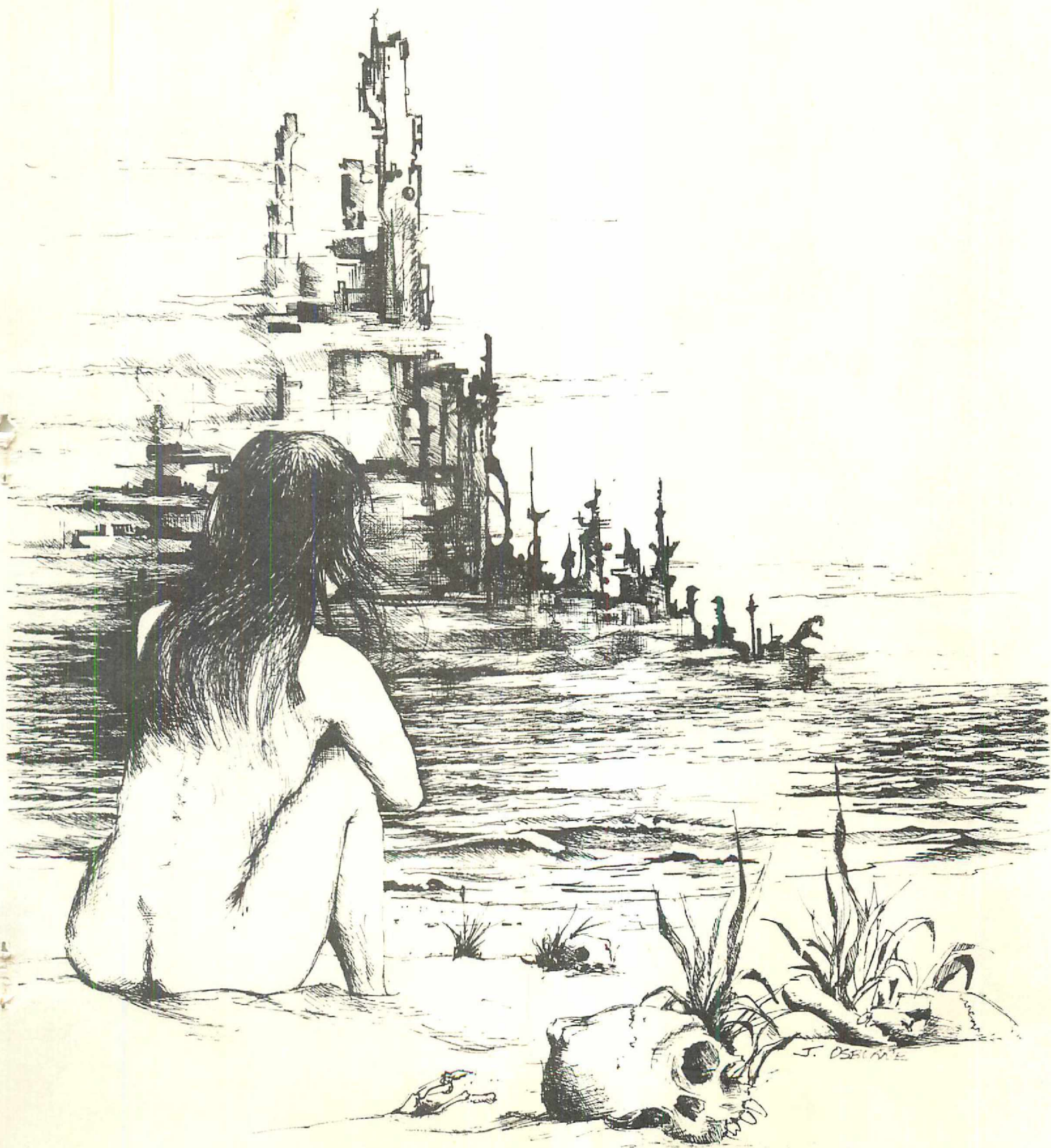


Proper Boskonian



November 1984

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REALSOONNOW

THE EDITOR SPEAKS

by Joe Rico

"Now, what was so hard about that?"

Before I tell you what was so hard about publishing Proper Boskonian let me explain what this zine is. This is a necessary introduction as perhaps one half of the current membership of NESFA have never received a full issue. Proper Boskonian or P.B. is the Journal of the New England Science Fiction Association. The purpose of the Journal is to provide a format for NESFA members to publish articles on Science Fiction, Fandom, and anything else that does not properly belong in AFA NESFA. The bylaws state that it is to be published quarterly.

In reality the Journal has not had a full issue since 1980 and only four mini issues since that time. About a year ago at the semi-official NESFA dinner expedition to the Blue Strawberry Restaurant in Portsmouth, N.H. (an exquisite dining establishment which I heartily recommend to the reader), I mentioned that I might want to edit P.B. Afterall, what was needed other than a willingness to put together what had already been submitted to the two previous editors? Unfortunately, Jill Eastlake heard my remark and put me in charge of the Journal.

Two things became apparent to me immediately. First, there were only two articles from previous years on hand. Second, the club wasn't exactly falling over itself to get out the Journal.

The first problem could only be overcome by having people write articles. To my pleasant surprise, about half of those who said that they would submit something to me did. This was accomplished by Sept. 1984; at which time I asked John Osborne to do his excellent cover showing a November publishing date. (I've retained this date as a final tribute to the delays of publishing.) It was about this time that I realized that many articles would have to be typed or retyped and therefore I needed volunteers. This retyping was largely done by Jan. 1985; leading me to announce, in a fit of enthusiasm, that P. B. would be distributed at Boskone.

Wrong again. You see there was this convention in February and I suddenly realized that no one, including me, would have time to collate the zine. At the same time it became apparent that we were having

some trouble with the mimeo equipment, making it necessary to photocopy the zine. Slowly, the Journal lurched towards completion thanks to the efforts of a small group of persons. Thanks to Wendy Glasser FN, Monty Wells FN, Bill Perkins, and Sue Lichauco. Special thanks to Claire Anderson FN who put in a lot of work in the final two months.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have been the editor of Proper Boskonian because of the insights it has given me about NESFA. At first, I perceived the lack of enthusiasm in the club in regard to the Journal as a reflection of NESFA's bias towards convention fandom. I've heard this cliché about NESFA since before I was a member and so believed it with little difficulty. I've now learned that the truth of the matter is that there is not in fandom today a club more dedicated to written fanac as is NESFA.

"Huh?" gasps the fanzine fans, "if that is true where has this zine been all these years?"

The answer to this challenge is simple; NESFA did not abandon the written word in the past years but simply expressed in a different form of fanac. Specifically, in the past years NESFA has been publishing two books a year, the newszine Instant Message, and the Index to Periodicals. The writers of NESFA have been engaged in book production and editing instead of working on the Journal(or the APA for that matter). Although these ventures may not be traditional fannish endeavors they have had the effect of promoting the field of Science Fiction in general as a written art, which is the *raison d'être* for the club. No wonder that the Journal fell by the wayside.

What does this forebode for the future of the Journal? Well as the club has gotten larger, there will be more members available for different activities. There should be enough fannish writers in NESFA for all projects. However, the idea that one person should be the editor has got to go. This Journal would have been produced much faster with a formal Journal Committee.

When I started, I thought I would be able to produce two editions of P.B. in a year. As it turned out only one was produced, but it is one of the biggest and in my opinion best in the history of P.B. Certainly, it is the most anticipated. Enjoy.

Joe Rico

WHEN I WAS A DUCHESS...

by Suford Lewis

Rekon 2 was a role-playing game at Boskone XXI, run by Walt Freitag, Eric Strassman, Mike Massimilla, Rick Dutton, Mike Hanson, John O'Neill and Russell Almond. They had run Rekon I at the previous Boskone very successfully (that is, everyone had a good time and the activities of the players had not interfered with the Boskone any more than any other group might have). They also ran another game at the Philcon.

Rekon 2 transported its participants to the First Earth Assembly of the Confederacy of the Spiral Arm, set something like 2300 years after an ill-starred Earth military incursion into the Confederacy, which puts it something like 2500 years in the future. Earth is pretending not to be the source of the unpleasantness and has petitioned to join the Confederacy. The Assembly is going to vote on their petition as well as conducting its other business.

There are at least eleven factions represented at this Assembly (enough to absorb 3-6 players per faction but too many to fix accurately in one's mind in a short time). Each faction has military, political and economic representatives and often one or more persons concerned with technology and/or cultural information, artifacts and art object exchange, and scientific research.

The events transpiring at this Assembly were of sufficient number and variety to give every player a problem to solve or a goal to meet. Simple trade representatives met to trade items, trying to gain points (later reflected in voting power of their faction) by trading items less valuable in their faction for items more valuable.

The military players had the ability to order their faction's troops to the capture or defense of territory (also later reflected in voting power of their faction, but so was military strength so one had to beware of losing).

The political players coordinated the other members of their delegation and wheeled & dealt with other delegations, the elected officials of the Confederacy and those of Earth. The Confederacy also has a military arm. (Unlike the UN, this is an actual separate force with its own personnel and equipment though supported by contributions of money, personnel & equipment from the Confederacy members).

What were the central events of this Assembly? They varied by your faction and special responsibility. From my point of view, they concerned the election of a new Hierarch (a more powerful version of the UN Secretary General) and the motion to raise the assessment for the Confederacy Navy. The jockeying over these issues also involved the trial of a member of a rival faction (rival to mine in the general power struggle) for



negligence in Terraforming a world, and a military confrontation over the status of a republic claimed as a dependent by my faction and this same rival.

On arriving at the Rekon 2 external liason offices on the 4th floor (not to be confused with the score-keeping and Confederacy News Nexus--a hotel room) the player was confronted with a formidable packet including: 31 sheets of background and game playing info, a nametag for your character, a strip of colored material (when worn it meant you were playing, when not worn you were "merely" another Boskone attendee) that identified you as a member of your faction, a small spiral-bound notebook and a pen to write notes in it with.

Several people who had paid to play, on being confronted with this challenging problem of information absorption, immediately gave up. This complicated the goals and problems of their factions, but discovering this "no show" state and solving it was a legitimate addition to the game's events.

My information sheets included:

Dear Player Welcome & Hints sheet

Dedication sheet

Rules of Rekon Game (6 pp)

Condensed *Lloyd's Registry of Worlds* (12 pp)

(Lloyd was also present as a player)

"Map" of the Confederacy (2-D projection)

Guide to Confederation Customs (10 pp)

Background on Kingdom of Korince (my faction) (3 pp)

Background sheet on Lessa Tretieveson, Duchess of Carensta (my character)

Trade reps had some sheets on the value of their trade items and the trade items they were to acquire, plus certificates of ownership for items they were to trade.

Military reps had several sheets with more detailed maps showing much smaller organizational units than the single sheet version. They also had stuff about the deployment and firepower of their forces, and codes and conventions for communicating with them.

There were also various "distraction pieces"; usually 3x5 cards representing a part of a machine with the implication that it could do great things if only the other parts and correct way of using it could be found. Players who had participated in Rekon I warned us that these were red-herrings capable of absorbing huge amounts of time but virtually certain of returning no benefit. This year there were also sections that (one presumes that all the pieces existed) could be put together to form a dodecahedron--which would also be "a wonderful thing."

My character was Chief of the Korince delegation and had as her mission; "take it over". This was very confusing to me, as my character had no personal resources (no money, no art objects, no personal trade items). There was nothing about the

number, resources or distribution of the military that indicated that it was markedly superior either. Nor did Korince seem to have any spies in other delegations or any blackmail information.

As the game proceeded, my character attempted to form alliances and agreements of common purpose by behaving in a manner composed of equal parts of Samurai and British nobility. This was NOT markedly successful--from my point of view. Honor, restraint, tact and tolerance are qualities with a long term payoff; they are not effective in the short term with strangers. My military commander and the Confederacy Chief Justice (a Korincian I wanted elected as the next Hierarch) all played their roles in the same vein.

Now this was not consistent with the events transpiring back in Korince, where our King had just crowned himself Emperor and proclaimed a new age of progress and expansion.

Since there was no hint in my character sheet that my character was a fanatic, a megalomaniac or in any way neurotically fixated on King Barentur XLI, I found myself in much the same position as the old German upper classes did upon the election of Hitler: loyally devoted to the homeland but queasy about the conduct of the government. There was also no REASONABLE way my character, with these characteristics, could accomplish her mission.

Hints I picked up from the gamemasters tipped me off that they had expected different conduct from Korince. Maybe they thought that aristocrats were *supposed* to be arrogant and unreasonable! Many days after the fact, I arrived at the following analysis; Barentur was indeed a Hitler analog; if he had dispatched a trusted person as his delegation head, this would have been someone just as fanatical and megalomaniacal as himself, someone who instead of discomfort and embarrassment at his assumption of Imperial rank would have been proud and delighted.

My character logically should have been arrogant, peremptory, and deceitful. She would have been much more effective that way, also. Instead of explaining the "social contract" between the nobility and the commons she would have challenged the Boundary Republic delegate who made rude remarks about aristocracies on Friday night. Besides, the gamemasters were dying to run a duel, and spent a lot of the rules and customs sheets giving us reasons to challenge and assurances that we would not be required to have any specific physical abilities to conduct one.

They finally did get to run a duel and it was indeed widely reported. The two participants had a contest in endurance and determination all right; the winner was the duelist who consumed the greatest number of lemons!

A duel over a rude remark would have established my

character as someone to beware of right at the start, and would have helped my cause. Then I could have been totally recalcitrant over the border conflict and even considered ordering some further military aggression there as the rival empire was suffering disorganization attendant on the lingering death of their emperor and the choice of his successor.

This would also have been more fun for me. The role of "old nobility" amid the Philistines was unrewarding (in game terms) though it is certainly what I would have done in a world in which I expected a long future existence. In contrast, an arrogant, intransigent, deceitful role would have been a refreshing change!

There was an actual Assembly as the final event. From this Assembly it was clear that the gamesmasters attend very few NESFA meetings and did not understand how *Robert's Rules* work or why they are an effective answer to the problem of running a fair and orderly discussion and decision process for a widely heterogeneous group. By this time I had started to be more obnoxious, as this was the only tactic of behaviour that worked. It would have been better if they had stuck to the rules of assembly conduct they had published; then I could have been lots MORE obnoxious, and effective, too. Just as I was starting to get into it... it was all over.

Don't get the idea that I did not have a good time. I had a great time! I met some people I enjoyed playing with. I enjoyed dressing up and painting decorations on my face. My military commander had this wonderful black plastic Samurai armor. The only player I knew in "real life" turned out to be a spy placed in my delegation by another rival empire, rendering all my reflexive trust in her misplaced.

The world of the game was rich in events and complexity, everyone could "win", everyone had something to succeed at. It was very absorbing.

NUCULAR POWER: A Naturalistic View

by Priscilla Pollner

In our time, a pronounced controversy has arisen surrounding the peaceful uses of nucular power. However, little has been written about the animal responsible for this unrest--the nucu.

The nucu (plural; nuculus) is a small Central American rodent, closely related to the mountain gazpacho of Mexico and the desert guacamole of Southern California. Unlike many other members of this mammalian order, the nucu lives in highly organized kinship-dependent colonies. This nucular family contains a number of sterile individuals (commonly known as neutrons) who raise the young (the nuculi). The adult nuculus are the breeders and food gatherers for the entire colony.

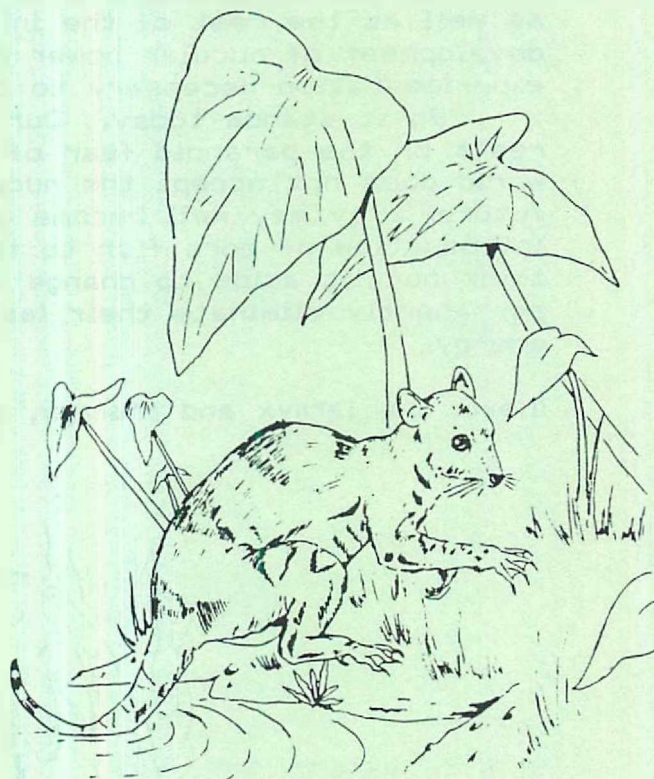
Nuculus are essentially herbivorous, though reports from remote villages indicate that they may also take aquatic vertebrates. Such nucular fishing may help these jolly little animals supplement their limited food supplies in these areas.

Recent studies on this piscivorous diet indicate that it increases the concentration of nuculic acid in the nuculus's gonads, allowing them a greater genetic plasticity. This may enable the animals to adapt rapidly to a suboptimal climate; research is difficult because dead nuculus decay rapidly.

In the recent past, an attempt was made to raise nuculus on fur farms (though not as fine as many other furs, nucular furs are much warmer than one would expect). These nucular enterprises failed; because of the animals' hyperactive activity in captivity they expire at an early age--essentially their life is halved. The nucular fussing caused the early death of too many caged animals to make farming them profitable.

However, during this period of attempted control of nucular reactions, it was discovered that when brought together in a sufficiently large group, with the individuals forcibly tied together, nuculus will spontaneously burst into flame! Such a chained reaction generated nucular energy for the first time!

Unfortunately, this information was suppressed for years. It is now believed that fearful plantation owners were hoping to safeguard their stock of bananas (on which the captive nuculus were most frequently fed). Indeed, nuculonic study is still in its infancy because of this previous suppression. A critical



mass of material is yet to be discovered. While it is thought that the nucular digestive system metabolizes bananas inefficiently, resulting in the release of both methane and peculiar radioactive waste products, this theory has not been adequately tested. Various factions (within both the Central American countries where this research has primarily been done, as well as the rest of the interested world) have held up the development of nucular power plants, and thus the experimentation necessary to document any theories formulated.

So it stands today. Our advancement into the nucular age rests on the paranoid fear of the plantation owners. If the world does not accept the nucus as the power source of the future, they may well become useless... for the simple introduction of more fish to these valuable rodents may cause their nuculic acids to change future populations enough to permanently eliminate their (as yet uncontrolled) release of energy.

(Next: the larnyx and pharnyx, in fact and fiction...)



"What if Hitler Got the Bomb?":
World War Two in Alternate History SF Stories

by Mark M. Keller

VARIANT HISTORY ONE --- June, 1943; Rome; just after dawn.

The convoy of German trucks rolls up the empty avenue toward St. Peter's Square: a dozen anonymous field-gray vehicles. They pull to a stop in the deserted plaza, and a hundred SS troops tumble out and trot toward the Vatican. One lone Swiss guard tentatively holds out a halberd in the entryway, a symbolic barrier; the leader of the SS-men shoots him down with a pistol ("an armed enemy") and the soldiers run up the stairs and into the church, past the fallen body in its colorful blue and yellow.

Last night the Pope made another broadcast attacking barbarism in war, accusing by name the British Bomber Command for indiscriminate burning of civilian cities and the Gestapo for killing by gas a million Polish prisoners in the death camps. The BBC response was a frigid remark that Pius should stick to religion. Himmler of the SS ordered more direct action.

Within ten minutes, the SS leaves the Vatican, bringing the Pope as prisoner and throwing him into a waiting truck. His Holiness had forbidden his security forces to engage in useless resistance. The truck drove away toward the north. At noon, the German Foreign Ministry sent two messages: one to the Italian government, saying in effect, "Shut up"; another to the Papal Secretary of State, telling him to assemble the cardinals and choose a more careful Pope.

AN EASY TOPIC FOR WRITERS ---

No, it didn't happen quite that way in the real World War Two. Pope Pius 12 avoided any statements that might have angered the fascist governments under which so many Catholics lived: Germany, Italy, Spain, and the puppet states (Croatia, Slovakia, etc.). In fact, there was quite an uproar in some quarters after the war as partisans claimed the Church had been too accommodating to the mass murderers who temporarily ruled Europe.

Science fiction writers looking for background, and interested in the pleasures of constructing believable alternate-history stories, find the possible "what if?" choices of World War Two a good place to work. The factual materials are easily available, there are many critical events that could have gone either way, and perhaps most important ... the readers will recognize what is going on without much trouble.

If you want to write a story in which the turning point of history was an obscure battle in Spain circa 1212 AD (the Moors won and all Europe became Moslem), you must explain when and where the battle was, and then spend lots of time filling in what an Islamic 20th century Europe would look like: art, technology, politics. This is lots of mental strain, and the reader's attention can wander.

But if your hero falls through a time-warp, and emerges in a 1984 Boston (same buildings) with swastika flags everywhere, and black uniformed cops on every corner, and maybe a zeppelin floating by overhead ... the reader grasps very quickly that here is a world in which Germany won in 1945. You can save the details for later and get on with telling the story.

Obviously, a skilled writer will avoid the sort of crude cartoon just described, but the fact remains, World War Two is a good setting for alternate-history adventures. It is recent enough, and well enough known through popular histories and films, that

readers can fill in the background with the aid of a few hints. But it is far enough in the past, nearly half a century, so that the implications of one side or the other winning can be plainly seen. Its art-forms, its technologies, its categories of political thought are close enough to us to be understandable, but far enough away to be fairly exotic and quirky.

I have collected a bibliography of a thousand alternate history stories and essays; the largest single category, almost 10%, is the "WW2" story. There are full-length novels, short stories, scenarios by imaginative historians (the term they use is "counterfactual hypotheses") and a few simulation games. For the reader who wants to see what the field offers, I include at the end of this article a short bibliography of 67 items: those that are most available to the average SF fan.

Between the sections of analysis are six "variants", examples of the sort of altered event that grows into a new track of history. They are taken from books in the bibliography -- you might want to see how many you recognize before looking up the answers.

THE DISTANT FUTURE ---

One of the trickier aspects of the alternate-history story is deciding how far you want to follow the consequences of the change in the course of events. The actual turning point is fairly straight-forward to write (you've researched the period, after all) and the consequences for the next ten or fifteen years can be worked out. But fifty years? A hundred years?

The more time passes, the further you get from known history, and the greater is the need to incorporate all those random unexpected events that keep turning up when you try to trace a real chain of cause and effect. Familiar people and places have to be replaced by invented biographies and newly important locations ... all of them growing out of an environment you have to make up also.

Not many authors try to project an Axis victory into the future by a century or more. Those who do often depict a curiously static world, where the manners and machines of 2010 are still those of 1940. How much can you invent for one 5000-word story?

For some writers it is mere gimmick. Asimov in "Living Space" (3) has paratime travellers from an American-ruled Earth a thousand years hence; they meet German-speaking paratimers on a third neutral dead Earth where life never evolved. The German calendar runs "nach Hitler" but we learn nothing more.

Three writers have tried to depict a world shaped by decades of unopposed Nazi rule: Kornbluth (36), Sarban (53) and Douay (21). The first two are indeed classics, memorably vivid.

All use the visitor from our own times (or close enough) as a way to lead the reader into the very strange, twisted and distorted societies that Hitler's victory produced. In Kornbluth's "Two Dooms", a long novella, the hero is a skeptical Los Alamos physicist from 1945. He doubts the need for the Bomb, thinks the tales of Nazi death camps are horror propaganda, and assumes the leaders of Japan's war machine must be rational men like the Japanese students he knew at Cal Tech. Overdosing on peyote, he lands in Axis-partitioned America 150 years futureward. California is a vast plantation of rice fields and fruit orchards, tended by imported Chinese slaves and some remaining whites, shipping all its surplus across the Pacific for the benefit of absentee samurai planters. Across the border, German America is even worse, with earnest Anglo-Saxon collaborators trying hard to gain the status of "honorary Nordic", and with the decayed remnants of the SS seeking new categories of undesirables.

Sarban (John W. Wall) in the novel, The Sound of His Horn, sticks to a narrower locale, a pastoral nightmare. The protagonist is a British airman who escapes from a POW camp in 1944 only to fall through a hole into the world-wide camp of 2044. He finds himself on the estate of the hereditary Reichs Forester, thousands of acres of woodland ruled by a revenant feudal junker who likes log cabins and firelight drunken songfests and especially the night-time hunt under the dark trees.

Before 1939, this region was Polish farmland and villages. The people were taken away, the houses burned, the pastures seeded to return to forest. Now it is again the dark tunneled wood of prehistory, stocked with elk and wild boars and young British girls for the baron to hunt. Somewhere else there may be a high technology, but here the ruler dreams of himself as Herne or as Kernunnos the Horned God ... archaic master of the Wild Hunt. His pleasure is to course live humans.

Neither writer credits the Axis warlords with much fondness for science or desire to raise the technological level of their civilizations.

There is high tech of a sort in Douay's Principe de l'Oeuf ("The Egg Principle"), but it turns out to be psi, i.e., magic. A treaty in 1942 divided the world into exclusive spheres of influence: the Germans get Europe and Africa, the US stays with North and South America. But a hundred years later the stasis seems to be shaky. American agents sneak into Eurafrika: the former colonies of France, England, etc., now self-sufficient and isolated backwaters cut off from what technical advances exist in occupied Europe. A pied noir Algerian is recruited to infiltrate mainland France and find out how the Germans are sending world-wide telepathic broadcasts that disturb and confuse psychics working for the US government.

Another book may belong here, Saberhagen's A Century of Progress (52). Agents of a change-war gather at the Chicago World's Fair in 1934, waiting for Hitler to arrive in the Graf Zeppelin on his state visit to the USA. One group from a Nazi-victory time line wishes to protect the Fuehrer; the second group, a future Jewish (?) state, plans to kill him in a zeppelin crash. We don't really get enough background on the world either side came from. It isn't clear just who they are.

VARIANT HISTORY TWO --- June, 1940; Bordeaux, France; evening.

The German armies have linked up on the Channel, tanks from the west, infantry marching from the east. The English run away to Dunkirk, the northern French armies are trapped. From a coastal staging area in Bordeaux, the aged Marshal Petain and his aggressive Defense Minister DeGaulle announce that France will not surrender, but will continue the battle from the colonies in North Africa.

German armies take three weeks to conquer the last French combat units in the south, by which time the French Navy is safe in Algeria. Hitler looks at his two enemies out of reach: England across the 20-mile moat of the Channel, colonial France across the 800-mile barrier of the Mediterranean. Surely German arms will win on land, but crossing water to assault a hostile beach is something for which the Wehrmacht was never trained.

Very well, let the Luftwaffe destroy the Royal Air Force in dogfights over Britain. Meanwhile, Italian ships will carry a full German Afrika Korps across to Libya - panzers, heavy guns, planes - then another unstoppable blitzkrieg rolls into Algeria. To pin the French, two divisions of paratroops will land in Tunisia and hold the main airport until the panzers reach them.

Once France is crushed, the panzers can turn eastward to Egypt, the Suez Canal, and the oilfields of Iraq....

English and French warships ambush the convoy near Sicily and sink most of the transports. The German paratroops take the Tunis airport and wait for reinforcements that never come. Three weeks, no ammo, no food: two divisions of paratroops surrender. August 1940 finds Hitler stunned and furious at two disasters; Mussolini is sick.

LIFE UNDER THE NEW ORDER ---

Last Boskone at the alternate-worlds discussion panel, one fan asked, "Why are so many of those stories based on battles and wars? Why not peaceful inventions?" I suspect wars are so common as turning points because the choice between two possible futures is so clear.

A world where Henry Ford never lived, or where television went commercial in 1910, would be different from ours. But exactly how it differs ... you'd have to spend time and research to work that out. On the other hand, a world where Hitler conquered Britain and Russia by 1943 would be different in ways you don't need a PhD in history to imagine. Extend the behavior of the Nazis in defeated lands just a little bit and you can get a sharp image of the German World Empire. Their ultimate goals for human society were never kept secret.

Within their realm there could be no other source of authority that even suggested alternatives to the Nazi faith. Thus in Mullally's Hitler has Won (44), the Nazi Party no longer pretends toleration for the Catholic Church once the Soviet Union has fallen. Hitler is in a good mood, preparing a sequel to Mein Kampf (called, naturally, Mein Sieg, "my victory"). The German bishops are given a statement to read from the pulpit next Sunday: that Church doctrines are wrong if they contradict National Socialism, that sterilizing the unfit and killing the subhuman is strictly secular public health, that women bearing healthy Aryan bastard children must not be criticized. The Gestapo will arrest all bishops who refuse. Protests from the Vatican or Spain or the United States will be ignored.

From one year to one generation after Axis victory, neither minute battle detail nor far-future extrapolation, this range of uchronias has produced some of the most memorable stories of alternate history.

The Germans made extensive plans for conquered England (it gave the staff something to do in the dull winter of 1940). You can find them translated and compiled in Clarke (13) and Longmate (39), with many examples from the tiny corner of the United Kingdom that the Third Reich did manage to occupy: the Channel Islands. Rule would be hard and brutal, with full reparations extracted, no mercy.

In beaten England, the key question is, collaborate or resist? The writer can choose either for his characters -- it depends on how cynical or gloomy the writer is.

Roberts in "Weinachtsabend" (49) has the English upper classes turn over the country without a second thought: better the Nazis than the Reds. Deighton in the novel SS-GB (19) has for protagonist a British police detective in 1941, a year after German victory. He must of course defer to the Gestapo units that now run the national police system, but aside from that, he gets on pretty well. He works on real criminal cases and hopes never to get tangled with political stuff; that can be dangerous, especially for an Englishman who gets caught between SS and Gestapo factions still jockeying for power.

Still in 1941, we find Brownlow's film It Happened Here (10, 11). The Americans and the Commonwealth are holding out across the Atlantic but resistance is muted in England. A nurse is forced to join the Party (English branch) to keep her job; she is transferred to a rural rest home, soon to discover the injections ordered for crippled children are lethal drugs. British Nazis who really like the new system try to convert

her, and can't understand her distaste. The film ends with rumors of American landings in Scotland that suddenly are true.

Big-money producers didn't want to bankroll a weird movie (alternate worlds?) by an unknown writer, so Brownlow filmed it over several years in England on an absolute shoestring budget. The German soldiers and British Nazis were played by local fascists who were so thrilled with the subject they not only worked for free, but paid for their own costumes. Their leader gave an ad-lib speech on Aryan supremacy that was so authentic-sounding Brownlow put it in the film. (The US distributor cut it out again, fearing the Nazi sounded too convincing and that people would forget he was just acting!)

Equally effective as drama was the BBC-TV series, "An Englishman's Castle," by Philip Mackie (40). The play's hero is a TV writer for the BBC network in Nazi-ruled Britain forty years after the conquest. No German censors appear; the BBC staff is riddled with spies and informers, quite capable of parroting the Party line without help from outside. Their big hit is a nostalgic soap opera about an English family in the thirties; people want to be reminded of the good old days. Soon the show will cover the war years, and the TV writer has a delicate assignment. The British must be flattered, told they were brave to fight against the Germans ... up to a point. Then the story must show that the British were also smart enough to realize the German visitors were their best protection against Jews and Reds -- those who surrendered were the true British patriots.

If there is any recurrent theme to these works, it is the gloomy realization that many, perhaps most, English subjects would probably accommodate to the new rulers and try to get along with them.

In the standard SF pulp tradition of the forties, this didn't happen, of course. When a cruel and brutal enemy conquered a free land, the hero gathered a band of guerilla fighters and took to the hills, sniping, raiding, stinging the clumsy invaders ... until some way could be found to restore the status quo. This is still the model for the 1980s "survivalist" adventure series, or "if the Russians conquer America" stories: patriots rally with their handguns and their motorcycles, easily outfighting ten times their number of soldiers.

Those who write alternate-world stories of conquered England lack enthusiasm for guerrilla warfare. So do most of those who write uchronias of Axis-conquered America.

For England there is the model of Occupied Holland or Denmark. For India there is the model of Japanese-occupied Malaya. (Has someone in Asia written a Japanese-victory novel?) But for North America we have no real clue as to what was planned by the Axis. I have seen only one historical work on the topic, Hawaii Under the Rising Sun, which describes the Japanese Navy plan for an invasion in 1942.

Writers therefore have a free hand in deciding what Nazi America would look like. Three works stand out: those of Dick (20), Norden (46) and Overgard (48). Phil Dick's Man in the High Castle should be known to all of you, since it did win a Hugo. But many readers miss the subtlety with which Dick builds his background, or the solidity with which his characters fit into it.

The typical Phil Dick protagonist is a small businessman slowly going broke, and in High Castle this character has the added problem of being a disguised Jew, with false papers, in the Japanese Zone of Occupation. Discovery means extradition to the German Zone, and certain death in the gas chamber.

A generation after victory, the high-ranking Japanese on their California estates are collecting authentic pre-war Americana: Colt revolvers, Coca-Cola posters, Mickey Mouse watches, Fiesta Ware ... the usual load of kitschy antiques. Dick's hero earns

a risky living by importing such goods from the unoccupied buffer state in the Rockies, or from the German East Coast. In fact, he doesn't import it as much as make it from scratch in hidden workshops. Little worries: discovered to be a forger. Big worries: the Gestapo finding his present identity.

Again we have the survivors trying to get by, buried in their mundane scrabble for cash and ignoring big political issues. There is such an issue in Dick's world -- the emerging German wish to nuke Japan and rule the Earth alone. Oh, yes, there are German A-bombs, and transcontinental rocket liners and landings on Mars. Technology has moved ahead in this world; no zeppelins here.

Norden in The Ultimate Solution shows us a similar divided America, this time from the German side of the line. His hero is a New York City cop working under Gestapo orders (sound like Deighton?), who finds himself assigned to a real "hot potato" case. A very high-ranking Nazi, an old gauleiter in his 80s, believes there are Jews still hiding in America; his younger colleagues dare not dissent too loudly, though they all know for sure he's senile. After all, the death camp upstate on the Hudson was shut down in 1970; it's become a tourist attraction. The great hunt is over, finished, completed.

The American cop gets assigned to help the old gauleiter, a transfer arranged by his personal enemies on the force. Well, it turns out that somebody has raided a souvenir store and stolen the Jewish skull on display, then buried it in the park. No, it couldn't be...

The search for the perpetrator reveals a decaying city: clusters of child brothels, Italo-American biker gangs who flaunt WWI US Army uniforms (obviously they won't wear Nazi insignia). Norden did a series of articles on right-wing para-military groups before writing this novel, and some of the attitudes he encountered among the Klansmen are echoed by the collaborators here. This world is ultimately one without hope. There is no way out.

Overgard's The Divide approaches more closely the traditional heroic guerrilla scenario, but the details are done with care. The combined occupation forces are preparing for the big thirtieth anniversary celebration; Japanese and German leaders will meet and feast at the border town, Kansas City. Bandits and horse thieves are still out there in the Montana hills, not worth the time of the Japanese Army and covertly aided by one faction of Germans. There is one last American A-bomb hidden in New Mexico after the collapse of military resistance. Okay, you know who wants to get what bomb to what city for what special occasion.

There are some Axis-victory themes we haven't touched yet. Within Germany itself, the end of the war is presumed to initiate a massive power struggle among the factions of army and party, which becomes brutally intense after Hitler dies. It is true that there was no clear line of authority, no planned succession under the Third Reich. Hitler liked to keep such things vague enough so that he would remain the only source of power. Several stories assume Nazi A-bomb leads to victory and then take it from there: Linaweaver (38), Basil (7), Silverberg (56). We see again collapse, fear, no future.

In Linaweaver's "Moon of Ice", Dr. Goebbels is still writing his Diaries in 1970, moaning about the trouble caused by the SS with their own private kingdom in Burgundy, and pondering a crackpot theory of 1930s Germany that the planets and stars were really just great floating blocks of ice. That part is accurate; many weird theories of physics as well as of biology flourished in Naziland. The trouble with bringing such things to public notice is that we may decide the Nazis were a freak one-time aberration, rather than the prototype for a congenital cancer of bureaucratic states.

If stories of "pasts that might have been" serve any purpose beyond amusement, it is the reminder that things today could have been far worse than they are, and that the danger never goes away.

Perhaps we were lucky.

Anyway, on to the lighter side ... the lighter side? There is the cartoon collection, Times-Square Samurai (34), originally published in US Army newspapers in Japan. The gimmick is turnaround -- instead of US troops in Japan, we have two kids from a rice farm who get drafted into the Imperial Army and are shipped to New York as occupation troops. They make naive blunders like Yankee soldiers in Japan, and cannot grasp that the behavior successful in Burma won't make it in Manhattan. "Well, Akira, I guess Yankee girls don't like green tea."

How do I classify Dean's "Passage in Italics" (18)? We overhear men talking in a barbershop: Italian section of Brooklyn, NY, summer 1952. They complain and are sharply reprimanded by a dapper man in the corner, who turns out to be the local Fascist squad leader. That's right. Enrico Fermi stayed in Italy ... built A-bomb ... Italy won the war.

VARIANT HISTORY THREE --- June, 1941; Damascus, Syria; afternoon.

The Vichy French who rule Syria have cooperated eagerly with German agents trying to rouse Iraqi Arabs to revolt against Britain. A coup in Iraq, a pro-Nazi coup, is crushed by RAF bombers and by an armored column of the Arab Legion out of Transjordan. Now the British turn to Syria, determined to evict the Vichy and install a friendly Gaullist administration in its place.

The drive on Damascus begins with a vision from 1918: a British horse cavalry troop, 500 men and horses, gallops north from Galilee toward the Litani River, following the route pioneered by Lawrence of Arabia. Behind them come armored cars, motorcycles, and lorries carrying the dusty infantry. Leading the way are two groups of scouts, Palestinian Jews on foot, veterans of the kibbutz fights against Arab terrorists; and another cavalry unit, Circassian deserters from an exotic French colonial army, who have thrown in their lot with DeGaulle.

Lebanon falls easily, but the French are dug in on the Syrian border, with Foreign Legionnaires and levies of Arab soldires. British biplanes are sent up from Egypt to strafe the French lines and bomb their supply dumps: they brush aside the weak resistance put up by French fighter planes. The Syrian Arabs break and run; the Legion is isolated and destroyed. Governor Collet, appointed by DeGaulle, drives his limousine from Jerusalem to Damascus, where he takes up his new duties. British horsemen and Bedouin camelriders accompany him to the official mansion.

SUPPOSE THE UNITED NATIONS WON ---

Even some of the gloomier Nazi-victory worlds hold out a bit of hope. In SS-GB and The Divide there are still resistance forces at work, somewhere in the world ... hiding out now, low profile but still there. High Castle shows us the stage beyond, when no escape is thinkable, when the world has become so evil that it resembles a dream.

There are fewer stories about the Axis-defeat world. After all, it is our own world, isn't it? What's exotic about that?

Other ways of Allied victory exist, though. Corley's The Jesus Factor (15) is set in what looks like our 1960s, but is a true other universe where laws of physics vary slightly. Nuclear fission is much more difficult to initiate, so that a huge static "device" can be made to explode, but a small mobile bomb just isn't feasible. It takes

only a few percent variation in the nuclear strong force to produce this. The Hiroshima bomb was faked with flash powder and cannisters of radioactive dust; major world powers agree to keep up the pretense of a nuclear arms race. They have good reason to do so; a weapon far more threatening than the weak nuclear explosions they can set off, and that weapon is ... well, I won't spoil it for you.

Some Allied-victory stories are fables, such as Bier's "Father and Son" (8), in which 10% of the German population is executed in 1945 by the new German government: atonement for the Holocaust. There are several stories in which Hitler survives the war. Van Rjndt's The Trial of Adolf Hitler (60) is the best of these; it has Hitler hiding in a small German town under false identity until around 1970. His memory and drive return, and he demands a public trial before a reconvened Nuremburg tribunal to prove he was right after all.

The Allied High Powers don't like the idea, with good reason. Aggressive lawyer for A.H. says, prove my client gave a direct order to kill any partisan or Jew. Prove he wasn't trying to build a European bulwark against communism just like NATO. Prove he wasn't doing what the Americans in Vietnam are .. Pound! Pound! goes the judge's gavel.

Hard to say if this is a satire on lawyers or on changing standards of international morality, but it feels authentic. Most of the other "Hitler lives" books are action-adventure thrillers with no thought involved. One plot fits all --- our super-spy hero finds A.H. still alive in a secret jungle base, plotting the rise of the Fourth Reich. The good guys stop him in time; he dies a well-deserved death. Sometimes the villain is Martin Bormann or Dr. Mengele instead.

Alternate endings to World War Two shade off into contemporary worlds if the Allies win. Immediate post-war adventures of famous Allied generals still count, though, I suppose. Thus, in Orgill's "Many Rubicons" (47), MacArthur crosses the Yalu into China in 1951, the Chinese respond with a germ-warfare attack on the continental US, and America collapses into a balkanized post-Plague patchwork. Are there any other Korean War uchronias out there?

Moving to George Patton, there is the vision of his army as it rolls past the stop lines to knock out the Russians while we have the chance. Leopold's Blood and Guts is Going Nuts (great title!) starts this way, but cops out as a reader-cheater. Patton calls back the tanks before they hit the Russian lines; it was a mistake. Mayfair Games of Chicago gives us Red Star Falling, a wargame which has the Yanks and Reds bashing heads across the Elbe in 1945 for real. Most of the Wehrmacht has come across intact and is fighting alongside the Americans ... Goebbel's dream. The designer does include a touch of realism in this fantasy with regard to the Waffen-SS units. They also are in the line against Stalin's horde, but the rules make it unwise for the player to set an SS division next to an American division. If he does so for any reason, the American unit ignores orders and attacks the SS with full strength until one or the other is destroyed. A reminder that American troops who saw Dachau didn't take any prisoners in SS uniform after that....

The scenario is unlikely but not impossible. In Southeast Asia the British came in to take the Japanese surrender, and found large numbers of Communist guerrillas also arriving in the cities, prepared to run the country now that Japan was out. There were not enough British troops to fight the Reds; reinforcements were slow. So the British re-armed the intact Japanese units and sent them out under Japanese officers to act as police and border guards: just what they had been doing for the last four years for the Emperor. Naturally, the liberated native population was a bit confused.

Finally Chinese, Commonwealth, Dutch or French troops showed up, so the Japanese could once more become prisoners, this time to be shipped home. Perhaps something similar could have happened in Europe.

VARIANT HISTORY FOUR --- June, 1942; Midway Island; dawn.

When the Imperial Japanese Navy realized that the Americans had been reading its most secret codes for a full year, there was a stunned fury in the offices and corridors of the Tokyo headquarters. The codes were changed at once, but it took time to get the new machines and books out to the field units; May 1942 was almost past before the changeover could be completed.

Naturally the invasion of Midway Island had to be delayed until communications were secure. Two weeks past the originally planned date, the date the Americans expected from reading the old codes, Admiral Yamamoto's fleet was finally ready for action. During those two weeks, the US carrier forces were returned to the command of aggressive and careless "Bull" Halsey, who took over from the more cautious Spruance. Shortly after Halsey resumed flag command, the Japanese radio messages suddenly became unreadable garble to the American code-breakers back at Pearl. The US Navy was blind.

Halsey ordered three carriers forward into the expected attack area at full speed. They were decoyed, caught off guard, and sunk by the five big carriers of the Japanese "main strike force". As the remaining US destroyers and cruisers were battered from the air, IJN Marines hit and overwhelmed Midway Island.

Now the "main strike force", the Kido Butai, was the single most powerful naval unit in the Pacific. Nothing could stop it or stand against it. Yamamoto proposed a landing on Hawaii, but jealous Army generals refused to release the needed troops; they planned to use them in China to gain glory for the Army alone.

ACTIVATE "SEALION", ACTIVATE "OLYMPIC" ----

We turn from results to causes, from the extended consequences to the acts that produced them. After all, there was a turning point that generated each of the imaginary worlds we have seen so far. There was one afternoon that lost the Pacific War for Japan (it could have won). There was one placement of a military unit that lost the European War for Hitler (he could have won, as many of our authors have said).

Not just fiction writers but historians and game designers get involved when the question turns to specific battles. So in this part of the essay, there are many different types of material to work with: scholarly papers, military analyses, simulations. I will avoid, where possible, getting too deep into technical details.

Start with the opening of the European War: September 1939, Germany and Russia invade Poland. It could have ended there, says Kimche in The Unfought Battle (35), a study of that first month. French forces on the border outnumbered German 5:1 as Hitler moved all his good troops east to Poland. The French could have marched to Berlin, but they sat. Fear did it, says Kimche, and huge over-estimates of the German Air Force. Actually, everyone guessed high at their enemy's strength.

Germany out in two months? It might be good background, but I don't know if anyone has written the story. I know of no stories about the averted German-Czech War of 1938, either. About 1936, the march into the Rhineland ... there is a radio play for school distribution (58) in which France resists, the German Army crawls home, and angry generals overthrow Hitler. This may also be the backdrop for one of the time-lines in Russ' The Female Man (50), which alludes to the death of Hitler in 1936 and a continued American Depression in 1975.

For the first two years of the war, Russia and Germany were allies, dividing the loot of eastern Europe and united in hostility to democratic capitalism. Deighton in SS-GB touches on this odd alliance: in his view of Nazi-ruled Britain, the Communist Daily Worker is still on sale. The Germans dig up Karl Marx's grave in London and turn over the coffin to their Soviet colleagues in a grand public ceremony; it will be flown to Moscow to be re-buried next to Lenin's Tomb. Of course, the Germans are secretly planning to invade Russia, but not just yet.

Also for the first two years, the USA was far from the war and was trying to stay that way. Many writers suggest that the Axis won because the US stayed out too long, waiting until Britain and Russia were conquered and Hitler ruled all Europe and Africa: unstoppable. The most common scenario has Roosevelt killed in 1933, resulting in massive strikes and fascist vigilantes through the 1930s, and no re-arming of America or arms shipments to the beleaguered Allies (Dick, Norden and Silverberg use this idea).

Moore's "Class with Dr. Chang" (43) shows us such a neutral racist USA, tilting toward the German side. However, there are dissenters. Russett in No Clear and Present Danger (51) suggests the US could have won without fighting. He depicts a US neutral toward Germany but sending economic aid to Britain and Russia; they could beat Germany without any American troops. Japan would have to be bought off with a deal.

Meanwhile, back to our authors ... Costa in L'Appel de 17 Juin (16) gives us a France in 1940 that has more guts than the real one did. German armies invade and conquer mainland France; there is no surrender. The French fight on from North Africa, sinking an Italian convoy that is crossing to Libya, defeating an Italian army in Greece. The ships of the Italian Navy are battered, and Mussolini's few last boats bringing the legions home are caught in the open Adriatic by British subs and French cruisers. Six months of disaster, no navy left, no army left: the Fascist Grand Council kicks out Mussolini and sues for peace.

Germany no longer looks invincible. Russia eases over the border into Romania. France and Britain remain allies (seems better than what did happen in our world: the Royal Navy sank the French fleet).

The most common theme of alternate-war stories in English covers a period somewhat later ... Operation Sealion, the German invasion of England in summer 1940. Older writers describe a German attempt that failed, such as Armstrong (2), Hawkin (33), and Forester (29); the first two books appeared in 1943, while an invasion was still at least a distant possibility. They envision a quick July attack right after France surrenders, disorganized and sloppily planned, with battalions of German troops left stranded on the beach.

There is great dispute among military analysts (17) and game designers (65) over how much of a chance the Germans really did have. An early fast rush across the Channel could have caught the British still reeling from Dunkirk, with no organized bodies of men to defend the country, says Macksey (41); once logged, the Germans could be supplied by air and would build too fast for the English to kick them out ... attrition would help the invaders. But others claim there was no transport ready for a July invasion, not even crude barges or commandeered scows. The Germans would have had to wait until August or September to assemble enough boats, wagons, horses (1), and men. By then, Britain would also have rebuilt, and of course the storms of autumn would be churning the waters of the Channel. A week of storm after the troop landing would block supply ships and planes.

A related question is the possible other outcome of the Battle of Britain, the air war between Luftwaffe and RAF in summer 1940. Once the Germans get control of the sky over southern England (they never did), they can bring across invasion barges at their own leisure, relying on air cover to drive away the Royal Navy. An objective look at numbers of planes and pilots, design of aircraft, experience of pilots ... gives the Germans odds of 60:40 to win. We can say that it was very close, and the Luftwaffe threw away several chances to crush the RAF. The question historians ask is, "why didn't the Luftwaffe win?"

No victory over England, so Hitler moves east against Russia, the next big turning point. Bailey (5) has a psychic win the war for Hitler by warning him against the invasion of Russia. A more detailed variation comes from Downing (22), who gets Hitler out of the way from November 1941 to June 1942 (long recovery from a plane crash) and thus gives the German generals a chance to run the war their own way for six months.

Many such generals after the war claimed they had a winning plan but intuitive loony Hitler kept messing them up; it wasn't their fault. Downing, in The Moscow Option, gives their plans a try. The main objective was a drive to grab the capital Moscow, with no diversions to north or south. Fine, says Downing, they take Moscow ... and Stalin retreats to Kuibishev. The war goes on, German supply lines are 300 miles longer and they are no closer to victory. Taking Moscow didn't do Napoleon a lot of good either.

Rommel is reinforced, drives through Egypt into Palestine, bogs down before Jerusalem due to lack of fuel: long supply lines again. While the Eighth Army sings "... and we will keep Jerusalem from Rommel's dirty German hands," another German column is moving from south Russia into Persia, pushing for the Iraqi oil fields. They too, run short of supplies and must retreat. Japan has been nagged and promised into an invasion of Russia, told they will divide Siberia with the German victors. Most of Japan's Manchurian army is now deep into Siberia and beginning to realize the Russians have cut them off: an eastern Stalingrad is brewing. When Hitler regains control in mid-1942, the Axis is already sliding down the slope to a lost war.

There is a critical turning point not often mentioned in our school histories, because in this one the Allies turned down the chance for a decisive move. It concerns the possible invasion of France by Anglo-American troops in summer 1943. No fiction on this yet, but see the studies by Dunn (23) and Grigg (31). Dunn is more detailed in his description of the large number of American divisions raised in 1943, a new one each month, with no special goal for them; some were kept in the southwest marching back and forth in "training exercises" for almost a year. Grigg describes the weakness of German defenses during that year when the focus was still on the east and the walls of Fortress Europa were still imaginary. (They were much more real a year later on D-Day.)

The British generals were afraid of a 1943 cross-Channel dash, and the American generals reluctantly went along with the alternative presented: North Africa, Sicily, Italy. The men and machines were available, but the generals wanted to practice on a smaller scale first. Grigg describes a possible result of deciding "not to knock Italy out of the war, but to get France back in," ... victory in 1944, with the Russians still in the Ukraine, thus no occupation of eastern Europe.

By mid-1943, Germany was surrounded and on the defensive, reduced to counter-punching at an enemy that grew daily more confident. The Axis could no longer win, but it could stalemate ... and it did, holding on for two more painful years until the final collapse. The authors of Second Front Now: 1943 and 1943: The Victory that Never Was claim that only a major blunder by the Anglo-Americans let Germany last so long.

An ingenious writer can always imagine a worse blunder, say an Allied invasion of Spain. Broadhurst in one scenario of the game Condor (9) has Hitler tempt Franco with promises of dominion over Gibraltar and North Africa. The Spanish dictator formally joins the Axis, and the Allies attack Spain instead of Sicily. (The troops were ready anyhow.) One long year of mountain fighting, a vicious rematch of the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39 leads the Allies to a useless dead-end victory, while the Germans and Italians get a much-needed breather.

Speaking of gamers, Gary Gygax took time off from building Dungeons & Dragons to write Victorious German Arms (32), in which Hitler stops to get organized in early 1943 and then booms into action. Russia goes down, Britain is invaded, the US is held to a nuclear bomb stand-off. The style is that of an extended game-campaign report in detail. There is no special persuasiveness about the sudden German turnabout.

But could Germany have won, even that late? Was there any secret weapon such as Dr. Goebbels kept promising?

Some writers surveyed here say, "Sure there was: the atomic bomb." In their stories, the German nuclear weapon is enough to defeat the Allies and assure German hegemony over the world. After all, the Bomb won the war for the US, didn't it? So it should therefore win the war for the Germans if they get it soon enough.

A more careful study suggests a surprising conclusion: any likely German bomb would have come too late. Nuclear-armed Germany would still have been defeated by conventional-armed Russia, Britain and America.

Fried (30) sets out the argument in some detail. I will try to summarize here for those who find such a variant hard to believe. First we have nuclear fission discovered in 1938, widely publicized in 1939, as in our world. Britain, America and Germany all start atomic weapons projects ... the first two in deep secret, the Germans rather openly. After all, German scientists are the best in the world, so there is no danger that somebody else will get the bomb first, is there? Besides, there is no real urgency for a German bomb, since the war will be over in a year or two, long before super-weapons can be made.

Americans, working at full speed and high budgets, very much afraid of a German lead, achieve a chain reaction in late 1942 with a graphite moderated uranium pile. The Germans, ambling along, reject graphite and try the much more expensive and scarcer heavy water as moderator; they still haven't got a chain reaction by the end of the war.

Let's imagine the Germans wake up to the fact of Allied progress on atomic energy. Let's say they rush to build a graphite reactor (it works) and hurry up a uranium separation plant. How soon would the Nazi A-bomb be ready? Separation plants are huge buildings, five floors high and a third of a mile long with 1940s technology: expensive and not quickly made, especially in a country under siege.

If they work at the US pace, the war is over before Hitler gets his A-bomb. Six months faster? Possible, though Germany would have to pull huge amounts of scarce special steel away from jet engine factories to make turbine pumps for the uranium diffusion plant. An atom bomb in January 1945 means 300 fewer jet fighters for the Reich.

A year faster than the Americans? Could Germany nuke the D-Day landings at Normandy? There seems no way German industry could manage the job, with the shortages of all sorts, with Allied bombs disrupting the transport net, with ball bearings and petroleum fuel and fifty other crucial items running out. So, German nuclear capacity in early 1945 ... would that change the outcome of the war?

Second point, delivery systems. The Germans had no functioning long range strategic bombers, didn't consider them necessary. So the bombs would be carried by modified medium bombers, maybe 500 miles in range. How many bombs? The US had three in July 1945, took months to make more. Assume the Germans have 2-5 bombs; where could they be used? Let's say for maximum effect: Warsaw, Leningrad, London. Can't reach Moscow or Washington, even though Hitler wants to do so.

Third point, the retaliation of the Allies. Nuclear fireball flashes away the heart of London, fifty thousand dead; similar bomb destroys Leningrad, but no information on casualties ... the Soviets will not even admit they've been hit. High officials left London a day earlier, warned by Ultra intercepts of the coming attack. Allied scientists explain the bomb, calculate the Germans won't have another for weeks. Recon flights locate the diffusion plant and assembly areas.

Now, at this time, the US has 5000 big four-engine bombers in Europe, and the British have 3000 more. (That many? Yes, one-third of all British war production went to Bomber Command, lots of planes.) We can assume all-out, 24-hour bombing raids on any German nuclear sites, day after day, whatever the loss rate ... 5%, 10%, 15%, the bombings continue. The Germans don't have enough interceptors to stop them.

"Remember London" is the poster slogan. The crews of the heavy bomber force will feel no remorse at all as they unload thousands of tons of incendiaries over the cities of Germany ... a dozen firestorms to avenge London. At last the Strategic Air Command has the full backing of all the Allies. The war might even end sooner, although British and American casualties would be much higher, not to mention German.

The side with superior weapons -- jet fighters and atom bombs -- will lose the war. Remind you of Arthur Clarke's story, "Superiority"? If the German factories are buried in rubble, if the synthetic oil plants are all burning, if the roads and tracks are cratered into useless pit-fields ... then so what if there's an atom bomb hidden in a tunnel deep in Bavaria? Germany can't fight any longer. The war is over.

And once the US test bomb is detonated (in public) you can expect a quick surrender from Japan as well. No need for Hiroshima or Nagasaki. The moral guilt for building the bomb in the first place is Germany's. Would this make an American-Soviet nuclear exchange more likely?

Maybe some of you still think that somehow a Nazi atom bomb would have made more of a difference. There are a dozen spy novels based on that belief: heroic agents parachute in to sabotage Hitler's bomb. They're mostly routine secret agent stuff. I will mention only Melchior's Haigerloch Project (42), which has a subtle twist in the way the German heavy water reactor is put out of action.

There is one final category of stories set during the war itself. We shift over to the Pacific, the final stage of the Japanese war. What if the US did not have an atom bomb by summer of 1945? What if we had to conquer Japan the hard way ... ground assault on Tokyo?

The answer to that question involves current politics as well as forty-year-old history.

VARIANT HISTORY FIVE --- June 1944; Washington, DC; afternoon.

The Pentagon chiefs were unhappy with the slow progress of the Manhattan Project, so Oppenheimer and Groves flew east to present their case in person. The flight from Los Alamos to Washington was long, hot, and uncomfortable, with the promise of a hostile committee waiting at the other end.

Our uranium bomb is on the fast track, said General Groves. Maximum effort. The Air Corps can pick one up and carry it to Japan in January 1946, guaranteed. About the plutonium device ... that one is tougher, but a test detonation is scheduled for summer 1946.

"Some war-winning secret weapon," muttered an Admiral. "Too late to do us any good against the Krauts or the Japs."

Not our fault, said Professor Oppenheimer. Einstein sent a letter to Roosevelt six years ago, but the President never read it. We didn't get the go-ahead until a year after Pearl Harbor, a year worrying about German progress, a year watching the British atom-bomb program stall for lack of men and money. That whole year dozing at the gate can't be made up so fast.

Decision: continue working on the A-bomb, but don't bet on it. The assault on Japan went in three final phases. Operation ICEBERG, taking Okinawa, April 1945: done. Operation OLYMPIC, landing on southern Kyushu, November 1945: done. Operation CORONET, landing on Honshu and the drive on Tokyo: scheduled for March 1946.

The peace party in the Japanese cabinet was disgraced and dismissed in September 1945, just before the invasion. No surrender, banzai.

Another 250,000 Americans would die on the beaches.

STILL A DEBATE GOING ON ---

When military leaders stop talking about weapons and begin to call for victory based on "fighting spirit" alone, you can figure the war is just about lost. That happened in Japan by early 1945. There was no way to match the overwhelming American superiority in hardware: numbers of planes, numbers of ships, numbers of bombs.

The warlords in the Cabinet refused to accept the facts. They wrote out plans for last-ditch suicide defense against American landings on the beaches of Japan, plans available today in translation ... millions of men armed with grenades, millions of women with bamboo spears were to wait in tunnels as the Yankees came wading up out of the sea.

Similarly, the US Chiefs of Staff prepared plans for the invasion of the Home Islands, based on amphibious tactics learned in dozens of Pacific Island battles. Massive bombardment first, air cover at all times, ultimately ten divisions of men ashore on the Kanto Plain just forty miles from Tokyo. (D-Day in Normandy sent six divisions ashore.) The Chiefs expected 50,000 American casualties; maybe if the bombing raids broke the Japanese will to fight, the landings wouldn't be necessary. These plans also are available now, declassified.

Writers of an alternate-world story about the US invasion of Japan should have an easy time, then. The battle plans of each side can be set out and compared, with conclusions drawn for each step of the clash.

Of course, the invasion story assumes no US atom bomb. We have the version of Clark's The Bomb that Failed (12), Westheimer's Lighter than a Feather (62) and Coppel's The Burning Mountain (14) -- three very different stories based on the same sources.

There was debate within the ruling councils of Japan between the "death before dishonor" warlords willing to take the whole nation down with themselves, and the "negotiate" politicians who saw that Japan could survive a surrender and someday recover as a great power. In our world the peace faction prevailed, just barely, and we were

spared another six months or more of pointless killings. Violent argument takes place among historians today over the question, "Was the atom bomb necessary to give the pro-surrender group an upper hand? Was Japan on the verge of giving up even if the bomb was not used?"

If they were ready to give up anyway, say the revisionist historians, then the A-bomb was superfluous. It wasn't a war-winner at all.

The writers surveyed here make an opposite assumption: that the war faction would have stayed in power and grown stronger had there been no US nuclear attack, that opponents of the warlords would be dismissed or murdered, that the death-worshippers would tighten their control of the country and prepare the people for a final grand Armageddon.

Westheimer and Coppel both use a sort of Cornelius Ryan The Longest Day format, that is, following the fortunes of a number of front-line troops and trapped civilians as they see different areas of the battle and try to stay alive; interspersed are excerpts from official orders and documents, maps, chronologies. It feels like non-fiction narrative. Westheimer uses the first landing on Japan, Coppel the second and greater landing six months later. Both end with the cessation of combat, the finale announced by the Imperial Rescript ("We must bear the unbearable") by which the Divine Emperor tells his people that the war is now over and they must obey the Americans. It has the same wording as the real Rescript in our world, but the date is some months later ... a great deal of agony hidden in a simple notation of month and day.

Clark extends his range beyond the fighting's end. In his version, the US landing is aborted by a great typhoon in December 1945. This storm is real. In our world it battered the US Seventh Fleet homeward bound from Japan. In Coppel's world, the storm disrupts US shipping for a while, but new ships from Hawaii quickly arrive at the staging area. Ironically, it is the Japanese defense that suffers the most damage, with roads washed out, tunnels flooded, and bunkers filled with sliding mud. The Divine Wind favors the invaders.

In Clark's world, the US sends over aircraft next spring to dump clouds of mold spores on the rice fields of Japan. Half the rice crop dies and starving troops force the warlords to give up. Sounds like "Operation Ranch Hand" in Vietnam two decades prematurely.

At war's end the Manhattan Project is stalled far short of a working bomb; an irritated Pentagon reduces the nuclear program to low-budget standby mode. Now comes Senator Joe McCarthy in 1947 in search of an issue to gain publicity, and he stumbles across the nuclear weapons fiasco.

"I was in the Pacific and I saw with my own eyes how our boys died in the jungles because we didn't have enough planes and shells. At the same time back here, somebody was throwing away almost two billion dollars of tax money trying to make this nutty, Buck-Rogers fantasy machine, this -- what is it? -- Atomic Bomb. Whose idea was this Atomic Bomb? If it isn't the stupidest mistake of the war, it must be a conspiracy so evil and immense that imagination fails. I want to get some of those scientists in here and ask them a few questions."

Pressure from McCarthy kills the US nuclear program. Meanwhile, the British and Russians decide there may be something in the idea.

The most gruesome of the no-atom-bomb worlds is that of Saunders' "Back to the Stone Age" (54), which has no Japanese surrender and no American invasion. Instead, the US heavy bombers continue to fly weekly raids over Japan, dropping explosives and incendiaries -- for months, then for years. The cities of Japan are plains of gray

ash, the fields are lunar crater fields, and still the bombers keep flying. Why not? The aircraft plants in California and Texas are working double-shift and the economy is booming back in the US. No unemployment, either. Finally, in 1954, a disappointed aircrew flies the last B-29 mission.

You may recognize a slight parody of the present US military-industrial economy. The main difference is that today we build the bombs and then just store them underground; in Saunders' world they drop them.

YOU MEAN NO WAR AT ALL? ---

Then we have some oddball worlds in which America stays out of the war for unusual reasons. In Eklund's "Red Skins" (26), North America was discovered by Europe in 1219, evolved a strong native civilization minus guns and smallpox, and became independent by kicking out the last Europeans in 1846. The Nazis rise in the twentieth century and rule Eurasia; refugees from Russia flee to America and build an A-bomb for the Indian Nation, which confronts the triumphant Germans in 1945.

In White & Arnam's Sideslip (63), the Orson Welles 1939 broadcast about Martian invasion was a factual news report. The Martians kick Hitler and his buddies out of Germany; they arrive in the US asking for help. But of course there are Martians in America, too. No World War II.

There are parables in which the military war is replaced by hard economic competition, usually via automobile sales, as in Effinger's "Target: Berlin! The Role of the Air Force Four-Door Hardtop" (25) or Wolfe's "How I Lost the Second World War" (64). In the latter, we find cheap German VW's overrunning England, and Dwight Eisenhower going back to Kansas to resume his Buick dealership.

Many of the no-war variants grow out of a change in the career of Adolf Hitler, who is made the key actor in the events that cause (or fail to cause) a great war in 1939-45.

Bainbridge in Young Hitler (6) imagines Hitler fleeing to a cousin in England in 1913, to avoid being drafted into the army of Austria. Alas, his stay in England is only six months, and he fails so badly that a return to Europe looks better than remaining in such a shameful place. He goes to Bavaria and joins the German army, which is much more disciplined than that of Austria, and thus more desirable to him. This book is another "fake uchronia" in that the end result is exactly the same as in our world, but the scenes of young Adolf as a waiter in a seedy Liverpool establishment have a certain authentic ring.

An even more unpleasant experience awaits the 1913 Hitler in an Austrian restaurant in Yulsman's Elleander Morning (66). An English woman has travelled back from the 1970s to 1913 and sought out this particular coffee house just so she can shoot Adolf in the head as he sits at his table. She does, too, with a heavy revolver.

It's definitely an alternate world. The woman, Elleander Morning, came back through time in the Jack Finney Time After Time style by wishing very hard. That bit of magic done, the story becomes hard-edge extrapolation. Without Hitler, the Nazi movement of the 1920s never gains mass following, and the Weimar Republic manages to hang on to precarious control of Germany even through the worst of the Depression in the 1930s. By the fiftieth anniversary of the Armistice, German technology leads the world; 1980 sees the first nuclear detonation (in German Antarctica), 1983 the first landing on the Moon (the crew sings Deutschland Über Alles). However, the granddaughter of Elleander finds a puzzling artifact left in a vault since 1913: something called The Time-Life History of World War II. Photo experts know the pictures must be faked, but can't figure out how.

"This photo shows prop planes on an aircraft carrier. The only time such carriers were used in combat was the Japanese attack on Russia in 1953, but these aren't Japanese planes. Couldn't get smoke like that with model work. You say your grandmother left these to you?"

Another variation has Hitler flee to America after the Reds take over Germany in 1919: Spinrad's The Iron Dream (57). Most of the book is a short novel written by the aged Hitler in the style of thirties SF pulps, with emphasis on pure-blood human heroes and degenerate evil mutants. The novel, "Lord of the Swastika," is described as winning a Hugo ... which gives you an idea of how Spinrad regards fandom. It is disturbing how closely the fake-Hitler pulp hero resembles those of Robert Howard or L. Ron Hubbard.

Hitler as waiter, as hack writer ... how about a Zeppelin pilot? There is a blurring of boundaries in Fritz Leiber's "Catch that Seppelini!" (37), which really did win a Hugo. The narrator slips back to the airship world of 1937, where he stands on the platform above the Empire State Building waiting for the scheduled flight to arrive from Germany. Memories mix as change-winds blow ... is he an American historian? Or an older German pilot of lighter-than-air vessels? And why does he think (random thought) Hitler was ever a politician?

Someday I will have to do a piece on why zeppelins turn up so often in stories of alternate worlds. They seem to exert a real fascination for many authors. Perhaps it is because they are so clearly "the road not taken" in air transport, the rejected option.

Alternate careers for Hitler, alternate endings for the military career of Patton -- how about Eisenhower? A recent attempt is Waldrop's "Ike at the Mike" (61), which is very feeble for a Hugo nominee. In 1908 the young Ike, on his way to West Point, stops to listen to a jazz band and chooses to become a musician rather than a soldier. We catch him at a retirement testimonial dinner sixty years later, thinking about his old drummer Georgie Patton, how life was in the thirties under President Huey Long. The muddled reverie pervades the whole story: Boris Karloff is the Ambassador from Britain, Elvis Presley is a US Senator from Mississippi. (Wait a minute, in 1968 Elvis would be only 33 years old, too young for Senator. Guess the author doesn't think it matters.) The names are just gimmicks.

Have we exhausted the field of possible World War II alternate history stories? By no means.

There are thirty or forty more works in English I haven't listed here, mostly out of charity. I've just touched the material in French or German; there must be more. I wonder if there is anything in Japanese, or in Russian? And how about those large areas of the Earth where WW2 began the collapse of European colonial domination? Or those where it marked the start of Soviet colonial rule?

There are still plenty of story topics waiting.

VARIANT HISTORY SIX --- June 1945; Munich, Germany; evening.

Enthusiastic crowds still roamed the streets, celebrating the victory of the German national soccer team over the English visitors at the World Cup Finals earlier in the day. Rivalry had been high since the contested draw in soccer between German and English teams at the 1944 Olympics a year earlier.

Beer-halls overflowed, singing groups of weaving men in Tyrolian costume stumbled from sidewalk to sidewalk: flushed, happy, drunk. The ornate Baroque frosting on the old buildings reflected yellow lamplight and the occasional hard white glare of a spotlight from roving police patrol cars.

The stadium was deserted now, and the cleaning crew busy at work shoveling up the tons of paper and discarded beer bottles. Munich's city fathers were quite proud of their new stadium; it was finished in 1943, a symbol of the economic recovery that the German Republic enjoyed after the gloomy days of the Thirties.

Reporters working late at the wire-service offices polished off the last of the World Cup stories. Tomorrow, no doubt, they would go back to stories on politics. Things were pretty quiet around the world on this pleasant day in 1945. War correspondents grumbled at the lack of action: quarrels on the Peru-Ecuador border, Japan in North China still bogged down in endless bandit attacks by Chinese Reds -- beyond that, nothing.

There had been a few noisy demonstrations outside the stadium by the tiny Communist Party (outlawed) and the even tinier Nazi party (a joke since the death of A. Hitler in 1923), but none of the reporters bothered to write about them.

"Haven't seen a German crowd this excited since the Russians surrendered, and that was, what, four years ago?", asked a young reporter. The others nodded.

Yes, that had been a time. During the 1930s, the German Army remained just barely loyal to the annoying new Republic. Most of the best officers and cadre were in Russia, training the Reds in tank and air war, "advisors". But Stalin went crazy and evicted all Germans; the Weimar Republic renounced Versailles and openly showed its new modern army; Russia moved into Finland and the Baltic states. Stalin's purges destroyed his own officer corps.

So Germany gathered allies in Romania, Hungary, Poland -- then moved east toward Moscow. England and France stood aside and watched; America was pleased. The short war ended with Stalin dead and Russia under Red Army rule, Ukraina independent and loyally allied to Germany, Poland a bit nervous about German plans.

All in all, a neatly finished anti-Bolshevik Crusade.

SOURCES OF THE VARIANT HISTORIES ---

Variant One, "Arrest the Pope!", was suggested by Mullaly (44) and Murphy (45), both of whom consider the status of the Roman Catholic Church in a warring Europe: vulnerable.

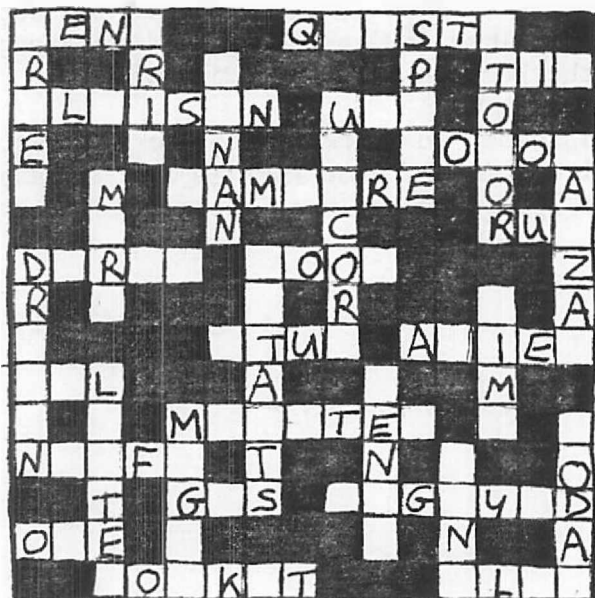
Variant Two, "France Fights," comes from Costa (16). It is unlikely that Petain would have been this aggressive as a leader.

Variant Three, "Syria," is the ringer. It really happened, horses and all, as stated. Sounds as if it should be fantasy, doesn't it?

Variant Four, "Midway," comes from Downing (22). In his narrative, Admiral Yamamoto never does get Army cooperation for a proposed invasion of Hawaii. So the Kido Butai is reduced to a series of long-distance raids along the west coast of the United States (San Francisco, Hollywood, San Diego), proof that Japan can go anywhere in the Pacific but useless in a military sense: the Americans suffer no lasting damage and merely get angrier. The idea of a Pearl Harbor raid on the sound stages of Hollywood is a nice touch; they are easy to find, undefended, legitimate military targets ("producing propaganda films"), full of inflammable nitrate film stock, and as Yamamoto hopes, their incineration by Japanese carrier-based bombers is headline news for weeks.

Variant Five, "Manhattan Project," comes from a number of war scenarios in which the A-bomb does not arrive in time, and there is an American invasion of the Japanese Home Islands: Clark (12), Dunnigan (24), Westheimer (62) and Coppel (14), among others. The reasons why the US didn't get the Bomb in time are quite varied.

Variant Six, "German Sports Victory," is based on Yulsman (66), or at least the England-Germany match for the World Football Cup in the late Forties is. Yulsman has no war at all in Europe between 1920 and the 1980s, probably an optimistic dream on any foreseeable time-line.

TWO-WAY - a puzzle by Priscilla Pollner

You can solve this puzzle by either of two methods.

- I - Fill in the blanks in the diagram, crossing off the letters from the listing (Note: all letters will be used.) Then, match your answers to the definitions below.
- II - Figure out the answers to the clues (Note: the answers are arranged in alphabetical order - the numbers indicating how many letters make up the answer). Then, decide where in the diagram to place the answer.

Letters: AAAAAA BB CCC EEEEEEEEE F
GG H III LLL M NNNNNNNNN OOOO P
RRRRR SSSSSS TTT UUU VV

(Answers on page 38)

((Have fun))

Definitions

- (5) Extraterrestrial, perhaps
(7) Describing previous answer?
(5) Well-known barbarian
(5) Luke's father
(6) Ramoth, perhaps?
(7) "Dangerous Visions" editor
(4) ---- Frank Russell
(3) A state of matter
(4) ---- Wolfe
(3) ARM operative Hamilton
(5) "The cool ----- hills of Earth"
(4) "Children of the ----"
(6) -----delRey
(5) Fantastic force, perhaps?
(4) Barsoom
(7) King Kong, or Godzilla?
(4) Earth's satellite
(7) Genetic "sports"

- (5) PB fannish organization
(3) "--- Ring to rule them..."
(6) Fantastic voyages, often?
(5) The "R" in R. Daneel?
(6) "----- to the Morgue"
(5) The pterodactyl that ate Tokyo.....
(3) Capek play
(4) VanVogt novel
(5) Mushroom seed?
(6) "Tunnel in the Sky" danger
(4) Phaser setting
(6) Lord Greystoke
(4) 4th dimension?
(3) --- Woodsman
(3) Flying saucer, probably
(7) Beagle's was the last.
(7) Dracula was (is?) one....
(5) 2nd planet out

(continued in next column)

In My Own Highly Biased Opinion, I Present:

The Silliest of APA:NESFA

by Laurie D. T. Mann

APAs have been one of my favorite parts of fandom. Some APAs give off the feeling of being at a very late-night party, where everyone's bullshitting like crazy. Other APAs have the feeling of a tight-knit group of friends really being honest with one another. Some APAs are very light in tone and others are ponderously serious. Most APAs go through distinct stages; they are serious for a time, and then get very silly. APA: NESFA has been through many stages, and the members have gone out of their way to publish some very funny pieces. Most of these pieces are written by the contributors themselves, but some are borrowed by the contributors from other sources.

One of these borrowed pieces is a little all-purpose horoscope Leslie Turek put in A:N in November, 1975. I recently heard excerpts from this on WBZ one morning, and found it as funny now as I did nine years ago.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 13)

You have an inventive mind, and are inclined to be progressive. You lie a great deal. On the other hand you are inclined to be careless and impractical, causing you to make the same mistakes over and over again. People think you are stupid.

PISCES (February 14 to March 20)

You have a vivid imagination and often think you are being followed by the CIA or FBI. You have minor influence over your associates, and people resent your flaunting of your power. You lack confidence and are generally a coward. Pisces people do terrible things to small animals.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19)

You are the pioneer type and hold most people in contempt. You are quick-tempered, impatient, and scornful of advice. You are not very nice.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20)

You are practical and persistent. You have dogged determination and work like hell. Most people think you are stubborn and bull-headed. You are a Communist.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20)

You are a quick and intelligent Thinker. People like you because you are bi-sexual. However, you are inclined to expect too much for too little. This means you are cheap. Geminis are known for committing incest.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22)

You are sympathetic and understanding to other peoples problems. They think you are a sucker. You are always putting things off. That is why you'll never make anything of yourself. Most welfare recipients are Cancer people.

LEO (July 23 to August 22)

You consider yourself a born leader. Others think you are pushy. Most Leo people are bullies. You are vain, and dislike honest criticism. Your arrogance is disgusting. Leo people are known thieves.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22)

You are the logical type and hate disorder. This nit-picking is sickening to your friends. You are cold and unemotional, and sometimes fall asleep while making love. Virgos make good bus drivers.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22)

You are the artistic type, and have a difficult time with reality. If you are a man, you are more than likely gay. Chances for employment and monetary gain are excellent. Most Libra women are good prostitutes. All Libras die of venereal disease.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21)

You are shrewd in business and cannot be trusted. you shall achieve the pinnacle of success because of your total lack of ethics. Most Scorpio people are murdered.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21)

You are optimistic and enthusiastic. You have a reckless tendency to rely on luck since you lack talent. The majority of Sagittarians are drunks or dope fiends. People laugh at you a great deal.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19)

You are conservative and afraid of taking risks. You don't do much of anything and are lazy. There has never been a Capricorn of any importance. Capricorns should avoid standing too long, as they tend to take root and become trees.

Some silly things in A:N appear in the guise of "A Modest Proposal-" a seemingly straight suggestion to improve NESFA. One of the best of these was Mark Olson's essay on NESFA work credits, which appeared in the August, 1982 edition. Mark explained why he thought NESFA work credits were necessary, and went on to explain:

Work credits will be essential to all aspects of NESFA's operations: anything that doesn't accrue work credits will cost work credits. Not only will this provide a sink for work credits (thus encouraging people to work harder to earn ever more work credits), but it can be used to discourage anti-social behavior. I.e., it is generally accepted that making motions at meetings and debating them is anti-social and to be discouraged. Prior to the work credit, however, there was no means of discouraging this sort of activity except by cutting off debate - itself an anti-social activity. By charging work credits for debating time, we discourage debate and encourage work. Listed below is a proposed table of charges:

Charge (credits)	Activity
1.0	Making a motion at a meeting
.5	Seconding a motion
0.1	Voting on a motion
0.3	per minute of debate
50.0	Running for office
10.0	Becoming a committee head
250.0	Regular Membership
75.0	Conversion from Inactive to Regular Membership
1.0	Points of Order
1.0	Points of Information
5.0	Points of Information that aren't
100.0	SMOFing (per hour)
5.0	Requests for roll-call votes
25.0	Successful requests for roll-call votes
10.0	Long committee reports
1.0	Failure to turn in expense and/or income reports monthly
1.0	Writing for APA/NESFA
2.0	Not writing for APA/NESFA
10.0	Corrections to the minutes....

Next month I'll present my proposal auctioning off all of the offices and other honors of NESFA for the Building Fund.

Back in 1979, when Claire Anderson was the collator of A:N, it was decided to proclaim August "hoax APA month." Since there was some overlap between Minneapa and A:N, (including Minneapa's founder Mike Wood, Doug Hoylman, and me) it was decided to call A:N "Minneapa: East 122A." Most of the contributors got into the spirit of things. Mr. Harter produced a funny alternate history of NESFA ("the Eddoreans") called "If We Had Won in 71," George Flynn contributed "Ten Years From Now in 'Instant Message,'" and General Hoxha (who was probably Peter Neilson) contributed "Procrastination How!". But Claire's tale of her attempt to produce a "real time toc" (A:N's table of contents are traditionally one month behind) was one of the funniest things in the APA that month:

MINNEAPA-OVER-THE-WORLD, INQ. asked me to produce a real-time TOC for MINNEAPA;EAST 122A...and I failed utterly. Perhaps M:E's new OE will have better luck. A week before the M:E 122A collation date I began calling all those who had contributed to APA:NESFA over the past year to find out if and what they were contributing to MINNEAPA:EAST 122A. Mike Wood told me he's so burdened with M-O-T-W, Inq. duties concerning the MINNEAPA regionalization project that he'd have no time to send a zine, unless it was official bullitens from M-O-T-W, Inq.

I called Joe Ross to see if he would provide a zine and also to find out if he was printing a zine from Doug Hoylman, who

could certainly be expected to produce a zine for M:E 122A. Joe never answered my many calls and I found out why when I saw the Channel 5 late news on Tuesday. There was a report about Joe (whose name was again garbled by Channel 5; this time as "John Roast") leading a Brookline tenants revolt against the condominiumization of the Coolidge Corner movie theater. Joe appeared on TV wearing his CONDOCON T-shirt. Of course, I tried calling Doug Hoylman - no answer. Figuring he was at the movies, I also called theaters near his home. One theater manager answered by query thusly: "Oh, you mean Dougie the Flasher, the guy in the raincoat and the propeller beanie. He's here; I'll get him for you." I hung up and did not try again to contact Doug Hoylman.

Tony Lewis told me he might finally miss an ish ... because Blackie had disappeared again. They searched hither and yon with no result. Last week, they noticed a foul stench emanating from their Gestetner. Well, if he does get a zine done, please pardon the cat hairs on it. Since Tony and Suford had done apazines on the birth of Alice, I queried Don and Jill about producing a birth report on their son. Jill replied that D. E. E. IV is expected to write his own birth-report zine, but not realsoonnow, thank you very much.

Andrea Mitchell answered my phone call to tell me that George would probably be unable to send a zine as he is recuperating from an unexpected chlorine gas tankcar derailment during his last operating session of his Riverside and Valley Northern Wedgewood, Frogotten and Pixilated Railroad. However, Petrea might send some crayon drawings as soon as she decides a proper copy requirement. When I phoned the NESFA clerk, a Quincy fireman answered telling me that Rick had been chased up a tree by his cat Hell and it would take the fire department some time to effect a rescue. I ordered Dick Sims in person to produce a zine, but he replied that he and Forbin, his computer, were busy installing "Tiny c" and ordering a Datamedia DT 80/1 terminal (because there's a 13-month waiting period for DEC's VT100). At this point, after running up a \$52 phone bill, I gave up hope of providing a real-time TOC.

Another very amusing piece that was borrowed for A:N was "Real Programmers." Dick Sims contributed it for the January, 1984 APA. A few excerpts:

Real Programmers don't need comments -- the code is obvious.

....

What kind of operating system is used by a Real Programmer? CP/M? God forbid - CP/M, after all, is basically a toy operating system. Even little old ladies and grade school students can understand and use CP/M.

UNIX is a lot more complicated of course - the typical UNIX hacker never can remember what the PRINT command is called this week - but when it gets right down to it, UNIX is a glorified video game. People don't do Serious Work on UNIX systems; they send jokes around the world on UUCP-net and write adventure games and research papers.

....

Where does the typical Real Programmer work? What kind of programs are worthy of the efforts of so talented an individual? You can be sure that no Real Programmer would be caught dead writing accounts-receivable programs in COBOL, or sorting mailing lists for People magazine. A Real Programmer wants tasks of earth-shaking importance (literally).

- Real Programmers work for Los Alamos National Laboratory, writing atomic bomb simulations to run on Cray I supercomputers.

- Real Programmers work for the National Security Agency, decoding Russian trans missions.

- It was largely due to the efforts of thousands of Real Programmers working for NASA that our boys got to the moon and back before the Russkies.

- Real Programmers are at work for Boeing designing the operating systems for cruise missiles.

....

Generally, the Real Programmer plays the same way he works - with computers. He is constantly amazed that his employer actually pays him to do what he would be doing for fun anyway (although he is careful not to express this opinion out loud). Occasionally, the Real Programmer does step out of the office for a breath of fresh air and a beer or two. Some tips on recognizing the Real Programmers away from the computer room:

- At a party, the Real Programmers are the ones in the corner talking about operating system security and how to get around it.

- At a football game, the Real Programmer is the one comparing the plays against simulations printed on 11x14 fanfold paper.

- At the beach, the Real Programmer is the one drawing flowcharts in the sand.

- At a funeral, the Real Programmer is the one saying "Poor George. And he almost had the sort routine working before the coronary."

....

The typical Real Programmer lives in front of a computer terminal. Surrounding this terminal are:

- Listings of all programs the Real Programmer has ever worked on, piled in roughly chronological order on every flat surface in the office.
- Some half-dozen or so partly filled cups of cold coffee. Occasionally, there will be cigarette butts floating in the coffee. In some cases, the cups will contain Orange Crush.
- Unless he is very good, there will be some copies of the OS JCL manual and the Principles of Operations open to some particularly interesting pages.
- Taped to the wall is a lineprinter Snoopy calendar for the year 1969.

The Real Programmer is capable of working 30, 40, or even 50 hours at a stretch, under intense pressure. In fact, he prefers it that way.

....

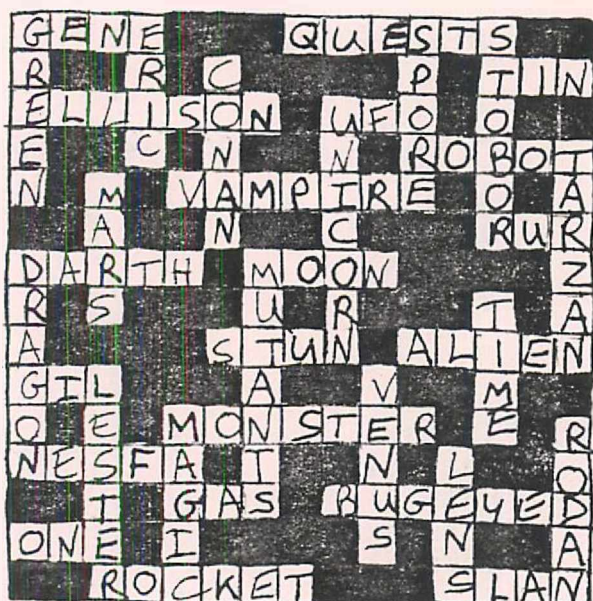
In general:

- No Real Programmer works 9 to 5 (unless it's the ones at night).
- Real Programmers don't wear neckties.
- Real Programmers don't wear high-heeled shoes.
- Real Programmers arrive at work in time for lunch.
- Real Programmers might or might not know their spouse's name. They do, however, know the entire ASCII (or EBCDIC) code table.
- Real Programmers don't know how to cook. Grocery stores aren't open at three in the morning. Real Programmers survive on Twinkies and coffee.

Well, I think that's all for now. A:N has had lots of other silly stuff in recent times, like Doug Hoylman's "The Story of Fast Food," and, of course, August of 1980's "APA:SPAM." To end this essay (and fanzine), here's Joe Rico's Fannish Chart, which first appeared in the A:N for April, 1984:

STAGE	TALKS TO	AT CON ACTIVITY	READS	THOUGHTS ON FANDOM
Neo	No one	Goes to program items.	Starlog	HUH???
Trufan	Fen	PARTY! PARTY!	Analog	Fandom is my hobby
SMOF	SMOFs don't talk, SMOFs program items SMOF. Otherwise, why be a SMOF, eh?	SMOFS are program items	Read? Who has time to read?	Fandom is a way of life
NESFAN	Other NESFen, but will make consultations.	Goes to program items. Party! Works tail off.	Instant Message Wall Street Journal	Fandom is a second job.
GAFIATE	Psychologist	AGH!!	Harlequin Romances	AGH!!
GAMER	Self	Has spent over \$150.00 to play D\D for 48 hours. Worth every cent.	Dragon	Fandom is the spring which feeds my puddle.
FILKER	Sings to self	Singing	Hymnals	Fandom is the one audience which apprieciates my voice.
DECcie	Computers	Telling floppy disk stories (Similiar to Shaggy Dog Stories)	SF_LOVERS	Fandom will improve once the data is properly entered.

ANSWERS to TWO-WAY - a puzzle by Priscilla Pollner



Alien
 Bugeyed
 Conan
 Darth
 Dragon
 Ellison
 Eric
 Gas
 Gene
 Gil
 Green
 Lens
 Lester
 Magic
 Mars
 Monster
 Moon
 Mutants

NESFA
 One
 Quests
 Robot
 Rocket
 Rodan
 RUR
 Slan
 Spore
 Stobor
 Stun
 Tarzan
 Time
 Tin
 UFO
 Unicorn
 Vampire
 Venus

PLAY BY MAIL GAMING

KELLY S. PERSONS

How would you like to build your own interstellar empire? or become the wealthiest family in Renaissance Italy? or starting as captain of a Company starship, work your way to independence or a high place in the Company power structure? perhaps leading a tribe of barbarians to wealth and power, winning a nuclear war, designing a race of theocratic insectoids, running a fief in Medieval England, or sending your space fleet to get more of your enemies than they get of you, would be more to your taste.

All this is now possible with play by mail gaming, which developed from a PBX version of the board game Diplomacy during the early '70s. Essentially, the players in a PBX game send a list of their actions for the turn to the individual or company running the game, which determines the

STARPORT RUMOR
HAVE BEEN REPORTS THAT THE
HEAVY CRUISER FARRAGUT CRASHED
ANNUAL PLANET SUNBURN DURING THE
OLDWORLD ISP MANEUVERS IN THE
THE LOSS OF LIFE WAS HIGH BUT
ISP IS NOT RELEASING ANY
ACTION ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES
LEAD UP TO THE

W16 (4
W24 (34,57,90,191)
W26 (42,43,73,150) FEAR
W29 (44,45,153,223) FEAR
W30 (50,150,194) FEAR
W37 (41,11,135,147) FEAR
W38 (23,74,135,212) FEAR
W39 (43,109,135,212) FEAR
W44 (50,124,135,212) FEAR
W48 (4,10,24,135,212) FEAR
W50 (4,10,24,135,212) FEAR

PROBE OF ORBIT # 1
W16 (4,10,24,135,212) FEAR
PROBE OF ORBIT # 2
W24 (34,57,90,191) FEAR
PROBE OF ORBIT # 3
W26 (42,43,73,150) FEAR
PROBE OF ORBIT # 4
W29 (44,45,153,223) FEAR
PROBE OF ORBIT # 5
W30 (50,150,194) FEAR
PROBE OF ORBIT # 6
W37 (41,11,135,147) FEAR
PROBE OF ORBIT # 7
W38 (23,74,135,212) FEAR
PROBE OF ORBIT # 8
W39 (43,109,135,212) FEAR
PROBE OF ORBIT # 9
W44 (50,124,135,212) FEAR
PROBE OF ORBIT # 10
W48 (4,10,24,135,212) FEAR
PROBE OF ORBIT # 11
W50 (4,10,24,135,212) FEAR

LOYALTY: VERY GOOD
CURRENT LOCATION
SYSTEM: BOKTAR
SPACE HEX: B3
LANDED ON: NOPTWO
SECTOR: 5-5
SQUARE:
YEAR: 182
SHIP'S MAN
OPERABLE
ITEMS
(COMMAND SECTION)
COMMAND HULLS
PLANET PROPS (1/6)
SENSORS
BATTLE COMPL (2/1)
CREW
LIFE SUPPORT (2/4)
YIELDS
ITEM PROBES (1/10)
AVAILABLE (1/4)
NOTES
W40
W42
W98
W13
W188
W205
W53
W136
W92
W103

results of said actions and interaction between players, often by use of a computer, and sends the current status of a player's position back. This allows games which would be too time consuming played face to face, due to the larger amount of that needs to be processed each turn and the large number of players involved. There are between 50 and 100 games on the market now, most of which are small, sometimes ephemeral operations. There are about a dozen well established companies, usually each runs several types of games. Games may have from half a dozen to over a thousand players.

Play by mail games fall into roughly two categories, computer moderated and human moderated, although some of the latter use a computer to keep track of players' possessions, while activity is human moderated.

Computer moderated games usually have set victory conditions, although they may not be quickly or easily obtainable. They are usually less expensive, but are limited in that no activity may be done which is not in the rules.

The first of these were developed by Flying Buffalo Inc., the first to go into PBM as a business, around 1970. Their most popular game is Starweb, a space game, which has fifteen players, each trying to be the first to accumulate enough victory points. A player can be one of six different player types, each of which obtains points by different means, including the Empire Builder, who tries to control worlds, the Merchant, who gets points by carrying raw materials to other's industrial worlds, the Apostle, who converts populations to the 'True Faith', the Pirate, who plunders planets and captures ships, the Artifact Collector, who tries to accumulate objects left over from an ancient civilization, and the Berserker (name from the Saberbagen stories) a robot race which launches robot attacks on populations and blows up planets in an attempt to destroy all life. Some player types have complementary goals and abilities, so cooperation is often the key to success.

Other games of this type include Starlord, a fairly simple game in which players attempt to overthrow the Emperor of the Galaxy and take his place, Capitol, in which teams of players vie for control of a star cluster, Zorphwar, a tactical game of fleet to fleet conflict, Feudal Lords in which barons try to increase their power and persuade other players to swear fealty to them as king of England, and Moneylender in which players are the powerful political families of Renaissance Italy, using their financial influence to control city governments, hire mercenaries, elect the Pope, and interfere with others doing the same.

My favorite game of this type is Empyrean Challenge, probably the most complex PBM game on the market. Each player starts as a ruler of a nation, one of fifteen, composing a race, on a home planet, with increasing population and diminishing resources. The objective is for a race to control more than half of the habitability in a star cluster. Systems have one or more stars each of which has up to ten planets, very few of which are habitable. To build ships with which to colonize other planets and bring back raw materials (four different kinds, including fuel and gold), one starts with the raw materials at home, which are produced by mines. Fac-

tories use them to build parts for ships-engines, life support, structural materials, etc. and new mines, etc for the colony. Transports carry the materials to orbit where construction workers assemble them, the process is then repeated to set up the colony at the new planet. Special types of colonies are needed for uninhabitable planets and asteroids, and orbital colonies may be set up to produce cheaper, lighter structural units. Research is possible to increase the quality of the units the factories build. Professional and unskilled population run the factories, mines, farms, transports, etc, although automation may be built to replace the latter. They must be paid with consumer goods, also produced by factories, in order to keep the standard of living up so rebellion doesn't occur. Spies keep track of and eliminate rebels and foreign spies, or create rebels and seek information in foreign ships and colonies. Players may buy and sell items on a market, or trade directly with each other, and publish signed or anonymous messages in a world news service. Cooperation within a race is vital for success, my own race suffered resource hoarding and civil war, leaving it at a disadvantage relative to the other races in the game.

Human moderated games are usually open ended, you play as long and as often as you like, and set your own goals. They offer 'special actions'-a player describes an activity the position will undertake, the moderator evaluates it and sends back a description of what happened. Such games are usually more expensive, since some activities such as trade, colonization and combat, as well as special actions may not be covered by the basic turn fee, and processing of the special actions is sometimes arbitrary and variable, depending on which individual is processing the turn.

The most popular games of this type are Starmaster, in which a player designs a race, their government, and homeworld, and sets out to explore, trade and fight in a galaxy of thousands of stars and hundreds of races, Tribes of Crane, in which a player controls a barbarian tribe in a comparable situation on a world of cities, seas and wilderness, and Beyond the Stellar Empire, in which a player starts with one of several types of ship, a crew, and a mortgage, are employed by one of several Imperial Chartered Companies, among the colonies (moderator or player run) of a frontier star cluster, with several options available, including rising in the Company, paying off the ship and becoming independent, turning pirate, exploring, setting up a colony, becoming a mercenary, buying more ships, etc. These games are more of a role playing, personalized nature, than are the computer moderated games.

Game turns usually come from a week to over a month apart, and take from about half an hour for the simple games to several hours for more complex games like Empyrean Challenge for a player to process. Good record keeping is often useful, and diplomacy is vital in most games-silent players don't last long-so much letter writing or phone calls are needed. Currently some games are being made available through computer networks like the Source, making for faster turn around times.

"PROPER TEA"

P. A. Vandenberg

When I think of "Proper" things Bostonians do, my mind inevitably thinks of tea. Of course, this may have something to do with the newsletter I edit for Boston in '89, The Mad 3 Party, and its theme of tea parties, mad or otherwise!

China is credited with first discovering tea around 2700 BC. Japan got into the habit around 800 AD, and by the first half of the eighteenth century, it finally became popular in Holland, Britain, and the American Colonies (recognize us?). As with many things which have been around awhile, tea drinking became very stylized. How you brewed it, when you drank it, and what you drank it out of were formalized. For Europeans, tea drinking became "proper" in 1840 when the Dutchess of Bedford originated the British custom of afternoon tea.

I don't know about you, but when I think of tea I think of low bushes. This, however, is not always true. The Assam variety is a single-stem tree ranging from 20 to 60 feet in height, and there are others around 16 feet tall; definitely in the "hard to get" category! Another possible misconception is that from tea leaves one makes only tea, a drink. In Tibet they steam tea leaves and then crush them in a mortar. The resulting pieces are made into cakes. The cakes are boiled with rice, ginger, salt, orange peel, spice, milk, and onions for an indefinite period to make soup. The Burmese make a substance called Pickled Tea. The process is started by mixing tea leaves with zoungya fruit, then setting the mixture aside for a week. After it has started to ferment, they add sesame oil. This is served as a main dish with powdered dried shrimp, toasted sesame seeds, fried garlic, monkey nuts, sliced coconut and roasted peas. Getting back to things one can drink; in India they have a recipe for tea au lait. They mix 1 quart milk, 1 broken cinnamon stick, seeds from 4 to 5 cardamon pods, 1/2 teaspoon saffron and 1 teaspoon ground almonds. This is simmered for 3 hours. Brown sugar or honey is then added to taste before taking it from the heat. One teaspoon of black tea for each cup to be served is steeped in hot water for 5 minutes. The tea and the milk mixture are combined in one to one proportions, then the mixture is aerated by pouring it from one container to another five or six times. At the end of this process, the mixture is strained and drunk.

If the above seem too exotic for your tastes, you might be happier with the "proper" way to brew tea:

- 1) Heat the water to boiling
- 2) Pour a portion of the boiling water into an empty teapot to heat it
- 3) Empty the teapot and spoon in one teaspoon "black" tea per cup to be served
- 4) Let steep 5 minutes
- 5) Serve

Bon Appetite!

My thanks to Pam Mallory-Ricker for the unusual recipes from Tea Craft by Charles and Violet Schafer, and to the Fifteenth Edition of the Encyclopædia Britanica for the historical information.

HUB OF THE UNIVERSE: A Bostonian SF Trivia Quiz
Compiled by George Flynn

I got the idea for this recently when I was reading a rather obscure SF novel and found a passage about Boston. It struck me that there must be a fair number of such in the literature, and that one could make an interesting trivia quiz of them. Some of these are very obscure, others quite well-known; I've chosen fairly long passages to give a good idea of the style. Answers on page

1. This is one of the better-known ones (to Boston fans at least).

There were two hundred twenty-seven trains running the subways every weekday, and they carried about a million and a half passengers. The Cambridge-Dorchester train that disappeared on March 4th was Number 86. Nobody missed it at first. During the evening rush, the traffic was a little heavier than usual on that line. But a crowd is a crowd. The ad posters at the Forest Hills yards looked for 86 about 7:30, but neither of them mentioned its absence until three days later. The controller at the Milk Street Cross-Over called the Harvard checker for an extra train after the hockey game that night, and the Harvard checker relayed the call to the yards. The dispatcher sent out 87, which had been put to bed at ten o'clock, as usual. He didn't notice that 86 was missing.

2. This, on the other hand, was the book I was reading when I got the idea for the quiz. (Here and elsewhere, ellipses are mine.)

"... The city is called Springsun, but wasn't always. Ages ago, before the Emigration from Earth, it was called Boston. It was dirtier then. Shabbier."

"I like Springsun better," Sebastian said, shaking his head in agreement with himself.

"I would think so," Pertos said. ... "Four hundred years ago, just before Emigration, when Earth was the only world and the stars were cold and distant, Boston was a piece of Hell. You know about Hell. Ugly clouds of smoke, noxious fumes, filthy drinking water. Homes were insulated against the tremendous noise of an overpopulated world. ..."

3. This one isn't set in Boston, but....

"South Station Under -- Washington Under -- Park Street Under -- Kendall -- Central -- Harvard --" The poor fellow was chanting the familiar stations of the Boston-Cambridge tunnel that burrowed through our peaceful native soil thousands of miles away in New England, yet to me the ritual had neither irrelevance nor home feeling. It had only horror, because I knew unerringly the monstrous, nefarious analogy that had suggested it. ... [What we saw looked like] a vast, onrushing subway train as one sees it from a station platform -- the great black front looming colossally out of infinite subterranean distance, constellated with strangely colored lights and filling the prodigious burrow as a piston fills a cylinder.

But we were not on a station platform. ...

4. Here's one by a local author.

At first it seemed wise not to leave the level of the lock until its details had been learned; there might be a need to leave the city. However, it was hard to see how such a need could arise, or could possibly carry as much weight as the need to learn, and presently Bones was as thoroughly lost

in the third dimension as in the first two. It was not even possible to keep track of levels' the floors of Blue Hill were anything but horizontal. Boston, long before, had bragged that its street pattern represented the paving of the early settlers' cow paths. The settlers' descendants, who had excavated Blue Hill when it became evident that the change in Earth's atmosphere could not be stopped, had similarly been guided by convenience in attacking the local geology. ...

5. This one was a Hugo nominee not too many years ago.

TechTowTwo sprawled over the bank of the Charles River, more than twice the cubage of all the old brick buildings put together. There were no classrooms in Technology Tower Two. There was no administration, either. It was all for research, from the computer storage in the subbasements to the solar-radiation experiments that decorated the roof with saucers and bow ties.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology had a long tradition of involvement with space exploration, going back even before there was any -- or any that did not take place on a printed page. ...

The woman Margie wanted to see was a former president of the MISFITS and thus would have been a power in the Tech world even if she had not also held the title of assistant dean of the college. ...

6. The closing lines of a fairly well-known story.

The following spring, on the day of its unveiling in Boston Common, when it was discovered that someone had scrawled obscene words on the statue of [protagonist's name], no one thought to ask the logical candidate why he had done it, and the next day it was too late, because he had cut out without leaving a forwarding address. Several cars were reported stolen that day, and one was never seen again in Boston.

So they reveiled his statue, bigger than life, astride a great bronze Harley, and the cleaned him up for hoped-for posterity. But coming upon the Common, the winds still break about him, and the heavens still throw garbage.

7. Speaking of statues.... (This one's a classic.)

All the same, Old City has a flock of statues to make Hamden or any other town look sick. Most of them are of Old Time, which in Nuin is sometimes made to seem almost like yesterday, an illusion I never felt in any other place. I'm thinking at the moment of a fine seated bronze gentleman in Palace Square, who carries clear traces of ancient paint in the cracks and hollows of his patinaed garments. It's Old-Time paint, they say. ... The inscribed name of the subject of worship is John Harvard. Nobody seems quite clear about who he was, but he sits there modestly, rather stuffily, with timeless and splendid indifference.

8. Here's a very obscure one (old, but reprinted a few years ago).

The first Red bomb landed in Boston Common, just off Park Street. The following detonation blew all of the windows out of the State House and caved in the Cambridge tunnel and the Boston subway in the neighborhood of the point where they cross at Tremont Street.

... Then came the downpour of death. One bomb, falling in the courtyard of the Copley Plaza Hotel, wrecked the front and one wing of the building and killed 180 occupants. Another missile crashed through the roof of the Milk Street Station of the Washington Street tunnel, where 3,000 people had gathered for protection. ...

And a few pages later:

The position of the American defenders north of Boston became untenable. The enemy ... opened the southward movement that culminated in the occupation of Boston on Christmas Day, 1934.

9. And here we destroy Boston again, albeit less seriously.

Even before the missile struck, their leader went on the air to apologize. "... One of our lieutenants got drunk, and the rubber band holding a bunch of punch cards broke, and the card stamped BOSTON fell into place. ... WE'RE SORRY!" ...

Harvard gone. Boston beans homeless. A churning hole in American history.

The mayor of Boston, Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic, sent a telegram to the mayor of Boston, Tennessee: EXTEND HEARTFELT REGRETS AND SYMPATHY TO THE PEACE-LOVING WORKERS OF THE UNITED STATES ON OCCASION OF TRAGIC DISAPPEARANCE OF ONE OF ITS OLDEST CITIES. AS AMERICAN POET W. WHITMAN SAID, "BAA BAA BLACK SHEEP LET NOTHING YOU DISMAY." AZONOVITCH, MAYOR, NOW LARGEST BOSTON IN WORLD.

10. And finally, one every NESFA member ought to be familiar with.

On the second Friday in January, twenty-odd members of the New England Science Fiction Association returned to their clubroom after their usual Chinese dinner in downtown Boston. The clubroom was inside the lead walls of what once had housed MIT's nuclear reactor - until the local Cambridge chapter of Ecology Now! had torn the reactor apart with their bare hands, a decade earlier, killing seventeen of their members within a week from the radiation poisoning and producing a fascinating string of reports for the obstetrics journals ever since.

The clubroom was perfectly safe now, of course. It had been carefully decontaminated and there was a trusty scintillation counter sitting on every bookshelf, right alongside musty crumbling copies of Astounding Stories of Super Science.

And a bit later we have the famous colloquy between the NESFA treasurer and president:

"Let's get a life-sized [three-dee] set for the clubroom."

"Do we have enough money in the treasury?"

"We do," said the treasurer, "if we cancel the rocket launch in March."

"Cancel it," the president said. "... We can always scratch up more money for a rocket launch."

Answers to Bostonian SF Quiz are on the next page

Answers to Bostonian SF Quiz

1. A.J. Deutsch, "A Subway Named Mobius" (1950); as far as I know this was Deutsch's only SF story. (Among its more remarkable aspects, for those familiar with Boston politics, is the name of the subway system's manager: Kelvin Whyte.)
2. Dean R. Koontz, The Flesh in the Furnace (1972). Only the first few pages are set in Springsun/Boston.
3. H.P. Lovecraft, "At the Mountains of Madness" (1936). In case you were wondering, the thing coming through the tunnel was a shoggoth.
4. Hal Clement, The Nitrogen Fix (1980).
5. Frederik Pohl, Jam (1979). By the way, that's spelled MITSFS, not MISFITS.
6. Roger Zelazny, Damnation Alley (1969); the protagonist's name is of course Hell Tanner. (I believe in the movie they changed Boston to Albany. Probably just as well.)
7. Edgar Pangborn, Davy (1964). Mind you, Old City clearly isn't Boston or Cambridge, which were under water at the time....
8. Floyd Gibbons, The Red Napoleon (1929). Yes, we eventually won the war. (Among the omitted passages is one describing the destruction of the building where I now work.)
9. Herbert Gold, "The Day They Got Boston" (1961). I didn't have room for the part about the radiation's causing the Radcliffe students to undergo a sex change....
10. And this is of course Ben Bova's The Starcrossed (1975). The passage has become obsolete: NESFANS are now scattered all over the suburbs and hardly ever have dinner in downtown Boston (except during conventions).

Some Summertime Reviews

by,
Susan M. Lichauro

What follows here are reviews of a few of the Science Fiction movies that were released during the summer of 1984, as well as a couple of very good non-SF movies. Just for the heck of it, I included a play that had a local run during August of 1984.

The Neverending Story:

The Neverending Story is a testament to the newest old adage: "It takes more than first rate special effects to make a movie work." What little plot there is in this movie concerns a cute little boy with big round eyes and dilated pupils, named Bastian. He is having some troubles with the neighborhood bullies, his mother recently died, etc. - just enough to set the stage for some true sap. He steals a book from the type of bookshop one only finds in mystery/horror stories, and hides out in the school attic, instead of facing the bullies or attending classes one day. The book turns out to be a magical book about a land called Fantasia (gag), inhabited by whatever creatures are necessary to show off the formidable talents of the virtuoso special-effects staff. The Fantasians are suffering from a sort of plague called "The Nothings" (Choke!) which is going to kill the queen and destroy Fantasia - unless the queen finds a new name. The catch is that the name must be supplied by a human. Enter our hero.

Bastian follows in the well worn footsteps of Alice in "Through the Looking Glass," Wendy, et al. in "Peter Pan," and many other books and movies that fall into this category: he imagines things about Fantasia, and they become real there, although he never really goes there physically. This is supposed to fill a two hour movie with poignance and adventure.

Any story which follows such a well-worn storyline should either have some original twists, or be a parody, if it isn't going to do a good job on the old story. This film does none of the above, and suffers from terminal cuteness, earnestness, and from an abundance of seriousness. Unfortunately, the film was made to be taken so seriously that many amusing details (the repository of knowledge, also the Queen's palace, is called the "Ivory Tower") failed to amuse.

This type of serious children's movie is a bit dated. It is hard to imagine anybody's slightly cynical ten year old sitting through this without cringing at the sticky sap that oozes out of the screen. As a matter of fact, it wouldn't be surprising if most ten to twelve year olds forced to see this movie with their younger siblings decide to swear off reading for the rest of the lives if this is what they think they can expect from books.

This film was similar to "The Dark Crystal," except that the special effects were much better. On the whole, this movie would have been much better if nobody had said anything at all. With the script, however, this film can't even be considered good enough to be called fluff. In other words, it is very good for young children, and only for children - not child-like adults. It would be a good idea to get this film on videotape - then the sound can be turned off.

Ghostbusters:

Ghostbusters follows the adventures of the world's first ectoplasmic exterminators. One wonders whether all parapsychologists conduct experiments in the manner portrayed here. The plot was a little hackneyed, but there were enough unexpected twists to make it palatable. The focus of the script seemed to be on producing one-liners for Bill Murray. Thank goodness most of them were good. The special effects were okay, except for the ghosts, which were very well done. Children might be scared by the ghosts, but I doubt it - most of them were too funny, and even the scary parts were funny. Of course, this is not a good movie to see if one despises slapstick.

The acting in this film was very good, especially because the casting was so accurate. All the characters could be stereotyped easily, which was part of the joke. To see a typical New Yorker, just wait for the scene in Tavern on the Green. That's New York. There were a few problems however, for example, why was a fourth ghostbuster gotten later on in the picture? It seemed unnecessary, and as there was so little character development for him, he seemed to be a token addition, one that was rather pointless.

Despite these problems, most of which are rather nitpicky anyway, the satire bandies about newer, more up-to-date subjects. Many people would like to see an EPA goon told where he can go, in only the way an EPA goon could be told where to go. Happily, the goons and demons were put in their respective places before the movie ended.

Now for the real stars, the ghosts. One wonders what these creatures could have been when they were alive - especially the green one. This film is made viewable several times by the ghosts alone. The cults that have popped up around the country as a result of this movie have been innumerable, and funny, sometimes (i.e., smofbusters). If one runs into one of these splinter sects, it would be a good idea to see the movie, if for no other reason than to figure out what's going on in these cults.

Repo Man:

This film is probably the best one the summer had to offer. Mike Nesmith (from the Monkees) produced it, and though everybody who saw it with me was sure he appeared in it, none of us have been able to say just where he did appear. Why don't you go and see if you can tell us. Incredibly, this film is very good - incredibly, I say, because it has very little plot. There's the makings of a very good cult film here.

We follow Otto, who becomes a "repo man" or someone who repossesses cars, through his trials and tribulations, first as a supermarket clerk - a job he loses within the first five minutes of the movie. From there, he bums his way into the heart (wallet) of a veteran repo man, and is soon a junior partner in the business, ready to take it over when his mentor retires. The car that will make them rich, once it has been repossessed, is the gold Chevy Malibu, with the intriguing trunk. We also follow this car on its trek across the country to L.A., where it meets up with and is repossessed for a short time, by Otto.

There are villains who try to take the car away, there are a few people who know what's in the trunk, and then there are Otto's old friends - punkers from suburbia, who want to take a joy-ride in this car. Eventually, the moral of the story turns out to be that a life of crime does not pay, and if someone tells you not to look in his trunk - take him seriously, you don't want to know what's in it.

The mood of the movie was punk, so if you liked Liquid Sky, you'll probably like Repo Man. I haven't seen Liquid Sky, but I liked this film anyway. There was some violence, not terribly gorge-rising, but still violence. It might be a good idea not to take small children to see this movie. Black humor and a cult, two good ideas in one movie. See this movie - especially if you are a Mike Nesmith fan.

This is Spinal Tap:

In this film, we follow Spinal Tap, a british rock group, through its american tour. Rob Reiner (All in the Family) interviews them in great depth, and he treats the audience to the stories of the deaths of most of the group's drummers. The guitars used on stage are all kept in display cases, along with most of the group's electronic equipment. After viewing the equipment, especially the amplifiers, one understands how the band earned its reputation for being the loudest group around.

Fortunately, this film is short. Even though it's a satire, the embarrassment one feels for the group (they don't know enough to be embarrassed by their behavior), can get wearing. The movie is a very good satire of "rocutmentaries," such as Let it Be, and it was well acted. The cast was made up of people in the film industry who had seen these films made, and who wanted to show that even groups who aren't on the skids shouldn't make these films, unless absolutely necessary. The cast also really liked the idea of creating a fake rock group.

I really recommend this film, however, if you get a chance to see them in concert, it would be a good idea to wear ear plugs. Their music stinks (intentionally), and what really amazes me is that a group has evolved out of this film, and has been going on tour across the country. There seems to be the basis of real cult here, complete with groupies. Apparently, it is lurking somewhere, probably being nurtured by the adolescent boys who are Spinal Tap's most devoted fans.

The Last Starfighter:

There was plenty of small town closeness in this film, which becomes apparent when the whole trailer park gathers about the video machine as our hero is about to execute some record-breaking maneuvers in the video game of the same name as the movie. Robert Preston plays the fellow who gathers these record-breakers up and takes them to a galaxy far, far away... meanwhile fooling the audience into thinking this is going to be a film on the scale of some other starfighter type movies.

This was a low budget film, and the people in charge worked better with what they had than certain other people in charge, who worked with bigger sums of money. The plot was not entirely believable, but for the most part, nobody seemed to mind. There were a lot of cliches used, but because they were taken out of context, they became refreshing and mildly humorous. The ending was just a little too sweet, other than that, I had no objections to it. It's a good bit of fluff, and is suitable for children. Fortunately, this film didn't take itself seriously, or it would have ended up being an overbearing, pretentious, turkey.

Star Trek III:

When seeing this film for the first time, it's a good idea to not let the title, "The Search for Spock" be misleading. Yes, there was a search, but it didn't seem to overpower the movie. The acting was very good, as were the special effects. All in all, this is the best "Star Trek" film, so far. Maybe it wasn't that much better than "The Wrath of Kahn," but this is still a trend that should be encouraged.

The familiar feel of this movie and the obscure references that only Trekkies would pick up on made the audience almost as fun to watch as the picture. The end of this film was sappily written, however, the acting was good enough to overcome this stumbling block, and in fact, turned it from sappy to heartwarming.

There wasn't too much violence in this film, making it suitable for young children. However, there was a lot of death and dying - the scenes that had deaths were gripping psychologically, not physically, they didn't rely on graphic violence to get the point across.

I hope there will be another sequel - and considering the way the end of this film set up the story for the next one - there probably will be. The only major drawback that I see, is that people might not understand what's going on in Star Trek n because they hadn't seen all of the other Star Trek n - k films.

The Little Shop of Horrors:

There is something brewing - or is that growing? - down on skid row. Its name is Audrey II, and its major goal in life is to eat Cleveland. Audrey II is a people eating plant that was spawned during a solar eclipse. Audrey II was named for its caretaker's secret admiree, Audrey. Both the caretaker, Seymour, and Audrey, work for a florist on skid row. His name is Mushnik, and he spends a lot of time complaining about the lack of business - but, there isn't much call for a florist down on skid row, as Audrey and Seymour remind him.

Later on, the plant's dietary ideosyncracies are discovered, and Seymour has to kill people to feed to the plant. Because he does this, he receives fame, fortune, and the girl of his dreams - Audrey. Seymour gets to lecture around the country, and the florist shop gets to supply roses to the Rosebowl. However, lurking behind even this modest happiness is Audrey II, with an ever increasing appetite.

The play, when it was running in Boston, was very well done, especially for a musical. The plot was easy to follow, moreover, it was worth following. There were two actors playing the plant, both of them great hams. There are many victims of this plant, but one in particular that the audience cheered about - Audrey's first boyfriend. The play had been running at the Colonial Theatre in Boston, but I think the plant succeeded in consuming Chelsea, and has had to move on to bigger and tastier cities. I'd recommend this play to anyone who dislikes dentists, or who has meaningful conversations with their houseplants.

I, Claudius in Space

by,

Mark L. Olson

In the course of a very interesting panel which ranged over all of history (and then some) at the 1982 Lunacon, John Boardman and Al Nofi got to speculating on the social structure of the Star Wars universe. They pointed out that the direct information available didn't really tell us much, forcing us to deduce the Empire's structure and past history from rather indirect evidence.

There is another approach: finding and exploiting historical parallels. Since Lucas seems to consciously use traditional themes (for example, I see a lot of overlap between the Star Wars stories and folk tales recorded by the Grimms), it is plausible that Lucas may have used one or more real situations to provide the background for his story. In particular, the declining years of Republican Rome seem to fit nicely.

Most people, when they think of Rome at all, think of the Empire, particularly of its decline and fall. In reality the entire Empire phase was only a part of Roman history and the Western Empire (the one we always mean when we say "The Roman Empire") didn't even last as long as the Roman Republic. Furthermore, nearly all of Rome's empire was conquered under the Republic - only minor additions to Roman territory were made following the fall of the Republic (usually taken to be at about Julius Caesar's death.)

First, a quick overview of Roman history:

Tradition dates the Roman Republic from about 500 BC when the aristocrats drove out the last of the kings of Rome and set up a government based on the Senate. Rome was at that time a smallish town among many other smallish towns in central Italy and in no way dominated anyone else.

It's probably useful at this point to stress that our words "Senate" and "Senator" are Roman terms which we've taken over and given substantially different meanings. The nearest recent parallel to the Roman Senate was the British House of Lords during the 16th to early 19th centuries. The Senators were the hereditary aristocracy of Rome. The people of Rome had very little to say in the city's government, and none in the make-up of the Senate.

As the early Republic managed to extend its influence over most of central Italy, Rome became a larger town and started to have urban problems. The Plebeians (random unaristocratic people and other lowlifes) revolted several times and forced concessions from the Senate. (In fact, the famous SPQR (remember the lead in to Rocky & his Friends?) originated at this time and was the Latin acronym for "The Senate and People of Rome".)

By about 200 BC Rome was in the big time. It had conquered Italy and was fighting Carthage and others for domination of the Mediterranean. Over the course of the next century it expanded its territory from Italy to the bulk of the known world.

By the end of this period (ca 100 BC) things were getting rough at home - Rome had grown to be the most powerful force in the Ancient World, but was still governed by institutions developed when it was a small town. The Roman style of government relied on civic virtues such as a considerable degree of self-abnegation, gravitas and a shared belief that the success of the Roman State was paramount.

These virtues were apparently widely practiced in the early and middle Republic - Greek writers such as Polybius who, as an exile, captive and quasi-hostage in Rome for 20 years observed the end of this period first hand, speak well of the Romans and their approach to life. (In "I, Claudius", Claudius' mother, Octavia, is probably a pretty good example of the type.) Remember, however, that the Greeks were looking for an explanation of how the upstart, barbarian Romans could have beaten them and may have overstressed the "simple" virtues of Rome.

By the beginning of the first century BC, however, things had changed. It was possible to become very rich and many people did. Furthermore, army commanders tended to be less under the Senate's control. Things had gotten out of hand. This was the period of the Civil Wars.

There were several.

About 130 BC, the Gracchi brothers led an abortive democratic reform movement. It was put down by the aristocracy, but some of the reforms it sought were implemented.

The first actual civil war is connected with the names of Marius and Sulla. A group of Celts called the Cimbrii had broken through the Alps and were ravaging central Italy. Marius organized the forces of Rome and defeated them. (Poul Anderson has written an excellent short story, "Marius", which compares the personality and problems of a leader in a post-holocaust Europe to Marius'. He has also written a historical novel, The Golden Slave, which deals with the Celtic invasion.)

Marius became quite powerful as a result, in effect, the military dictator of Rome (the whole affair has a certain Banana Republic tinge). He was welcomed by many of the people who felt that a strongman would be just the thing to restore the old order of things, but, freed from most restraints, he grew overweening and started purging people.

Sulla was his principle rival. In the end, he defeated Marius - and took over as dictator.

Each of them in turn controlled Rome and slaughtered large numbers of his opponent's supporters. (Incidentally, it was much more than a simple fight between two men for power - many societal issues came into play and many old causes joined the fray.) When the episode was finally over (it lasted decades), the Republic was further demoralized and people accustomed to usurpation.

A generation later, about 50 BC, the trend culminated in the Civil War between Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great. (Pompey was a sort of boy wonder who never quite made it - everyone was betting on him over Caesar.)

Caesar (along with Crassus who was very rich and Lepidus who had few, if any, discernable virtues) in effect took over Rome by a coup and killed or exiled all of his opposition (though he was considerably less bloody about it than any of his predecessors). He cowed the Senatorial class and made the Senate into his rubber stamp.

By the time Caesar was assassinated (only a year after seizing absolute power), the Republic was dead, though the forms lingered. His nephew and heir, Augustus, turned out to be even shrewder than Julius and kept and built up the power. Nominally, Rome was ruled by the Senate and officials elected by people, in fact, everybody followed the advice of Augustus, the *Principes* ("leading man"). Towards the end of the first century AD, the *Principes* became the Emperor (originally a

strictly military title) and the transition to Empire was complete in theory as well as in practice.

The Senate remained, of course. Much later we see it as the Roman city council (which is what it was in the first place). See L. Sprague deCamp's Lest Darkness Fall for a fairly good picture of Rome and Italy around 500 AD, about 100 years after the nominal Fall of the (Western) Roman Empire.

Now, how does this apply to Star Wars?

Part of the problem here is one of canonicity. Just what part of the Star Wars corpus can be used as a source of authentic information? It seems clear that the movies themselves are canonical. I'm inclined also to include the novelizations of the movies (which I've read), but not the myriad of Star Wars spinoff novels.

Joe Rico has shown me a write-up which is allegedly sanctioned by Lucas concerning the third SW film (occurring right before the current trilogy). It shows the takeover by the emperor and the start of Darth Vader. I'm a little dubious about this because it does not seem entirely consistent with the first SW film, but I'll include it as a pseudo-canonical source.

We see several interesting things in the movies by themselves. To begin with, we hear of some sort of recent conflict (the Clone Wars). We also learn that an Imperial Senator who was also a high ranking aristocrat commanded some fairly fancy troops (Obi-Wan Kenobi served Leia's "father" as a general). Finally, it appears that seats on the Imperial Senate are hereditary. All of this fairly reeks of a Republic which was actually an aristocratic oligarchy. It has just had one or more wars with an unstated enemy, which leads one to suspect a civil war.

Looking at the novelization of Return of the Jedi, we see some details of the Emperor's seizure of power. He was a rich Imperial Senator who took advantage of the government's weakness to grab power. He ruled for some time along with the Imperial Senate. (It is clear from the first Star Wars movie that the Emperor had been in power for some time and had not just seized power, since the news was that he had dissolved the Senate, not that he had just crowned himself.) At any rate, he dissolved the Senate and ruled alone.

All of this fits beautifully with the late Roman Republic and early Imperium. Julius and Augustus Caesar together correspond to the Emperor in SW up until he seized power. The late Roman Republic and Principate correspond to the period right up until the first Star Wars movie. The group of emperors from Tiberius to Nero (who were Principes) are missing from Star Wars, though the Emperor's degeneracy and evil in SW may well have some basis in Suetonius' exaggerations about Tiberius, Caligula and Nero.

The deviation from Roman history comes in where the Rebel alliance is successful in overthrowing the Emperor, while in Roman history, the failure of the dynasty of the Caesars precipitated a succession of military Emperors who were Emperors de jure as well as de facto.

There doesn't seem to be a precise analog to Yoda or Darth Vader in Roman history (though, perhaps, one could make the Cumaean Sybil fit in ...).

Actually, while the political consequences of their acts are much the same, Julius and Augustus were considerably more mild in their actions than was the emperor in SW. In particular, Julius was noted for the clemency he showed to his

defeated enemies, and Augustus ("I found Rome made of bricks and left it made of marble") is better known for his constructive activities on behalf of Rome than for the years of civil wars he went through to establish his rule.

One of the interesting sidelights on this parallel is that the Rebel Alliance's equivalent in Roman times was the aristocratic faction, and not the nice democrats of SW. It seems likely that the Star Wars' "old Republic" was a decaying, corrupt, stratified society which deserved to be eliminated.

Boardman and Nofi noted this in their discussion, and pointed out at least one additional piece of information. When you look at the way the two sides military forces dressed, you tend to see the Rebel forces as generally flashier, while the Empire's forces tend to be subdued. There has always been a strong correlation between authoritarian regimes and fancy uniforms (look at Nixon's White House guard uniforms, for example), which tends to support the contention that the Empire is the more democratic force. The gaudy dress of the Emperor's personal guards can be dismissed as the extravagances of a nearly senile old man.

Besides the PBS program "I, Claudius" (which every fan should watch and enjoy), Robert Grave's novels I, Claudius and Claudius the God (upon which the series was based) are excellent. Additionally, A.E. Van Vogt has written about this period of history in Empire of the Atom, an SF novel set in a far future Earth (many years after civilization was destroyed by some war). What Van Vogt did was to take the story of I, Claudius and retell it. The crippled Claudius is replaced by a crippled mutant and almost the whole of Graves' novel is followed faithfully. It makes for a good story. (The sequel, The Wizard of Linn, has no particular relationship to Graves' work.)

I, Tough Guy
by,
Michael Colpitts

I was nursing a drink in a bar by the Port Authority Building. Another damn day beginning and I felt like wet newsprint. It was 2:00 am and hot in New York City. Too damn hot. A roundabout race from Bus Terminal to Train Station to Airport, then back again shipping papers had left me wrung dry of patience and sopping with sweat.

Probably the reason I was being left alone tonight was the scarcity of "regulars." The would deserve more than a free first drink for showing up tonight.

"Yeah," I muttered to myself, "a silver swizzle stick with lemon peel clusters."

Toasting myself in the mirror, I saw her coming.

I didn't care for her.

I could tell that right off.

She looked good, too good for this part of town. She made me ache. Ache in places that hadn't ached in a long time.

She was giving my system of chemical checks and balances a rough work-out. I was adding a second level of sweat. On the inside. Something had to give. It did.

"Excuse me, but do you have any change for the phone?"

"Sure, here..."

I dropped all my pocket change on the bar. The bartender looked away from the T.V. I shook my head. She picked up two dimes and a nickel, leaving a quarter. Then she went over to the phone near the door. Her face turned blue then red and back again from the neon sign. She dialed. I knew she would be back. On the bar stool next to me she had left her wrap. A black shapeless thing with all the substantiveness of a handkerchief.

"Women wear some damn strange clothes!"

Checking her out again, I caught her slamming the phone down after only a few hushed words. Her heels sounded like small arms fire. Or maybe it was the T.V. She slid on top of her stool with a taut gracelessness. This was one angry dame. I could tell from the way she lit her filter... Coughing, she put it out and glanced at my profile. I pretended to be watching the movie on the T.V. Relieved, she motioned to the barkeeper for a beer.

"Trying to be one of us?" I wondered. I had a hunch she was planning a little something to show the sucker on the phone what for. A little womanly revenge.

"Thanks again for the change, Mister."

"No problem..." I replied, waiting for her to make the first move. I didn't have long to wait.

"Say..." she said in a little girl's voice, "... Can I buy you a beer?"

"Naaah...", I said, "... Gotta hit the road pretty soon."

"Can't you stay..."

"Look sister, I don't think you're my type!"

"What type is that?" she said (the gears turning in her head, noisily).

"Like ... I'm into a heavy L & V trip." I stared down at the suds at the bottom of my glass. And I waited.

"Never heard of L & V before... What does it...?" She said in a whisper, half-trembling, half-thrill.

"Loitering and Vagabondage."

I walked away into the dying night. There were puddles everywhere.

This city never cried. It couldn't. What it could do was sweat. And the sweating never stopped.

VOYAGER IN THE NIGHT By C.J. Cherryh Daw \$2.95 1984
Review by James Mann

For the past few years, C. J. Cherryh has been examining the question of what constitutes an "alien" and, by contrast, what constitutes "human." Her latest novel, *VOYAGER IN THE NIGHT*, strips away all the peripherals and examines in stark detail the nature of human and alien. The story is simple and is told in straight-forward fashion. Yet the issues are complex and the aliens are truly alien, making the book slow reading at first. It merits careful reading, for it has much to offer the reader.

The novel is set in the same universe as *DOWNBELOW STATION*, although this is incidental to the story. The small human ship Lindy crewed by Rafe Murray, his sister Jillan, and her husband Paul, is picked up by a large alien ship. This ship and its passengers have been travelling for millennia. <> is in charge, although <>'s authority is being challenged by </>. The arrival of the humans precipitates a war of sorts among the alien factions.

The roughness of the pickup together with the intense probing by the alien kills Paul and Jillan. <> has made templates of them, and simulacra that look, act, and think just like the originals appear. In essence, the haven't died. Duplicates of the still-living Rafe also appear. Both <> and </> try to manipulate the humans for their own ends.

The duplicates are unquestionably human. All--and there are several versions of each--have the strengths, weaknesses, loves, hates, fears, and uncertainties of humans. The act human and, more importantly, feel themselves to be human, even though all but Rafe-One are computer programs. Humanness is not a matter of physical form; the characters are human because of the way they feel and the way they interact.

It is these interactions that mean the most in defining their humanity. This is emphasized by the contrasts between the characters of humans who stay together and those who isolate themselves as a result of manipulations by </>. At the novel's start, the humans are a tightly woven group; they care deeply for one and another and each relies heavily and defines part of his/her life on the other two. </> is able to threaten the ship by playing on the secret fears, uncertainties, and resentments each has. </> causes duplicates of Paul and Rafe to separate from the others, causing them to become in some degree inhuman. Paul becomes a domineering monster, Rafe a sniveling nonentity. Paul tries to dominate Rafe, playing on his weaknesses, forcing him to meld with him in </>'s cause. The result of this forced, unnatural joining is grotesque and inhuman.

The other versions of the characters, including Rafe-one, are also made to face their fears by <>. Yet in this case, because they remember their feelings for one and another, they face and overcome their weaknesses rather than succumbing to them. While the inhuman Paul is dominated by hate, his counterpart remembers his love for the others and their love for him and remains human. When he must meld with Jillan and Rafe to face the other Paul, he sees Jillan's and Rafe's weaknesses and they see his. This upsets them and for a while almost splits them. But unlike his counterpart, Paul doesn't surrender to his fears or use the others' fears to manipulate them.

Instead, he soothes them and keeps them together out of their feelings for one and another. Humanness is not dependent upon physical form; most of the characters don't even have physical bodies. Humanness is instead compassion, sharing, and feeling. The opposites--fear, hate, loneliness, domination--lead to inhumanity.

In contrast to the humanness of Paul, Jillian, and Rafe is the total alienness of the others. The humans act based on understandable motives. The aliens do not. In fact, <> explains that motivations cannot be translated; only actions can be translated. The humans remain human by their interactions. The aliens are both closer and farther apart. They blend back and forth and are part of one and another in ways that are at first confusing and disorienting. Yet, though they are an identity, they do not interact on a meaningful level--meaningful on human terms. The interactions do not have recognizable feeling (except in one case fear) behind them. In the end, because of this, they are still alien. We know what they did; we know something of what they are; but we do not know why they do what they do. This is not a fault. It's praise. Cherryh has done a marvelous job of creating truly alien aliens. By contrasting them with the humans, she brings the nature of human being more sharply into focus.

The theme is kept sharply in focus throughout the novel because Cherryh has eliminated all that is unnecessary to the main action. Like a Greek Drama, her novel has few characters and a simple set. The plot is relatively simple. Nothing draws our attention away from the interactions between the main characters. There are no minor characters, no additional background or locations, and no subplots. The result is powerful.

Cherryh has produced several outstanding novels. This is one of her best. It should be a major contender for the Hugo and Nebula awards next year.

STILL LEARNING, WITH DIFFICULTY

by Don D'Ammassa

Some years ago, I wrote an article for **THE PROPER BOSKONIAN** entitled "Learning the Hard Way," which dealt with my traumatic realization that science fiction fans were second class citizens in the eyes of the rest of the world. Reading in itself was not enough to gain adult approval; it was also necessary to read that which was perceived by those adults as "worthwhile," even if they had no experience of the "worthless" from which to make such judgments. I carried on an intermittent guerrilla war with my teachers and librarians, naively believing that virtue would triumph and they would one day realize that I had been right all along. And then I would magnanimously forgive them their ignorance. Such was not to be.

While I was pursuing a brief career as a high school English teacher myself, I thought that I was finally on winning ground. Not only would I allow the reading of fantastic literature, I was going to foster and encourage it as well. This supposition turned out to be just as naive as the first. Even the few students who did in fact enjoy reading were resistant to anything out of the ordinary. I concluded that earlier article by resigning myself to the fate of science fiction fans as a misunderstood minority and awaited my martyrdom.

But the distance of some years has led me to believe that I sidestepped the more important aspects of the situation. Why do people resist fantasy? Has the situation changed during the interim because of the popularity of Star Trek and Star Wars?

Resistance to innovative writing styles and subject matters is far from unknown even within the field. Although we pride ourselves on our wide horizons, SF as a literary form is one of the most conservative artforms of all. While the extreme experiments of the New Wave do indeed require an unusual taste, the reaction to stream-of-consciousness fiction within the genre was bitter and out of all proportion to the cause. Some readers condemned even traditional narrative fiction if it contained "anti-heroes," and even today we hear of editors who don't want to see stories with downbeat endings. I know fans who refuse to read supernatural fiction on general principles. Their justification is often some variation of: "I can't suspend my disbelief far enough to accept the outright impossibility of supernatural phenomena."

Although this is an approximation of their real reason, at least in my opinion, it still isn't the complete story. It is not so much that they cannot accept the supernatural pseudo-reality as that they insist upon denying its possibility. There is a subtle but nonetheless real difference here. Similarly, readers who don't care for stories with "anti-heroes" might say that these just aren't very good stories, but the truth is probably that they don't want to admit the possibility that they themselves would be non-heroic in a similar situation. Editors don't really believe that downbeat endings make lousy stories or fail to sell magazines, but they do believe that a

downbeat ending makes a lousy life. They would rather not accept that in reality the good guy generally loses, or has a mixed victory at best, usually only when he has reached a compromise with his principles. Or hers. The rationalist reader cannot really believe supernatural science and rationality doesn't always work. It is not so much that these people don't believe in the alternatives so much as they do not want to believe in them.

Morris Berman wrote an interesting book titled THE RE-ENCHANTMENT OF THE WORLD. he offers as a possibility the power of the mind to alter reality. Newton did not discover the law of gravity; he invented it. Scientific laws only work when there is a consensus of opinion about them. Alchemy was a real science until a majority of the people rejected its tenets and turned to the modern scientific method, which will in turn give way some day to yet another mode of thought. Although I frankly found Berman's book to be nonsense, it was often fascinating nonsense, but rationalists might well find it infuriating. They carry that same narrow viewpoint over into their pleasure reading.

Reverting to my original article, the question remains, has the situation changed in the interim? Has the success of Star Wars, E.T., Star Trek, and Alien made science fiction more acceptable as reading material? It has undoubtedly helped to make it more successful commercially, although that may not be a lasting change, but I doubt that anyone has revised their earlier opinion of the field's literary merit on the basis of these movies. For one thing, all of these films were unabashedly escapist, which just reinforced the earlier prejudices. I have personally had people tell me that my investment in my library probably was a wise one in retrospect, because the recent popularity of the field has increased its value significantly, but no one has asked me to recommend any books to them to read, escapist or otherwise. In fact, several have tried to get me interested in Robert Ludlum, John Updike, and--God help them--Katherine Woodiwiss.

Is there any hope of converting mainstream readers to an appreciation of science fiction? Should we proudly flaunt lurid paperback covers in public places, or hide them within the pages of the comparatively more respectable Playboy? Should we urge friends to read specific SF novels in an attempt to win them over to our side, or assume they are hopeless cases? Do we rush to the defense of genre authors, or bow our heads and slip silently away from arguments about literary merit? The answers, I suggest, to all these questions are one and the same. It does not matter a damn what we do. People who believe SF to be inferior will find it inferior no matter how good it is (assuming we could develop some measurable standard of goodness in literature) because to do otherwise would be to contradict their own natures. Most people are psychologically incapable of throwing off such a prejudice and endorsing a contrary position, no matter how preponderant the evidence of their error.

So I balance my resignation to the condescending opinions of others about my reading habits with the knowledge that I am

experiencing something they will never know. Each of us is thereby secure in our respective worldviews and we can blithely patronize each other to our hearts content. In the learned words of Leonard Cohen: "Let us compare mythologies; I have learned my elaborate lie." The emphasis is mine.



BOOK REVIEW
by Sue Lichauco

TITLE: The Silent Gondoliers

Author: S. Morgenstern, also author of the "The Princess Bride"

Illustrator: Paul Giovanopoulos

This is a captivating story about an aspiring gondolier named Luigi. Although he was a virtuoso with a gondola, his singing, quite literally, struck terror into the hearts of small children. Merchants lining the Grand Canal in Venice would hurl decaying fish and other debris upon hearing, or even anticipating, Luigi bellowing out "O Sole Mio" in some hitherto uninvented key. Unfortunately, at the time this story takes place, singing was an essential skill since part of a gondolier's job was to serenade his passengers. This is no longer true (at least according to the author), and the story is about how and why this tradition came to an end.

This is certainly a book worth reading. Poignancy is rampant in it, yet it is definitely not sappy. The story is not an epic, but it is intriguing, charming, captivating, and above all, unpretentious. It is a good bedtime story, easily consumed and digested. There is a wry, tongue in cheek sense of humor permeating the book. Although it does not inspire guffaws, I did grin and chuckle my way through it. The illustrators whimsical sketches fit in well with the author's writing style.

This is the author's first attempt at writing in colloquial English, a fact which would have eluded me had the author not confessed it in the introduction. "The Silent Gondolier's" could hardly be called a science-fiction novelette. The publisher's spiel on the back cover classifies it as a "fanciful novel," which I suppose is true. But then again, what manner of fiction isn't.

DEATH and SCIENCE FICTION

by Joe Rico

"No, I'm not upset by Spock's death; no one really dies in Science Fiction"

The above comment was oft repeated by viewers of The Wrath of Khan. Of course they were correct in their expectation that Paramount would not kill the goose that laid the golden egg. It is easy for us to dismiss Spock's resurrection by quibbling "that's Hollywood" or "that's Trek." But this event is only the most visible expression of what is, to me, a disturbing trend throughout S.F. works; the refusal to face the true final frontier, Death.

It is, of course, natural that in an action oriented genre the hero has a knack of avoiding death; the force field of the protagonist always holds and the antagonist's aim is errant or else the plot would die as swift a death as the hero. Miraculous escapes in S.F. are enhanced by the sudden discovery of new technological advances. I do not quibble with these plot twists except when they are truly hackneyed. The trend in science fiction that I object to is not the avoidance of death but the denial of death.

One way that denial of death is expressed in S.F. literature is by the character dying, but in such a way as to render death without meaning. By that I mean the continuation of the character in a psynic manner. Rather than being a disembodied spirit, the "dead" continue to live through another body, most usually that of a lover. (see I Will Fear No Evil by Heinlein; Doasadi Experiment by Frank Herbert; Anazi by Dean Ing)

Their new existence is not too dissimilar from their former life. Through their host's body they vicariously make love, run financial empires, plot soups, etc. In short, they experience all the pleasures of life with none of the pain. Further, since they are in communication with the living, survivors are spared the suffering of separation. Death is with one stroke trivialized, anesthetized.

Death is also denied by the time honored device of the false report of death. This allows the author to explore all the ramifications of the death of a character and then put everything back as it was. The fallen's comrades first bemoan and then accept the loss of their friend until, like the proverbial unwanted penny, they turn up again. (see Stardance by Spider Robinson; Forever War by Joe Haldeman)

This last device ruined Spider Robinson's Telempath. The first appearance of this tale was in ANALOG as the novelette By Any Other Name. It struck me at the time, as a hard hitting and intriguing tale of a unique post-holocaust world. One in which every human's sense of smell had been artificially heightened a thousand fold. The resulting sensory overload (and some other factors) causes the loss of over half of mankind. The hero, Isham Stone, has been dedicated, since his youth, to the killing of the scientist who tricked his father into creating the virus that caused the disaster. Isham tracks down his quarry only to discover that it was his father who had plotted the end of life as we know it. Isham spares his planned target and returns home, where he kills his father.

So ended the Analog installment. When the expanded novel appeared, (Telepath, TOR, 1983) I was looking forward to the continuation of a rousing tale. At first, I was richly rewarded. The survivor's culture was sketched in more fully; another group of antitechnology pagans was introduced, the Muskies (ethereal beings reminiscent of the Sinister Barrier) were given an explanation for their origin and their actions. Mostly, I enjoyed how Isham's view of his father evolved from that of pure monster to one of a mistaken, guilt stricken and only too human soul. Everything built to an exciting conclusion when almost as an afterthought, Dad comes strolling back on stage.

Why did Spider do this? Did he come to the conclusion that heroes just can't kill their dads? This resurrection had no discernible effect on the story at all. (In this regard it reminded me of the revival of Athelstane in Sir Walter Scott's Ivanhoe.) My only conclusion is that Spider brought the parent back to make a "nice" ending. Having concluded that the killing of Isham's father was a mistake, Spider set it right.

In fairness to Spider, the 2 parts of Telepath were probably written at different times and so a change in plot direction was to be expected. Telepath is still an excellent read; but it remains a prime example of the spate of stories that use resurrections to side step the reality of death. Very few authors have faced this reality. One who has is Robert A. Heinlein.

In Time Enough for Love, Heinlein presented us with a character who after a thousand years of life had decided to cease longevity treatments, Lazarus Long. His distant descendants kidnap him and force him to live in order to satisfy their own needs. The dying person is treated as an object in a maze of medical machinery. Eventually, individual rights assert themselves and Lazarus agrees to continue to live on the condition that he is granted new experiences. Quality of life and not just the avoidance of death is the goal of this protagonist. In recounting his life story for the education of his descendants, Lazarus also explores an experience that rarely is mentioned in S.F. works: grief for the loss of loved ones.

What is the cause of the dearth of other S.F. works that confront death on realistic terms? There are many possible explanations. One of the simplest is that death is viewed as a problem to be solved by writers in the genre, like any other problem. Death is overcome by the new machines and perceptions, the way Campbell would have wanted it. On the other extreme, we have the more mundane view which is that, of course, S.F. is going to deny death as it is an immature genre, written for immature people. Heaven knows, young adults and adolescents do not want to have their mortality waved in their faces. This audience is the life's blood of the genre and the writers will not offend them.

I know which of these 2 reasons I want to believe. I have always resisted the notion that S.F. is an escapist genre; to me those who make such comments show that their knowledge of science fiction comes from B movies rather than literature. Yet, when I look around me at S.F. conventions and see men who are 30 pounds overweight making reservations for a pig out, ("The non-smoking section, of course.") I must conclude that the denial of death is at work. When I compare the hordes of those under 25 to the few of us over 25, I must ask myself if S.F. is truly compatible with an adult view of the world. Perhaps it is not the futuristic settings and the "Buck

Roger's stuff" that makes S.F. fairy tales for engineers, but the failure to face the hard personal issues of love, life, and death.

Of course, in any territory as vast as science fiction there are exceptions. Two of the more recent exceptions include The Final Encyclopedia by Gordy Dickson (which contains a hero who lives through several incarnations; several cases of persons dying for what they believe in and staying dead*) and Robert A. Heinlein's Job: A Comedy of Justice (which, if it does not explore death does portray that rare F.S. hero, the observer-victim rather than the standard "doer of all things.")

As both fans and pros become older we are going to have more stories that will look at death, dying and aging in a realistic manner. I predict that this will be a natural outgrowth of the literary world in general. As the baby boom generation has grown older, we have seen a spate of stories geared to their ages. In succession there have been rebellious youth stories, jaded youth stories, and upwardly mobile young professional stories. Now we are seeing the "my-God-I'm-an-adult" tales. Soon we will see the autumn of my life stories. It will be interesting and even refreshing to see these themes in S.F. literature.

* Yes, I know that the boy's tutors reappear to him after they are martyred, but it is made clear that they are memory constructs, not ghosts.

PROPER BOSKONIAN CONTEST No. 1

Recently viewing that immortal classic "The Island of Dr. Moreau," the Orion production film, on cable. I was reminded of that little verse that the "Good Doctor" taught his ...ah... "patients." I was intrigued by the insight that some of the inhabitants of Dr. Moreau's island look as human as many of the creatures I have seen in hotel corridors, early in the morning hours of a convention.

I thought to myself, "Joe, why should our con attendees have less of a chance to stay subhuman than the animals in Well's story had to stay human?" What's needed is a little jingle, just for the S.F. convention corridor culture. Here it is:

Not to shrink
From beer for breakfast
That is the Law
Are we not fen?

Can you continue writing verses in this manner (as in the chant "Are we not Men?") Keep in mind the same high ideals I've expressed in this sample verse, and send yours to:

Proper Boskonian Contest No. 1
Box G
MIT Branch Post Office
Cambridge, MA 02139-0910

A suitable prize will be determined (RSN) for the best verse we receive.

FROM THE REVIEWING STAND ALONG ALPHA RALPHA BOULEVARD by Tony Lewis

Talking to Dragons by Patricia C.Wrede (Tempo Magicquest). A delightful romantic fantasy. If you don't know what's going to happen you are very naif. Excellent dragons, excellent cats.

A Bait of Dreams by Jo Clayton (DAW). Part of this previous appeared in IA'sfm. A good story up to the end when it stops rather than resolves the situation. I wonder what happened.

Fugitive in Transit by Edward Llewellyn (DAW). His last book. Plot complexities worthy of van Vogt (in fact, this is much like a literate van Vogt story). Action story keeps moving along; somewhat of an idiot plot though.

Shadows Linger by Glen Cook. Second Chronicle of the Black Company. No one else writing today can put such gloom and despair into his stories like Cook. They are thoroughly enjoyable; lots of betrayals, evil acts, double crossers, etc. Nothing clean and neat like Conan.

The Garbage Chronicles by Brian Herbert (Berkley). How nice of the book titler to review the story. It ought to have been humorous but I found it hard slogging and would not recommend it to you.

The Vizier's Second Daughter by Robert F.Young (DAW). Entertaining fluff. A pleasant time-passer.

Chanur's Venture by C.J. Cherryh (DAW Books). A sequel to Downbelow Station and Pride of Chanur it says on the cover; true enough. What it doesn't say is that this is really half of the story that will be continued in Chanur's Revenge. There is no doubt but that Cherryh is the pre-eminent adventure SF story writer today. Since there is no "Planet Stories" it has become necessary to invent it.

Crewel Lye by Piers Anthony (Ballantine/del Rey). Another of the Xanth books (did you know that the name of the land comes from its author -- pierS ANTHONY?). Full of inventive puns; somewhat better than average for this series.

To Demons Bound by Robert E.Vardeman and George W.Proctor (Ace). First in a series of s&s called Swords of Raemllyn. I think you can recognize everyone here. Still, it moves along and has its moments. The female characters are much more realistic and realized than the males which is unusual for this type of story.

The Mummy, The Will, and the Crypt by John Bellairs (Bantam Skylark). The sequel to The Curse of the Blue Figurine only insofar as the major characters continue. BUY THIS BOOK -- READ IT.

The Golden Witchbreed by Mary Gentle (Morrow). Gentle does a fine job of building an alien culture and taking the Earth ambassador through it. I believe its British origin shows in the lack of a united and unified Earth (almost always assumed by U.S. writers). Much better than I thought it would be. It cries out for sequels.

Empires of Flux & Anchor and Masters of Flux & Anchor by Jack Chalker (Tor Books) being books 2 and 3 of the Soul Rider series. I suppose I should note that Jack is working on volume 0 (or perhaps -1, or -2 that will explain how the society came about. This is the most serious of Chalker's works with few or no complete polarizations of characters; no one is fully evil or good. Some of the concepts and resolutions will infuriate dogmatists but whotthehell.

Partial List of World War Two Alternate Histories

(* = Stuff Worth Reading)

by Mark M. Keller

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31. GRIGG, John, 1943: The Victory that Never Was (NY: Hill & Wang, 1980).
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DRAGONS OF DARKNESS

In his Introduction Orson Scott Card says that the Dragons of Darkness "generally come from or strike at a darker place in the human heart; they are, on the whole, crueller and more dangerous." Indeed, many of them are, however, there are a few on the lighter side.

When is a dragon not a dragon? Card's solution was "that if by any stretch of the imagination a story could be said to include a dragon, we would stretch our imagination to fit."; and indeed they did.

Most of the stories in this volume fit both. They are from the darker spaces of the heart and they are not your typical idea of a dragon. As a whole, these stories make adventurous and contemplative reading.

"Filed Teeth" by Glen Cook is an adventure story. I'd subtitle it The Great Quest: or What You Seek is not Always What you Find. What they seek is a cup of dragon's blood. It has some nice fantasy elements, but while the ending is good, I felt let down, as if the story had fallen apart as suddenly as the protagonist.

"Vince's Dragon" by Ben Bova fit in well with the rash of fires the Boston area has been experiencing, and again pointed out that one should not expect a dragon's reasons to be the same as one's own - or even what you think they are. A pyromaniac dragon with a twist.

In "The Thermals of August" the dragons are gliders used in competitive flying where the objective appears to be to knock your opponent out of the sky without killing yourself. The protagonist doesn't succeed. Taking your problems into the air isn't always a good idea.

"The Dragon's Clubs" by Stephen Kimmel is one of the "stretch of the imagination" kind. I didn't quite follow his reasoning, but poker playing dragons make a nice twist.

Janet Gluckman's "Negwenya" has the feel of one of the old Japanese fables, though it takes place in a futuristic, but yet ancient, Africa. The story fits the contrast of place and time as echoed in the mind of the protagonist. His demand of dragon kind leads to a messy end for his half-brother and almost for himself.

Byron Walley's "Middle Woman" is set as a Chinese fable, using the old three wishes idea but with a new twist. The dragon, tricky grantor of wishes, has to beg the 'Middle Woman', on her death bed, to use the last wish or he will die, as she has resisted the temptation to use it throughout her life.

"The Storm King" in Joan D. Vinge's story is both a dragon of a different kind and a man. The hero changes from one who came seeking the dragon's help to conquer those who have caused him pain to one who turns on the dragon after he has been granted just what he wanted. Humans are never satisfied.

One poem was included with the collection; "My Bones Waxed Old" by Robert Frazier; a real gem. Reuben Fox's illustration of a dragon faced by a Saab tells it all.

Victor Milan's dragon in "Soldatenmangel" is a mechanical marvel. This story combines Arthurian legend, time travel, and magic - Merlin's brand.

"Alas, My Love, You do me Wrong" by James Tucker is definitely from the darker recesses of both heart and mind. A real downer, even though a very plausible plot; new planet outpost runs into unexpected psychological problems as well as alien life.

"Fear of Fly" by Lynn Mims takes us back to fairy tales. This time, however, it is the gentleman in distress who is rescued from durance vile (a tower guarded by a humungus dragon fly) by the adventurous heroine. This one is fun.

"Though All the Mountains Lie Between" by Jeffrey Carver is one of my favorites. Time: far future; Heroine: Jael, a pilot (rigger), who has been made into an addict by the owner of the vessel; an addiction she is only able to escape when in the net (the dream by which she steers her ship). Hero: Highwing, a dreaded dragon of space, who teaches Jael how to overcome her addiction and take the freedom of the net into reality with her.

"The Lady of the Purple Forest" by Alan Bruton is my other favorite. Footloose Sir Knight saves fair lady from most dreaded dragon ever. Lady wants to know why knight and dragon must fight; because appears the only answer. Knight wins and rides off into the sunset to fight more dragons - right? Wrong.

"A Dragon in the Man" by Kevin Christensen is interesting if a little confusing. At the end I'm not quite sure if the protagonist is actually mad and suffering scitzophrenia or if one of his cybernetic bodies already had an occupant.

"A Plague of Butterflies" by Orson Scott Card is another of the dark side. Though, since the script calls for a Saint to commit what appears to be cold blooded murder, this could be questionable. In this one all but one dragon has been killed, and this one has mutated until it can mate with a human woman, thus creating a new race of semi-dragons. The Saint must kill the product of this first union before it matures (within 5 minutes of being born). He can't, and ends up becoming the father of the new race.

MORE FROM THE REVIEWING STAND ALONG ALPHA RALPHA BOULEVARD by Tony Lewis

The Complete Book of Swords by Fred Saberhagen (Nelson Doubleday). One is reminded of Anna Russell's analysis of Wagner's Ring -- 23 hours later and you're back exactly where you started. In this case we have 626 pages. The ending was fated; it might have been novel for new readers but anyone who has been reading fantasy should see it.

Twilight of the Gods: The First Name by Dennis Schmidt (Ace). Quite a bit better than I expected. A deliberately distorted Norse myth background but with elements of Sumerian and far-eastern cultures. This looks like a series to watch.

West of Eden by Harry Harrison (Bantam). A fast-moving adventure story set in an alternate world where the reptiles evolved to intelligence and culture in the old world (and man did the same in the new). Of course, the fun is to pit the two cultures against each other and see what happens. I suppose there can be quibbles on sociology, language, etc. I enjoyed it.

Heechee Rendezvous by Frederik Pohl (Del Rey). Well, the Heechee come out of their black hole and they meet the humans and that's it. Very anticlimactic ending to the series.

The Aztecs by John Lucarotti (Target). Another tale of the first Doctor -- quite well done too. There are some real decisions for the Doctor and his companions to make; none of the choices are all right or all wrong.

The Highlanders by Gerry Davis (Target). A story of the second Doctor and his meeting with Jamie. It does not seem as if the English/Scots issues have yet been settled today; lots of digs at both sides here.

Pulptime by P.H.Cannon (Weirdbook). The tale is narrated by Frank Belknap Long; other characters include H.P.Lovecraft and Sherlock Holmes. I suppose this should be classified as fantasy rather than nostalgia as Lovecraft's letters never mention any meeting with Holmes. Some of the lesser characters are fictional.

Dinner at Deviant's Palace by Tim Powers (Ace). This will probably become a minor cult item. I don't particularly like sleazy cultures with gratuitous violence. My only question for readers is -- is this L.A. of the future?

Never Cross a Vampire by Stuart Kaminsky (Mysterious Press). Another Toby Peters story; the guests this time are Bela Lugosi and someone named William Faulkner. There is a marvelous characterization of media fans (groupies).

Shadowkeep by Alan Dean Foster (Warner). Based upon a computer game -- we can ignore that. A competent S&S adventure with more intelligent characters than are usually found in such. They seemed familiar and I wondered where I had met them before; after much thought I had my answer -- Hal Clement's aliens. Pleasant and civilized. One of the fellowship even wants to set up and teach school for the various intelligent species. How much more Hal Clement can you get. [Query -- besides Ice World how many other stories have had high school teachers as hero/ines?]

Witchdame by Kathleen Sky (Berkley). High magic in an alternate England. In this story when we say Deus ex Machina we mean Deus ex Machina. Better than most of this kind and with much humor and care for the humanity of the characters. Worth reading.

The Making of Doctor Who by Malcolm Hulke and Terrance Dicks (Piccolo). A behind-the-scenes book published in 1972. I believe there are updated editions but no true Whovian would scorn it. Hooray for the Doctor; hooray for the Master; cheers for the Brigadier.

Enchanters' End Game by David Eddings (Ballantine). The final book of this five-part series and a rip-roaring finale. This is an excellent example of mid-level heroic fantasy (that means what I want it to mean - H.D.). Eddings does not attempt to write in a non-contemporaneous style; for which, much thanks. Tolkien and a few (very few) others could do it and not sound affected or silly (see Dragonrouge). If you haven't read these you have a nice block of pleasant time awaiting you.

The Snares of Ibex by Jo Clayton (DAW). One of the better of the Diadem series. However, much of the story won't have motivation if you haven't read the earlier ones.

The Three Wild Men and The Fiery Menace by Kenneth Robeson (Bantam). Two more Doc Savage stories -- about average for the series. Where that fits on a more absolute canon of quality is left as an exercise for the reader.

The Karma Corps by Neal Barrett, Jr. (DAW). An interesting idea but the plot never seems to be justified (neither people nor non-people have any real reason for doing what they are doing -- except that it is in the script). Barret has written better stuff; let's hope he got this one out of his system.

Pillar of Night by Robert E. Vardeman (Ace). The final Cenotaph Road book -- in which all is revealed and one of the protagonists triumphs but there is some tragedy. I like the spider; I also liked Kiska k'Adesina.

The Harem of Aman Akbar by Elizabeth Scarborough (Bantam). This is what used to be called "Oriental Adventures" and of its kind it is acceptable. My major complaint is that the protagonist certainly does not deserve to have three wives of such high quality (maybe not even one). However, the enforced monogamous (that is both monogynous and monandrous) system we have points out the fallacy of not subsuming marriage under corporation law.

The Infinity Concerto by Greg Bear (Berkley). The only reservation I have in recommending this to you is that there is a second half that is not yet published. This book requires a slow and careful reading; pay attention to the detail -- the author certainly did.

The Final Reflection by John M. Ford. Another Star Trek novel; this time set before the time of the tv series and told from the Klingon's point of view. These things run together; did I review this before?

National Lampoon's Doon by Ellis Weiner (Pocket). A parody (surprise) of Dune obviously hoping to rip off some fast cash in response to the movie publicity -- good luck to them. A book-length parody can become tedious (and this does); it is most amusing for the names and concepts -- Paul is the Kunkwat Haagendasz. Okay?

The Year's Best Horror Stories: Series XII edited by Karl Edward Wagner (DAW). A good selection; horror and detective stories tend to average higher than SF stories in quality.

Tolkien and the Silmarils by Randel Helms (Houghton Mifflin). The price of books is ridiculous; this one works out to ten cents per page (retail) but lots cheaper at remainder. [Why did God create WASPs?] An interesting discussion of the history and themes of the Silmarillion and some of the others. To be read after (and before rereading) those books.

Analog Mid-December 1984. The spoof issue -- it contains some of the best stories in years. My favorite was "Hindsight" (Eric G. Iverson). The best thing in the entire issue is the fake Calendar of Events; write to the editor and tell him how good it was and how much you liked it.

Gods of the Greataway by Michael Coney (Houghton Mifflin). Being the second book of The Song of Earth. This is a much better, more coherent book than the first; many of the strange puzzles are solved (but not all, that would spoil the fun).

From Beowulf to Virginia Woolf by Robert Manson Myers (University of Illinois Press). An irreverent look at English literature. This book is best read with a reasonable hiatus between chapters; after all, how much frosting can one eat at a time. The more you know about English literature, the more you will enjoy this. If your knowledge is limited, skip this -- you won't understand much of the fun.

Wings of Omen edited by Robert Lynn Asprin and Lynn Abbey (Ace). This is the sixth "Thieves' World" anthology. As the milieu gets more defined and the major characters interact with each other, the authors' scope is becoming increasingly constrained. It has been found necessary to have alien invasions and the like to open up the stories. I think it is time to put this series to rest.

The Curse of the Blue Figurine by John Bellairs (Bantam Skylark). Another of John's super terror stories with adolescents as the primal movers (or at least proximate causes). Get it.

Homecoming by John Dumas (Tor). Sequel to The Yngling. Typical S&S with the second S being telepathy and the like. Not up to the original novel.

The Alejandra Variations by Paul Cook (Ace). A look at the meaning of reality in the style of (but not with the skill of) Philip K. Dick. I am not convinced that the "Behold it was but a dream" subsidiary of Deus ex Machina PLC is a viable corporation (even though it is a growth industry).

Quarreling, They Met the Dragon by Sharon Baker (Avon). Considerably better than you might think; certainly better than the first part of the book would lead you to believe. We all say we want to read about alien cultures but when an author really presents them we complain that they are not realistic or understandable.

Niven's Laws by Larry Niven (Owlswick Press). Creeping NESFAism moves down the coast; this was the GoH book for the 1984 Philcon GoH -- Larry Niven. It has ten of the Draco Tavern stories plus ten essays and articles Larry has written. A very nice memento and a good book for Niven collectors.

World's End by Joan D. Vinge (Bluejay Books). The sequel to The Snow Queen. Much more of a quest story than its predecessor and, in some ways, better. It is a closer tighter story and will well reward careful reading.