of people. My biggies were Kafka and Ionesco. They really knocked me out. And, importantly, they were the first to show me that you could get away with writing things other than straight, realistic reporting. I got into Dürrenmatt, another German playwright, and Buechner, the same, and Goethe (I took a lot of German in school). I have a passionate love for John Barth's books, and Donald Barthelme, and sometimes Bellow. I have an intellectual appreciation for L. Durrell. How could I forget Laurence Sterne? Absolutely the cat's pajamas. Who else? You will notice that none of these are sf people. My biggest influences, today, as far as my own stories go, are Ernie Kovacs, Woody Allen and Jean Shepherd. Funny guys. Lots of boffs, lots of yoks. I'll talk about that later.

Within the field, my favorites are Philip K. Dick, right there at the top. I love everything he ever wrote. Alfred Bester, who wrote what I think is the best novel ever written in sf (THE STARS MY DESTINATION). Zelazny. Disch. Sturgeon. Ballard. Aldiss, lately. Damon and Kate and Harlan. Too many more to list, and I'm sorry I started, because I have to leave some off. Lafferty. See what I mean?

KELLER: You recently published a second novel, RELATIVES, which is quite different from your first. Could you talk a little bit about what lies behind it?

EFFINGER: RELATIVES is a complex book, in a different way than ENTROPY was a complex book. I was a classics major at Yale, and that may explain my love for FORM. My novels tend to be orchestrated, rather than written (boy, does that sound pompous). I mean that I draw up elaborate schemes of action, symmetric plot structures, graphs and charts of the fortunes of characters, etc. My story per se will develop organically, changing beyond my power to control sometimes, as with other writers, but it does so within a certain framework. RELATIVES concerns the same poor guy in three different alternate worlds. His name is a bit different in each, to tell him apart. In one world, it is the future and the world is run by a committee of five totally capricious dictators. Are they symbols for the inscrutable forces of nature, as another writer suggests? I don't care. They set up the ground rules of this world, and my protagonist is faced with a life-and-death situation with which he is not at all sure he can cope. (The original short story version of this line will appear under the title "Relatives" in a Harper & Row anthology, BAD MOON RISING, edited by Tom Disch.) In another plot line, divided into chunks and after every other chunk of the first, the character is a lonely, wretched, failed poet alone in a fictional city on the coast of Africa. The rest of the world has degenerated and become totally decadent. There is no America. Africa, but for this single city, is unpopulated. Etc. The protagonist is presented with a similar dilemna, and there is little chance that he can act. He sits in a cafe and drinks. (This appears in the April 1973 F&SF in a much-condensed form, under the title "The City in the Sand.") The third plot-line, alternating with the second after parts of the first (got that?) has our hero working for the international communist party. He has been exiled from his homeland, Jermany, which has just won World War I. He acts with assurance and varying degrees of skill when confronted with his problem. Three versions of the same man; sort of ego, id and superego. They all begin in vastly different milieus, but all are faced ultimately with the very same political decisions. It is a very political book; as ENTROPY was about one's duty to oneself, RELATIVES concerns one's duty to the state.

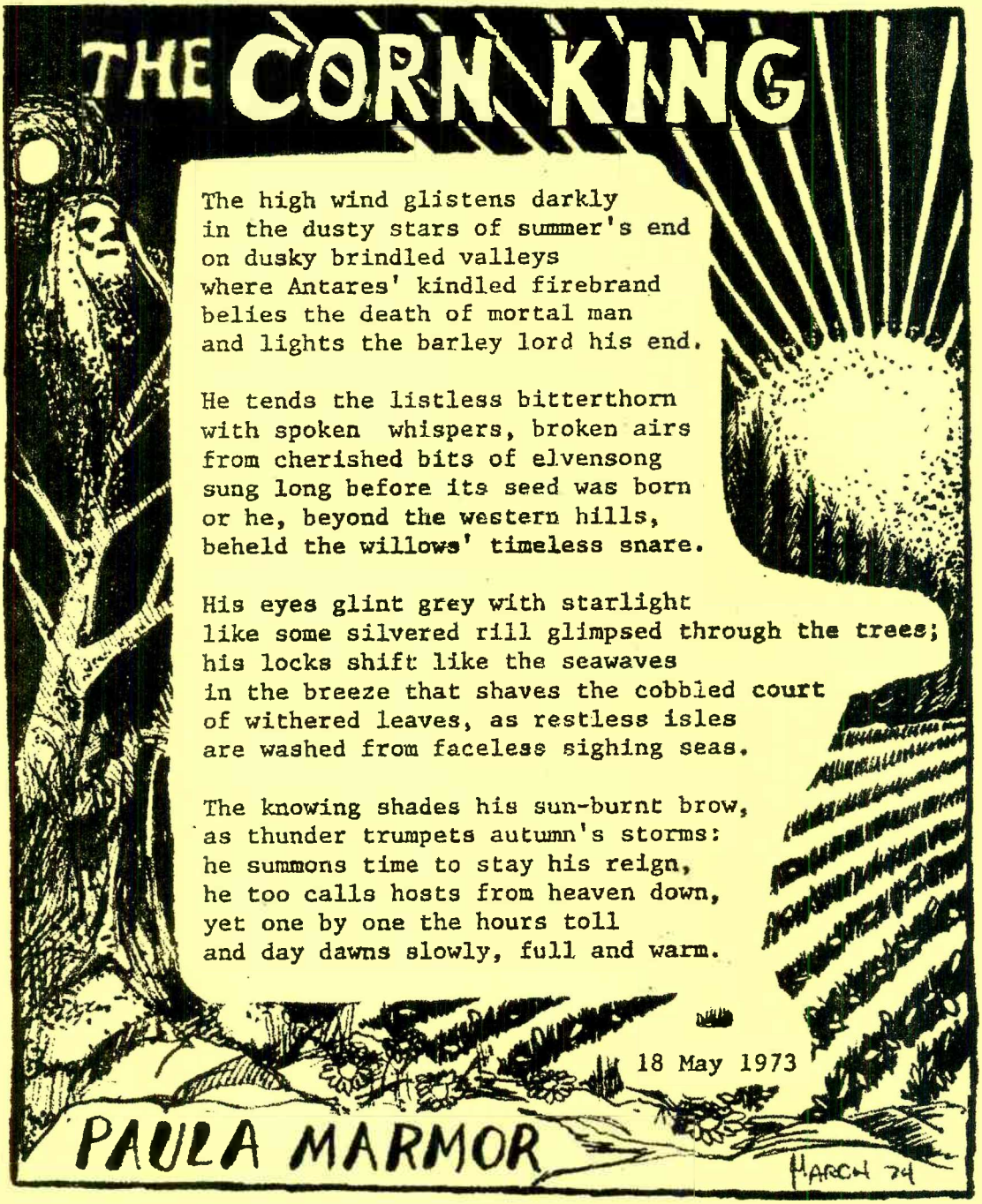
KELLER: Have you sold a story to THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS? How did you respond to Harlan's challenge?

EFFINGER: As a matter of fact I've sold two stories to Harlan. One was the second story I ever wrote, still one of my best. The other was something I did over a year later. I'm still waiting to see them. He's had a couple of good things tied up for nearly three years, now. That's a long time to wait. I don't worship Harlan, in the way that those who only vaguely know him do sometimes. I respect him, which sounds like a cold thing to say. I love him, but sometimes I am incredibly annoyed and even offended by what he says and does. I take each thing he accomplishes on its own merits; it is not wise to make myths while the subject is still among us. That way I won't be shattered by his revealed humanity. I won't be suckered into hating or adulating him. I'll treat him, always, as my good friend Harlan. We're both from Ohio, you know. I reacted to his challenge at Clarion the only way I could, schmuck that I was. I had only written one story previously.

So I went and typed a lot of words on a lot of paper. He liked some of them. I liked working with him; his energy can be infectious. I find that a weak solution of boric acid can be of great help.

KELLER: I once discussed with Gardner Dozois the fact that both you and he have excellent senses of humor in person, but whereas you carry this over into your stories he does not. He said he thought that while he was writing in a serious manner, you were basically a satirist, and therein lay the difference. Do you have any comment?

EFFINGER: I write a lot of things that come out funny. I don't try to. ENTROPY was supposed to be perfectly straight. It turned out pretty funny in places. I've only sat down to write one intentionally funny story, and I haven't been able to sell it in two years. The others just end up that way. I do like satire; I disagree with Gardner (and I know I can't possibly be objective) that I am primarily, if not completely, a satirist. I think that dismisses a lot of my stuff too easily. Beneath the boffs and the yoks there is ALWAYS a pretty heavy statement; I don't write the trivial things anymore--at least I try not to. That's a matter of opinion. As you saw from my list of influences, I got a lot from the old Theater of the Absurd crowd. I can understand what they're saying. It's not just the novelty of the incongrous action or word. It's something much more, and I'm trying to tap into it. I am building my own universe in my stories; other writers have done this, but I'm going about it in a different way, I think. I have a cast of characters built up in the fifty or so stories I've written. Steve Weintraub (the Steve of "All the Last Wars at Once," "Things Go Better" in ORBIT 11, about a dozen others) can appear in stories that occur two hundred years after another story in which he plays. I use made up places often, though they may be destroyed in several different stories. I think someday I may have to outline my ideas of this universe, but it will take a good deal of space.


THE CORN KING
The high wind glistens darkly
in the dusty stars of summer's end
on dusky brindled valleys
where Antares' kindled firebrand
belies the death of mortal man
and lights the barley lord his end.
He tends the listless bitterthorn
with spoken whispers, broken airs
from cherished bits of elvensong
sung long before its seed was born
or he, beyond the western hills,
beheld the willows' timeless snare.
His eyes glint grey with starlight
like some silvered rill glimpsed through the trees;
his locks shift like the seawaves
in the breeze that shaves the cobbled court
of withered leaves, as restless isles
are washed from faceless sighing seas.
The knowing shades his sun-burnt brow,
as thunder trumpets autumn's storms:
he summons time to stay his reign,
he too calls hosts from heaven down,
yet one by one the hours toll
and day dawns slowly, full and warm.
18 May 1973
PAULA MARMOR
MARCH 74

WAS HUGO GERNSBACK REALLY THE FATHER OF SCIENCE FICTION?

DARRELL SCHWEITZER

"Science fiction? Fantasy? Why, that's children's trash! A mature person should read only Literature!"

Did your English teacher ever say that to you in high school? Mine did, and I'm sure most of yours did, too. It probably helped push you into fandom, by setting your traditional fannish I'm-right-and-everybody-else-is-wrong persecution complex off to a roaring start. Perhaps it also got you feuding with that same teacher and you made a nuisance out of yourself in his classes by trying to prove that everyone from Shakespeare to Hemingway was nothing but a miserable hack. Perhaps you loudly trumpeted the fact that Edgar Rice Burroughs was by far the most successful novelist the English language has ever known. It's all very understandable. You knew that science fiction was no more related to Buck Rogers t han mystery is to Dick Tracy, but you couldn't convince anybody else of that. Science fiction wasn't respectable. Fantasy was fairy tales for children.

The field was perfectly acceptable once, in the latter part of the 19th century and into the first couple decades of the twentieth. The purpose of this article is to try and figure out why it fell so far so fast.

First we must view things in perspective. Normally 1926 is considered to be the beginning point for any detailed history of science fiction. Anything before that is the dim stone age, and usually skipped over. 1926 was the year the first issue of the first science fiction magazine appeared. Gernsback said: Let AMAZING STORIES be, and then there was science fiction. Or scientifiction, as he called it. The conventional view of things excuses all the crude inadequacies of the material in the Gernsback maga-

zines on the grounds that this was the First. The field was in its infancy.

No, it wasn't. Let's get to the point, shall we? Science fiction started sometime during the 19th century, or perhaps in the late 18th. It was quite respectable then, published in major magazines and by trade book publishers, who also printed fantasy and seldom made a distinction between the two. But by 1940 or so no publisher in his right mind would touch the stuff. Science fiction hardcovers didn't appear again until after the war, and then only from small specialty houses run by fans. It had been at least twenty years since any large amount of fantastic fiction had been published by bigtime publishers when the first few things started to reappear in the early fifties. Science fiction had suffered terribly, and fantasy almost as much. (Some fantasy was still appearing--Sprague de Camp's novels were being reprinted by Henry Holt right out of the pages of UNKNOWN--but not much. Perhaps the reason any fantasy at all was being published was because WEIRD TALES and UNKNOWN had such higher standards than any of the science fiction magazines. The only really bad all-fantasy magazine, STRANGE STORIES, a companion to THRILLING WONDER STORIES, didn't last long enough to do any real damage.)

What happened? How did science fiction get out of the slicks and into the ghetto? Why were publishers shunning the same stuff they printed great amounts of in the 'teens and twenties?

Hugo Gernsback did it. Contrary to popular belief he did not found the field but very nearly killed it. It is my opinion that he was the worst thing ever to hit the genre, and that we are still recovering from his influence, although most of the pieces have been picked up. Ironically, fantasy, which wasn't as badly hurt at the time, seems to be dying a slow death and is now in much worse shape than the science fiction which so nearly strangled from the Gernsbackian millstone around its neck. (Yes, there is a paperback boom in fantasy right now, but will it last? Who publishes fantasy in hardcover? Arkham House. Science fiction? Most of the major trade publishers. Once it was the other way around.)

Like I said, you need a sense of perspective. The best way to get this is to read Sam Moskowitz's SCIENCE FICTION BY GASLIGHT. It also helps to have a large collection of popular magazines from the turn of the century. Things like HARPER'S, CENTURY, ATLANTIC, McBRIDE'S, PEARSON'S, COSMOPOLITAN, etc.

I have one, and have seen a great deal. What have I noticed? Fantasy and science fiction, although interchangeable at the time, were totally respectable. Fantasy and sf writers were major literary figures, even. I don't have to go into how James Branch Cabell was a giant of his time. (He wrote for HARPER'S and was published in hardcover mostly by McBride.) Lord Dunsany did all those delightful prototypes of the heroic fantasy in places like SATURDAY REVIEW (of London). Later he published his Jorkens stories, many of which were fantasy and some of which were even (you guessed it) science fiction, in HARPER'S and ATLANTIC. Earlier, C. Cutcliffe Hyne sold THE LOST CONTINENT to PEARSON'S (which was no pulp magazine, I assure you). H.G. Wells turned up all over the place. THE WAR IN THE AIR in PEARSON'S, IN THE DAYS OF THE COMET in COSMOPOLITAN, "The Dream" in HEARST'S INTERNATIONAL. More, too, of course, but those are just the ones I happen to own. (Oh yes, A

WORLD SET FREE ran as three non-fact-type articles in CENTURY.) Arthur Machen's "The Terror" ran in CENTURY in 1917. A short novel. Who would run fantasy short novels twenty years later, after the ghettoization of fantastic fiction had firmly set in?

There's more, lots more. I have a McBRIDE'S which features a Cabell story and announces a ghost yarn by Algernon Blackwood as forthcoming.

Those were the days.

Of course, many have tried to explain this all by the claim that Wells and Dunsany and all those people were famous bigtime literary figures, so they could get away with things that unknowns couldn't.

For a couple reasons this is nonsense. Wells wasn't always famous. His first sale was THE TIME MACHINE. He, an unknown, sold a science fiction novel in a day when there weren't any specialty SF publishers. Dunsany's first book was THE GODS OF PEGANA. Fantasy, and published years before any of the plays that made him such a big name in the literature of the time. Besides, you'll find that these bigtime magazines, mass-circulation slicks, published a lot of sf and fantasy by people who weren't famous, ever. Most of the writers in the aforementioned Moskowitz anthology I had never heard of. Sf and fantasy by smalltime writers could be sold to national magazines. I have a story in an EVERYBODY'S which dealt with a future war between Japan and the US and featured a lot of then-futuristic submarines. What was it? I don't remember. Pardon me while I go look it up.

"The Submarine Destroyer" by Morgan Robertson. September, 1905.

Who? What? Nothing in particular. Just a typical turn-of-the-century science fiction story published in a typical turn-of-the-century mass-circulation slick magazine. Nothing out of the ordinary at all.

Need I go on? Why was it that it was considered such a tremendous breakthrough for sf when Robert Heinlein sold an interplanetary story to the SATURDAY EVENING POST in 1947? Simple. It meant that the field was well on the road to recovery.

Read some of the Gernsback magazines sometime. Not just the Sol Cohen reprints therefrom, but the magazines themselves. The editorials, the lettercolumns, the stories that nobody ever did dredge up again. Compare this to the popular magazine sf of the previous two or three decades.

The only possible conclusion is that AMAZING STORIES (and later WONDER and the assorted quarterlies) was a magazine of illiterate amateur drivel aimed at children. It was trying desperately to remain respectable, but it just couldn't make it. Gernsback wanted recognized scientific figures to write the "stories" but they refused to. So he had to settle for what he could get. The idea of the magazine, as clearly indicated by Gernsback's editorials and the examples set across in his own stories, was something that was to be "75% science, 25% literature." The for-

mer was questionable; the latter never materialized at all. There were no literary standards in these magazines, other than the author had to be at least literate enough to be understood. There were very few stories in it at all, as most of the material was just--to use the old cliche--"sugar-coated science lectures." The aim of all this was to encourage readers to study science and become scientists when they grew up and went to high school and college, not to provide a showcase for the best in artistic fantasy and speculative fiction. Gernsback was always delighted when a reader wrote in and told him how AMAZING had inspired him to go on to some technological career. The lettercolumns were full of things like that.

Shortly after Gernsback came Harry Bates with ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPERSCIENCE, which featured scientifiction framed in conventional pulp formulas. You know, like: Boy meets girl, girl gets kidnapped by mad scientist and her brain transplanted into the body of a gorilla, hero comes to rescue her, he too ends up with a new simian physique, whereupon he escapes and sets out intothe jungle in search of his girlfriend, finds her after many perils, comes back and kills the mad scientist, and restores them both to their original bodies. Then they get married and live happily ever after. (Don't laugh. Arthur J. Burks wrote one along those lines for ASTOUNDING in 1932.) The depression killed the new magazine, but its contents showed the general trend of sf for years to come. At least this was a story, and when similar things appeared in the Gernsback magazines they were always very popular. To readers used to the incredibly low standards that Gernsback had set, these things were an improvement. This, as you will recall, was the period in which E.E. Smith made his massive innovations on the field of science fiction. Strange as it may seem today, Smith was more advanced in literary techniques than any of his contemporaries. He re-invented the plot and introduced characters of greater depth than any previously seen in the genre magazines. (I.e., he came up with Blackie DuQuesne, a two-dimensional character, capable of both good and indifferent actions, which was a big leap over the totally cardboard Hero and Villain of the earlier writings. At least sometimes you couldn't predict what DuQuesne was going to do.)

Bad writing breeds bad writing, and when editors get used to it they often force their writers to produce bad writing. Magazine scientifiction writing was bad because as long as there had been such magazines it was bad. Oftentimes writers simply weren't allowed to write as well as they were capable of. David H. Keller, for example, wrote stories with very good ideas in them, but they were as dull, plotless and lecture-filled as anyone else's. However, his fantasy material for WEIRD TALES written at the same time showed him to be perfectly competent if not sometimes masterful in the short story format. I see no reason why he couldn't have written a science fiction story save that Gernsback wouldn't let him. As it came out, though, his only sf material worth reading at all were his novels, for the simple reason that when one is working in lengths of thirty and forty thousand words the lecture style of the Gernsbackian short story almost inevitably breaks down. The author has to get around to story-telling eventually. Even though he resisted it as much as possible, Gernsback himself had to do a little rudimentary plotting in RALPH 124C41+. What Keller produced were disaster novels that

foreshadowed the John Christopher/John Wyndham school of writing. THE METAL DOOM is still quite readable today.

Unfortunately, most Gernsbackian writers were not as good as Keller, who when allowed to write stories tried for serious sociological content and human interest. The average serial in one of those early magazines is just the pulp formula material mentioned above, though it was usually dressed up with more gadgets per page. Often much time would be taken out so the hero could be shown all the technological marvels that the plot hinged on. An explorer who discovered a super-scientific lost race in the Amazon jungle would be taken on a thorough tour of this community before the melodrama resumed. By the standards of the day this was perfectly acceptable. It was one helluva drop from the kind of sf that used to appear in the turn-of-the-century slicks.

This should make it pretty clear why so little sf from the period of 1926 to 1938 survived. Most of it was just plain trash. This was the genre's all-time low, and to make matters worse, what little quality sf was still being published in other magazines (e.g., By the Waters of Babylon" by Stephen Vincent Benet in SATURDAY EVENING POST) was not labelled as such, while all the junk was. And when Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon and the first of the abominable Hollywood schlockers came along, they too were identified in the public mind with science fiction. Hence the "that's a good book it can't be science fiction" syndrome.

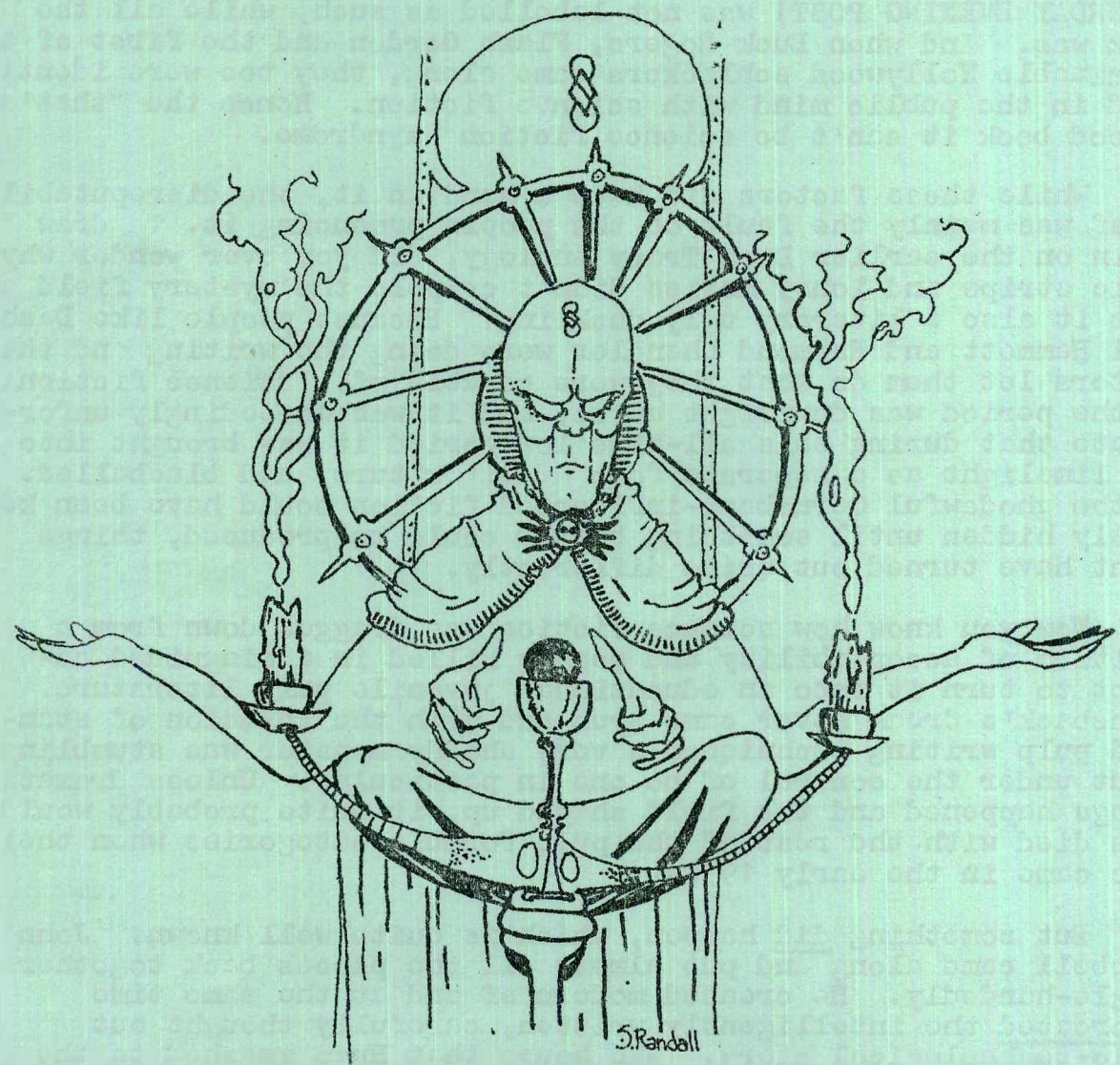
While these factors did have a hand in it, the disreputability of sf was mainly the fault of the people producing it. To draw again on the earlier Dick Tracy analogy, did you ever wonder why comic strips and lousy movies didn't cripple the mystery field and make it also a literary ugly duckling? Because people like Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler were doing the writing and their editors let them do what they were capable of. Science fiction of the period was downright awful, and it was exceedingly unfortunate that during this all-time low period it was brought into the limelight as a seperate form of literature, and blacballed. If the ghodawful Gernsback-influenced fiction could have been kept safely hidden until something better could be produced, things might have turned out quite differently.

Now you know how science fiction was dragged down from a position of acceptability and nearly killed in a misguided attempt to turn it into an educational juvenile pulp literature. Gernsback's dream never came true and with the infusion of standard pulp writing techniques a very shoddy monster was stumbling about under the control of no one in particular. Unless dramatic things happened and the field shaped up, it quite probably would have died with the rest of the pulp formula categories when their time came in the early 1950s.

But something <u>did</u> happen, which is quite well known. John Campbell came along and put almost all the pieces back together single-handedly. He created modern sf and at the same time <u>re-created</u> the intelligently written, carefully thought out <u>socio-technological story</u>. The house that Hugo smashed to the ground received a new set of solid foundations, beams and walls, plus a simple, but thoroughly functional, roof. For some reason Campbell could only go so far, so it was up to H.L. Gold and

Anthony Boucher to carry things on to greater sophistication. (Is it just a coincidence that FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION was the first and only genre prozine ever to feature new material from Dunsany, who was one of the few survivors from the long-gone period of affluence?) By the time the new wave people got there most of the work was already done. Although a lot of their material was pretentious trash they did do their part. More and better trimmings, mostly.

Science fiction. Gernsback broke it, Campbell glued it back together, Boucher and Gold painted it, and the new wavers added the trimmings. It is once again respectable, published by major publishers and printed in mass-circulation magazines like PLAYBOY and even the new SATURDAY EVENING POST quarterlies. In other words, we're back where we started from. After nearly a half century of arrested development, the next thing to do is ask Where Do We Go From Here?



THREE NEWSPAPER PIECES

ROGER ZELAZNY

It was nearly a half century ago that Hugo Gernsback said, "Let there be AMAZING STORIES," then saw that it was good. By this act evolution commenced and set out for science fiction as we know it today. Similar magazines subsequently appeared, and the first decade or so of the phenomenon represented a kind of primal ooze out of which more complex life forms were eventually to arise.

Speaking generally, in keeping with the requirements of a geological survey, the first major period to follow was the development, in the 1940's, of the "classic" science fiction story. This was the time wherein some emphasis actually came to be placed upon the scientific content of a particular piece. Here, names such as Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, L. Sprague de Camp, Lester del Rey, Fritz Leiber and Theodore Sturgeon came to be associated with a projective or extrapolative sort of writing, with scientific generalizations extended beyond the contemporary state of technology into a future where, as Sturgeon has put it, such questions as "If this goes on ...?" and "What if...?" were considered an integral part of the story's structure. This, in its purest form, was considered by Kingsley Amis as, at the least, approaching an "idea as hero" situation.

The answers to Sturgeon's questions resulted in two species of story, which Asimov has referred to, respectively, as the "chess game" story and the "chess problem" story. The chess game story begins with the present, kmown state of the world; situations are extended into the future in a logical, rational fashion and there played out to a dramatic conclusion. The chess problem story, on the other hand, while rational is not necessary logical (i.e., deductive) in terms of the initial, given situation. It commences with the pieces in positions which are not often likely to arise in the course of ordinary play. Granting this, however, the normal rules obtain and the exercise in speculation may proceed.

This stage in science fiction was at least partly determined by the background of the leading writers of the period. These men were, by and large, scientifically oriented, a thing which may have attracted them to the field initially and contributed to their efforts to purify its scientific content once they had entered it.

The late Forties and early Fifties saw new writers entering the area--Poul Anderson, Gordon R. Dickson and Philip Jose Farmer, to name but a few--whose individual touches served to broaden the field of speculation. The magazines flourished and prolifereated at an unprecedented rate. By 1953, the science fiction magazine market reached its peak, became overextended and fell apart under the general economic pressures of the recession. Only a half dozen of the magazines survived. Many of the writers at this time turned to the paperback and hardcover book markets as an outlet for their material.

This displacement from the magazine to the book format ultimately proved a benefit. While the genre's intellectual content had seldom conflicted with taboos in the magazine industry, these restrictions did nevertheless exist, and by hindsight may be seen as having exercised some control over the nature of the material considered. These restrictions were not so severe in the book industry.

Sturgeon's questions can, of course, be addressed to other subjects than the physical sciences. The social sciences were an obvious source of material, and--of equal importance in times to follow--such areas of thought and activity as theology and sex had also come within reach.

As a result of some of these factors, the 1950's represented a period when the novel of sociological speculation came into greater prominence. In general, whether from habits of thought or the necessity for an economy of argument in a science fiction story, the sex was not overworked and theology remained mostly in the background. Notable exceptions are Farmer's "The Lovers," Del Rey's "For I Am a Jealous People" and Blish's "A Case of Conscience."

In the 1960's the balance remained tilted toward the novel, as the remaining magazines held their own while changing sufficiently to keep pace with the times and more new writers entered the area. There then occurred a reaction. Whether it came from a distrust of the optimistic scientism of the Forties, a disillusionment precluding the reasonably good-natured social speculation of the Fifties or simply a vexation with the relatively staid structure and nuts-and-bolts prose of the science fiction story itself, the new writers--such as J.G. Ballard, Thomas Disch and Samuel R. Delany--devoted a good part of their energy to experiments with style and form. Sex and theology were now also exploited. The idea had ceased to be the hero, if it ever truly was, and a preoccupation with method took hold of the field. Appropriately dubbed the New Wave, this form of writing reached its most intense level just before the end of the decade, at which time it began to provoke a reaction of its own.

Fairness, however, requires the observation that the concerns of the Sixties brought to the area a measure of stylistic elan and a quality of introspection which eventually resulted in a less manipulative, more humanistic approach to the process.

And so to the Holocene:

The current situation possesses three distinguishing features. First, the balance has swung from the novel back to the short story, a thing which occurred without a resurgence of the magazines. A great number of publishers are now bringing out anthologies of all-original science fiction short stories, and any remaining magazine taboos are thereby skirted. Second, the beginnings of a renewed

concern with themes involving the physical sciences has been noted, along with a judicious restoration of sociological speculation. Third, the stylistic experimentation of the Sixties appears to have been absorbed successfully into the greater whole.

Accordingly, the current situation seems best characterized as a period of synthesis.

Writers such as Ursula K. LeGuin, Larry Niven, Robert Silverberg, Philip K. Dick and Harlan Ellison--all of whom have lived through some phases of the above--seem to have achieved increased mastery within the past few years. Outstanding among the newer writers now receiving notice are Geo. Alec Effinger, Gardner Dozois and Joe Haldeman, who may be seen as representing this recently integrated approach.

The current state of the area and its present relationship to life and letters in general was summarized by Ursula K. LeGuin this past April on the occassion of her acceptance of the National Book Award (best children's book) for THE FARTHEST SHORE.

"...Sophisticated readers are accepting the fact that an improbable and unmanageable world is going to produce an improbable and hypothetical art. At this point, realism is perhaps the least adequate means of understanding or portraying the incredible realities of our existence. A scientist who creates a monster in his laboratory; a librarian in the library of Babel; a wizard unable to cast a spell; a space ship having trouble in getting to Alpha Centauri: all these may be precise and profound metaphors of the human condition. The fantasist, whether he uses the ancient archetypes of myth and legend or the younger ones of science and technology, may be talking as seriously as any sociologist--and a good deal more directly--about human life as it is lived, and as it might be lived, and as it ought to be lived...."

--June 24, 1973

RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA. By Arthur C. Clarke. 303 pages. Harcourt-Brace. $6.95.

Over the years, the term "science fiction" has been applied to a great number of things, not all of them good. Among the good, the very good and--to some purists--the only good things it has represented are classical tales of scientific extrapolation. Masters of the technique are rare, and in recent years the area has been poorer for their absence. So it can be good, very good, whenever one of them does return with such an offering. This is the case with Arthur C. Clarke and this book.

The story's basic situation is this: Early in the Twenty-second Century, a highly sophisticated space monitering setup detects what appears to be a good-sized asteroid advancing sunward through the solar system. Previously uncharted, the wanderer is studied and a determination finally reached that it may be an artificial body of alien origin. An exploration party is sent to rendezvous with it as it speeds toward what could be its destruction in the sun. Time is limited for this reason, yet the knowledge that may be contained in the artifact is incalculable. Rendezvous is achieved with the object --named Rama, after the Hindu diety--and it does indeed prove to be artificial. It represents an enormous engineering achievement, even by Twenty-Second Century standards, and a number of things about it

are beyond immediate comprehension. Working against time and the unpredictable behavior of the vehicle itself, the space team commences its exploration.

Yet this summary describes the book no more than a picture postcard captures the spirit of a cathedral. It is not simply the events detailed in the story--and I guarantee that I have betrayed nothing by indicating as much as I have--but it is the tone and the manner of presentation which provide the quality still best described as a "sense of wonder." For those who may read science fiction only infrequently, the most immediate comparisons which come to mind are the writings of Saint-Exupery on the early days of air travel and perhaps those of Cousteau on undersea exploration. This is what I mean by a sense of wonder--an almost mystical quality of exhilaration at the penetration of a new world by means of devices which are wholly the product of human ingenuity.

The physical features of Rama have been worked out to a level of detail pleasing from both a scientific and an esthetic standpoint. Satisfying small touches also abound, sketching in the bureaucratic and political structure of that society which has authorized the mission. The narrative is neatly retailed in 46 short chapters, each providing new close-ups, angle shots and panning effects while steadily advancing the story.

It is, in other words, a very visual book. And this technique is perfectly suited for the material. My only regret, and it is not a mortal one, is that with all of this focus on the spectacle, surface values are emphasized at the expense of deep characterizations. There are times when the people seem to have become almost supernuerary bits of machinery. Perhaps this was by design. It may be that the author intended his characters to represent humanity, as such, encountering this prodigy. However, I can still wish he had done it the other way, with 20 or so pages more of material distributed here and there, offering more personal insights into his people. Again, de gustibus...He has written a work of power, scope, wonder, of a sort not often seen these days. And good. Very good.

--1 September 1973

THE TIMES OF LONDON ANTHOLOGY OF DETECTIVE STORIES. John Day. $6.95.

The thing that impressed me most about the stories in this collection was their variety. The 10 stories in this book distinguished themselves from the company of more than a thousand entries received in response to a special detective story competition sponsored by the TIMES of London and Jonathon Cape Ltd. And the thing that impressed me most about the judges was their visual stamina. The average story is around 5,000 words in length. Ergo, 10 stories, 50,000 words. One hundred, half a million. A thousand... The spirit recoils, the eyeballs undergo sympathy pangs. However, John Higgens, of the TIMES; Tom Maschler, of Cape; Lord Butler, president of the Royal Society of Literature and Master of Trinity College, Cambridge; Tom Stoppard, playwright; and Dame Agatha Christie herself were up to the mortal feat, an indication of more than a little affection for the area and a desire to come up with something new and worthwhile with which to adorn it.

According to the dust jacket, the contest was conceived in hope that "the time is ripe for a revival of that classic literature conjuring trick, the detective story," and held to locate "the new young

writers who can weave plots as beguiling as their Nineteenth Century forebears." Or, "...the search for a potential new Conan Doyle."

All right. All these things in mind, I opened the book expecting a very British collection. But hold! Who should have won first place but John Sladek, originally from Iowa (okay, he is currently living in England), the author of a couple of good science fiction novels. His story, "By an Unknown Hand," was a humorous, locked-room puzzler. Good. After all, one of those Nineteenth Century forebears was Edgar Allan Poe, and it was pleasant to see one of our boys holding up the tradition. The second place story, "The Tale of Sir Jeremy Fisher," by Don Carleton, teacher, newsman, was one of those bonus events, a thing wherein the reader obtains an extra pleasure in addition to following the working out of the story line. In this case, it is a sense of the spirit of place that he creates in setting the tale. The third place winner, "The Scapegoat," by Michael Freeman, who is now reading History at Ballial College, Oxford, is a moving psychological piece which serves to remind us that Dosoyevsky, also, was one of those Nineteenth Century forebears. Better and better.

Three consolation prizes were also given, to John Garforth, Arts Organizer for the London Borough of Harringey; Sean Stiles, a South African journalist; and Ida Shewan, of Aberdeen, a former hotel proprietess, for--respectively--"A Quite Conventional Death," "Occam's Razor" and "Mind Is How You Go." The first of these is a sort of in-group fun piece, a murder at a mystery writers conference. The second, a well-handled blending of the mystery story with elements of the eerie, the bizarre, the occult. The third, a somewhat predictable murder situation at a spiritual retreat.

Of the four remaining, I liked "Oriental Justice," by Alex Josey, journalist, an offbeat, neatly done tale laid in Singapore. Long before reaching the endpiece containing the biographical material on the author, it became apparent that Mr. Josey was very familiar with the area and the people of which he was writing. "Miss Emeline," by Monica Lee, formerly of Czechoslavakia, is a peculiar piece. Not exactly a mystery by the definition of what most people point to when they say "mystery." More a character and situation thing which I could almost see as a scenario for a one-act play by Tennessee Williams. Prettily morbid. Interesting, though.

"The Speculator," by Kenneth Strongman, is another psychological tale. Appropriately enough, written by a psychologist. In the first-person important-facts-withheld-till-ending tradition. Forgiveable, perhaps, in light of the good writing and the extra compensation of a small, additional twist. "Crisis Over," by Nigel Abercrombie, chief regional advisor to the Arts Council of Great Britain, is one of those very smooth, understated pieces where everything is built offstage by implication.

And that's the book. As I said for openers, the thing that impressed me most about the stories was their variety. They do serve to show the scope of which the genre is capable. They also show that there have been a few small additions to the mystery writer's armory since the days of the Nineteenth Century forebears. Some new talent may have been sparked along, which is always a Good Thing. I would call the contest successful for these reasons, whether or not the time is really ripe for a revival of the sort hoped for by the TIMES and the five judges who risked eyestrain on its behalf.

--14 October 1973

WHAT IS HAPPENNING TO ROGER ZELAZNY?

JEFF CLARK

This question has been prompted from me by the appearance of one of Roger Zelazny's latest works, "'Kjwalll'kje'k'koothailll'k-je'k"--from here on out to be called "Dolphin" for reasons which are already, and will become, obvious--in Terry Carr's AN EXALTATION OF STARS. I'm in nearly total admiration of Zelazny's talents, but I see a trend in some of his recent work which seems unfortunate and is likely to continue for a while...though I won't pass judgment on whether it's due to authorial failings. That would be somewhat irresponsible and partake of C.S. Lewis' "personal heresy" in criticism if carried too far; and, anyhow, my natural inclination suggests that Zelazny could never be capable of killing his talent of his own accord.

But to begin. I've noticed that there seems to be a dropping off of satisfaction with Zelazny's work in the fan press beginning with the first two volumes of his six-part-or-so opus, NINE PRINCES IN AMBER and THE GUNS OF AVALON. Much of this dissatisfaction seemed to me to be unjustified, and I for one wouldn't want to conclusively judge theentire work on the first parts. To me it seemed to be developing almost along a new direction for Zelazny...but, even so, there was the hint of that uncomfortable trend.

After finishing "Dolphin," I've finally managed to articulate it, more or less fully.

It is the "mystery" element in his work. Sometimes, more pointedly, the "whodunit" element, the "detective" element. It can be sort of generalized, as in ISLE OF THE DEAD, to form a framework of inquiry and discovery, and I can see many good and beautiful reasons for making Francis Sandow not only immortal but also a sort of amateur detective in his own interests. At the other end of the spectrum we have the protagonist who is quite literally a private detective. In this category we find "Dolphin" and "The Eye of RUMOKO." Both of those long stories share as their protagonist the same nameless character who has his own minor brand of godhood--namely, the advantage of not having the specific data of his life recorded in the central banks of a Great Computer, as does the rest of the world. For practical purposes, he doesn't exist "at large," outside of his own actions. He lives on cash, not credit.

Which means, by way of conjured image, from day to day: a perfect situation for the attitude of detective.

But for the life of me I can't find a terribly good reason for this set-up, especially in "Dolphin." When I read "The Eve of RUMOKO" it seemed to be the worst shorter work I had ever seen from Zelazny, and "Dolphin" is also unsatisfactory, if not in the same degree, then in a similar way. (When I make a statement like the first part of the one just above, I'm discounting most of an author's work before his rise to serious prominence. I recently read many of the short, early bits from his AMAZING days in Zelazny's DOORS OF HIS FACE... and, despite the smoothness and occasional fortunate turns of phrasing, there wasn't great indication that he'd turn out to be the writer he is at his best.) And I'm sure it's that mystery-detective element. "Dolphin" is about an attempt to clear up a murder allegedly caused by dolphins and, also, on the side an inquiry into the nature of possible spiritual ecstacy experienced by dolphins in general. The murder turns out to be a thing of human device, interwoven with diamond-smuggling, blackmail, and adultery. At the point where things begin to come clear, the protagonist reflects ironically on how simply human everything turned out to be in the face of his speculations devoted to dolphins and the philosophical discussions of alien ludus, or "play instinct." Yes, indeed: this reader wondered, a bit annoyed, at that too. The dolphin concern is brought to a sort of casual resolve, by the end, but it is still not central enough to the activities of the story. I can see a possible, pointed connection between the human and dolphin aspects of the story, but I cannot feel it: the human intrigue, unfortunately, does not contain a distinctly personalized enough cast of characters to lend the whole thing weight and complexity. There are some nice touches, some fine stretches of descriptive writing, and a subtle implied correlation or two between different events; but the primary circumstances under which the philosophy of the dolphin and human murder schemes are brought together are too arbitrary to provide much force and coherence. A philosophical mystery or thriller is not the result.

The detective element, the mystery drive, is much of the problem with both stories. To combine such a form with an SF content is just too constricting to the expression required here--and especially to the finer aspects of Zelazny's talents. Most of the writing is concerned--must be simply concerned--with the narrator's (and this form inevitably takes the shape of a first-person narrative with Zelazny) speculations on alternate next-moves. Limited as it usually is to a superficial level, this kind of thing is very divisive to a story's effect. For example, one would never again read "Dolphin" for the suspense and curiosity of the story per se, but rather want to reread selected "relevant" chunks of it if he felt compelled to get a better grasp on the whole; the rest is dispensible once the general plot has been assimilated. The problem is greater with "RUMOKO" because the content of it isn't nearly as interesting as questions about dolphins. And there is a bit of this weakening intrusion revealing itself in the two Amber books, but it is almost smothered because the concern of these novels is predominantly the unravelling of a complicated fantasy.

The last evidence of the mystery trend in its full, debilitating bloom is in Zelazny's recent TODAY WE CHOOSE FACES. After

a promising and curiously beautiful first quarter or so, the book becomes rougher and rougher going. It is the mystery element again, this time in homage to and (sort of) imitation of Philip K. Dick. The novel is first-person, again, and it becomes increasingly complicated and action-oriented.

There is a vast difference between Zelazny and Dick; in terms of general prose style they are at opposite poles. Dick's sentencing is as overall clumsy as Zelazny's is graceful. But Dick's style is strangely suited to his disjointed, prickly plot complications, which seem almost ramshackle on first examination--no matter how that style looks when you stop to consider but a few phrases on the page before you. On the other hand Zelazny's attempt to adapt his terse grace to a Dickian choppiness of structure is simply unsettling; it is not within the scope of his sensibility.

What I feel the mystery format is doing to Zelazny--rather than he doing to it--is narrowing his writing down to his more superficial virtues. He has a unique talent for mood and perspective which does not come across in these cases. Such works have largely abandoned the mythopoeic in his writing; this element is nearly starved clean out of the suspense-action connective tissue of FACES after the opening of the book--that disturbing first part where the mythic subtly holds s y, as the protagonist encased in armor and machinery descends, determined, upon his enemy's planet, upon his enemy in a stark impregnable fortress, with its threats exploding all around the invader; and as the hidden, impregnable voice of the opposition comes to him with drifting, fading words of dissuasion over the waves of radio static...earnest? knowing? menacing? deadly? Like crossing some queasy waters to face the unknown, crossing an ether-bound Acheron to encounter an enigmatically beckoning fate...to sink toward it. --All this, subtle promise soon abandoned in the succeeding paces of the novel. It often now comes in discreet packets only, while once it permeated the larger structure of the author's best works with a sly, persuasive strength.

This is a trend I hope--and believe--will not continue indefinitely. A return to Zelazny's earlier, "purer" concerns may bring the risk of repitition, but there is hardly a good, distinctive writer who doesn't run that risk, and there is always something to be gained and enlarged upon from a new angle. And, of course, there are always unexpected new directions, one or two of which perhaps the Amber novels may yet bear out. I've been told that Zelazny has written a couple of mysteries and intends to concentrate on that area for a while. That's fine by me: I'm perfectly willing to read and (re-) appreciate certain of his talents on that basis. Mystery or detective novels, or whatever you care to call them, pure and simple.

But I'm prejudiced.

If Zelazny tries to mix the field with SF in the way he has with the works under discussion, I feel he is doing something of a disservice to both of them, and an especial disservice to his greatest talents. Those talents were never very traditional, and they cannot be well served by taking a seemingly challenging, perhaps, but ultimately "low-yield" route where form and style are concerned.

SNAPSHOTS OF ETERNITY

JEFF SMITH

Way back, I uded to have to ration my reading. I could read no more than x pages per day, to make sure I would always have something unread on hand. Earlier than that, when I read mostly Edgar Rice Burroughs, I had to read and reread the ones I had until I'd built up 40¢ to buy another. (I had to buy the Ace editions; 50¢ for Ballantine was too much. --I started buying IF in 1964 when it was 40¢. When it went up to 50¢ I stopped buying it, in the middle of a Keith Laumer serial.)

Those were the days. Lately I've felt three books a month a succesful period. It isn't that I'm not reading. I'm just not reading books fast enough to even come close to keeping up.

I have piles of reading matter scattered around: a pile of novels; a pile of short stories (books and magazines); a pile of books acquired in the last two months; a pile of books sent for review; a pile of library and otherwise-borrowed books; a pile of magazines (NEWSWEEK, NEW TIMES, PLAYBOY, ROLLING STONE, VIVA, MS.); another pile of magazines at the office (INTELLECTUAL DIGEST, SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, PSYCHOLOGY TODAY); a pile of fanzines; a pile of comic books; and now I seem to be starting a pile of Book-of-the-Month Club selections. (I recently joined, to get the OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY. The first selection offered me was THOMAS JEFFERSON: AN INTIMATE HISTORY by Fawn M. Brodie, and I decided to get it. I waited a long time. Finally it came, and I started into it. The first couple chapters indicate it should be very good. But less than a week later comes the second selection, WORKING by Studs Terkel. So I've got a pile started.)

Library books in particular are a lost cause. I took MONDAY THE RABBI DID SOMETHING out three times in a row and never did get around to it. The only ones I really make certain I read before returning are books by Donald E. Westlake and the Swedish husband-wife team Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö (whose series of Martin Beck police novels was my Big Find of 1973; if I'd read nothing else all year it would have been a rewarding one--brilliant books).

Nonetheless, I'm always bringing home books off the "New Releases" shelves. I've got Kit Reed's new novel, TIGER RAG, now. Think I'll ever read it? I don't. I'd love to, but....

New anthologies and collections aren't bad. I bring them home and look through them. I read all the introductions in THE EARLY ASIMOV, a lot of fun. (I couldn't help but be leery of the stories--all the early stuff he never felt worthy of collection before...aargh!) Hope to do the same for BEFORE THE GOLDEN AGE someday. (Reading thirties science fiction is not my idea of a good time.)

The one I have here is THE GOLDEN ROAD, a Damon Knight anthology subtitled "Great Tales of Fantasy and the Supernatural." It's published by Simon & Schuster, 447 pages for $8.95. It looks good, and quite wide-ranging. Oliver Onions and Mark Twain and Arthur Machen, H.P. Lovecraft, John Collier, up to Le Guin and Lafferty and Wilhelm. A lot of familiar stuff: "Entire and Perfect Chrysolite," one of Lafferty's very best; "The Truth about Pyecraft" by Wells--I never get tired of that one; Benet's "King of the Cats"; Heinlein's "Magic, Inc."; the story that Larry Niven may eventually find his reputation resting on, "Not Long Before the End." Lovecraft's long "Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath" is included, which will be familiar to many people if not to me.

I'm determined to read the Twain selection before the book goes back. The beginning is a lot of fun--not the devastation that LETTERS TO THE EARTH is, but a milder version. I have read a trio of the shorter stories from the book, and I think it's stretching things a little to call Heywood Broun's "Artist Unknown" a fantasy. "The Weeblies" by Algis Budrys is a little better than the average CREEPY story, but not much. But Alfred Bester's "Will You Wait?" is marvelous. (It's in his collection THE DARK SIDE OF THE EARTH, but I'd never read it before.)

Mainly what I've done with this book, though, is reread Kate Wilhelm's "Jenny with Wings," which originally appeared in her first book, the lamentably-out-of-print MILE-LONG SPACESHIP. "Jenny" is a story about a young girl born with wings, protected from discovery by her grandfather. She is telling her story to a doctor, and what she mostly talks about is the way men react to her wings. They are either frightened by them or they want to exploit her.

I'm not too sure whether it was inborn in me, or whether the consciousness-expanding drug of science fiction and fantasy nurtured it in me--but I love wings. I put myself in the place of the men in the story...what would my reaction be if a girl I had been dating undressed, and instead of her breasts the focal point of attention was a six-foot spread of soft, golden wings? Ecstacy, is what it would be. Exploitation is out. A winged human calls for long-term exploitation, and all my exploitations are strictly short-term. Fear?

My god, what is there to fear? And I'm not just talking about wings now. We've seen so many slimy BEMs in science fiction--and understood them on their own terms!-- that I cannot see fearing the sight, the plain, uninterpreted <u>sight</u>, of anything. Sights can be repulsive: I'll never be able to fully reconcile myself with cockroaches, or newborn rats (ugly little pink slugs)--but be afraid of the way they look?

Of course, the one guy in the story thought Jenny must be an angel, so it wasn't <u>uninterpreted</u> sight he was reacting to. But would he have felt any better if she'd slipped off her dress to

reveal four breasts? (Or, to take things completely out of the realm of fantasy, less than two breasts and a mass of scar tissue?)

All of a sudden, reading this story, aching to fly, to have known Jenny when she was looking for love...I felt very glad that I had "wasted" all those years with science fiction. That I had managed to be up at seven-thirty every Saturday morning to see Rocky Jones on tv. That I had saved those dimes to buy those Burroughs paperbacks.

There is magic in the world, and I can tap into it. At the sober old age of twenty-three I can slouch down on the sofa, open a book--and fly! I may not have wings myself, but I know someone who does. She takes me with her whenever I want. It's exhilarating. It's certainly erotic. It's fantasy.

People with no real fantasy in their souls, people whose fantasies never extend beyond "What if I won the $50,000 lottery" or "What if I were raped by two women," these people will never fly. People whose fantasies are mundane can enjoy them tremendously, but a true fantasy frees the soul, unleashes the spirit. You can fantasize about living in a better house, but you are merely changing your reality for a glorified version of the same. When you return, it's like you never left. If you break free, though, if you soar through space and time, you return with snapshots of eternity.

Of course, we all have mundane fantasies, but how many have true fantasies? How many fly?

Do you have to be trained to fly? There are people with dead souls, irredeemable. But how about those with sleeping souls?

Questions, questions. The answers will show themselves, and if we know where to look we'll see them. Myself, I figure if I can still fly at twenty-three, I'll be able to fly at sixty. And what more could I ask?

Since it takes me forever-and-a-half to read a book once I get it, I don't really haunt the newsstands waiting for new releases. It doesn't matter if I buy a book today or next month--I'll be lucky to get to it by next year.

I anxiously awaited AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS. I looked and looked for Tiptree's TEN THOUSAND LIGHT-YEARS FROM HOME. And I craved Disch's 334.

The back cover of the Avon edition ($1.65, 269 pages) says: "334 is a much-anticipated novel," which is almost true. The pieces I had read had me waiting for the book, to be sure, but I must wonder if it is a novel. By science fiction standards, a novel based on shorts stories is a novelization, but a mere compilation of stories into a book is a collection. That is what 334 is. On the other hand, if the pieces had not been published seperately, and the book had been published just as it is, it would be considered a novel by literary standards. Actually, you can call most anything a novel these days--and 334 seems to me more a novel than the latest Cap Kennedy extravaganza, so what the hell... The book claims to be a novel; who are we to deny it?

The book has a 1974 copyright date, which I can't explain--it was published earlier in England. This could make it eligible for 1974 novel awards, but: a) will it be considered a novel?, b) particularly since the Worldcon will be in Australia, will the American copyright be considered ineligible?, and c) hasn't Disch stated that he will withdraw his stories from awards competeition?

Anyway, the book:

To dispense with formalities, here is the list of original publications of each segment, lacking in the book: "The Death of Socrates" (revised from "Problem of Creativeness," F&SF, April 1967); "Bodies" (QUARK/4, 1971); "Everyday Life in the Later Roman Empire (BAD MOON RISING, 1973); "Emancipation" (NEW DIMENSIONS 1, 1971); "Angouleme" (NEW WORLDS QUARTERLY 1, 1971); "334" (NEW WORLDS QUARTERLY 4, 1972).

This is the story of 334 East 11th Street in New York City, in the 2020s--and particularly of the Hanson family there. 334 is not one of the better neighborhoods of New York, but neither is it a slum. (I don't know if they have real slums left.) It is an apartment building with 812 apartments, 3000 people. Competetion for apartments is strong, and evictions are common: one slip and someone is moving in and taking over, leaving you on the street.

The future is recognizable as springing from our present. There is nothing unfamiliar; every word rings either an intellectual resonance, an emotional one, or both. It's a place in which you could conceive of yourself living--not liking it, but living in it. The detail is superb.

The characters are products of their environment. Their feelings about their lives and their world are equivalent to our feelings about ours; they are as illogical and inconsistent as our own. Importantly, they live there. They cannot see their world in the perspective that we can.

The main problem with this book--and it is one which could be disastrous--is that it is very difficult to get into. The first section is by far the weakest, and the second section starts slowly. Once into "Bodies" the reader is home free, but will he stick with it that long? Even though I had read some of the later bits, and knew how excellent they were, I read "The Death of Socrates" and the beginning of "Bodies" and put the book down very disappointed. A couple weeks later I started again, from the beginning, and managed to break free into the main body of the novel. If I had not been committed to the book, though, if I had not known before I even saw a copy that I would like it, I quite possibly would have put it away without finishing it.

My expectations hurt "The Death of Socrates." It is a good story, but it is not a major portion of the novel. It concerns the main characters only tangentially. It concerns 334 only tangentially. It does introduce us to the society, but another story could have done that. This one should have been in the middle, to be read after some momentum had been built up.

Disch does a lot of playing with the reader's own preconceptions in this book. He half-describes something, lets the reader

visualize it--without realizing anything is missing--and then fills in the picture. This allows the reader to see what assumptions he automatically makes every day, and also gives the reader the possibly-disconcerting feeling that Disch is sitting there in the room watching his book being read, and chuckling.

(For instance, from the very beginning: "Professor Ohrengold was telling them about Dante." Clear enough. Then, "Now Ohrengold was telling them about Florence and the Popes and such, and then he disappeared. 'Okay, what is simony?' the proctor asked. No one volunteered. The proctor shrugged and turned the lecture on again." Aha! It's a recorded lecture--Disch even told us that on the first page, with "Professor Ohrengold became a messy painting," but I thought that just meant the student unfocused and went into a daydream. So it's recorded, and some other guy is actually conducting the class. Oops, "The proctor raised her hand."

"Bodies" starts off with dialogue that sounds exactly the same as that in the first story, but then it is revealed that the main character is around forty. He sounds like the kids in the first section, though, and I could not picture him as any older than the late twenties. This may be my fault as well, but I think Disch has to share some of the blame; this is the only area where I will insist upon that, but I do feel Disch should have tried to make Ab Holt sound older. Part of the problem I had with the early part of "Bodies" was that I was consciously trying too hard to visualize what Disch wanted me to see.

So, persevere. 334 is not for everyone, I will admit. It is a very literary book, and many people do not like literary books. (That is not a character flaw, despite what some people might say.) But it is an excellent work of speculative fiction, an intensely rewarding book.

In THE ALIEN CRITIC 6 Mark Mumper had the comment: "Should a writer need to 'hook' the reader's attention I should say he had failed before he begins. The substance of his story should be sufficient to interest the reader...."

This is not workable. A hook at the beginning of the story is quite a desireable thing. It is a difficult thing to interest the reader in the substance of the story without getting the reader into the book, and that is what a hook does. A hook is nothing more than an interesting beginning. It is what the reader has to go on, it is all he really has to know if reading the story will be worthwhile. (No writer should take the chance that his publishers will package his work correctly, or that his reviewers will be kind.)

A story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. I'm not arguing plot theory here; for my purposes here a Ballard condensed novel has a beginning, a middle and an end. Purely physical terms.

To my mind the ending is the most important. It is what the writer leaves the reader with. Many stories (including most by Heinlein) have interesting middles but fizzle out at the end. This is because the writer was most interested in the process, the development of the story, and didn't pay enough attention to his

plot-structure. ("Plot" and "story" are not synonymous.) The story he told was interesting; the story he wrote was not. (The stories which drag in the middle are the reverse; lots of plot, no story.)

But important as the ending is, the beginning must not be ignored. If a writer wants a reader to read his story, he must show him that the effort might be repaid.

A writer need not resort to "devices" or "formula" to come up with an effective hook. A tight, solid first paragraph can convince the reader he will be entertained:

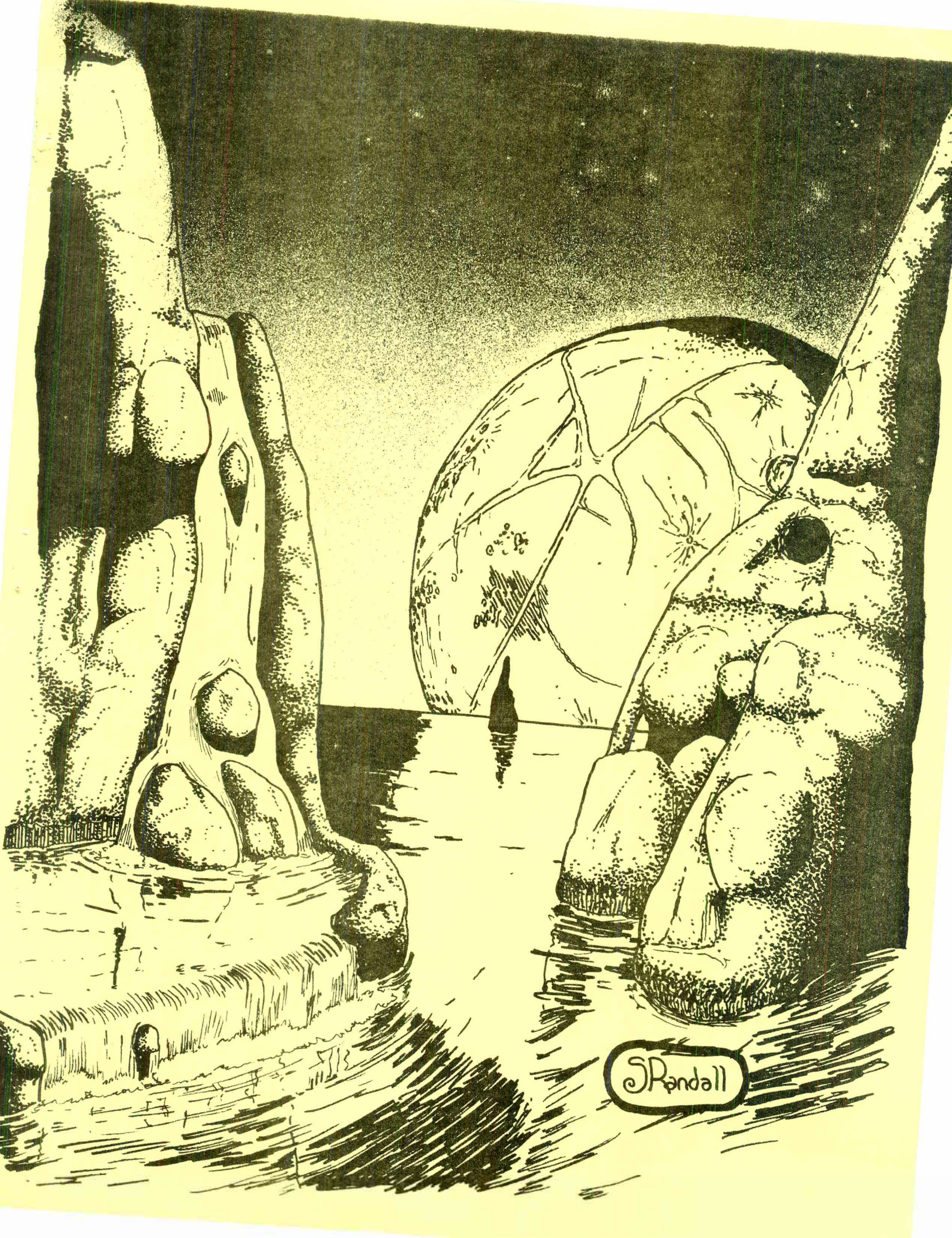
> The ceiling above him was low and gray; Barton's first thought was, what am I doing in the drunk tank? On second thought it didn't stink like a drunk tank, and Barton was far enough awake to know that he was not hung-over. So he sat up and looked around. The first thing he noticed was that he was naked, along with everyone else. If this were a drunk tank, it had to be the first coeducational nude drunk tank in his limited experience.
>
> "Cage a Man,"
> F.M. Busby

This paragraph hooked me into reading a story I might not have bothered with. There isn't a wasted word, and (just as important) the words are in the right places. If that last "limited experience" had been put in with the original mention of "drunk tank," which might have easily happened, it would have badly marred the flow of words and thoughts.) (Unfortunately, the care showed in this first paragraph is not kept up throughout the rest of the story, but I was in it by then and interested enough to keep going.)

Another great opening comes perilously close to the "device" chasm but doesn't fall in. In this case the writer gives you simple sentences with implied meaning, but then changes the meanings subtly--or rather, reveals the true meanings and replaces the ones inferred by the reader:

> He had never held a girl before. He was not terrified; he had used that up earlier when he had carried her in and kicked the door shut behind him and had heard the steady drip of blood from her soaked skirt, and before that, when he had thought her dead there on the curb, and again when she made that sound, that sigh or whispered moan....
>
> ...What could I tell them, she's my sister, she's hit by a car, they going to believe me? Tell them the truth, a block away I see somebody push her out of a car, drive off, no lights, I bring her in out of the rain, only inside I find she is bleeding like this, they believe me? Stupid....
>
> "Bright Segment"
> Theodore Sturgeon

That second paragraph actually comes from a couple pages into the story (which, incidentally, does not let down, anywhere), but I quoted it so you would know what was going on. The hook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is there in those first couple lines. Most effective hooks are. But in a novel, particularly, a hook can run longer. Two of the richest fantasies I've ever had the pleasure of reading I read because of their hooks.

It was the first two paragraphs of Peter Beagle's A FINE AND PRIVATE PLACE that said to me: "You will like this book." They go like this:

> The baloney weighed the raven down, and the shopkeeper almost caught him as he whisked out the delicatessen door. Frantically he beat his wings to gain altitude, looking like a small black electric fan. An updraft caught him and threw him into the sky. He circled twice, to get his bearings, and began to fly north.
>
> Below, the shopkeeper stood with his hands on his hips, looking up at the diminishing cinder in the sky. Presently he shrugged and went back into his delicatessen. He was not without philosophy, this shopkeeper, and he knew that if a raven comes into yor delicatessen and steals a whole baloney it is either an act of God or it isn't, and in either case there isn't very much you can do about it.

A very sketchy series of quotes butchered from the first two pages of Lloyd Alexander's THE BOOK OF THE THREE might give you an idea of why I got hooked on his Prydain series:

> Taran wanted to make a sword; but Coll, charged with the practical side of his education, decided on horseshoes....
>
> "Why?" Taran cried. "Why must it be horseshoes? As if we had any horses."...
>
> "Whisht!" cried Coll. "Why should you want to know that ((how to make swords))? We have no battles at Caer Dallben."
>
> "We have no horses, either," objected Taran, "but we're making horseshoes."

Hooks. There are many books and stories I wouldn't have read had they not come with hooks. They show the author's intent to make the story interesting for the reader. They are not a mechanistic device. They are a legitimate and necessary part of the writer's craft. (And people like Sturgeon, in the quote above, make them a part of the writer's art.)

My key word is "interest." Mark Mumper says "The reader is not necessarily present to be entertained," and this is true. But he is certainly not there to be bored.

LACK OF PROGRESS REPORT: F&SF FILMS IN 1973

BARRY GILLAM

1973 was a bad year for movies and an impoverished year for F&SF films. Just as any reasonable "ten best" list is topped by six or seven older foreign films receiving their first US commercial release, so the movies in our genre are overshadowed by the still growing reputations of two films released in past years: THX 1138 (1971) and THE OTHER (1972).

In the first three years of this new decade there has been no stinting on the money spent on genre productions. A CLOCKWORK ORANGE and THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN are evidence of this. But they are also evidence of the poverty of imagination that conventional filmmakers bring to F&SF. What many fans don't seem to grasp is that a mediocre director will make a mediocre movie, whether it is a cop film, a western, a love story or science fiction.

We are lucky that Robert Mulligan (INSIDE DAISY CLOVER, SUMMER OF 42) is interested in gothic horror. THE OTHER is a masterpiece of ambience and ominous suggestions. As elsewhere, Mulligan uses style as a revelation of psychological states. THE OTHER is characterized by both Robert Surtees' downy, child's-eye photography of a bright, blue New England summer and Mulligan's literal, casual pans from the youthful necromancers to the results of their wide-eyed "games." Mulligan has long wanted to make a film on Lizzie Borden and after the success of THE OTHER, he was reportedly working with someone on a script. His latest film, NICKEL RIDE, is a US entry at Cannes.

George Lucas is the genre's other cinematic ace in the hole. His first feature, THX 1138, was not nearly as successful as Mulligan's recent work, but then Mulligan has twenty years' experience on Lucas. Lucas, though, is a wonder among young directors and his work is consistently exciting, even though it has all (that is THX and AMERICAN GRAFFITI) suffered from weak scripting. Lucas is practically the only new director who has a real "eye" fo images and who, more importantly, has a sense of narrative motion so rare today. He and his co-scenarists from AMERICAN GRAFFITI a

now at work on an sf movie, RADIOLAND MURDERS, which is one of Universal's seventeen films currently in production.

Lucas's student movie, ELECTRONIC LABYRINTH (on which THX was based) had a two-week run at the Whitney Museum. If this constitutes release (although I have my doubts), LABYRINTH is probably the best sf film of 1973. I couldn't get to see it, but friends assured me that it looked even better on screen than it had on television. My memory of seeing it on the latter medium several years ago is not too clear but the impression remains of the fugitive's desperate race to escape through, and from, the endless corridors of the labyrinth.

Of the films in general release, WESTWORLD is probably the best, although more by default than achievement and very definitely more in part than in whole. Michael Crichton's directorial debut (on his own script) proved him to have the typical strengths and weaknesses of a novice: he is able to select strong images but does not know what to do with them. His simple story about a future Disneyland gone berserk simmers weakly through all the preliminaries. The purposeful banality of the first half doesn't excuse its insipidity and emptyheadedness. And the script is often that of a television mentality, containing too many jokes about meek men dreaming of being knights and middle-class women dreaming of being raped. The flashy, television style smothers both Richard Benjamin's competent performance and some nice ideas, like the pseudo-Morricone touches to the score. But the crucial character to the partial success of the film is Yul Brynner's robot gunfighter, dressed all in black. We know more than we want to about Benjamin's role. We know nothing about Brynner. And that script decision is one of the best in the picture.

A friend of mine remarked half facetiously that this is the role Brynner has been rehearsing for all his life. The amount of truth in the comment helps explain the casting coup. Crichton is most successful in his joining of the western and sf iconographies, in the combination of the invulnerable gunfighter and the unkillable Frankenstein's monster. Brynner's inexorable return after successive "deaths" and, finally, his relentless pursuit of Benjamin are what save the film. In a role that requires a total lack of facial expression, Brynner manages to elicit both our admiration and our sympathy. And Crichton's use of the infrared vision "computer screen" for Brynner's eyesight provides a rather unique point-of-view shot. There is an incredible moment towards the end, when Benjamin wanders into a Medievalworld castle, lit with torches, and the closely-pursuing Brynner cannot distinguish Benjamin's body heat from the flames. The look of incomprehension in Brynner's eyes is priceless.

Crichton follows this up with his most rivetting images: Brynner's acid-scarred face, Brynner aflame, like nothing else in the room (something out of Dali or Gorey), Brynner's charred body, still walking, Brynner's now-black faceplate caving in. The end is tragic rather than melodramatic because we care not at all about Benjamin's escape but instinctively for Brynner's noble death. The problem, as in LIFEBOAT, is that the only admirable person in the film is the soulless one. An allied problem is that exceptions to Crichton's broad, bland caricature-roles must be achieved through acting. And aside from Brynner, only the wonderful Steve Franken has the ability. In the film's

best vignette, Franken is a technician stranded in the midst of the desert, busily assuring Benjamin that he has no chance of escape.

There is, then, some promise in Crichton's debut and his interest in sf may yet result in a satisfying movie.

SLEEPER is Woody Allen's most cerebral comedy but hardly his funniest. Allen is again the only character in his film, and again he uses his female co-star (lovely Diane Keaton) as a "straight man." The difference is that this time Allen has distanced himself from his surroundings not by urban alienation or moving the story to Latin America, but by going into the future. He has, of course, very little interest in this future world per se, but there are incidental felicities. The sets are excellent: milky, white-on-white buildings, lots of soothing, complacent shapes, especially ovals. It is a pastoral, uncommited world, which, Allen suggests, rid itself of war when it mechanized sex and thereby took all the frustration and guilt out of it.

SLEEPER is not Allen's 2001 but his WEEKEND: an essay on politics, sex and technology. Many of the gags are of the sort that work conceptually rather than visually and that one feels would be more at home in his NEW YORKER pieces. The attempt to clone a new dictator from his remains (his nose) and the parody of cryogenics in which Allen comes wrapped in aluminum foil are ideas that Allen does not, or cannot, successfully visualize.

The encounters with the machinery of the future are more interesting. Allen at one point acts as a robot servant, but with his natural incompetence he cannot work the futuristic kitchen. He can't even control a robot dog, but he goes most to pieces when he encounters the orgasmatron. In the end, though, as one would expect, it is the machinery that backfires while Allen goes off somewhere with Keaton to start a new world.

The only other sf film that provides anything resembling quality is the French-Czech animated feature, FANTASTIC PLANET. This concerns a primitive human society on a hostile alien planet inhabited by an advanced race of blue "giants." The direction (Rene Laloux) and the screenplay (Laloux and Roland Topor) emphasize the brave fight for survival and, in some vague future, back to culture. However, someone wasn't thinking when he engaged Topor to produce the original artwork. Under the influence of Edward Gorey, Topor's work deals primarily in images of depersonalization, evanescence and futility. He has given this film a persuasive vision of the tenuousness of life: it is full of longshots in which the figures are diminished to the size of insects. The action of the story has more to do with the original title: LA PLANETE SAUVAGE.

In a bid for the children's picture market, the film was quickly dubbed (poorly, as usual) and there is a ludicrous "happy" ending. Still, much of the graphic work--the huge, ornate, almost Victorian mansions of the giants, and the surreal landscape with its horrific, inexpliquable flora and fauna--is striking. Perhaps overlong at its 72 minutes, FANTASTIC PLANET is best with its monsters and with its action, when characters would be a hindrance and thought a delay.

The other sf films of 1973 were very bad. Richard Fleischer's SOYLENT GREEN is even worse than his FANTASTIC VOYAGE (1966) was, mainly because MGM begrudged him any kind of budget. Many of the crowd scenes are processed through a monochrome filter, supposedly to make them look different, i.e. futuristic, but also to mask the pitiful sets. The script is mediocre and the film is a refuge for old, tired actors: Edward G. Robinson (in his last role), Charleton Heston, Chuck Connors, Joseph Cotten, Whit Bissell. Even with the "riots" and much emphatic script flagwaving, we never feel the lack of food or luxuries. And the potentially interesting theme of bookhoarding is equally unconvincing. There is a surprisingly good scene near the end in which Heston and Connors shoot it out in the midst of a church crowded and reeking with the sleeping poor: each step wakes someone else as they careen past bunks and over inert bodies. But nothing can redeem the dross that has gone before. With the exception of the shootout, the only thing I liked about SOYLENT GREEN was Metro's practice of having very complete credits at the end, where I learned that Joe Canutt directed the action sequences. I assume he is a son if not a grandson of the great Yakima Canutt, who worked on many Ford films.

The fifth Apes movie, BATTLE FOR THE POTA, was directed by J. Lee Thompson, whose CONQUEST OF THE POTA (1972) displayed an admirable hand at action montage. But CONQUEST was written by Paul Dehn, whose moderate intelligence and humor raised the third and fourth films in the series (ESCAPE and CONQUEST) above the others. BATTLE reverts to labored allegory about minorities, is poorly acted (by Roddy McDowell, Claude Akins and John Huston, among others) and is poor in every other way imaginable. There is one almost interesting sequence, involving the ruse that wins the battle of the title, but it is hardly worth the boredom of the rest of the film.

Mike Nichols' THE DAY OF THE DOLPHIN is just as boring but much easier to sleep through because of the soothing underwater photography and Georges Delerue's pleasant score. The movie attempts several genres and succeeds at none. It is a dull animal picture, dimwitted sf, unsuspenseful spy stuff, etc. The logic of Buck Henry's screenplay is so full of potholes and craters that the plot is a disaster area. Oddly enough, the one level on which it works is as a story about parents raising and then having to say goodbye to their children. But the parents are scientists (George C. Scott and Trish Van Devere) and the children are two dolphins. And it works there only for the most tearjerking of reasons--it is built into the voice given Alpha, the speaking dolphin: that of a trusting, brain-injured child, a Blakean innocent for whom "feels good" means "morally good." As an anonymous editorial wit entitled Vincent Canby's NEW YORK TIMES review of the movie, DAY OF THE DOLPHIN is an "underwater talkie."

Films in release last year that I did not see included George Romero's THE CRAZIES, which does not seem to have generated any enthusiasm, unlike his earlier film, THE NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD. There was also something called THE NEPTUNE FACTOR, another underwater talkie. Its chief claim to fame seems to be Lalo Schifrin's THUS SPAKE ZARATHUSTRA adaptation, which VARIETY characterized as having "the sublety of a fire alarm." Andrei Tarkovsky's film of SOLARIS was shown at various film festivals and in the Museum of Modern Art's January Russian series. Every-

one whose opinion I trust who saw it was bored to death.

Among the films of marginal interest were sequences in Lindsay Anderson's O Lucky Man and in Ralph Bakshi's Heavy Traffic. The bloated corpse of the Anderson film contains a horrific and rather disgusting section at an experimental laboratory that bludgeons scientific research over the head with dreary old Frankenstein and vivisection fears. The rest of the film is generally more soporific but no less sophomoric, the one exception being Alan Price's splendid score. One of the digressions in Bakshi's funky and rather rank cartoon about New York City is an entirely self-contained story, "Wanda the Last." This is one of those "what is the future of God and man" things and was one of the less successful parts of Bakshi's very uneven film.

There may have been a good fantasy or horror film released in 1973 but if so, I didn't see it. Roger Greenspun's favorable reviews of Pedro Portabella's Vampir and Hans Geissendorfer's Jonathon suggest that one of them might be the elusive item, but I cannot say. And although I have my doubts, it might also be found in Lost Horizon, Theater of Blood, Scream Blacula Scream, Asylum or Vault of Horror, Friends who've seen Theater of Blood discount Diana Rigg's presence (she apparently has little more to do than wear disguises) and the touted humor (which they found very heavyhanded).

The fantasy and horror genres seem to be perpetual moneymakers any many were released this year. The most widely seen, and the worst, is William Friedkin's film of The Exorcist from William Peter Blatty's screenplay. This is poorly written, photographed, directed and acted. The only actor with talent (Jack MacGowran, in his last film) is wasted. Mercedes McCambridge, against all odds (including lack of screen credit) is an amazing, radio-like presence as the devil's voice -- the best thing in the movie. The film itself is not only physically disgusting but intellectually sordid and cheap. Its use of clinical conditions, such as projectile vomiting, is simply irresponsible. Whether it would ever be justified I cannot say, but there is certainly nothing in this film to warrant what amounts to asking the audience to enjoy the torture of this young girl.

As Marvin Zeman remarked, the basic problem with the film is that no distinction is being made any longer between what is frightening (Psycho, for example) and what is sickening (The Exorcist). In this light, its success augers an era of even more repulsive films, even more shoddily made. Blatty claims that the film is about the triumph of good. Nonsense. After having seen Linda Blair as that obsessively destructive, self-fouling creature, it is impossible to believe in the cure or innocence of the girl at the end. You expect her to reach out and strangle Ellen Burstyn.

I can certainly understand why The Exorcist was made, though. It is not so easy to understand why anyone let Nicholas Roeg's Don't Look Now get beyond, or into, the script stage. Don't Look Now's story is not so much illogical as invisible. Julie Christie and Donald Sutherland (in two endearingly wooden performances) wander about Venice while Sutherland is employed there in restoring a cathedral. Christie spends time with two batty old women (one of

whom claims to be psychic), who promise to put Christie in touch with her recently deceased young daughter. They warn Sutherland that he is in danger. We are then treated to an anthology of red herrings of menace that would put a bus station rack full of gothics to shame. Nothing happens. In spectacular photography. (Roeg was a photographer before he became a director.) There are flashbacks to the daughter's red mack. There is "atmosphere:" Venice in the winter. But as Ira Hozinski put it, "I dont know what all the fuss is about. Venice in the winter looks like Brooklyn at night." And so it goes. The acclaimed love scene is as cold as the weather and the cross-cutting to their dressing later is merely academic. Roeg knows what a movie should look like but he doesn't seem to have considered anything else.

Brian De Palma, on the other hand, has considered everything. SISTERS is Hitchcockian in script, acting, music, photography and direction. Everything except quality. If I didnt know better, I'd have thought that this was a burlesque rather than an homage. Jennifer Salt is a reporter for a Staten Island newspaper who sees Margot Kidder murder a man but can't prove it and spends the rest of the film trying. De Palma has obviously seen many Hitchcock films but he has no idea where their heart is. Therefore, his quoting looks more like aping, since his reproductions of Hitchcock's perverse themes and lucid, unsettling style are purely mechanical. In fact, De Palma throws in so many Hitchcockian references that they interfere with the story and with the audience's reactions to scenes. There is a certain amount of talent here, which comes out in the comedy, but De Palma is unable to control the tone of his film and the audience often laughs through the "horror" sequences. The story is more aggressively improbable than Hitchcock's plots and the photography is unbelievably literal: De Palma uses split screen where Hitchcock would cross-cut between simultaneous actions. The viewer looks on in amusement, wondering what De Palma will pull next.

SISTERS, nevertheless, produced two worthwhile dividends: Bernard Herrmann's excellent score and a charming article by De Palma (in the Village Voice) about working with the great Herrmann. This is one case in which following in the master's footsteps paid off. For although SISTERS is not nearly as good as Truffaut's homage, THE BRIDE WORE BLACK, it has the same advantage of a musical track that often persuades viewers in spite of the images on the screen. The joined fetuses under the credits of SISTERS represent laughable pretentions, but the sequence is evocative and compelling due to Herrmann. And it is good to see an artist of Herrmann's age still experimenting, this time with a Moog synthesizer to supplement his usual full orchestra. SISTERS is anything but boring and with the added delight of the music, it is not a bad investment of ninety minutes.

Unlike John Hough's THE LEGEND OF HELL HOUSE, which follows a hokey Richard Matheson script beyond endurance. Pamela Franklin, Roddy McDowall, Clive Revill and Gayle Hunnicut are four psychic researchers investigating the usual haunted house. To keep the audience awake, there is an inordinate amount of camera trickery and an unforgivable number of "shock" angles. And when it is finally revealed that the unquiet spirit which has rampaged for decades is compensating for his shortness, I had to wonder if Matheson weren't having us on.

I also got that feeling in parts of Mario Bava's BARON BLOOD, but I found this admittedly minor exercise more entertaining. The reason probably has as much to do with my memories of Bava's fine BLACK SUNDAY (with the superb Barbara Steele) as with the film at hand. Joseph Cotten is the disinterred villain and Elke Sommer is the heroine, which means that she spends most of her time running from shadows through old, cobwebby halls. My favorite scene was one in which the unsuspecting victim is busy at a Coke machine. I'm not sure who the joke was on, but I enjoyed it.

Another minor film that proved surprising was THE LEGEND OF BOGGY CREEK. This was playing on the bottom half of a double bill with this year's Apes film and I hadn't even intended staying for BOGGY CREEK. The opening, though, was so superior to its companion that I sat back and watched. Instead of cheap sensationalism about the Fouke monster, BOGGY CREEK is a shrewd combinatic of semi-documentary (interviews with witnesses), sympathetic myth-mongering (including songs about the lonely monster!) and good old horror film (well paced shocks). Good use is made of the location shooting to convey the atmosphere of the deserted, alightly menacing woods and swamp and the creepy feeling of the lonely rural houses. The combination of slickly shot sunsets and almost amateurish day-for-night recreations make for an uneven but an earnest, rather pleasing film.

Fantastic elements have been present in a number of unlikely places this year. My mention of LIVE AND LET DIE here has to do with its Tarot and Voodoo themes rather than its James Bond-related sf gimicks. And unfortunately, the occult plays a larger role in the ads than in the film. There is some effective voodoo imagery centering on Geoffrey Holder as Baron Samedi but Jane Seymour's virginal tarot reader is entirely too anemic. Neither Roger Moore nor Yaphet Kotto gives anything more to their roles or the film than their time. The elaborate central chase is well done but this is definitely a minor entry in the Bond series. What amused me most about the film were the opening and closing sequences, which parody those in NORTH BY NORTHWEST.

Another odd genre to find fantastic elements in is porn. THE DEVIL IN MISS JONES has a framework story about spinsterish Georgina Spelvin, in which the devil, a modern executive type, grants Miss Jones a reprieve to savor what she had missed. Her prize includes Harry Reems, a woman almost as unattractive as Spelvin herself and assorted others. It is hard core but scarcely erotic. The surprising thing is that a porn film should open with such a grisly and graphic suicide. Watching Spelvin slit her wrists in the bathtub doesn't put one in a mood for what follows. After the pretense of a story is no longer needed, the film settles down to what seems the usual: a series of drab, workman-like sexual encounters. The tedium is relieved in one scene -- in which Spelvin masturbates with a water hose -- by the use of Ennio Morricone's splendidly operatic score for ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST.

The western, in fact, is the third genre that has adduced fantastic elements. Clint Eastwood's second directorial job, HIGH PLAINS DRIFTER, concerns the nameless man (Eastwood) who returns to torment and destroy a small town. The story, in which he renames the town "Hell" and has its inhabitants paint all the buildings red, sounds like an unfortunately literal reading of

metaphors from Sergio Leone's films. Certainly the gradual revelation of identity through the flashbacks and the dislocated Christian imagery have their immediate sources in Leone's exceptional westerns, three of which Eastwood acted in (the best of the three is THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY). Leone, though, never went so far as to make a ghost story western. (Eastwood, it turns out, is the avenging spirit of the town's former sheriff, who was killed as a result of the community's cowardice.) But there are moments in Leone's work that are far more haunting and redolent of the supernatural than anything here: the column of dust-shrouded soldiers in THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY who might as well be wraiths and whom Eli Wallach mistakenly takes for Confederates; or the exchanges between Charles Bronson and Henry Fonda in ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST, when Fonda asks Bronson's name and then rejects one name after another: "Your're not him... nor him either... Those are the names of dead men." While HIGH PLAINS DRIFTER has nothing to compare with that, Bruce Surtees' very dark photography is consistently fine. I am still, however, not sure what to make of the images contained therein.

Despite the ragged year of 1973, the field has a good deal of promise. One exciting if somewhat nonsensical sf film has already appeared in 1974: John Boorman's ZARDOZ. And aside from the upcoming Mulligan and Lucas movies, Hal Ashby, whose THE LAST DETAIL is so damn good, will direct THE CAVES OF STEEL with Jack Nicholson. Coming much sooner should be THE TERMINAL MAN, from Mike Hodges, who made the fine GET CARTER. Another promising young director, Paul Morrissey (of the wild, hilarious TRASH), has made two English language horror films in Italy: BLOOD FOR DRACULA and FLESH FOR FRANKENSTEIN (the latter in 3-D). Still other possibly interesting films will be Richard Williams' animated NASRUDDIN! (over six years in the making, recently bouyed by Williams Oscar for A CHRISTMAS CAROL in 1972) and Stanley Donen's musical of THE LITTLE PRINCE, whose release has been delayed for some time. This may finally be the year that we will be able to choose the best sf film for a Hugo rather than the least bad. It is something to look forward to.

PART V: 1972 -- DONALD G. KELLER

It seems to be a pattern for the Adult Fantasy Series that it prospers in odd-numbered years, and falls slightly on its face in years of even number. 1972 was no exception; the quality of the books fell off, and worse, distribution and sales problems led to the cutback in numbers of volumes published, and we never did get the regular two-a-month schedule we were promised.

But some good books did come out. Ever widening the circle of types of fantasy published in the Series, Carter started the year by presenting two examples of the Haggardian lost-race romance, which he had heretofore neglected.

And what better way to start than with Haggard himself? His THE WORLD'S DESIRE, despite being burdened with a hideously inappropriate cover, was a fine choice for the series. Haggard wrote it in collaboration with Andrew Lang, the great fairytale expert; it is nothing less than a sequel to the first and greatest romance of them all, THE ODYSSEY. In it, Odysseus is sent by the goddess Aphrodite in search of Helen of Troy, the World's Desire. In typical Haggardian intrigue, Odysseus finds her in Egypt, and gets involved with the court of Egypt and its queen, Moriamun. The tale is fascinating, full of interesting plot turns, episodes of magic, and supernatural happenings, and finally reaches a satisfying and heroic climax. For those who know Haggard from SHE and KING SOLOMON'S MINES, here is a book to equal them in all things, and perhaps to better them in some.

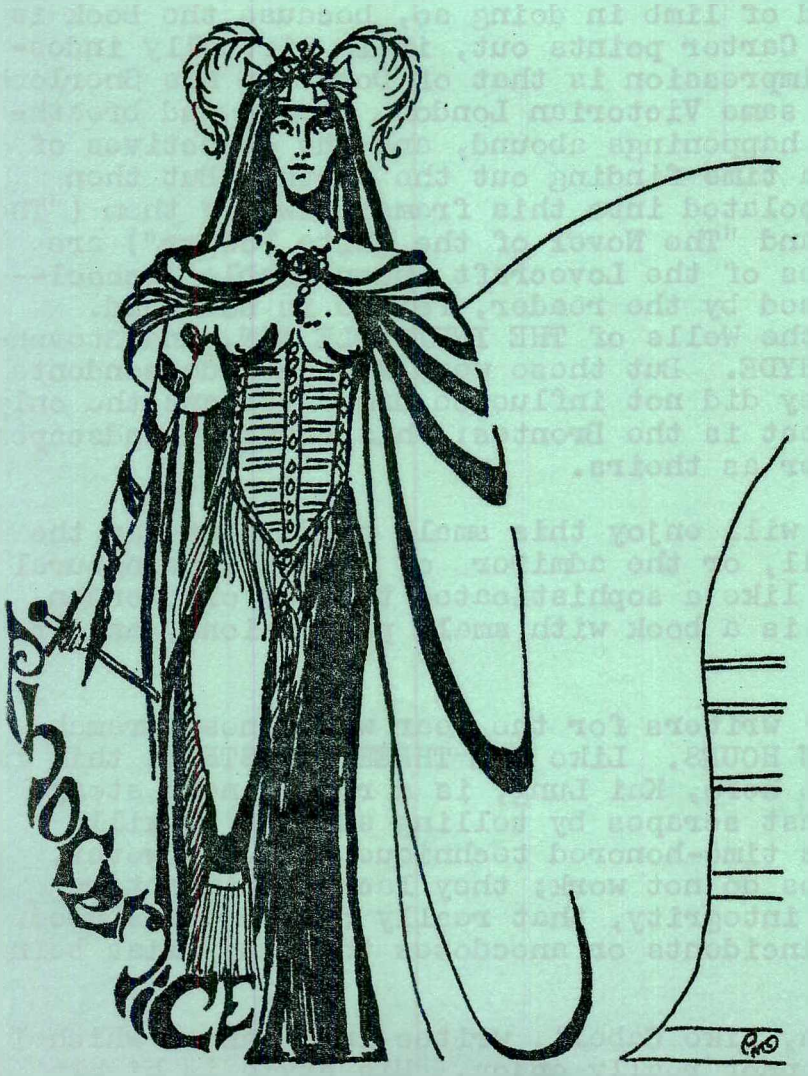
For example, one of the best things about the book is its prose. Perhaps this is Lang's contribution; I would prefer to think it was a product of the spark between the two, for certainly Haggard proved himself no mean stylist in ERIC BRIGHTEYES. But

however the style came about, it is a musical, singing thing, absolutely perfect for a fantasy such as this, yet so inobtrusive one ceases to notice it very shortly. There are also two fine poems, one at the beginning and one at the end, which bookend the novel beautifully.

The book's one major flaw is perhaps the result of a strength: Helen, the book's ostensible heroine, remains a shadowy, vague figure throughout. Perhaps this was the author's purpose, like Cabell in JURGEN: Helen made too real would lose her mystery. But I think it more likely that it was because she is so overshadowed by the novel's real heroin-villianess, the Egyptian queen Meriamun. Strong in her beauty, pride and evil, she is nearly as powerful and memorable a character as the immortal Ayesha herself.

As a sequel to the ODYSSEY, the story works well, beginning truly beautifully. An entire novel is implied as Odysseus returns home from untold adventures to find Ithaca wasted, a scene of marvelous poignancy. And when the book reaches its end, with the usual Haggardian suggestions of transmigration and eternal Reality, the reader has in sum a truly great fantasy.

After this fine start, I was looking forward to the other Haggardian romance, C.J. Cutcliffe Hyne's THE LOST CONTINENT, "the greatest novel ever written on Atlantis." It was highly touted by the experts in the field, and praised by the early readers of the new edition, so I started reading it with great expectations.



I was very disappointed, but I find it difficult to pinpoint why. I think, first of all, that to me Hyne is not a very skillful writer. His attempt to write slightly archaic and heightened prose does not work for me; I found many clumsy passages and much unbelievable dialogue. There is also the problem of his main character, Deucalion, supposedly a priest-ruler whom the charms of women do not affect. This is unbelievable just as it is; and it becomes worse when he reacts the same way to Phoronice, Empress of Atlantis. (She is Hyne's triumph, a truly memorable charact-

er whom I fell for; a Women's Lib type to the nth degree.) And he completely destroys credibility by having Deucalion give up the priesthood and fall in love (and not with Phorenice) near the end.

As a story, it's a pretty good one, complex and interesting (though standard) of plot. But I think Hyne emphasized plot too much: certain things (Deucalion's character, for instance) came out as they did because the plot demanded it. The destruction of Atlantis was handled fairly well, and the Atlantean milieu came over excellently. But another thing that bothered me was that Phorenice, truly an exceptional person and a great ruler, but everything in the book is slanted against her. She had her character flaws, true, but it's disconserting to see a writer conspire against his finest creation.

So many people have liked Hyne's book that perhaps I'm just finicky, but simply said, I didn't much care for THE LOST CONTINENT. Frankly, I've read an unpublished Atlantis novel I liked better.

In his introduction to Arthur Machen's THE THREE IMPOSTERS, Carter speaks of his "personal iconography," those books which he reads over and over again, so that they are really a part of his life; a marvelous concept which appealed to me greatly. He uses this as justification to reprint THE THREE IMPOSTERS, which is one of those books for him.

He went out on a kind of limb in doing so, because the book is not really a fantasy. As Carter points out, it is virtually indescribable. The strongest impression is that of Doyle in his Sherlock Holmes tales; here is the same Victorian London, living and breathing. Mystery and strange happenings abound, and the detectives of the tale have a devil of a time finding out the truth. But then there are the tales interpolated into this frame: two of them ("The Novel of the Black Seal" and "The Novel of the White Powder") are powerful supernatural tales of the Lovecraft 'unspeakable' school--a great deal must be guessed by the reader, for he is not told. They are also similar to the Wells of THE INVISIBLE MAN, and Stevenson's DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE. But these were Machen's descendents and contemporaries, so they did not influence him. Perhaps the only previous shadow I can detect is the Brontes: his country landscapes have the same strange power as theirs.

Perhaps not everyone will enjoy this small book. But for the Sherlockians among us still, or the admirers of a good supernatural tale, or those who merely like a sophisticated tale of old London, it will be a delight. It is a book with small pretensions, and it entirely fulfills them.

The last of the 'new' writers for the year was Ernest Bramah with his KAI LUNG'S GOLDEN HOURS. Like THE THREE IMPOSTERS, this is a sort of frame-tale: the hero, Kai Lung, is a rogue and a storyteller, and gets out of nast scrapes by telling stories to kill time. Bramah handles this time-honored technique well. However, for me, most of the stories do not work; they lack the incantory power, the wholeness, the integrity, that really fine stories need. Most of them are amusing incidents or anecdotes that just miss being good stories.

Added to this, Bramah, like Cabell, writes in a manner which I admire objectively, but cannot really enjoy. His style is highly

polished and excellently sophisticated, recreating an unreal, artificial, but totally consistent and viable parallel to the honorifics and humbleness-of-speaker so characteristic of Oriental speech: his China lives, even if it is unreal. But after a while for me, the constant and insistent subtle irony and sophistication begin to pall, and I cannot say I really enjoyed the book all that much.

Those readers who do like Bramah will be pleased to know that this is one of several Kai Lung books published in the 30s, all of which Carter is likely to reprint as time goes on.

Oddly enough, one of the Kai Lung stories was printed twice within a month's time: it also appeared in Carter's DISCOVERIES OF FANTASY. An unusual experiment, the book contains the work of four almost completely unknown fantasy writers, one of whom is Bramah. His two stories are typical of him, so I'll move on.

There are two stories by Richard Garnett, from his monumental collection TWILIGHT OF THE GODS, "The Poet of Panapolis" and "The City of the Philosophers." Neither story impressed me much; like Bramah's, they lack something, a spark, a wholeness, which prevents them from being really good stories. (I confess this idea is rather obscure, but it's so subjective I can barely explain it.)

There is a novella by Eden Phillpotts (whom I'd actually heard of) called "The Miniature." It is a fascinating work, a truly Stapledonian narrative concerning the Olympian gods and how they create the world and observe it throughout its history. The conversations between the gods are extremely well-done, and the insights and barbs at mankind well thought out. But whether it was the fact that it was a novella in a short story collection, or perhaps that Phillpotts is not the world's most exciting stylist, I found it rather wearisome after a while, and had trouble finishing it. Perhaps if I sat down expecting a novel and read it I might like it better.

The book might have been a waste for me had it not been for the talents of the fourth writer, Donald Corley. Author of a number of magazine stories and three obscure books in the 30s, his two stories herein provided me with the most delightful fantasy reading I had the entire year.

Corley's work reminds me of only one other's: Alastair Reid, who wrote those two marvelous children's fantasies ALLTH and FAIR-WATER. The style is simple, clear, yet infinitely evocative: not contorted or complicated like Clark Ashton Smith, not deliberately archaic like Eddison or Morris, a style without pretensions, yet it strikes right to the heart of the reader. Whether the tale be happy or tragic (and there is one here of each), the feeling he instills in the reader is the same: the bittersweet joyful sorrow, the great longing, the eucatastrophicity that it seems only great fantasy can produce: a feeling so strong it brings tears to your eyes.

"The Bird with the Golden Beak" inspired the lovely cover of the book, and deals with a rather oriental setting, telling of a king and his search for that great mythical bird, and how he nearly lost his wife because of it. "The Song of the Tombelaine" is a retelling of the English ballad "Cruel Sister" (effectively quashing my ambition to do the same), and involves also the lost sunken land of Tassifer, which remains all the more marvelous for being told of but vaguely.

I cannot accurately convey the charm of Corley. His names are gems in themselves, he is ceaselessly inventive of all the little ideas and concepts that a fantasy needs to live and breathe, and he writes serious fantasy; for all that there is wit and irony in the tales, he is in earnest at the bottom, where it counts. (It is a shame that his ability as an artist--vaguely similar to Frank Pape --was not made manifest here; perhaps if/when Carter's projected collection of him comes out.)

It is difficult to decide which of these stories is the better; "Bird" is tighter and closer to perfection, but "Tombelaine" is the more powerfully evocative. In any case, no fantasy reader should miss these two; they are worth buying the book in themselves.

Carter's other anthology this year was also somewhat unusual; he collected four GREAT SHORT NOVELS OF ADULT FANTASY and made a book of them. They were chosen deliberately and well from a wide range of times and places to demonstrate the eternal appeal of fantasy.

The one I was looking forward to most was de Camp and Pratt's

"Wall of Serpents," sequel to THE INCOMPLETE ENCHANTER and THE CASTLE OF IRON, two of my favorite fantasies. But it had been so long since I read them that only now do I see their shortcomings. "Wall of Serpents" takes place in the land of the Kalevala, the little-known Finnish mythological epic; like the other stories, it uses this background only insofar as it helps the plot. The characters are marvelous caricatures, but little like their epic counterparts, and much of the action is rather dumb slapstick, amusing but minor. Still, magic is well used, the story is funny, and I enjoyed it in spite of my carping. I was disappointed it wasn't longer.

"Kingdom of the Dwarfs" (also known as "Honey-Bee") is a charming French fairy tale by Anatole France about a little boy and girl who were raised together, and how each is captured, one by the dwarfs, and one by a pixie. I liked it well enough without being ecstatic ovr it.

"The Maker of Moons" I hesitate to talk about, since I was half asleep on an airplane when I read it. I feel certain that this (and other Chambers tales) strongly influenced the later novels of A. Merritt. Here is the same vague langourous prose, the hints of strange unearthly mythologies, and the mysterious woman who haunts the narrator. In sum, a rather good story.

Finally is "The Hollow Land," by William Morris. It is probably the best of the oddly obscure short fantasies Morris wrote in his twenties, thirty or more years before his last great prose romances. Its very title has always created a myth in my mind, and it is a lovely little tale indeed. Its first half shows Morris in his mode of recreating the Middle Ages, more brutally and realistically than he was to do later; the second half, I feel, is highly symbolic or allegorical, and though I haven't the foggiest notion what it means, it's beautifully written, and the mood comes across unhindered. (Darrell Schweitzer, in a round-robin he and Cy Chauvin and I started on the story, insists that the tale is merely poorly and amateurishly written. It is a decision each reader must make for himself.)

As a whole, this book is pleasant if unexceptional reading, and a worthwhile project; it is the first of a series of similar volumes.

In its first few years, the Series has established a group of 'regulars,' writers who produce (or have reprinted) a volume or so

a year for the series. The most regular of these has been James Branch Cabell, and DOMNEI is the sixth of his erudite romances to see print from Ballantine. (A seventh, the fabulous JURGEN, was published by Avon.)

DOMNEI is, like THE CREAM OF THE JEST, not really a fantasy, but for different reasons. Here only dedicated fantasy readers will detect a difference, for on the surface it is the same sort of pseudo-medieval romance he usually writes; but herein is little or no magic nor supernatural happenings. It is all adventure and intrigue, full of Cabell's typical ironic dialogue. The difference is indeed small; and I react to the book the same way I do to all his stuff, with mild enjoyment and no little annoyance.

But it is with "The Music Behind the Moon," also included in this volume, that my pique with Cabell really reaches a climax. Here is easily the most marvelous fantasy he ever wrote, telling of the poet Madoc and how he was haunted by that strange music which was played by Etarre, the 'eternal feminine' of the Cabellian mythos. It also tells how Madoc outwitted the Norns and turned the pages of history back. It is a key work in the Cabellian oeuvre, and treats most of his major themes. But instead of writing his typical 80,000-word novel on the idea (some of his ideas for novels --DOMNEI, for instance--are not even this complicated), Cabell, seemingly doomed to frustrate me, wrote instead a story of thirty little one-page chapters. It seems to me a prodigally wasted opportunity.

One of the more important things the Adult Fantasy Series has done is not only to get Evangeline Walton's marvelous VIRGIN AND THE SWINE (as ISLAND OF THE MIGHTY) back in print, but also to start her writing again on her great retelling of the Mabinogion, producing the equally marvelous CHILDREN OF LLYR. So it was with great anticipation that I looked forward to the new one, THE SONG OF RHIANNON, the tale of the Third Branch, making a connected narrative which lacks only its beginning.

But as so often happens, great expectations often lead to disappointment, and this proved the case here. Firstly, the book is terribly short, even shorter than THE CHILDREN OF LLYR. Since I felt that the Third Branch it deals with is even more complicated than the Second, I knew there was a problem right from the start. Then, she uses up twenty precious pages near the beginning to relate goings-on in the First Branch one needed to comprehend the action later. This left all too little wordage to deal with the story, and so as an inevitable result the richness of the fleshing-out (especially the characterization of the stick figures of the original, which was the remarkable thing about the two earlier books) is largely missing here.

But I cannot possibly call it a bad book. In fact, were it not for the fact that it had such a hard act to follow, I would call it a very good book. Miss Walton has lost none of her skill with prose, and the characters are certainly quite good--but it is just that it does not make nearly the powerful impact the other two do. A disappointing book, then, but one which still can be read with enjoyment and wonder.

DERYNI CHECKMATE is the second in a series of original novels by Katherine Kurtz, and it continues all the virtues and faults of its predecessor, DERYNI RISING. Here are strongly realized characters whose interactions are well-handled (with only now and then a slip); a plot full of intrigue, politics, and action-adventure which involves the reader; rather colorless prose, nearly styleless and built of stock phrases, allowing the reader to move through it without hindrance; and rather shaky handling of magic. She does better with the last in this volume, using it as a tool and not a deus ex machina: it makes for one shattering moment around mid-book. This novel is structured like the middle novel of a trilogy, which is good in kinds of ways, but somewhat frustrating since the next volume won't be out for a while.

I thoroughly enjoyed the book; its exciting melodrama is hard to top.

Certainly the most important volume of the year, and one of the most controversial, was William Hope Hodgson's THE NIGHT LAND. Before I try to deal with it as a literary entity, I have a few comments on the new edition. Again, Ballantine decided to print a long book in two volumes, and instead of paying for two covers, they took the excellent Robert Lo Grippo cover (which perfectly recreates the mood, if not the exact details, of the book; he fits Hodgson the way Gervasio fits Morris or Johnston fits Walton) and printed it obversed and reversed. I think the two-volume practise is wrong (I have been a staunch opponent of it before, you may remember), especially in this case: THE NIGHT LAND, as I intend to show, is not a work destined to be very popular, and splitting it up into two volumes is bound to kill sales. (I hold to this despite the fact that I know a number of people who have bought it.) In addition, the publishers have taken the dubious action of very slightly cutting the book in its second half; and while I admit it probably needed it, I still regret the action.

Trying to ignore the shortcomings of the present edition, what is one to say about the book? It is an acknowledged classic among connoisseurs of fantasy, having been praised highly by Clark Ashton Smith, C.S. Lewis, H.P. Lovecraft and Lin Carter; I recently found out that it is also a great favorite of Roger Zelazny's. But I think there can be no question that it is also the most massively flawed of all the great fantasies.

As with THE WORM OUROBOROS, it took me several attempts to finally finish THE NIGHT LAND. I had tried twice to read it in the Arkham collection of Hodgson's novels, but never could get more than halfway--it just became too much. When the paperback came out, I forced myself to sit down and read without stopping, and a couple days later I had finally read the last page, still dubious of the value of the reading.

I cannot deny that the book has considerable virtues. Hodgson has no peer among writers of the 'unspeakable' school; with but a few words he can create resonances that lead the reader to imagine entities of an alienness that is frightening in itself, quite apart from the menace Hodgson implies in them. Chapter II of THE NIGHT LAND, like the first four chapters of THE BOATS OF THE'GLEN CARRIG', stands with the most evocatively frightening fiction ever written. THE NIGHT LAND works well also as sf, in its early chapters: it foresees a future Earth strikingly similar to the Neptune in the end of Stapledon's LAST AND FIRST MEN--a sunforsaken black planet with men cooped up in one huge metal pyramid supplied by 'the Earth Current.' Though all this totters on the edge of scientific impossibility, it has internal verisimilitude, and the details of the life within the great pyramid are inventive and utterly fascinating.

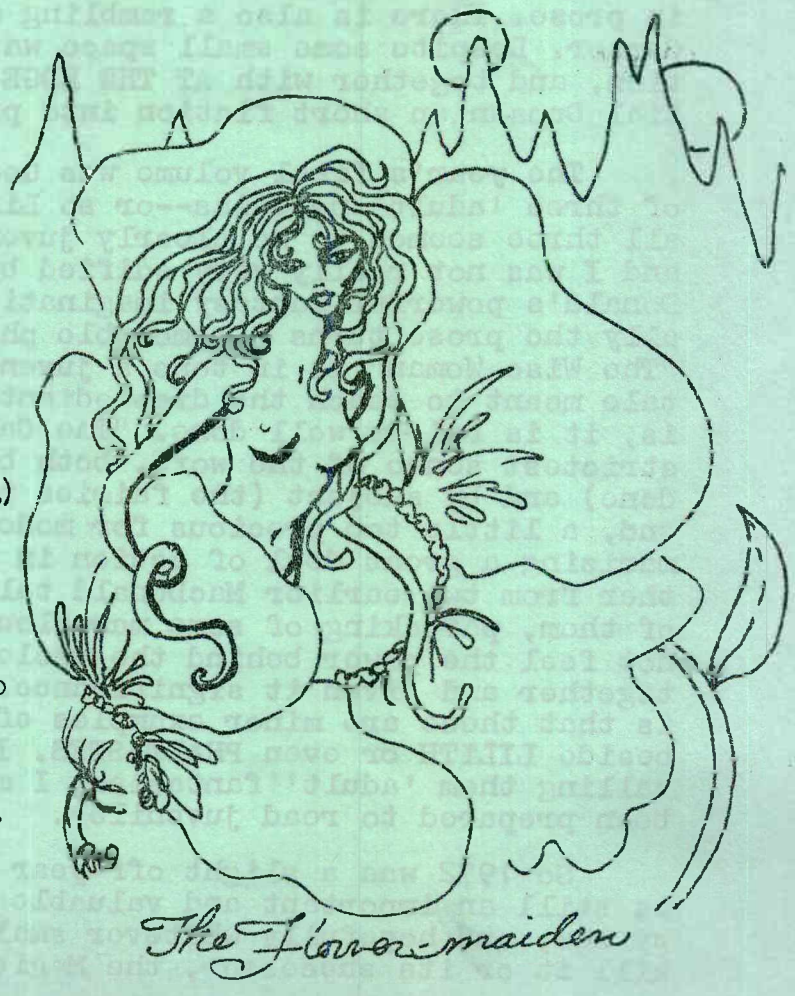
But despite all this, the book is enormously flawed. The style is a clumsy attempt at archaism, consistent but consistently poor: for one used to archaism, as I am, it can often be ignored, but it certainly is a hazard. The first chapter is as bad an example of sloppy Victorian sentimentality as can be imagined (it takes place in our day, before moving forward to the Night Land). Being a sloppy sentimentalist myself, it didn't bother me too much; still it is rather difficult to get through. And Hodgson's romantic and extremely eccentric (from our point of view) ideas of love and man-

woman relationships permeate and drag down the book. Worst of all, however, is the nature of the narrative itself. A couple chapters into the book, the protagonist ventures out of the pyramid across the Night Land in search of his Love, who is in another, smaller pyramid a long ways away. The journey forward and back again takes him around a month, and we are regaled with every meal, every sleep period, he takes during the entire time. I don't think there is a single hour unaccounted for in the whole book.

One large problem is that most of the book does not take place in the supernally frightening Night Land itself, but in nearby regions with more substantial, and less scary, monsters. But in the antepenultimate chapter the hero reenters the Night Land and approaches home with his Love. This chapter finally and incredibly manufactures some real suspense, and I found myself wrapped up in it; then Hodgson pulls a real surprise which would have made a tragically poignant ending--but like Joy Chant in RED MOON AND BLACK MOUNTAIN, he cannot bear to do it. So he suddenly reverses it, and we get an ending eucatastrophic viewed from within the book, but so incredible as to seem absolutely dumb from without.

THE NIGHT LAND, then, while certainly one of the most powerfully imaginative pieces of fiction ever written, is also one of the most unbelievably wearisome and monotonous. (It is not helped by being made up of very long chapters.) I think there is much more one could say about it, but I think I've written long enough. Despite all the very good things in it, it is not a book I can recommend to any but the most devoted fantasy fan. It is without a doubt the most exasperating book I have ever read.

There were three one-author collections in the Series in 1972, all of whose authors were around for at least their third time. Clark Ashton Smith's XICCARPH is the third collection of his weird fantasies; as I expected, it is the weakest one yet. (I really wish Carter would hurry up with AVEROIGNE.) It is made up largely of Smith's interplanetary stories, but good as he was at them, they are not nearly as good as those in his previous two books. There are only two Xiccarph stories; Carter had already reprinted one in an anthology, and here they both are, good examples of his art. The three Aihai stories (his name for Mars) are equally good, "The Dweller in the Gulf" in particular because it leads the reader to expect a happy ending, then zaps him.

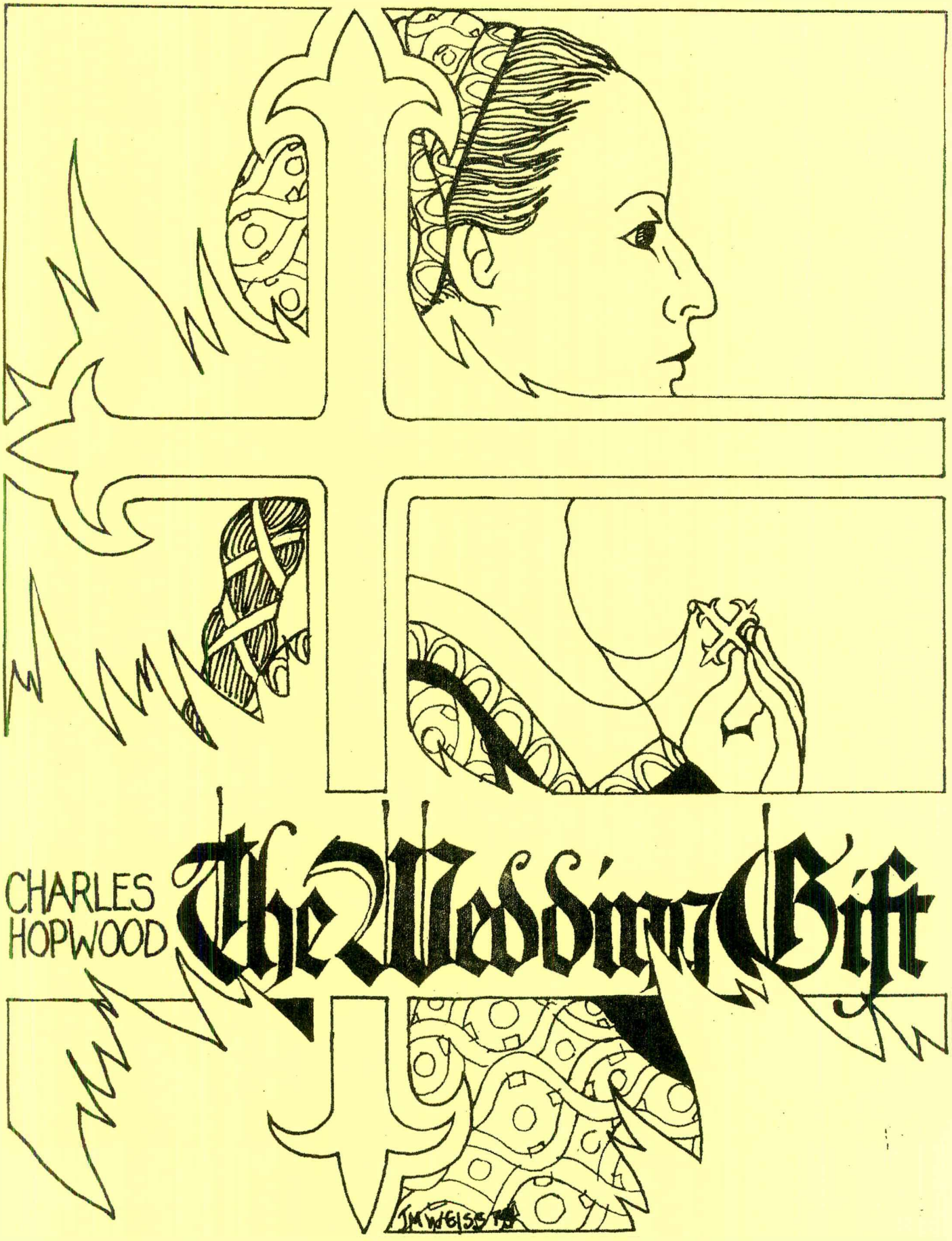


The rest of the stories are from scattered invented planets of Smith's; the notable ones include "The Doom of Antarion," a beautiful story about lovers on a dying planet, handled with consummate skill; "The Monster of the Prophecy," which I hope is a satire, because its plot is incredibly creaky and predictable (it's also one of Smith's longest stories); and "Sadastor," a lovely prose poem about a demon and the last mermaid. Devoted Klarkash-Tonians will grab anything of his published and enjoy it, and I'm no exception; but I think Carter does his readers a disservice by publishing this lesser stuff when so much great stuff remains unpaperbacked.

The one essential volume of the year (despite the terrible cover by--can you believe it?--Gervasio) is Lord Dunsany's BEYOND THE FIELDS WE KNOW, largely because it reprints in its entirety THE GODS OF PEGANA, his first book, and (I think) his best. Here is a little bible, inventing a brilliant new mythology, with all the various gods given their due, and full of gem-like anecdotes. Every time I reread it it starts my creative wheels turning; this is why Dunsany is the fantasy 'writers' writer.' The volume also includes most of the rest of TIME AND THE GODS, his second book, and my favorite. These are the more minor tales left unreprinted from the previous collection. (But why hasn't Carter reprinted "A Legend of the Dawn" or "The Journey of the King"?) There are a handful of other fine tales (including one of my favorites, "A Story of Land and Sea," which chronicles a boat-trip through the Sahara), perhaps his best play, "King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior," (starting point for THE WELL OF THE UNICORN), and some utterly terrible poetry. Judging from this, Dunsany surprisingly had no talent in verse, despite his greatness in prose. There is also a rambling and pointless essay on names by Carter. Despite some small space wasted, this is a tremendous collection, and together with AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD gets all the essential Dunsanian short fiction into print.

The year's final volume was George MacDonald's EVANOR, made up of three 'adult' novellas--or so Lin Carter says. Actually, they all three seemed to me clearly juveniles for one reason or another, and I was not really very edified by them. They show flashes of MacDonald's powerful fantasy imagination here and there, and occassionally the prose turns a memorable phrase, but it is all in pieces. "The Wise Woman" is in tone a juvenile, because it is a moralistic tale meant to teach the disobedient child how bad he is. For what it is, it is fairly well done. "The Carosyn" is a fairy tale in the strictest sense of the word, both by plot-structure (extremely well done) and by subject (the fairies that survive from Elisabethan legend, a little too precious for modern taste). It suffers from summarizing a great deal of action in the middle (it was cobbled together from two earlier MacDonald tales). "The Golden Key" is the best of them, partaking of some marvelous bits and pieces; but I could not feel the power behind the whole thing that should have held it together and given it significance. I think the major problem here is that these are minor examples of MacDonald's fiction; they pale beside LILITH or even PHANTASTES. I feel Carter made a mistake in calling them 'adult' fantasies; I might have liked them better had I been prepared to read juveniles.

So 1972 was a slight off-year for the Series. Despite this, it is still an important and valuable contribution to the art of fantasy now, and hopefully whatever small problems there are will not kill it or its successor, the Magic Kingdom series of juveniles.



CHARLES HOPWOOD

The Wedding Gift

What month was it? What day? What hour?

Isaac of Toledo didn't know. Furthermore, he didn't care.

As the small procession led by disinterested soldiers wound its way to the center of the large courtyard and the platforms located there, Isaac distantly heard a burst of laughter come from the portico. He turned his eyes in that direction, but could only make out faint blurs of seated figures. Weeks of confinement and torture in the prison of the Inquisition had impaired his sight and the fiery Spanish sunlight nearly blinded him. Even the flame of the candle of penance he clutched absently in his hands appeared only as a soft undefinable glow.

The bells of the neighboring cathedral tolled hysterically as the procession crossed the hot tiles of the courtyard. First came the helmeted soldiers with long pointed halberds, then the black-robed chanting priests carrying gilded crucifixes. The end of the procession was made up of the grim servants of the Inquisition shepherding their charges with little compassion for the sick and crippled. The procession halted abruptly when it reached the foot of the platforms. The people under the portico became silent.

Isaac sighed with a tired resignation as the priest bearing a large enameled crucifix came up to him. The blood spilling from Christ's wounds caught the light and glinted a bright red.

"My son," the priest said softly, "this is your last chance for redemption. Accept Holy Baptism. Recant your offensive heresy and acknowledge the salvation of the Holy Roman Church and Our Gracious Lord, Jesus Christ."

Isaac paused a moment in hesitation; the temptation was great. He raised his face to that of the priest and shook his head in negation. The priest's anxious countenance hardened visibly.

"So be it. May God have mercy on you, and may the flames cleanse you of your perfidy and blindness. I will pray for your soul." The priest stalked angrily away.

The Grand Inquisitioner led Isaac up the steps of the rough platform. A second later he felt himself being roughly bound to the stake. His thoughts drifted to Constantinople.

While the Grand Inquisitioner called out his "crimes" to those gathered under the portico, Isaac counted himself among the fortunate. Just in time he had managed to get his family on the last ship bound for the haven of Constantinople. Friends had informed him that there were many of their faith in the God-Guarded City recently conquered by the Turks from the Byzantine Greeks. They welcomed with open arms those fleeing the Terror. Isaac sighed with relief. He hadn't been so fortunate. But his family was safe.

He hoped his family liked Constantinople. He had heard that it was once more a beautiful and splendid city.

Farther down the procession Isaac noticed the same priest asking a sobbing woman if she would acknowledge the salvation of the Holy Roman Church. Wide-eyed, she confessed the sin and heresy of practicing Judaism, and accepted the truths of the Roman Church. The priest smiled triumphantly and tears of joy came to his eyes. A lost soul had been saved! Satan had been defeated! He blessed her. When he had gone, one of the Inquisitioners came up behind her and quietly strangled her. Her body was placed on the platform in front of Isaac like some dark pagan sacrifice.

When the last of the condemned were assembled on the platform, the Inquisitioners began to pile up under them bundles of wood soaked in pitch. The chanting of the priests and the tolling of the bells had continued unabated all the while.

Under the cool shade of the portico, Lady Marie de Lambaux, Comtesse de Toulon, laughed charmingly at the witticisms uttered by the Spanish gentleman seated next to her. The wedding ceremony that morning in the Great Cathedral that had united Princess Marie-Eleanore with Prince Carlos had been so beautiful--so inspiring. Two great houses were now one to the benefit of both France and Spain. The French entourage had received nothing but the utmost in courtesy and hospitality from their Spanish hosts. It had been a pleasant experience. After the ceremony they had retired to the portico for some entertainment the Prince wished to provide for his new bride and guests. Marie was in a gay mood. She had noted with only fleeting curiosity the platforms in the court below. She had been so absorbed in the anecdote being told her by Don Ferdinand that she hadn't noticed the ominous procession when it had come into the courtyard.

The conversation momentarily at an end, she turned in her chair and looked back into the courtyard. She saw the soldiers, priests, and the strange figures dressed in tunics of sackcloth. She turned back to Don Ferdinand and gestured to the scene with her handkerchief.

"Ah, and what is this, Don Ferdinand?"

"Why, this is the entertainment, Comtesse. It is one of the many wedding gifts His Most Catholic Majesty is giving to his bride. In honor of the wedding, ten Jews are to be burned in an auto-da-fe. He could have thought of no finer gift to sanctify the occassion, do you think?"

The Comtesse de Toulon turned a little pale. "You don't mean those people are--going to be burned before our very sight?"

"Of course," replied Don Ferdinand cheerfully. "It is the custom in these parts. Do you do the same with your Jews in France?"

Horrified at the question, Marie turned slowly back to face the courtyard. "No--I'm afraid not. We have no such custom that I know of."

"'Tis a pity you don't. It's such a charming custom, really."

The Royal Bridal Couple, along with the others on the portico, had become silent. From the courtyard below the Grand Inquisitioner read out the "crimes" of the condemned:

"Blasphemer--!" "Heretic--!" "Apostate--!" "Judaizer--!"

The noise of the cathedral bells reached new frantic heights as the Grand Inquisitioner took the torch his aide handed him. He went to the great bundles of wood beneath the platform. Wide-eyed, Comtesse Marie put her handkerchief to her mouth to stifle a cry. She heard Princess Marie-Eleanore laugh as Prince Carlos whispered something to her.

The Grand Inquisitioner touched the torch to the wood and the pitch caused it to flame up in a great blinding flash of light. The writhing figures on the platform were half-obscured by the flames and smoke. Great shrieks and cries came from the condemned as they were roasted alive. Comtesse Marie could feel the heat on her face. Any moment now she would vomit down the front of her gem-encrusted brocade gown. A half-crazed defiant cry came from the mass of flames.

"Shema! Yisrael! Adonai Elohenu! Adonai Ehod!!"

"Did you hear that!" Don Ferdinand said in outrage to Marie. "The nerve of the Infidel--It was the one with the woman at his feet! May his soul rot in Hell forever!"

Marie looked desperately at those gathered on the portico. They wore amused expressions. Holy Mother of God, she thought in shame, how can they--how dare they--call themselves Christians? The voices and screams had ceased coming from the flames. All that was to be heard were the cathedral bells and the crackling of the fire. Prince Carlos smiled with satisfaction.

"Excellent!"

His Most Catholic Majesty began to applaud. The others on the portico, including his bride, joined in the applause. Never had such a fine spectacle befitted such an august occassion. A wisp of smoke drifted lazily in their direction. Comtesse Marie half-arose from her chair in agony. The smell of burning flesh it bore was sweet--like incense.

Again she looked desperately at the faces on the portico and her eye caught that of the Archbishop of the city. He had married the Prince and Princess less than an hour before. He was frowning and eyeing her suspiciously. Marie abruptly seated herself. She was filled with sudden terror. She was in danger. The lust of the Inquisition for victims was like that of the Great Whore of Babylon, insatiable.

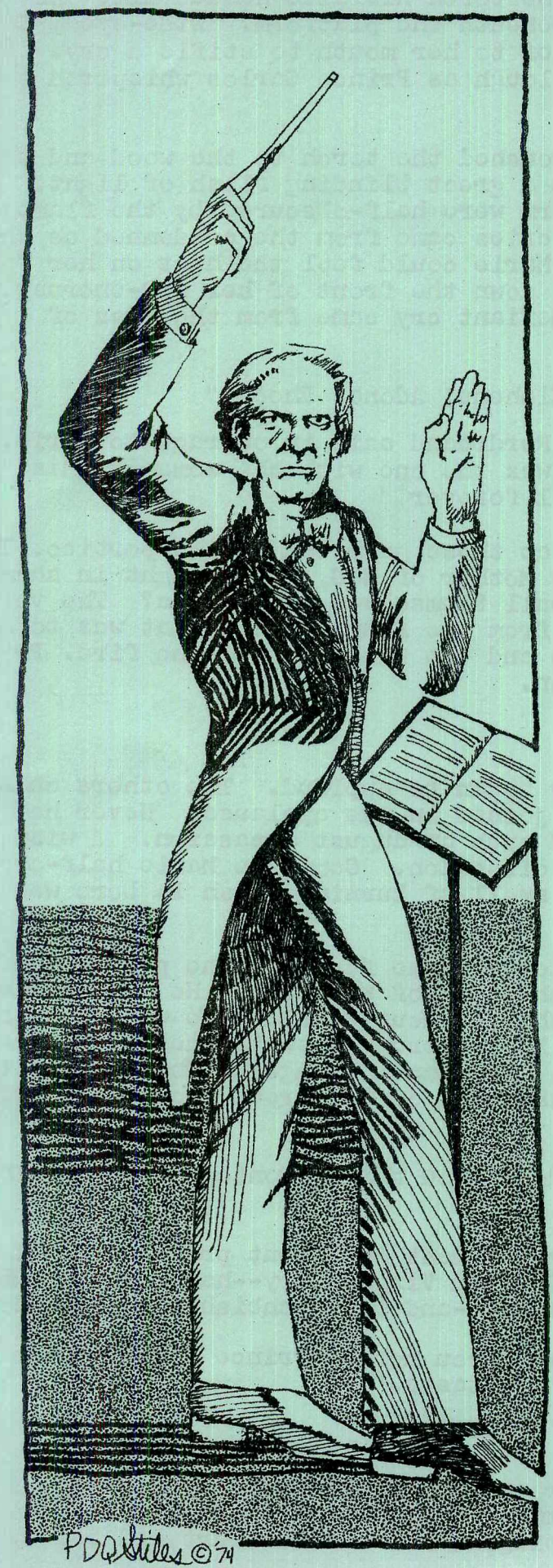
"Yes, a fine spectacle, don't you think, Contesse?" asked Don Ferdinand casually.

Marie closed her eyes for a moment in silent prayer. God forgive me for what I must do! Blessed Virgin Mary--have mercy! She forced a smile for Don Ferdinand's--and the Archbishop's--benefit.

"Yes, I--couldn;t agree with you more. Prince Carlos is to be congratulated for his thought and taste."

Oh, God--! Oh, God--!

Silent tears ran down her smiling face. At first slowly, then with mounting forced enthusiasm, Comtesse Marie de Lambaux applauded with the others the still-leaping flames in the courtyard below.



"But I have a great symphony in my head," the famous actor insisted most stubbornly. "A great symphony. Full of genius. If only I knew how to write music, I should show the world the true scope of my feelings. It would astound you."

His companions agreed sympathetically and insincerely with him and left it at that. The actor seethed with indignation that they should have so little faith in his talent and his breadth of understanding.

Yet it happened, as such things will, that heaven heard the actor and the angel Gabriel--who is something of a musician himself--had mercy on the actor and bestowed upon him the knowledge of music in the soft and purring night.

"Ah," said the actor as he awakened. "My symphony has blossomed in the night. This is a staff and this is a clef and this line is for the note G. It is only a matter of time until the world receives the outpourings of my genius." Delighted, he set to work, filling the pages of his manuscript with thousands of flowing notes. And in no time at all, so great was his pent-up music, he had finished his

masterpiece.

In very little time the music was in the hands of a distinguished conductor, noted for his bold new approaches to the Masters and a maverick love of new talent, especially if that talent belonged to someone as famous as the actor.

So the audience and the critics gathered, swept along by the enthusiasm of the actor and a certain curiosity for the famous conductor.

But what subtle transformation had occurred? The notes were too predictable, as lacking in imagination as the alphabet; the melodies were trite; the impression, banal. The bland sounds rose and fell over the listeners like a blanket of sleep.

"You don't understand," wailed the actor as he rose to his feet. "That isn't my music --not at all. My music is...." And he moulded the air with his hands to tell them how his music was. At last he looked away, much saddened, saying nothing.

Yet those who were near him say that they heard him murmur, so very softly, to himself; "My symphony is sublime."

STORY WITH A MORAL

— CHELSEA QUINN YARBRO

written to and for James Tiptree, Jr.

GOING GENTLY DOWN

or, in every young person there is

Nobody tells you the truth about old age.

Nobody tells you much of anything useful, in fact, but that isn't my point now. About getting old they not only tell you nothing, they tell you lies. When they talk about it at all, that is. Their eyes veil up, they get behind a cardboard smile-mask and shove you a couple hysterical slogans: Think Young. Don't Worry. Then a whimper comes out of their throats and they take off, fast.

Even if you're only five, the implication comes through perfectly: Cheer up, kid--you're doomed.

Remember how you first met it? A huge face comes at you. Pores, postules, craters. Wattles and ropes hanging down. Brown crusts, yellow cheesy things. A soft, wobbly wart or two, with hair in them. Tufts and snarls of dead hair in the sore-looking nostrils. Eyes like an oyster's blowhole. And the smell, the stink blasting at you out of the deformed orifices!

"Hiya, boy," a broken bellows wheezes, rumbles in the garbage. You identify it, tentatively, as a human being.

"Mother! What's wrong with him?"

"That's Uncle William, dear. Isn't he marvelous?"

"What's wrong with him?"

"Why nothing, dear. He's just a little older, that's all."

"Will I get like that?"

"You and your ideas, heh heh. You don't have to think about that for a long, long time, heh heh."

JAMES TIPTREE, JR.

an old person screaming to get out

"Will I get like that, mother?"

"Say, you have some homework to do, right now."

"Mother. Will I?"

"...yes."

NO. NO!!!

Remember that, the No? They won't get me. They can't make me stick around for that. Leave, that's what I'll do. Leave first. Crash the car, dive into the sea in a Piper Cub from ten thousand feet. Have a little hunting accident. Give a part on the edge of a volcano and jump in at midnight, smashed out. Just walk away. Remember?

Because by this time you've found out some of the other things about Uncle William besides the deterioration in his looks. Uncle William's useless thing, for instance, dangling dead and pallid like a pickled worm. The way Uncle William keeps making the unfortunate mistakes that mean he has to be hastily reclothed by Auntie. And Uncle William's conversation.

"You already told me that story, Uncle William."

"What say, boy?"

"I said, you told me that before."

"What? What you say, Martha?"

"I'm not Martha, Uncle William."

"What?"

The amount of "what?" older people say is weird. Uncle and Auntie have whole conversations that are nothing but "what? what?"; their heads are total mush. In fact, Mom and Dad say "what?" quite

a bit, too. You begin noticing that all these adults that you'd taken for normal people, I mean, not people exactly but at least alive, okay--they have some funny little ways. You notice this more and more. By the time you're driving a car all by yourself you've realized that the general class of older people, say over twenty-five, are pretty nauseating. For example your mother's repulsive way of referring to her old-hag friends as "girls." And more: these old men who seem to have the delusion that your mother is a girl. Jeeesus! Why don't they realize? Why don't they shut up and go around unobtrusively, wear veils or yashmaks or something, like nuns?

I think about here comes a split. The kids who stop there and more or less forget it, versus the kids who go on thinking about it. I was one of those who couldn't forget it, some kind of third eye and ear inside me stayed stuck to it, focussing, like a diver who has glimpsed a dim, cold alien form: shark.

Maybe most of you reading this are like that too. The people who know there is tomorrow. Time-coming is real, maybe more real than right now. Sometimes it's great, today is beautiful because of the great thing coming. But underneath it's Brrrr. Now always passing, future always there, coming. Ozymandias. The plain of dust, covering all. Time.

I had terrible trouble with time. Looking at a picture of Uncle William, a blond Mark Spitz grinning on a load of lumber: Young! Uncle William as a little baby for crissake. I remember looking at the U.S. Senate once and seeing two hundred little babies, mothers saying what sweet little kids. Then I'd look at real kids and see...skeletons. Old old skeletons in baby-carriages in the Red Owl store.

I learned, too. I remembered everything I read about it when I got to the book world. Like the faculties you lose, the falling metabolic rates, the falling response-time rates, the falling everything rates. (We didn't have Kinsey then, but I had the news.) Out shooting ducks--I quit killing things later --I'd hear the high pinging whistle of birds coming over the pass at 100 mph and a voice inside would murmur, Enjoy it, baby, you won't be hearing 18,000 cps ten years from now. When I did a back flip (my painful achievement) the voice would inform me about declining reflex curves.

And the girls. Oh, the girls. One girl in particular, the first time it hit me that it was going to happen to everybody. That corpse-like moment: I heard the rasp of her mother's voice in her laugh, I glimpsed her mother's jowls waiting beside that perfect jaw.

Thirty, I thought: say thirty. That's the end.

Man, the day I turned thirty I really expected to wake up as a pile of dust.

It was kind of a shock, thirty-morning, finding I looked the same. (Well, just about. Recognizable, anyway.) I could even still do a back flip. Of course, there were all these young kids running around thinking they were people. But what the hell, things didn't seem to have changed too much, and I couldn't

spend much time thinking about it. I had all these things I was doing. Busy, busy. I decided I'd made a mistake. Forty. Forty was the time to go.

Well, forty came--but there kept being all these interesting things I was doing, doing, doing. And I still seemed to be functioning okay, if maybe a little tiredly, perfectly understandable when you're so busy. The girls were still around, sort of. Of course I didn't do any more back flips after the time the board caught my chin going down, accidents happen. But I still felt the same underneath, I was still me.

And then one day I heard myself saying "What?" Not for the first time, either. I began to suspect. And pretty soon I knew: A trap.

A trap, see? It sucks you in, one day is so much like the next there's no place to dig your heels in. You don't hear the trap closing, in fact you don't even know it's there until you're in it. No day says, This is where you get off. Even your old uniform still fits...almost. And hope, hope is all around. Soon as this is over I'll take a couple weeks off and get back in shape. Because you're always so busy, see? You're DOING things.

Ah yes. And pretty soon--"What, boy?" "Yeah, that's Uncle Tip, isn't he marvellous?" Oopsy daisy, time for beddy-by. "What?"

So here comes the next split, the different ways people go. Maybe it's the same split all over again.

Some of us go gentle into that good night. The sheep, the golden-yearsies; stoic, flat, puzzled voices voices interminably pointing out the missing limbs, the hospital horrors. The Winnebago trailers trundling at 35 mph, the wallet full of grandchildren, the gardens and handicrafts. The pills. The comfy void.

Or you have the fighters. You see them--the ones that do get back in shape. The ones that play tennis through their forties and marry new women in their fifties and crack up their planes in their sixties and go on talk shows in their seventies and marry teenagers in their eighties. THINK YOUNG. Rage, rage against the falling of the night. Dean Martin.

Only...they talk about it. Oh god do they. Ever hear a twenty-year-old boast about playing three sets of tennis? At fifty they do. They make whooshing backhand gestures and tell about the old serve. (I won't even go into their sex-talk bag, no.) And that's damn all they talk about, the ones that Think Young.

Pathetic.

Man, there has to be another way.

Of course there is one other way, the people so interested in something outside themselves that they don't even notice the scythe cutting them. I just saw an old plant-hybridiser, his legs won't work and his retinas are falling out so he can only see a pinhole, but he crawls, crawls over fifteen acres of seedling rows, weeding and feeding and squinting at the new ones every year and breeding more. Some biologists and artists are like that. Tiptree Sr. was

sort of like that too, maybe I'll be.

But I think there's another way still.

I don't know exactly what it could be, but years ago I got a hint out of Ghandi's autobiography. The idea of stages beyond stages of life. New, interesting stages, I mean. The first ones aren't new, of course. Youth: the gonad-time, the exploding time. Fucking and loving and running around experiencing the world and rebellious theories; maybe brilliant in science. Next comes full-body middle-age, full energy drive, adrenaline, skills, strong-loving-but-wary ego. Building-time. Building family, movements, anything. Money/power/status time. (Christ was 32, remember?) The thrill of I can. Full involvement. Goes on awhile. Nothing new yet.

But the next stage, that's new. In our culture there is no next stage. No map, no idea beyond holding on, repeating what you did. (I have a friend in his seventies starting his <u>fourth</u> family.)

But suppose there is a last metamorphoses: not holding on, letting go. Migrating inside yourself into some last power-center, where you never really lived before. Changing forward one last time.

You can, you know. Even if your first stages came to nothing, even if sex was a puddle and status was a joke, that's all over now. Time to move on. How? Well, I don't really know how but here's what I think.

Turn in your buttons. Say goodbye. Take up the holy beggar's bowl and go. Out. Free. Alone, literally or mentally. Go out... in search of something. Call it the Bo Tree, call it the invisible landscape of reality, or wisdom, or union with the cosmos. Or yourself.

Because you're different, you know. When you're old enough you really are FREE. Your energy is not only less, it is different. It's in--if you've done it right--a different place. Your last, hottest organ.

That old force that drove your gonads first, that spread out to power your muscles and hands and appetite and will--where is its last fortress? In your brain. Let me explain.

Your brain really is hot, you know. The hot under the belt is tepid compared to the hot between your ears. It uses 24 o/o of your oxygen in every breath. And it's working every minute, changing, packing and adding, cramming itself full.

You've been using it, of course. Nobody drives his brain faster than an eighteen-year-old mathematician. But it's an <u>empty</u> brain--that's why the geniuses of the empty sciences are so young: they can twist that thin brain into fantastic patterns. Physics, for example, requires complex patterns of relatively few data. Other sciences require more data, but the patterns get simpler; that's why good anthropology and psychology tends to come from older people. At forty the brain is getting packed with data --but it's still a <u>driven</u> brain. It's harnassed to life goals:

winning a campaign, running a farm.

By the time you get sixty (I think) the brain is a place of incredible resonances. It's packed full of life, histories, processes, patterns, half-glimpsed analogies between a myriad levels--a Ballard crystal world place. One reason old people reply slowly is because every word and cue wakes a thousand references.

What if you could free that, open it? Let go of ego and status, let everything go and smell the wind, feel with your dimming senses for what's out there, growing. Let your resonances merge and play and come back changed...telling you new things. Maybe you could find a way to grow, to change once more inside ...even if the outside of you is saying "What, what?" and your teeth smell.

But to do it you have to get ready, years ahead. Get ready to let go and migrate in and up into your strongest keep, your last window out. Pack for your magic terminal trip, pack your brain, ready it. Fear no truth. Load up like a river steam-boat for the big last race when you go downriver burning it all up, not caring, throwing in the furniture, the cabin, the decks right down to the water line, caring only for that fire carrying you where you've never been before.

Maybe...somehow... one could.

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PROLOGUE

JEFF SMITH

So. Quite different from our first issue, which was almost entirely fiction and reviews. Not yet the perfect fanzine, alas, but maybe next year...

An annual PhCOM should not be tremendously difficult to produce. A lot of it can even be leisurely. (I still worked like a demon the last month in getting this one ready, but I was able to start many months ago to get some of it done.) I'm pleased that it will remain in existence.

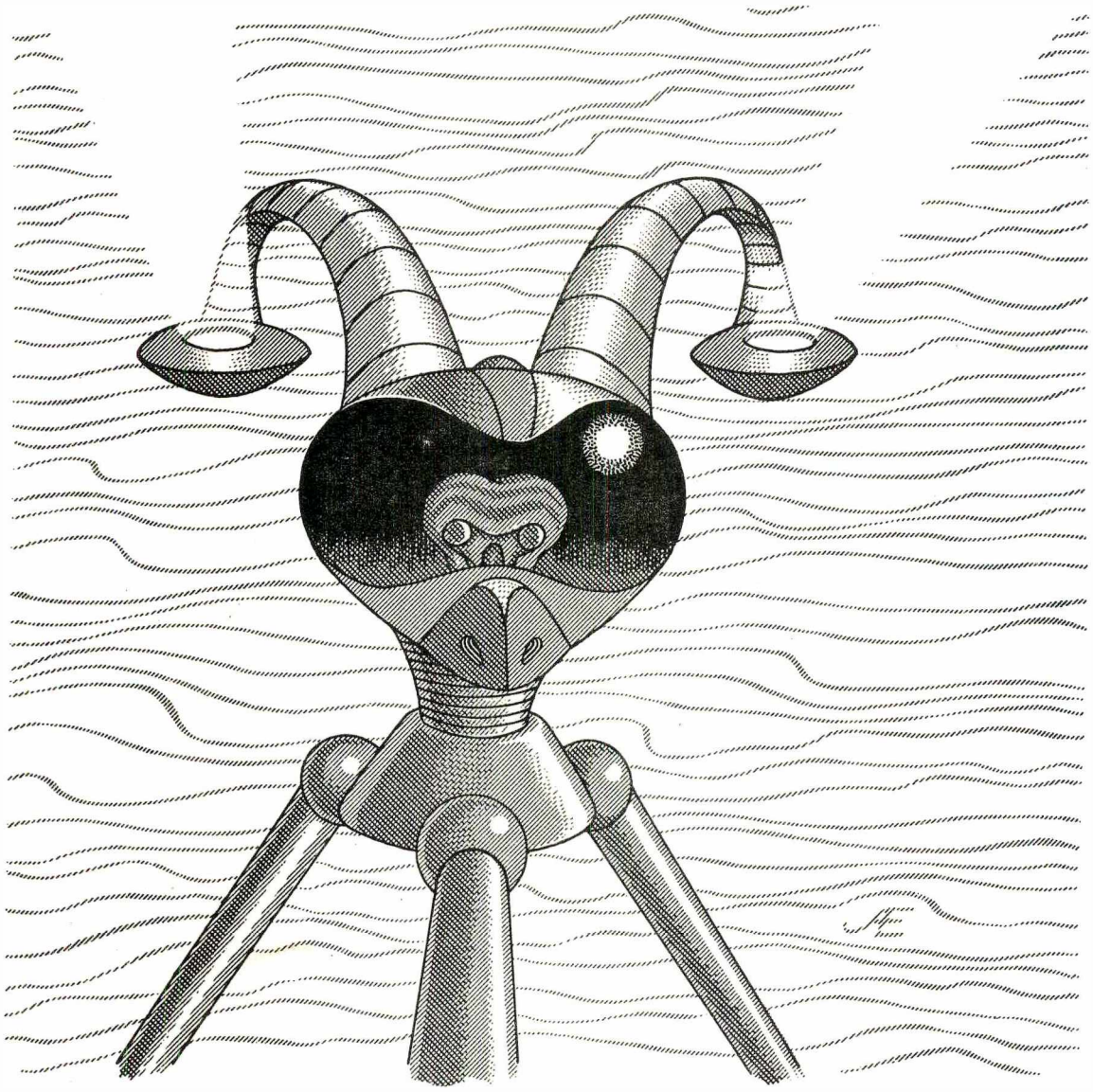
And an annual--as opposed to irregular--fanzine has what I hope to be distinct advantages. Such as an annual survey by Barry Gillam of the year in film, and by Don Keller of the year in fantasy. (I don't think we'll really attempt the year in sf.) We shall see. And PhCOM is definitely developing a distinct personality: it is becoming less and less a collection of articles and more and more a one-piece, single-tone-of-voice publication. I performed the somewhat questionable act of placing the Zelazny/Clark pieces side by side not for the perverse pleasure of zapping a writer, but to show how much of Jeff Clark's style is derived from Zelazny. Barry Gillam writes very similarly, and the Gardner Dozois piece fits right in. These people write with sensitivity, and they belong together in the same fanzine.

Problems: Subscriptions, for one. Don't send me five dollars for a five-year subscription. Send me a dollar each year. Changes of address. I'd like to be notified, but I'll understand if you forget. I doubt I'd remember myself. (But try.) Letters of comment. Discussions don't survive too well with year-long pauses. So, while all permanent comments will be published in PHANTASMICOM, anything that looks like an interesting, thought-provoking discussion-starter will be published in KYBEN, for feedback. There seem to me to be a lot of comment hooks in this issue (I'm willing to go into "What is Art?", courtesy James Taylor, if you are), so write.

(KYBEN, for the uninitiated, is my thirty-page personalize, much more informal and lackadaisical than PhCOM. It sells for 35¢, 3/$1.)

Well, here we go. Where no man has gone before. (At least, not this far.) Talk to you later.

phantasmicom II



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