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♪
Olim vagatus
Sedebat per lacunam
Sub arboris umbram...



Australia in MCMLXXV?
Propinabo!

DECEMBER 1971

50 PAGES

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Sandra Miesel
Bruce R Gillespie

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Edited, typed, printed, published, proof-read, agonised over, and everything elsed by BRUCE R GILLESPIE, of GPO BOX 5195AA, MELBOURNE, VICTORIA 3001, AUSTRALIA. (Ph: 47 1303).

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THE BEST OF THE BEST...

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MUST BE TALKING TO MY FRIENDS

* "'Ot?# "Yeah." "Last long?" "Dunno." "Bad storm last night?" "Yeah. Get wet?" "Yeah. You?" "Yeah."

There are reasons why nearly every Australian conversation begins with a prolonged discussion of the weather (as above). Or rather, every Victorian conversation; I haven't conducted many New South Welsh or South Australian conversations. The very good reason is that Melbourne weather is lunatic. Within the last few days we have had four days with a temperature of over 80°, two violent electrical storms, one 20° temperature drop in a quarter of an hour, a cool morning wind which changed into a northerly heat blast in the afternoon, et cetera. I can't stand the heat anyway, so all of this weather is equally bad.

But - and this calls for some comment - Victorians survive their weather. On Wednesday (December 23) Merv Binns and John Foyster had organised a Nova Mob/Melbourne Science Fiction Club meeting in Lee Harding's flat. (More on this later; it's only three months since NORSTRILIAN NEWS appeared, but a lot has happened since then.) During the day the temperature reached 90° and the humidity nearly reached saturation point. When I visited the Space Age Book Shop, Toni was slumped in a corner, nearly asleep, Lee Harding looked as if he was ready to drop, and Merv Binns wasn't at his usual cheery best. The customers looked exhausted as well. The best thing to do, I would have thought, would have been to shut the shop. Harding had a splitting headache at four o'clock, and I didn't see him again the same night. Merv managed to survive the heat, and after I arrived back at the flat (which is above the shop) after seeing GIMME SHELTER, Merv was carrying food and a card table up the very dangerous steps which lead to Lee Harding's flat. Rob Gerrand had already arrived, so I talked to him until... behold! the apparition of John Foyster in his Australia-In-75 tee shirt! Then, behold again, the stunning sight of Robin Johnson and Bill Wright in their AI75 tee shirts! About twenty other people arrived, and the party was still swirling in inimitable Melbourne S F Club style when I left.

When I arrived at about 7.30, a few drops of rain had begun to fall, and by about 8.30, the rain had set in for the rest of the night. I was only able to escape because Ron Smith drove me down to the tram stop. Meanwhile, the temperature had not dropped at all, the inside of the flat was still about 90°, and outside it was like a tropical downpour. Next morning, the rain had disappeared, the sun had come out again, and it was 90° again. Still no cool change.

The amazing thing about all this is that anybody turned up. After all, three days before, the top temperature had been 62°. By this time next week, winter will probably have returned. During this year I've been working in an air-conditioned office in Carlton. When I enter that office in the morning I have no idea what the weather will be like when I leave it in the afternoon. Yes, Philip Dick, we live in a world of chance, and we might say that Melbourne fans are *The Way They Are* because of the arbitrary environment. In the middle of winter the only way to get warm is to turn a duplicator handle; in the middle of summer it's too hot to do anything but read and write fanzine articles. Australia's clear superiority in the world of science fiction fandom can be attributed entirely to the weather!

* But what has Melbourne fandom been up to? This is a fair question from interstate and international subscribers to NORSTRILIAN NEWS, the fortnightly newsmagazine that hasn't appeared since September 1 - or was it October 1? In a burst of true optimism, John Foyster handed the magazine to me at the beginning of the year, and it did come out fortnightly for several months. Unfortunately, while I was publishing NN fortnightly, I wasn't able to do much else at all, except SFC 19. And since I've stopped doing NN, I've been able to write more than during the rest of the year. There is an explanation: it was all part of an evil plot to make John Foyster so impatient that he would come to my place and carry off all the books and accounts for the magazine. However I knew that Foyster had several projects to hand which were a lot more important than NN, including the production of two issues of THE MONASH RESEARCHER in a fortnight. Perhaps it was the weather, but on Wednesday night Foyster finally confirmed that he did want to resume production of NN. Sigh of relief from me, although not from Robin Johnson, who thinks he could do a better job. Motto: send all your dollar subscriptions to John Foyster, c/o 6 Clowes St., South Yarra, Victoria 3141. If you are already a subscriber, cheer loudly, for the prophet of NN has returned.

* Lee Harding moved to town. Only on week-days, I hasten to add; he and Carla and the kids still live in their house in the hills. Lee needed a place to write during the week, so he took the flat above the Space Age Book Shop. For several months he has been battling the rats that play in the floor boards, and he has actually written some more Lee Harding Stories. However, Lee plans to move out during the next few weeks, and the Melbourne Science Fiction Club will take over the premises - at least for a few months. Merv Binns hopes that a move back into the city will attract people to the Club once again. Certainly the move to South Yarra didn't help the Club's fortunes or finances. We hope that Lee finds some other flat in the city, by the way. Since he has been the assistant manager of the Space Age Book Shop, Lee Harding has managed to brighten up Melbourne fandom considerably, by forming the nucleus of a shifting (shifty?) group of people who would otherwise never meet each other. We have met quite often at the Degraeves Tavern, a cosy place in Degraeves Street, so Lee and Robin Johnson asked the proprietors if we could show a film there. They wanted a guaranteed profit for the night; we wanted a convivial, but free, venue. I expected about twenty people to turn up and

* Wrong again, Gillespie. Foyster published an issue on January 1, 1972.

didn't attend. During the whole of the next week, all I heard from Melbourne fans was "Did you hear about Friday night?" Instead of twenty people turning up, about eighty people arrived. Luckily, the Degrares Tavern is a fair-sized restaurant and I guess that everybody got a seat. However, most of the food was gone by 6.30, most of the grog by 8.00, and I'm told that not many people remained sober enough to see the film. The Melbourne Fantasy Film Group has not been invited back because it is rumoured that a certain prominent Melbourne s f writer organised people into moving their chairs around the cinema screen in order to see better. Henry, the proprietor, had visions of maddened Health Inspectors raiding the place, and has decided that he can do without all those profits. "Much better than any convention we've held," said Lee Harding.

* The rest of the interesting Norstrilian News is mainly dng at the moment.

At least, I'm not willing to risk publishing it yet. I'm mainly interested in the quotable news that the Australia In 75 Bidding Committee is alive and well and working flat out. The prime movers (and prime financiers, from what I've heard) are still Robin Johnson, Bill Wright, and John Bangsund, but I wouldn't ignore the efforts of any of the others, except mine, which are minimal. The Committee does need donations, as well as ideas, encouraging suggestions, and any other signs that Australian fans actually support the bid. As Sandra Miesel's cartoon indicates on the front page, the American fans are supporting us more vigorously than some Aussies.

* Don't forget DUFF, either. The nominees are Juanita and Robert Coulson, publishers of YANDRO and very nice people; Lesleigh and Hank Luttrell, publishers of STARLING, organisers of APA-45, and leaders of s f's under-30 set; and Andy Porter, publisher of ALGOL, and a strong supporter of AI75 before anybody else heard the slogan. A strong field, and I still can't decide where I will place my vote. Voting sheets will appear soon (Australian organiser is John Foyster, address above; American organiser is Fred Patten, 11863 West Jefferson Blvd., Apt. 1, Culver City, California 90230).

* At this precise moment it is 11.50 am on Christmas Eve; it feels like 100° in this room; and this is more of a Christmas issue than SFC 24. I've already had one letter of comment for SFC 24 (from George Turner; thanks very much), and I have 27 letters on file for this issue. A special Christmas greeting to Stanislaw Lem, by the way - SFC 22 has brought in more mail than any other issue in SFC's history, including SFC 19. This will be typed before the Adelaide Convention. Best wishes to the Convention organisers. Lotsaluck to John Foyster; he's going to need it if he wants to publish NN fortnightly. Thanks to all the people who helped me or AI75 during the year, or sent me things (esp. Joanne & Barry), or took out subscriptions, or told people about this magazine or Australian fandom, or who helped in any way at all. Here's a few of your letters:

* DAVE PIPER (7 Cranley Drive, Ruislip, Middlesex HA4 6BZ, England)

One of the things I like about you and your magazines, and I can't explain this at all, is that I can disagree completely with you in something and yet still find your arguments and opinions interesting. Mmmm. That sounds pretty bad, doesn't it? No, I don't mean that I habitually disregard anyone's opinion just because I disagree with 'em. Well, not too much anyway! S'just that with you, ever since you, in a foolish moment, sent me SFC 1, I have disagreed so consistently with practically all of your opinions on books that it some-

times amazes me just how much. Actually, I've just realised how to explain my point. Both are in SFC 22: your opinion of QUARK/ 1, and the Lem material. I find your final note about QUARK/ being the "best of the" etc. hilarious. The book struck me, all 12/6.worth... and that hurt by the way... as the, no let's not exaggerate, one of the most boring, pointless, boring, collections ever assembled. I found it lousy. And yet I read your comments and found them interesting. But, with regard to the Lem bumf... well, he bores me stiff and I regret... no, I don't regret... I didn't bother to read it. Well, not more than a page or two just to see if it was the same old stuff. So ...my considered opinion is that if Lem is going to be very famous, and, in my considered opinion you're a better writer than Lem, then, wowiee Bruce lad, you, nay, YOU are gonna be even more famous. Boyoboy ...and I've got some Original Gillespie Letters. I'll make me fortune!

(October 18 1971) *

* I couldn't resist printing those last two sentences (even if it's only a sample of the general drift of opinion). All I can say, on no occasion have people flooded the mails with letters of comment about my material in the way that people have written about Lem's work. :: And you needn't feel alone in disagreeing with me. Nearly everybody does, especially Merv Binns. When I first met Merv Binns, one of the first things that he said was, "There's one s f book I can't stand, and that's HOTHOUSE." I tried to remain calm, but it was difficult. HOTHOUSE is still about my favourite s f novel. The other day I went into the Space Age Book Shop. During the conversation I must have said something nasty about TAU ZERO. Merv immediately whirled around and said, "TAU ZERO is a really marvellous book!" or words to that effect. What struck me later was the fact that Merv had actually read a recent s f book (he always complains that he is so busy that he has no time for reading s f or fan-zines.) There is just one matter upon which we agree - that EARTH ABIDES is one of the best s f books ever written. Brian Aldiss once called it "that beautiful sunset novel". In fact, that is about the only s f book that appeals to oldies and youngies, Old Wavers and New Wavers.

But that's getting away from Dave Piper somewhat. This magazine has really succeeded if people can agree to disagree. There were quite a few other people who disagreed most strongly to parts of SFC 22: *

* GEORGE TURNER (4 Robertson Avenue, St Kilda, Victoria 3182)

I struggled through the Lem article, SEX IN SCIENCE FICTION ((S F COMMENTARY 22)) and I mean struggled. It would be unfair to attack the man on grounds of prolixity and verbal dullness, since the work was translated and re-translated to the point of exhaustion; but I can't help feeling that, however good a novelist he may be, Lem lapses into pompousness when he puts on his mask as essayist. Which is only another way of saying that an essay should be presented with the same simplicity as a story, particularly when it is aimed at the general reader rather than the specialist. Simplicity, strangely enough, is more difficult to achieve than the compactness of philosophic language, but is the method practised by all the better essayists from Montaigne to Huxley - Karl Marx excepted with a sigh of incomprehension - who wished to be understood.

I have no criticism of the matter contained in SISF, because I find myself in general agreement with most of it, differing only over de-

tails whose retelling would be mere nit-picking. I feel, however, that something should be said about the relative importance of sex in science fiction.

Lem, quite rightly, looks forward to ideal treatment; he regards s f as an art form (along with the rest of fiction) which should aim at perfection, and one can't cavil at this. But s f, as it is, as it exists in the forms served to us, cannot achieve what Lem requires of it, and is not likely to do so until the death grip of the magazines is relaxed and the all-engulfing voraciousness of largely uncritical fandom gives way to a demand for quality rather than quantity.

The writing of a story whose central theme has been considered and reconsidered by the author until he is satisfied that he has said all that needs to be said and that what he has said is philosophically, psychologically and factually correct is not difficult - once the preparation has been done. The preparation is the snag - the endless compacting, lopping, and expansion of conceptions - the research - the checking of detail - the devising of plot and character in form suitable to the presentation. This may take months, even for a short story whose ultimate value may be two hundred dollars.

Such work is for the writer who writes for the love of writing. The professional simply cannot do it on a financial basis unless he is in a solid financial position. A good example is James Blish, who spends half the year writing what he knows will make money (in his case, the STAR TREK books) and the other half applying himself to the business of being a literate, careful, and worthwhile author.

Few in the business as it stands could follow his example; they have to produce and keep on producing. The result is that those who do not depend on s f for a living will, in general, produce the most thoughtful and rewarding work, simply because they can give to their themes the respect and consideration due to them. But it is hopeless to expect such work from the average magazine writer and, alas, far too many of Lem's examples came from just this group.

Science fiction, in the mass, is not geared to the presentation of much more than ephemerae - and this is true of all stories deliberately conceived and written as genre work. (All fiction fits some genre or other, but there is a considerable difference between the story written as an entity in itself and that compiled to fit a market.) Science fiction, at its present stage of evolution, is still essentially the gimmick fiction of the Hugo Gernsback days. The nature of the gimmicks has changed with waves of reader taste - we have passed through the technological era, the psychological, the para-psychological, metaphysical, and other eras, and now seem to be wallowing in the sociological age - but the stories are still mainly gimmick stories, wherein the writer takes an idea old or new, gives it a twist and puts it in the mail. It is the twist that sells, and all the implications of the basic idea that have been ignored in order to get to the twist are similarly ignored by the reader.

This makes the whole thing sound pretty unrewarding, but this is not necessarily so. Admittedly the presentation of ideas in s f has been and is superficial and often illogical, but a purpose has been served and while new generations of readers keep on discovering s f, will

continue to be served. The mere gulping down of these ideas, new to them, has some effect in releasing their minds from conventional thinking, and this is a very good service. (It can also, in the more thoughtless addict, produce much distortion of his view of reality, but that is another story.)

Now at last we can get back to sex. Sex was discovered by s f writers almost overnight (as usual a century or two behind their mainstream brothers) and has suffered the same fate as all the other s f ideas. It has become a gimmick. Not the least of the more pernicious gimmick-mongers has been that same Philip Jose Farmer for whom Lem held such disappointed hopes.

So the role of sex in s f as it is is little more than to titillate (which it rarely does), occasionally to provide an impression of profundity (as in the nonsense purveyed by Theodore Sturgeon), or simply to get a girl into the action. And so it is likely to remain while the field is dominated by mediocrity. A few, like Ursula LeGuin, give some real thought to the matter, but most prefer to leave it on a boy-meets-girl basis, which is exactly right unless sex has some definite importance in the development of the story's central theme. (Which, incidentally, is why sex was almost completely missing in the technological era of s f.)

We won't get the kind of consideration Lem demands, of sex or of any other subject, until s f is dominated by thoughtful writers who in their turn are not dominated by an indiscriminating market.

(September 16, 1971) *

* Maybe Lem becomes so annoyed about Western s f because he does not know the wretched conditions under which it is produced. I stand to be corrected on this, but I guess that the Writers Union or state publishing house in Poland produces all the books published in the country. For Americans or Australians this procedure sounds very censorious, but (again) I would guess that the state publishers would resemble most closely the role of the British Broadcasting Corporation in radio - they would be editors of quality rather than political content. From various remarks made by Lem and Franz Rottensteiner, it seems that Western "pop lit" just does not appear in Poland; that authors are paid by the state, and that they don't have jobs unless they are good writers. With no access to writers like Harold Robbins and Jacqueline Susann (and Robert Heinlein) Polish readers seem to buy in vast quantities (Lem: 5 million sales in Eastern Europe alone) works that would be classified by Western publishers as "too intellectual" for the "masses". Under such conditions, it's no wonder that Lem cannot understand why our public reads such junk, or why anyone here writes or publishes it. :: Here's George's reaction to LOST OPPORTUNITIES... the first letter I received about SFC 24: *

Stanislaw Lem surprises me, and not altogether happily, with his essay on LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS. It is always an error - and one of which Lem in a more thoughtful moment would certainly be aware - to criticise a work on the ground of what was not done rather than what was. And he surprises me again by his confusion of plot with theme. He writes:

The novel's main problem is the struggle for the entry of the planet Winter into the Cosmic Federation. On the other hand, the strange bisexuality of the Karhider is only part of the (interesting) background.

This, as I see the novel, is simply untrue. The theme is the need for meaningful communication, and it is demonstrated by the author's creation of a race very similar to ourselves but with a different cast of thought. And in concentrating on this different cast of thought she has put her finger firmly on the great barrier to communication. Among human beings such differences are commonly caused rather by environmental than hereditary (or even racial) variation, and can be overcome, with difficulty, by understanding the origins of such thinking. You "put yourself in the other man's place" and by an imaginative effort make some approximation of his mental processes.

Mrs LeGuin has carried the problem a step further by making this exchange of roles extremely difficult. Some men can think like women, and some women like men, but not very effectively - witness even the greatest attempts of novelists of both sexes. To think like a person who is neither and both is a problem on the grand scale. And neither protagonist in the novel succeeds completely, though in the arctic scenes the imperative "communicate or die" brings them close enough to admit a kinship sufficiently basic for a meaningful relationship to build from it.

So, in order of importance:

- the theme is communication,
- the plot is the means of achieving it,
- the fable, not to be confused with the plot, is the purely external matter of entry to the Federation.

Seen in this light, the three are integrated very well, and the theme looms larger than the means employed to develop it (that is, the plot and the fable). Lem's complaint about a happy ending is also misplaced, because Mrs LeGuin wanted to show how the communication might be achieved, and this success made the upbeat ending of the fable almost a necessity. It could have been written as a story of failure, and the point still made, but it would have been dramatically less effective (I think). In any case, the fable is merely the frame on which the real story is strung and our interest in it no more than to discover which possible variation will be used and how it will support the more important elements. (This is true of almost any novel which is not dependent, like a thriller or an s f adventure, on mere mechanics of plot structure.)

All this is merely to say that I feel Lem has mistaken the true orientation of Mrs LeGuin's novel and done it less than justice as a highly competent work.

But he says also:

However, if a work of s f succeeds in breaking through the ghetto walls to join the world of literature, then it must belong to the peak of world literature, because the scope of the problems in s f tend to stretch to cosmic and ontological dimensions.

Why it should have to belong to the "peak of world literature" is Lem's secret, because his reason for saying so is invalid. He is repeating that old refuge of the writer asked why he writes s f, and

says it is the only form which allows discussion of the problems he wishes to present. This I have always considered nonsense. I have yet to discover a basic problem in an s f work which has not been dealt with in the mainstream, and generally done better. Mrs LeGuin belongs to the mainstream, but that doesn't mean she has to rank with Tolstoy, Dickens, Stendhal, and the rest before her work has meaning. Mrs LeGuin is, in fact, a pretty good representative of the excellent but less than great - which is no mean place to fill in the vast bulk of world fiction.

Lem writes:

Any path in s f which does not eventually lead back to Man can offer us nothing except the riches of a galactic freak-show. Regrettably Mrs LeGuin's novel leaves a gaping hole.

This is, of course, part of his mistaken view of the work as a whole, discussed above. In fact the novel never for a moment gets away from Man. He is the subject of it, discussed in parable if you care to so phrase it, but never absent.

His psycho-sexual objections are possibly more firmly based, but I feel there is a world to be said for Mrs LeGuin. Since the problems raised by him are not envisaged by the writer (and I repeat that criticism should concentrate on what is there rather than what is not) it is reasonable to seek other solutions.

Mrs LeGuin in fact provides an alternative solution in the matter which makes communication difficult - the Karhider think (at least throughout their non-sexual phrase) without the complications imposed by the continual sexual urge and without the conventions imposed by the presence of two sexes with basically different functions. The result is not necessarily that they think more accurately, but within a different framework of conventions.

I am not at all certain that his hellish psychological complications would occur - and in a viable intellectual community they would not, therefore they do not.

So what does occur? Here I have to regret that Mrs LeGuin gives less information than one could desire, but it would not be impossible to supply a hypothetical psychology.

Start with the idea that platonic - non-sexual - affection is a possibility, and that would carry us over the non-sexual period. And since, like it or leave it, the sexual urge is very much a part of the development of any kind of love, and the cessation of the sexual urge is very much a part of the death of strong love, that non-sexual period would have implications militating against Lem's postulate that "this race's sexual system causes a complete uncertainty and challenge, which will paralyse the weak and rouse the strong to a powerless struggle against this kind of sexual moira." In writing that passage he was doing the very thing Mrs LeGuin's thesis warned against - thinking like a human being, where human beings as we know them were not involved.

Still, I would have liked more information on these points from the

CRITICANTO: SHORT NOTICES

Ted Pauls reviews

THE POLLINATORS OF EDEN

by JOHN BOYD

Dell 6996 :: 1970
75c

Gollancz :: 1969
212 pages :: £1.25

Consider the degree to which advancing technology has transformed everyday life during the last century. Consider, moreover, that latest reports show that the advance still accelerates, and multiplies geometrically. Every major technological break-through promptly ramifies into three or four others. Obviously, a science fiction author who sets his story any substantial number of years in our future confronts the challenging task of at least roughly sketching (if only by implication) a new technology and its consequences.

Whatever literary merits an s'f story may have, it will fail as science fiction if it fails to depict adequately the "futureness" of the future, as it were. A story that does not even make the attempt will turn out worse than a failure - it will be a dreary, insulting travesty of s f.

John Boyd's THE POLLINATORS OF EDEN is such a story. Allegedly it takes place in the year 2257 in the United States and upon an alien planet. We might expect some lapses when the author tries to portray consistently life in the US some 266 years from now; but Boyd simply makes no effort whatsoever. He tells us about two interplanetary vessels which transport the characters between the two locales of the novel. He tells us about helicars which sometimes transport them within the United States. But that is all! Boyd writes for tens of pages of a time without mentioning anything that the author could not find in his own bedroom in 1971. Boyd's lack of imagination is appalling: men carry car keys in hard-to-reach pockets and women wear bikinis, people use light switches and elevators and air-conditioners that are indistinguishable from today's, people speak exactly the same as today (the intervening generations have introduced neither technological terms nor slang), and so on, ad nauseum. As science fiction, it is laughable.

THE POLLINATORS OF EDEN has other flaws beside its main inadequacy as science fiction. Boyd writes well, and he thoroughly develops here a sound s f idea,

that of an intelligent plant species from another solar system. Obviously he has thought out well the details of an alien botany, and his concept of the sexuality of his flowers is memorable. I can see here the potential for a decent novelette, built around chapter 12. That novelette is gripping in spots, but Boyd loses it in 200 pages of slow-moving, dreadfully dull verbiage, unprofound analysis of essentially two-dimensional characters, and heavy-handed pokes at government bureaucracy and psychiatry. We are supposed to laugh uproariously at these jokes, but Boyd never achieves much more than mild amusement and unenlightening conversations held between boring people.

Ted Pauls reviews

ABYSS

by KATE WILHELM

Doubleday :: 1971
158 pages :: \$4.95

This is a book without raison d'etre. The two novellas which comprise this book have nothing in common save their author, and only the second and shorter story deserves preservation between hard covers. STRANGER IN THE HOUSE has a very familiar plot: a couple moves into a country house which contains an alien creature in its sub-basement. In this case, the alien is benevolent, but so totally and thoroughly alien that mental contact be-

tween the humans and it causes traumatic shock, insanity, and even death. Wilhelm does little that is spectacularly new with this idea, but she handles its elements quite well and creates a first-rate story. Wilhelm portrays with sensitivity the alien, a six-foot-long grey being with large eyes that secrete sulphuric acid. She shows its pain, its loneliness, its nobility of spirit, that form the emotional element of the story. Indeed Wilhelm characterises the alien far more impressively than she shows the humans. STRANGER IN THE HOUSE is tightly written, with some excellent dramatic narrative (especially the scenes where alien and human come into painful telepathic contact).

THE PLASTIC ABYSS, the other novella, is an empty and superficial parallel worlds story, encumbered by indifferent characterisation and pointless mysticism. In this story, the people remind me most of the cast of characters in one of Erle Stanley Gardner's "Perry Mason" mysteries - or even more typically, in one of the television plays based upon the series. Wilhelm writes upper class drawing room cliches - executives and executive wives; the crusty old president of the firm, clever though uneducated; the itinerant young artist who'll marry the executive's daughter; the independent research scientist who is the crusty old president's dearest friend; the executive's jet-setter daughter, home from finishing school; all moving around a world of luxury homes, cocktail parties, fast cars, and private beaches; a world without any point of contact with the one in which most of us live. To make it worse, Wilhelm does not even portray these plastic people with the sort of deadly consistent firmness that would have shown some interest on the part of the author. I don't think she cared. THE PLASTIC ABYSS includes a couple of clever ideas about parallel existences and one memorable simile (an executive's wife who is "the yellow pulp paper on which he tried out" his ideas before presenting them to the "fine smooth twenty pound bond" of his listening guests) wrapped in a story that the author threw together on the spur of the moment.

Perhaps ABYSS will be worth buying for the second novella if it appears in paperback. But not at \$4.95.

Paul Anderson reviews

A FOR ANYTHING

by DAMON KNIGHT

Walker :: 1970

160 pages :: \$4.95

First US publication 1959

A FOR ANYTHING first appeared in 1959 under the title THE PEOPLE MAKER. It has remained out of print ever since, except for a short-lived paperback edition. I first read it a number of years ago, and as I enjoyed it then, I approached a second reading with some misgivings. I need not have worried; this book has stood the passage of time well.

At the beginning of the book, the standard backyard inventor discovers a mechanism by which a person can duplicate endlessly anything he wants to. Knight shows how this one invention can upset the applecart of society, and bring to people a temporary freedom from dependence upon material things. Knight uses his Gismo as a plot device, only important to the extent that it affects the people of his future society. It's handy that Knight does not look at the Gismo too closely - I'm rather curious about the workings of such a gadget, especially as it does not seem to have a power source. So much for the science in this s f novel.

After the book's introductory chapters, Knight takes us forward a century or so and describes yet another of those future feudal power structures which has a land-owning aristocracy on top and an inevitable slave population at the bottom supporting the whole society. Knight's story begins to take well-worn paths, as he deals with power/status struggles, and has a slave revolt for a climax. He adds a few twists to his story, without which this would have been a poor book, as many of the incidents could have come from an assortment of period costume romances.

Knight gives little life to his main characters. Only his hero shows signs of humanity. Unfortunately Knight scatters these signs sparsely through the book. He sketches the slaves very roughly, if at all, and they all seem like featureless robots, although Knight tells us that they have human ancestry. Of course the slaves have been mass-produced by the Gismo, so they all have this bland sameness. Knight nearly trips himself up here: the leader of the slaves seems to have no rivals, but at the same time he must have hundreds of duplicates among the slave population.

Knight writes a fairly entertaining story about a modern cornucopia, but he could have made it all a little less orthodox. As the dust jacket proclaims, his style is "unpretentious" and at all times highly readable. Probably Walker's editor was justified in resurrecting A FOR ANYTHING in hard covers, but I don't see how he can call it "one of the classics in the field".

Paul Anderson reviews

THE SEA THING
& OTHER STORIES

by A E VAN VOGT
and E MAYNE HULL

Sidgwick & Jackson :: 1970

222 pages :: \$A 3.35

First US publication 1969

The paperbound edition of this collection was called OUT OF THE UNKNOWN, and as you may guess, all of these "seven shocking stories of science-fantasy horror" come from UNKNOWN magazine, that rich source of intriguing fantasy. Unfortunately most of the better stories have appeared in many anthologies, and some should have stayed there. Most of these stories are neither masterpieces nor complete failures, but

all somewhere inbetween.

The four stories written by E Mayne Hull, van Vogt's wife, read most like UNKNOWN stories. Supernatural beings grant the hero/heroine of a tale a series of wishes, and attach a number of fish-hooks to them. In such stories, the main character meets his supposed benefactor because of some quirk of pure chance. In THE WISHES WE MAKE: "'Oh! You didn't call me. purposely. You don't know the method.'" In THE WELLWISHER: "'Wrong number!'" groaned a voice just behind his left shoulder. 'That's my luck! First time in a thousand years anybody finds that combination and it has to be a dumb accident.'" The poor dumb character spends the rest of the story trying to get around the restrictions placed upon him/her. In THE ULTIMATE WISH the benefactor offers the final wish anybody could have on this Earth. In each of these stories, the author tries to give a final twist to the tired cliché of the plot. Of the three stories here, I would describe one as just average, and the other two as slightly better. They are certainly not horror stories.

E Mayne Hull's other story, THE PATIENT, is fairly lightweight. It depends on a surprise ending that is revealed to slower readers in the closing paragraphs.

A E van Vogt leads off the book, but unfortunately his first novelette is the least successful story here. THE SEA THING is a straight-forward action adventure. A group of shark-hunters battle a monster which comes from the sea in human form in order to destroy them. Unfortunately van Vogt's style does not match his story. As usual, man gains victory over the forces of the supernatural. The characters are made of tissue paper rather than cardboard. In the next story, the ending is also quite inevitable from the start.

The longest story in the book, A E van Vogt's THE GHOST, is also the most entertaining of the seven. Scientists would hardly accept the main premise of the plot, but from it van Vogt spins out a story that is both complex and logical. Van Vogt even manages to tie up most of the loose ends of the story.

THE SEA THING AND OTHER STORIES is a fairly readable collection, with no really outstanding stories, and only one failure.

Paul Anderson reviews

TARNSMAN OF GOR

by JOHN NORMAN

Tandem 4546 :: 1970

224 pages :: 80c

First US publication 1966

I have read a number of sword-and-sorcery books recently, and after awhile the heroes begin to merge into one another in my mind. They all have the same virtues and faults. No matter where they come from, they are all marooned in strange lands, but can fight their way out of strange situations because they are master swordsmen.

Norman changes the cliché plot slightly. His adventures take place on a planet that is a companion of Earth, but always on the other side of the sun. The author dismisses any possible objections to this idea with a glib, offhand explanation that the Priest-Kings can distort the date received by our instruments. Unfortunately that is about Norman's only variation on the tradition structure.

The first chapter, 12 boring pages long, tells about the hero's life on Earth

and why he did not succeed there. During the next few pages Tarl Cabot learns how to become the greatest swordsman that Gor has ever seen. Our hero undertakes to steal the Home Stone of Ar and return with it to his city of Ko-ro-ba. If you really want to read the book, then you should begin at this point. The preceding 60 pages merely introduce the rest of the book.

Now Tarl can show that he is a true hero, who acts in a virtuous, foolhardy, and completely predictable way at all times. Norman emphasises all of his hero's good deeds, and throws in coincidences wherever possible. When Tarl decides to free his slave girl Sana, the decoy for his "difficult" task, he discovers that she is the daughter of one of the leaders of a neighbouring city, Thentis. Later, of course, he calls on the gratitude of her father, whose ~~loyal~~ army of Tarnsmen come to his aid. Everything he does interacts with some future event. Unfortunately John Norman merely exaggerates a tendency of the famous John Carter series of Edgar Rice Burroughs.

The author wastes little space on the characters of his book. He quickly tells us whether any newcomer is a "goodie" or a "baddie". Norman introduces Tarl Cabot at great length, but he does not tell us anything that we could not have assumed as soon as we started reading. His father disappeared soon after he was born, and his mother died in due course, so we are not really surprised when Tarl is taken across to the counter-earth, Gor, and his father. But we are surprised when Tarl immediately greets his father with affection; especially as he has never seen the father who walked out on him without a regret. Tarl Cabot also adapts to the life on Gor with remarkable ease; he was a master at a small backwoods college. The lesser characters rarely function as anything more than names on the printed page.

This may happen because the society of Gor degrades most of its people to the lowest possible level of existence. The males treat their women badly: the women can choose the life of a tower slave, or a career as a Free Companion of a warrior. If they do not agree to the latter, the men force them to take the former. The men treat them the same, in any case.

The book steps through its paces at a fairly sprightly pace. We find the standard number of sword fights, and little more gore than usual. If you like this sort of thing, you should try Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Paul Anderson reviews

PRIEST-KINGS OF GOR

by JOHN NORMAN

Sidgwick & Jackson :: 1971
317 pages :: \$A 4.95

First US publication 1968

In PRIEST-KINGS OF GOR, John Norman continues the adventures of Tarl Cabot of Ko-ro-ba. In the first two books of the series, the Priest-Kings brought Tarl to Gor to serve their inscrutable purposes. Tarl learns this purpose in this book, as he ventures deep into the heart of the realm of the Priest-Kings, the impregnable mountains of Sardar. He seeks his Free Companion, the beautiful Talena of Ar. After Tarl is captured the author departs from his earlier formula plot, and puts in its

place one that is just as hackneyed.

As the book's title suggests, Tarl finally meets the famed and feared Priest-Kings, who hold the destiny of Gor in their antennae. Once inside the nest, Tarl finds that the Priest-Kings hold both men and women in slavery on appro-

ximately the same terms. Perhaps the women score more victories over the men, than vice-versa. Certainly Tarl treats this book's heroine, Vika of Treve, more harshly than usual, and far worse than her deeds warrant. All too often he is the epitome of male chauvinism, and very different from the idealistic young man who appeared first in TARNSMAN OF GOR.

Unfortunately there is little else to Norman's characterisation. He makes the actions of his minor characters fit the dictates of the story alone. He invents Vika as only an excuse for the actions of his hero. The only Priest-Kings he shows are Sarm and Misk, the leaders of the two factions, so in many ways this group remains as mysterious as before.

The book's main fault is that Norman lets the Priest-Kings introduce large slabs of nature study, as taken from a handy text book on the habits of insects. The lectures come thick and fast, but usually I could minimise their effects by skipping them. Yet at the end of the story, Norman does not tell us why insects equipped with super-science bother to stock their planet with so many free humans. Maybe succeeding volumes will explain this.

After Norman tells us about the insect's nest, he settles down to the usual battle to the death between opposing groups of the enemy, plus the inevitable slave revolt. Of course the slaves side with the moderates, led by Tarl's friend Misk. This action gives Norman an excuse to tell us something about ant psychology, and the consequences of the rewards of doing good deeds in the name of friendship.

Finally, the book begins to sound far more like legitimate s f than his previous volumes. Norman tries to merge the dazzling-swordsmanship-and-gore genre with the lectures-and-alien-beings type of writing. Perhaps he will succeed one day in joining sword-and-sorcery and science fiction, and then he will write far better books than this. However, in PRIEST-KINGS OF GOR, he still relies on a flat writing style, coincidences, escapes, and that trusty sword which still features so prominently in the book's last chapters. In the last pages we can see quite clearly that John Norman will serve up another quest in the next Gor book, and I will find it just as orthodox and boring as this one.

David W Boutland reviews

GALACTIC ODYSSEY

by KEITH LAUMER.

Mayflower 583 11729 :: 1970
143 pages :: 65c

First US publication 1967

WORLDS OF THE IMPERIUM

by KEITH LAUMER

Mayflower 583 11757 :: 1970
125 pages :: 65c

First US publication 1962

In WORLDS OF THE IMPERIUM we travel a swift and exciting route by armed TNL scout to an alternate world of adventure dreamed up by one of the best action writers in the business. In GALACTIC ODYSSEY the same writer, Keith Laumer, takes us aspacing with Billy Danger and the beautiful Lady Raire. End of review.

And in writing so uncritically of Laumer I follow in the footsteps of the countless shoals of critics who, when faced with his books, simply put their sharp-nibbed pens aside, turn up the fire, adjust their reading lamps to shine on the muscly pages of Laumer's fantastic adventures, and read on.

Because Laumer takes me back - takes

many of us back, I suspect - the moment I open one of his books. Wild, exciting chases around alien worlds, fast, swashbuckling adventures in settings from Stonehenge to the farthest stars... Who could forget A TRACE OF MEMORY? Who is so critically refined that he can't be stirred by WORLDS OF THE IMPERIUM or GALACTIC ODYSSEY? Not I.

In fairness, I must admit that GALACTIC ODYSSEY does read as though the author had begun his adventuring with very little notion of where it would all end - but isn't that how it should be sometimes? And WORLDS OF THE IMPERIUM has moments when the action is a bit too fast and thick for comfort - but why not?

Sf is first and foremost a medium for the adventure story; if you can't get excited about going to the stars, if you want it all cut and dried and smothered in the arid sauces of intellectualism, forget Laumer. Because you don't review Laumer's books - you read them. That's why he wrote them.

By word of mouth I hear that writer Laumer has suffered a heart attack, but is recovering. It's to be hoped that he recovers fully - there's a colourful, exciting corner of the universe which would be empty without him.

Alf van der Poorten reviews

THE TIME-HOPPERS

by ROBERT SILVERBERG

Tandem 4124 :: 1970
190 pages :: 80c

First US publication 1967

THE TIME-HOPPERS tells of a 25th century rigidly controlled society, quite competently described, although we've seen it all before. The only escape is to the freedom of the past. However these escapes must have already partially conditioned the present world. If you prevent the escapes you change the present.

A good idea, but this so-so book lacks the verve of Silverberg's time-travel extravaganza UP THE LINE, the depth and ferocity of THE MAN IN THE MAZE, or the delicacy of NIGHTWINGS. Moreover the essential time-travel paradox simply won't do. The past cannot be changed, and time journeys which, so to speak, have already occurred, must occur, or those which have not as yet occurred have indeed not occurred, and will not. Indeed (as you can see in my BA thesis which I must rewrite into coherent form one of these days) the sort of change in the past which Silverberg talks about simply doesn't make sense, and cannot stand up as the vital feature of a serious book. Nonsense in a happy, friendly story, such as UP THE LINE, is perfectly proper, but unreality impinges too closely upon this one. However, THE TIME-HOPPERS is a competent pot-boiler, and I recommend it for its readability. You won't place it in your favourite hundred books, nor in your hundred most despised books. But then, only two hundred books can attain to those happy positions.

Alf van der Poorten reviews

HAWKSBILL STATION

by ROBERT SILVERBERG

Tandem 4116 :: 1970
192 pages :: 80c

First US publication 1968

Usually I find it annoying to read a book which is simply a novelette filled out to book length. I quote the recent van Vogt abortions as vivid enough instances, and also a large number of Ace Doubles. In cases like FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON and HAWKSBILL STATION, the authors have stretched out excellent short stories into novels of only ave-

rage quality. By means of flashbacks, Silverberg adds a love interest (time travel again; strictly speaking, flashforwards) and retains all of the original short in its original form. You can read the original as a serial, so to speak, simply by avoiding the accretions.

The easiest thing you can do is to buy the collection that contains HAWKSBILL STATION (unpolluted) - say, in Wollheim and Carr's WORLD'S BEST S F 1968, and read some other worthwhile stories at the same time. Once it was a great story; watered wine, even if the water and wine are hardly mixed, is simply not good wine.

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PHILIP JOSE FARMER

A Letter to Mr Lem

A half-hour ago, I was in my big backyard, throwing a ball to my grand-daughter and climbing the sycamore with her. The sky was cloudy; the grass and leaves were wet and damp; fifty yards away, the fog became a solid bar to visibility. The sun is up but not out, and there is a chill in the air. Winter is still a month or more away, but Yukon radar reports detect the first of the brass monkeys going south.

Although my six-year-old grand-daughter wanted to keep on playing, I told her I had work to do. And, sighing, I went down into my troll's office in the basement. I'd put off answering Lem's SEX IN SCIENCE FICTION long enough. Actually, I hadn't been putting it off; I had a book to finish and couldn't take the time to write this rather long letter. It's not really a letter of comment; it's an article but untitled. I was going to title it something like SOCKS IN SEANCE-FUCKTION, but I didn't want to confuse Franz Rottensteiner any more than he already is. Besides, some people might think I was being facetious, and I'm serious. Lem's title, by the way, is exactly the title I used for an article I sold to a somewhat new psychosociological magazine, SEXUAL BEHAVIOR.

I might as well say right now that I'm taking a whole day off to write this because I had asked to see Lem's article and I feel that I have an obligation to do so. But it's an exercise in futility, since nothing that I or anybody else will say will change Lem's or Rottensteiner's minds or make them admit they could in any degree be in error. Such is the way of literary critics. All, except myself, of course, are afflicted with a luciferean pride or a dinosaurian invulnerability to the ideas of others. But I believe that there are certain statements in Lem's article that can be shown to be clearly wrong. And I also believe that Rottensteiner is as much the author of the article as Lem. However, Lem does try for objectivity and he is polite. And he is of such stature that he should be answered.

One thing. Can Mr Lem read English? I think that I read somewhere, probably in one of Rottensteiner's articles, that he can't. If he can't, then he has read the English-language works he reviews in SEX IN SCIENCE FICTION in translations. And this might make a difference in his ability to perceive all the levels of meaning in certain works.

Lem says (about me), "...he pursues ideas which he considers original and va-

luable, as when he used ULYSSES as a paradigm." This statement implies that Lem read RIDERS OF THE PURPLE WAGE (in DANGEROUS VISIONS) in the original language. He would have had to do so, since no translation exists. And I would question the validity of a translation if it did exist. In translating such works as ALICE IN WONDERLAND, FINNEGANS WAKE, or RIDERS OF THE PURPLE WAGE, the main difficulty is not in translating. You can seldom translate a pun; you must find proper, and excellent, analogies in the foreign language for the puns. You try to find equivalents. (For problems in translating puns, I recommend Warren Weaver's ALICE IN MANY TONGUES.)

If Lem can't read English, he didn't read RIDERS. And if he didn't read it, why is he offering an opinion on it? Is he taking Rottensteiner's word for it that RIDERS is valueless and is derived from ULYSSES? If Lem can read English, can he know all its subtleties or know enough to make a perceptive reading of RIDERS? Many native English speakers have had trouble with RIDERS; it demands work on the part of its readers, work and knowledge. I'll get back to RIDERS later on.

Meanwhile, we have Lem's comments on THE LOVERS and MY SISTER'S BROTHER (in the original magazine version, OPEN TO ME, MY SISTER, and in the French, OUVRE MOI, O MA SOEUR). Lem says that the evolutionary development of the planet of Ozagen can't stand serious criticism. He then gives his reasons for saying this. And he immediately reveals that he has not read TL or MSB as a serious critic should. That is, he's read hastily and thus has misread.

Mr Lem, I took great care to show that the lalitha were not descended from insects and were not insects. They are not super-insects, as you say. Nor was the mimetism of the lalitha a result of evolution by reason. I stressed this point in the original English-language novel. And I have verified that the French translation of TL has not deleted or mistranslated the passages stressing the above points. (No authorised German or Polish translations of TL exist as yet.) Mr Lem, I made it clear that the lalitha were descended from a pre-insectile non-chitinous form classified as chordata pseudarthropoda. Fobo and his fellow "wogglebugs" and Jeannette and her kind were descended from a primitive creature which did not follow the insects' mode of survival: the exoskeleton, the many legs, the limitations of size and respiration, etc. Moreover, as I made clear, the prehominid ancestors of the lalitha attached themselves to the prehominid humans at a very early stage of evolution. In fact, this occurred not too long after the ancestors of both emerged from the sea. The mimetism of the pre-lalitha was not, I repeat, not a matter of volition governed by intelligence. The evolution was the result of instinct and whatever factors there are that guide evolution.

One of the many precedents, or models, for this mode of evolutionary mimetism are certain beetles. These mimic ants in behaviour and form so they may parasitically live among and off the ants. Their structure and habits are the results of millions of years of evolution. And no intelligence whatsoever was involved in their mimetism.

A similar thing happened with the lalitha. These, of course, attained sentience at the same time as their human hosts, and then they used their intelligence to further their cultural evolution.

It's aggravating to have to repeat the above, since it's all in THE LOVERS. I can't believe that Mr Lem could be so imperceptive if he had read the English or French version. Did you read a much-cut and perhaps mistranslated version, Mr Lem?

Lem says that he hasn't touched on the question of whether or not the novel has an extra-scientific, cultural meaning. Yes, Mr Lem, it does. It has, in fact, many levels of extra-scientific and cultural meanings. I would point them out for you but this letter is going to be long enough as it is. However, I'll be glad to send you a copy of THE LOVERS in English or French, and you can read it yourself. Your comment that you would have preferred to have TL presented from Jeannette's viewpoint so we would have the inner life of the insect is valid enough, except for the fact that she was not an insect. If I were to write TL over, I might do this. Actually, I contemplated many years ago writing a sequel to TL in which we would have a complete drama of the psyche of one of Jeannette's children. But I had too many other stories to write.

I deny that the biology of TL is impossible or even improbable. I was very careful and very detailed when I created the set-up of the planet Ozagen. That was in 1952. I reread TL recently, and there are many literary changes I'd like to make. But the biology/evolution constructions can't be invalidated by one who reads the text carefully, and it doesn't need correcting.

Lem criticises a story of mine whose title he can't remember. Perhaps he has a mental block on the word MOTHER. In the first place, Mr Lem, the Mothers of MOTHER are more than just gigantic wombs. Nor is it a valid criticism to suggest that it's unreasonable for Eddie Fetts to land on Baudelaire with his mother. Why not? The reasons given in the story are valid enough. Also, Eddie Fetts is not an astronaut, as you say. Astronaut is a 20th-century term which does not in any way apply to Fetts. In his time, as should be obvious from the story, interstellar travel is commonplace.

Lem says that nothing follows from MOTHER. What does he mean by this statement? He doesn't explain. MOTHER is a story of about ten thousand words, and in this narrow space Freudian principles and an alien ecosystem and individual biology are presented. Eddie re-enacts his entire life in Mother's cave-womb; his drives are explained through action, not through a long-winded lecture. And when Eddie uses the scalpel as a phallus and weapon, he combines his desire to mate with his mother with his desire to kill her. He also eats his own mother after having been, in a sense, swallowed and digested by her when he was a child. In ten thousand words two beings, Eddie and the Mother, are peeled layer by layer and shown to the reader, yet Mr Lem says, "Again, nothing follows from this." What do you want, Mr Lem? Thunder and lightning and God Himself speaking the Epilogue?

Lem then goes on to comment on MY SISTER'S BROTHER. He can't give its title because - I am guessing - he doesn't have it available, and perhaps he knows of it only through a resume provided by Rottensteiner. This point will have to be cleared up. But Lem does give a completely false impression of the story and so makes me wonder in what language he read it and in what form the translation existed. In MSB, the phallus does not propel itself into the body of a female, nor is the sexual act in it a projection of wishful thinking. (Even if it were a projection of that, how would Mr Lem know? He does not know me at all, and only a psychotherapist and myself could determine that after many sessions.)

The Eeltau in MSB don't have many males, despite what Lem says. All the partners (except the phallus-larva) in the sexual act do feel orgasm during the act, despite what Lem says. It says they do in clear enough prose in the English version. It also states that the Eeltau are neither male nor female in the human sense. They are female only in producing eggs but not in any

genital or mammary fashion. The phallus is, economically, also the larva, and the sexual acts and the transmission of genetic material and the metamorphosis of the larva into the final hominoid form are all scientifically plausible. I suggest that Mr Lem read books on basic biology and entomology and cover the subject of batrachians thoroughly.

The sexual act in MSB has not only an intrinsic biologically justifiable purpose, it has a definite and profound emotional and social - in short, cultural - value. Not only this. It is evident - even if the reader isn't hit over the head with the idea - that Lane, the Earthman, is beginning to love Martia, the Eeltau. They share a communion of bread and wine which expresses the love between them. They are beginning to develop a deep emotional attachment, even if they are so alien to each other. Then, Lane recoils in horror when he learns the true nature of Martia's endoworm. The fears of homosexuality his culture has planted so deeply in him, and his revulsion to her alien sexuality make him kill the phallus-larvae.

It's also pointed out in MSB that Martia might find Lane's sexual organs as disgusting. Need I go any deeper in this letter, Mr Lem? You should see by now that you missed much. Again, what follows from this is that I'll be happy to send you MSB in the original English. Or in the French version, if it's a good translation. I haven't checked it out yet.

As I said, the biological systems, the entire ecosystems, in fact, of TL, MSB, and MOTHER, are detailed and valid. And creating them gave me a great joy, an intellectual near-orgasm. This joy in creating is something that neither Lem nor Rottensteiner, to my knowledge, have ever mentioned. What differentiates the s f writer from the writer of other types of fiction is an intellectual joy in creating well-thought-out and original worlds. He has the same delight in doing this that the dolphin seems to have in his play in the ocean. The s f writers (those not doing hack work, of course) delight in the play of the mind. Surely, Mr Lem, you've experienced this. And the more perceptive reader, I'm sure, shares in this delight. I don't expect professional critics to enjoy this, of course. They're too numbed with analysis to delight in synthesis.

(It's true, unfortunately, that the main mass of s f doesn't offer this intellectual delight. Only now and then does a work obviously created by a dolphin-man come along.)

Back to Lem's comments on my using ULYSSES as a paradigm for RIDERS OF THE PURPLE WAGE (ROTPW). In the first place, Mr Lem, you make a mistake many have made. You assume, because I used FINNEGANS WAKE as an integral part of the plot, that the techniques were taken from Joyce. In fact, even Mr Blish, who should know better, made the statement that the techniques in ROTPW were lifted bodily from the Cave of the Winds section of ULYSSES. He said this even after having read several of my explanations that this just was not so. If he had taken the trouble to re-read the Cave of the Winds section, he would have seen how wrong he was. (Unless, as I suspect, he's closed his mind entirely on this subject. He seems to suffer a crystallisation of brain cells whenever he thinks anybody has raided his Joycean territory.)

No, Mr Lem, I did not use ULYSSES as a paradigm. ROTPW would have been written in its style and with its techniques as it is - except, of course, for its references to Joyce and FW - if Joyce had never existed. Joyce did not invent the many-layered pun any more than he invented the stream-of-consciousness technique. Nor did he invent the use of dreams to show psychology.

ROTPW is not derived from Joyce. It derives from Aristophanes, Rabelais, and Sterne. And, mainly, it derives from Philip Jose Farmer. I was writing little experimental sketches for my own amusement when I was in high school. I never even heard of Joyce until I was twenty-three years old. And the particular prose style and techniques of ROTPW are the literary analogues of the paintings which Chibiados Winnegan created and which are described in detail in ROTPW.

Even if ROTPW had derived from the Cave of the Winds section of ULYSSES (which it did not in any way), I'd see no objections to it on that ground. It surpasses, in my opinion, the Cave of the Winds episode as much as Shakespeare's HAMLET surpasses the earlier crude THE HYSTERIE OF HAMBLET. I don't mean I'm a Shakespeare by this; I just mean that it's not valid to denigrate a work because of its derivation if the work surpasses the prototype.

You have in ROTPW, Mr Lem, a detailed portrayal of a future (and very possible) society. You have, despite what some lazy and imperceptive readers have said, a very definite story. You have the persona and the problems of artists in a moneyless society. You have... I could go on but why should I? The work demands even from native speakers of English that which Rottensteiner has been crying for in s f works. Again, I offer to send you a copy so you can read it in the original. If you can't read English, then you had no business making the comment you did.

You then tell us that PALLAS OU LA TRIBULATION is a masterwork in sexual novels. Strangely enough, the very things you see in it are the very things you missed in TL and MSB, the very things that also existed in TL and MSB. But the erotic relationship in MSB, for instance, wasn't produced as a cudgel; it was semaphored with a few signals.

You say that PALLAS probably won't be translated because it's so good. I think you should reconsider this remark. Rottensteiner says that your novels are very good; indeed, he claims they're great. Yet you're being translated. And your statement implies that the really great s f novels are lying fallow in nontranslation. I doubt it. But I'll tell you what I'll do about PALLAS. I've already told my agent to get me a copy. I'll read it, and if it's as good as you say it is, I'll get it translated. And if the publishing business comes out of its present depression, there'll be no trouble getting a publisher.

As for your statement that you know of no other example than PALLAS of psychologically acute prose in the s f field, I can't argue with that. You probably don't know. (I hasten to add, you don't know because of language difficulties, I'm sure.) But I know of Sturgeon's MORE THAN HUMAN and Boyd's THE POLLINATORS OF EDEN. And I especially know Stapledon's SIRIUS. SIRIUS is, in my opinion, one of the ten greatest s f classics. It is also the greatest sexual s f novel. No sexual s f novel that I know of has come near it. I recommend SIRIUS, Mr Lem, but not in a censored or badly translated version.

You state that a writer would find it dangerous to write a novel depicting a culture that includes sex within the highest sphere of its transcendence. This would have been true twenty-five years ago. That is, the writing would not have been dangerous; the publication of the book would have been. I suppose this is what you meant. But such a book would no longer be considered dangerous. Not in the western world, anyway.

Also, I deny that you are right when you say s f authors show the highest deg-

ree of ignorance about anthropology. I've been reading anthropology for thirty-five years, and I know many American and English authors who have read deeply in anthropology. If you had read deeply, and widely, in s f, you wouldn't have made that statement. But, again, this can be accounted for by a certain isolation on your part.

You say, concerning LIMBO, that you find the idea of the self-mutilation in it not so believable. Well, Wolfe didn't expect people to take him seriously in this. LIMBO was a satire on many things, among which was the type of heavily written, absurdly extrapolated, basically obtuse type of s f novel which LIMBO is. It is so on purpose, and Wolfe was having fun when he wrote it, and he was appalled when his obtuse readers swallowed it straight. However, we do have the circumcision ceremonies of the Australian aborigines which leave the men half-impotent for the rest of their lives. We also have, in some preliterate societies, the circumcision of women, the filing or extracting of good teeth, the cutting off of thumbs, and so on. And in our own "civilised" cultures, we have the terrible and irrational self-mutilation and self-killing of hundreds of thousands every year. We accept this as normal, as part of the scheme of things. I refer to the annual toll resulting from traffic accidents.

You say, "Literature achieves its full value when the actions depicted can be perpetrated by no other means than language." (Perpetrated, I am assuming, is a mistranslation. Performed?) If I understand this sentence, I can logically conclude from it that fantasy (or s f) is the only literature that can achieve its full value.

You (Lem) say, concerning the rape of the Madonna, that it is "the most terrible sexual perversion possible in the realm of Christian culture." No, Mr Lem. In "Christian culture", the worst perversion would be the rape of the baby Jesus. A man who tried to rape the Virgin Mary would be regarded as crazy, but at least his object of desire would be an adult female - if she existed, that is. Caligula, if you'll remember, tried to rape the moon, which is, I suppose, almost as crazy a thing to attempt. Whether the ancient Romans regarded the attempt as a terrible perversion or not, I don't know. Again, the moon was a female. Trying to rape Father Sun would have been a perversion, but the offering of a burnt cock was not unknown in the ancient Latin religion.

Mr Lem has many valuable things to say about reactions and countercultures. But he's not being fair by accusing the hippies and yippies of presenting society with nothing except a reaction of protest. He thinks they should create and present a new heirarchy of values.

In the first place, most hippies are marxist, or claim to be. They can't present a new heirarchy of values. In the second place, the term "hippie" covers a spectrum of individuals who are often not in agreement on anything except the need for a decent and workable society. These "hippies" have many different ideas about how to achieve the society, and they also differ on their definitions of that society. Moreover, they're pioneers. They're too busy being forced to cut down the trees to know what kind of house they'll build or what they'll do with the cleared ground. They live in and off present society, and any ideas for new values will have to evolve from them. Intellectual and political and economic ideas evolve more swiftly than biological entities. But they still have to take a certain amount of time to evolve.

Besides, unless you yourself, Mr Lem, come up with a new heirarchy or core of

values (one which would transcend the present capitalist, socialist, and marxist values), you are in no position to criticise. Perhaps you have done so in the novels which I haven't been able to get hold of as yet.

Actually, some fairly old ideas are all we need. What we need, and quickly, is a worldwide economy of abundance. Not the present worldwide economy of scarcity. We need a system which combines the economy of abundance with social and psychological systems wherein individuals have a genuine opportunity to develop their full potentiality. The old-fashioned virtues: love, honour, decency, are enough. But they must be brought into existence. They have seldom existed and do not exist to any degree now. We don't need new values; we just need a new approach to the old values.

Mr Lem says, "Until now, all men have been unequal only according to economic, professional, and political situation. Now we can see the possibility of a new biological inequality on the horizon" (because of biological engineering). The truth, I believe, is exactly the opposite. All men have been unequal in their biology from the beginning of the species. Some have been born with more potentiality for intelligence than others. Some have been born to be tall or short or straight or crooked. Some have been born with the seeds of insanity in them. Heredity plus environment makes for inequality (social institutions aside). This was once hotly disputed, and such a viewpoint was regarded as heretical and downright inhumanitarian. But modern scientific findings are increasingly showing the fallacy of the equal-heredity argument. And when biological engineering is fully developed, we may see all men, for the first time, becoming biologically equal, not unequal. A dreadful thought. We fix all men's heights at such and such, all IQs at such and such, all muscular development at such and such, and perhaps even give everybody the same handsome or beautiful face. At last, the millenium of mediocrity has arrived.

My comment on Lem's comments about defused sex and its development (page 47), is that Aldous Huxley's BRAVE NEW WORLD, published in 1932, treated everything on which he speculates in this paragraph.

Mr Lem says (page 49), "...in our culture, sexual and religious spheres bear close similarities to each other." That, Mr Lem, is one of my major themes in THE LOVERS and MY SISTER'S BROTHER and FATHER and NIGHT OF LIGHT and a number of others (even, sometimes, in my "adventure" stories). It was the big point in my mainstream novel, FIRE AND THE NIGHT.

Let's look at the ideas you've treated in your own books (page 45). All, I regret to say, have either been treated a number of times in the old s f magazines of the 1930s and 1940s or in more recent literature. That these ideas are old does not, of course, mean that you haven't given them a new treatment. I look forward to reading the eleven novels Rottensteiner says will be out in English soon. I sincerely hope he's right when he says they're great. We need great works in this field, need them very much. (We need them in all fields of literature, too.) I'll reserve my opinion until I've read your novels. Rottensteiner's previous literary judgments haven't inspired any confidence in me, though they have provided a sort of valuable, but not always trustworthy, antiguide.

I wouldn't take it too hard that you've failed as a critic in SEX IN SCIENCE FICTION. In the first place, it's obvious that you haven't read the English-language books you refer to, in the original English. So it's not your fault that you missed so much. Also, many writers are great creators but imperceptive and inadequate critics. Besides I'm not sure that your article, as pre-

sented in English, and probably as presented in German, reflects accurately the original Polish.

Despite the above, I really do welcome you to the s f field. The Polish, according to Nietzsche (himself partly Polish), are the French of the Slavs. I trust your works will have all the qualities of the great French writers: Balzac, Rabelais, Montaigne, Voltaire, Proust, Camus, und so weiter. I wish you all the good fortune and the favourable reception you deserve. I think you'll find, once you get out into the western s f world, that there's a certain camaraderie among s f writers, even among those who hate each other's guts, that you won't find in other literary fields.

I only hope your novels are translated better than mine seem to have been. And I hope that you will take advantage of other avenues of communication, so that the world will open to you in many many flowering forms.

(October 24, 1971)

Estos plezuro koni vin.

PHILIP JOSE FARMER (4106 Devon Lane, Peoria, Illinois 61614, USA)

****brg**** The editor puts his bit in. As Stanislaw Lem said in his letter which appeared in SFC 14, he does read English, but at the time of writing the letter, he had never spoken it. I get hints from F Rottensteiner that Lem has received a huge amount of western science fiction over the past few years, and has read it all in the original language.

The main confusions in the translation are probably my fault (at least Lem is not entirely happy with the result). When Franz's original translation arrived, I found that I could understand it approximately, but much of its vocabulary and syntax was simply not English; it was German translated directly into English, i.e. almost meaningless. (I have this difficulty in explaining to Franz that German and English are about as unlike as two languages can be, especially in their basic premises about what is 'good language' and what is not. In German you can express the abstract far better than in English, but we judge the quality of English by the way it expresses the concrete; or that's the impression I get from my recent skirmishes with German.) Therefore I rewrote every sentence of Franz's translation into something that sounded remotely English, and sent it back to Franz for approval. He was dismayed by the way in which I had turned the impersonal, the passive, and the abstract into the personal, the active, and the concrete. It grated; but not half as much as Lem's verbal manner grates on the English reader. None of this detracts from the articles themselves, may I add. The more Lem the merrier, but not for the idle reader.

Thanks very much, Mr Farmer, for responding to the article through the pages of this magazine. I'm sure Messrs Lem and Rottensteiner (and everybody else) will have something to say in answer to this letter/article. *

HANK DAVIS

To Hell in a Handbasket

Having had SFC 19, otherwise known as The Wit and Wisdom of John Foyster in a Clever Plastic Disguise, around the place for three or four months, and having trickled through its pages in that time, at last I can write some kind of coherent letter of comment on it. I hope.

John's I LIED WITH FIGURES FOR MY COUNTRY... (in EM 3) put forth a claim - that s f is going to hell in a handbasket - that I cannot agree with. Nonetheless, it started me thumbing through my old and not-so-old anthologies, and scribbling dates in a spiral bound notebook. John Foyster took thirteen anthologies. I have sixty-eight anthologies to add. Further, he wrote that the copy of BEYOND HUMAN KEN that he used was the paperback, which is abridged, nine stories worth. Two of them are fantasy, so I won't consider them, but I have inserted the other seven into the total.

First, I took fifty "general" anthologies (since John excluded "theme" anthologies from consideration) and compiled a list of years of origin of the stories.

1926	1	1940	18	1954	26
1927	4	1941	28	1955	9
1928	1	1942	18	1956	10
1929	3	1943	17	1957	11
1930	5	1944	17	1958	14
1931	4	1945	18	1959	4
1932	3	1946	23	1960	12
1933	4	1947	15	1961	10
1934	10	1948	25	1962	8
1935	11	1949	39	1963	10
1936	8	1950	51	1964	3
1937	1	1951	52	1965	6
1938	11	1952	49	1966	1
1939	9	1953	47	1967	4
				1968	0

Alas, this seems to confirm John Foyster's conclusion. If, by the application of great will power, I bring myself to add the years of publication of the 171 stories in the thirteen anthologies that he selected, I get the new table:

1926	1	1931	4	1936	9
1927	4	1932	3	1937	4
1928	1	1933	4	1938	14
1929	3	1934	11	1939	13
1930	5	1935	11	1940	23

1941	34	1950	54	1959	9
1942	28	1951	63	1960	16
1943	22	1952	67	1961	11
1944	39	1953	63	1962	10
1945	22	1954	41	1963	10
1946	26	1955	16	1964	10
1947	19	1956	19	1965	6
1948	31	1957	18	1966	1
1949	43	1958	19	1967	0
				1968	0

And the new table gives more cause for despair. Some slight consolation came from John's original table, which proved that more good s f stories (22) were written in 1944 - the year of my birth - than in any other year, but even that is taken from me now. The new champion is 1952.

I still have eighteen more anthologies which I would like to add to the total. They are "theme" anthologies, but I think that their themes are so loose that selection of stories was scarcely restricted, and that the "theme" anthologisers had no tendency to re-anthologise stories. (The tendency exists apart from "theme" anthologies; Groff Conklin, in particular, showed an alarming tendency to anthologise the same story more than once.) These anthologies, for example, gather stories that concern space travel or occur on other planets (SPACE, SPACE, SPACE; A SEA OF SPACE; ADVENTURES ON OTHER PLANETS; etc). This net is much looser than, say, an anthology of robot stories.

1926	1	1940	26	1954	51
1927	5	1941	42	1955	23
1928	1	1942	34	1956	21
1929	3	1943	24	1957	27
1930	5	1944	41	1958	28
1931	4	1945	26	1959	12
1932	3	1946	30	1960	17
1933	4	1947	23	1961	13
1934	12	1948	37	1962	18
1935	13	1949	50	1963	20
1936	12	1950	71	1964	12
1937	5	1951	74	1965	7
1938	16	1952	80	1966	5
1939	15	1953	84	1967	5
				1968	4

At least this brings the peak year of the golden age forward one year, to 1953, but there I am, still stuck with that confounded handbasket. The anthologies which have treacherously supported John Foyster's thesis, even after I took them in and gave them a good home on my bookcases and regularly wiped off the mildew, these traitors, with editor and date of publication, are:

- 1 THE POCKET BOOK OF SCIENCE FICTION: Wollheim, 1943.
- 2 THE BEST OF SCIENCE FICTION: Conklin, 1946.
- 3 A TREASURY OF SCIENCE FICTION (abridged paperback): Conklin, 1948.
- 4 STRANGE PORTS OF CALL (abridged paperback; 10 of 20 stories): Derleth, 1948.
- 5 THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOON (abridged paperback; 10 of 20 stories): Derleth, 1949.
- 6 MY BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORY (abridged paperback): Marguillies and Friend, 1949.

- 7 BIG BOOK OF SCIENCE FICTION: Conklin, 1950.
- 8 THE SCIENCE FICTION GALAXY: Conklin, 1950.
- 9 BEYOND TIME AND SPACE (abridged paperback): Derleth, 1950.
- 10 MEN AGAINST THE STARS (abridged paperback): Greenberg, 1950.
- 11 THE OUTER REACHES: Derleth, 1951.
- 12 OMNIBUS OF SCIENCE FICTION: Conklin, 1952.
- 13 BEYOND THE END OF TIME: Pohl, 1952.
- 14 BEACHHEADS IN SPACE (abridged paperback): Derleth, 1952
- 15 TOMORROW THE STARS: Heinlein, 1952.
- 16 CROSSROADS IN TIME: Conklin, 1953.
- 17 WORLDS OF TOMORROW (abridged paperback; 10 of 19): Derleth, 1953.
- 18 BEYOND THE BARRIERS OF SPACE AND TIME: Merril, 1954.
- 19 SIX GREAT SHORT NOVELS OF SCIENCE FICTION: Conklin, 1954.
- 20 THE ULTIMATE INVADER AND OTHER STORIES: Wollheim, 1954.
- 21 ASSIGNMENT IN TOMORROW: Pohl, 1954.
- 22 OPERATION FUTURE: Conklin, 1955.
- 23 THREE TIMES INFINITY: Marguillies, 1958.
- 24 RACE TO THE STARS: Marguillies and Friend, 1958.
- 25 A TREASURY OF GREAT SCIENCE FICTION: Boucher, 1959.
- 26 THREE FROM OUT THERE: Marguillies, 1959.
- 27 SIX GREAT SHORT SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS: Conklin, 1960.
- 28 THIRTEEN GREAT STORIES OF SCIENCE FICTION: Conklin, 1960.
- 29 A CENTURY OF SCIENCE FICTION: Knight, 1962.
- 30 WORLDS OF WHEN: Conklin, 1962.
- 31 THREE IN ONE: Marguillies, 1963.
- 32 THE WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION: Mills, 1963.
- 33 FIFTY SHORT SCIENCE FICTION TALES: Asimov and Conklin, 1963.
- 34 TWELVE GREAT CLASSICS OF SCIENCE FICTION: Conklin, 1963.
- 35 SEVENTEEN TIMES INFINITY: Conklin, 1963.
- 36 DIMENSION FOUR: Conklin, 1964.
- 37 MODERN MASTERPIECES OF SCIENCE FICTION: Moskowitz, 1965.
- 38 SPECTRUM FOUR: Amis and Conquest, 1965.
- 39 AWARD SCIENCE FICTION READER: Alden Norton, 1966.
- 40 THREE TO THE HIGHEST POWER: Nolan, 1968.
- 41 SEVEN TRIPS THROUGH TIME AND SPACE: Conklin, 1968.
- 42 THE TIME CURVE: Moskowitz and Elwood, 1968.
- 43 ELSEWHERE AND ELSEWHEN: Conklin, 1968.
- 44 SF: AUTHORS CHOICE: Harrison, 1968.
- 45 ALIEN EARTH: Moskowitz and Elwood, 1969.
- 46 OTHER WORLDS, OTHER TIMES: Moskowitz and Elwood, 1969.
- 47 FUTURES UNLIMITED: Alden Norton, 1969.
- 48 THE MIRROR OF INFINITY: Silverberg, 1970.
- 49 FUTURES TO INFINITY: Moskowitz, 1970.
- 50 DIMENSION X: Knight, 1970.

And the equally treasonous theme anthologies:

- 51 INVASION FROM MARS: Welles, 1949.
- 52 POSSIBLE WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION: Conklin, 1951.
- 53 SPACE, SPACE, SPACE: Sloane, 1953.
- 54 ADVENTURES IN THE FAR FUTURE: Wollheim, 1954.
- 55 TALES OF OUTER SPACE: Wollheim, 1954.
- 56 S F TERROR TALES: Conklin, 1955.
- 57 ADVENTURES ON OTHER PLANETS: Wollheim, 1955.
- 58 MORE ADVENTURES ON OTHER PLANETS: Wollheim, 1963.
- 59 EXPLORING OTHER WORLDS: Moskowitz, 1963.
- 60 ALIEN WORLDS: Elwood, 1964.

- 61 IF THIS GOES ON: Nuetzel, 1965.
- 62 MAN AGAINST TOMORROW: Nolan, 1965.
- 63 TIME PROBE: Clarke, 1966.
- 64 AN ABC OF SCIENCE FICTION: 1966.
- 65 FIRST STEP OUTWARD: Hoskins, 1969.
- 66 DARK STARS: Silverberg, 1969.
- 67 A SEA OF SPACE: Nolan, 1970.
- 68 NIGHTMARE AGE: Pohl, 1970.

So that I can make a one-to-one comparison between my heap of mouldy data and Foyster's, I have, reluctantly, determined the average date of original story publication for each anthology. Reluctantly; not merely because the job was a drag, but mainly because I don't think that the average date provides a useful tool. If an anthology of ten stories had eight published in 1970 and two published in 1930, the average date for that anthology would be 1962; which, I submit, is not merely a useless datum, but misleading. Nor is the median date (1950 in my hypothetical case) any help. But here they are:

ANTHOLOGY (by above numbers)	DATE	AVERAGE DATE OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATION	LAG	ANTHOLOGY (by above numbers)	DATE	AVERAGE DATE OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATION	LAG
1	1943	1935.8	7.2	36	1964	1951.0	13.0
2	1946	1937.5	8.5	37	1965	1945.9	19.9
3	1948	1945.4	2.6	38	1965	1958.7	6.3
4	1948	1945.5	2.5	39	1966	1947.6	18.4
5	1949	1944.4	3.6	40	1968	1953.5	14.5
6	1949	1941.6	7.4	41	1968	1964.4	3.6
7	1950	1943.5	6.5	42	1968	1950.2	17.8
8	1950	1942.1	7.9	43	1968	1950.8	7.2
9	1950	1941.1	8.9	44	1968	1953.5	14.5
10	1950	1943.7	6.3	45	1969	1944.4	24.6
11	1951	1944.7	6.3	46	1969	1949.4	19.6
12	1951	1946.2	3.8	47	1969	1945.4	23.6
13	1952	1947.6	4.4	48	1970	1949.9	20.1
14	1952	1945.5	6.5	49	1970	1940.9	29.1
15	1952	1949.1	2.9	50	1970	1958.0	12.0
16	1953	1942.1	10.9	Theme Anthologies:			
17	1953	1948.4	4.6	51	1949	1944.0	5.0
18	1954	1952.7	1.3	52	1951	1946.2	4.8
19	1954	1946.0	8.0	53	1953	1951.0	2.0
20	1954	1946.5	7.5	54	1954	1950.4	3.6
21	1954	1953.1	0.9	55	1954	1947.8	6.2
22	1955	1950.8	4.2	56	1955	1949.1	5.9
23	1958	1950.0	8.0	57	1955	1949.8	5.2
24	1958	1943.7	14.3	58	1963	1946.7	16.3
25	1959	1946.9	12.1	59	1963	1941.5	21.5
26	1959	1947.7	11.3	60	1964	1948.8	15.2
27	1960	1956.6	3.4	61	1965	1958.8	6.2
28	1960	1953.1	6.9	62	1965	1955.6	9.8
29	1962	1953.6	8.4	63	1966	1947.9	18.1
30	1962	1958.6	3.4	64	1966	1958.1	7.9
31	1963	1950.7	12.3	65	1969	1955.7	13.3
32	1963	1955.9	7.1	66	1969	1961.8	7.2
33	1963	1953.8	9.2	67	1970	1957.1	12.9
34	1963	1959.3	3.7	68	1970	1958.0	12.0
35	1963	1956.7	6.3				

Warnings should be posted, since my arithmetic is prone to error. (My partial differential equations are impeccable; it's the addition and subtraction that trips me up.)

Even though my lightning calculations may be a bit fumble-fingered, these figures show an alarming trend: the more recent the anthology, the greater the lag. Which was the same result that John Foyster obtained. Lucky thing that I don't think that the average date is significant. (There are exceptions - but most of them are edited by Sam Moskowitz, and you know what kind of s f he likes!)

Ah, but I still have my trump card to play, as we literary stylists say. I have already stated that I do not agree that s f is going Below in a tourist-class handbasket. But, in my heart of hearts (that's another card game, not to be confused with the one involving aforementioned trump cards), do I really believe that? The thing to do, obviously, is to sneak up on the question, by putting together a list of my favourite short s f. Fortunately, I did this very thing almost a year ago, when I sent in a list of nominations for the ANALOG best short story poll. Assuming that I have, by means best left unstated, obtained colour sound film of the kinky and illegal habits of the chairman of the board of some large publishing concern, and therefore can have my nominations published as an anthology, the stories would spread across the years (neglecting a couple by H G Wells) thus:

1934	1	1946	1	1958	3
1935	0	1947	2	1959	2
1936	0	1948	2	1960	0
1937	1	1949	5	1961	6
1938	0	1950	3	1962	4
1939	1	1951	1	1963	2
1940	1	1952	2	1964	0
1941	3	1953	0	1965	0
1942	2	1954	1	1966	1
1943	1	1955	1	1967	2
1944	5	1956	0	1968	2
1945	1	1957	3		

So, the Davis Superanthology would not support John Foyster's thesis. But - note that if the figures immediately above were added to the table derived from the eighty-one other anthologies, the influence would be spread across the board. Is this what happens to anthologists in the 1960s? Do they feel that they must put together a "balanced" group of stories, spread more or less evenly across the last four decades, or at least the last three, and do they also bear in mind that many of the older anthologies are long out of print, even in paperback, and re-anthologise stories from them? Which perhaps results in that mountainous pile of wordage in the 1948-1954 interval?

Remember, too, that these tables have meaning only if one grants that the gentlemen compiling the anthologies can be trusted to select the best stories. Can Conklin, Derleth, Nolan, Moskowitz, etc, be relied on to do that? The name of Moskowitz, of course, will rouse snarls from many, often without justification, but I place less trust in Conklin and Derleth, both of whom often exhibited abominable taste.

(October 24, 1971)

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RICHARD DELAP

The Original Fiction Anthologies

PART THREE

Richard Delap discusses

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QUARK/ 3

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UNIVERSE 1

edited by TERRY CARR

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Each new year brings more and yet more anthologies that feature new and never-before-published stories, until finally they've begun to sprout like bunches of grapes at a pseudo-Roman orgy. I've heard it reported that this increase is the herald of the end of the magazine era; but I wouldn't bet on it. Not yet, anyway. Remember that the s f magazines flooded the racks during the 50s - then died of overkill. It can happen again in the paperback field, if the turned-on audience turns off when the debris so litters the flood that nobody can be bothered fighting through it in order to find a clear area.

I don't say that any of the anthologies here are strictly debris; but it is interesting to note that not one is truly exceptional or outstanding. Not one of them includes that cherished abundance of winner's-circle stories that might make them a mine for re-an-

thologising (although all of them include one or more stories that are very good or better). Each of these collections is generally good, yet each could be better, and that's the rub. At this rate they will not only not get better, but they will decline. Until that dreary day, however, let's find the best of what we have now -

I Most s f fans at least vaguely know about the Clarion Writers' Workshop in Fantasy and Science Fiction. Its lecturers are writers who have made the grade and willingly help aspiring newcomers realise their potentials. As Clarion organiser and editor Wilson says, "I think the Clarion experiment was successful, and I submit this book in evidence."

Out of 21 stories, I would count 15 as good or better, so I have little doubt that Clarion works in the way that it should; that it develops talent in the production of notable stories. If we take them in one lump, however, most of these works, generally quite short, seem to dampen each other. Their effects (when they do work) tend to be pyrotechnic. The brightest blaze gets more attention than the small, but often striking, sparklers. Therefore I would say that you should read CLARION in groups of two or three stories at a time. Wilson groups them following the comments of the lecturers, which include Kate Wilhelm, Harlan Ellison, Frederik Pohl, Damon Knight, Fritz Leiber, Samuel R

Delany, Joanna Russ (who again shows why she is currently the best "genre" critic writing, and I'll bet she teaches hell out of those who try to learn) and Wilson himself.

Because CLARION includes so many stories, I cannot give them all equal mention, so I'll try to make a representative cross-section analysis. To my mind, the book's best story is Amy Hutton's THE BEHOLDER'S EYE, a work of art laced with a perversity that is intensely honest and intensely frightening. It forces the reader to look at the speculations within himself to find the answer to the question it prompts - is reality what we see or what we want to see?

Robert Thurston shows great promise and range with two stories which are nothing alike, yet succeed admirably in their very different ways. WHEELS, the first-prize winner in awards sponsored by the publisher, is a direct, heated, super-charged story of a future where cars are denied to most people and have become a symbol for those rebellious ones who cling to the excitement of the forbidden. The writing is terse and sharp, exactly suited to both the mood and speed of the protagonist's involvement in the social milieu of tough-minded outcasts, and almost exactly the opposite of ANACONDA, an excursion into that strange, unclassifiable genre of creative imagination, the kind of story you can't really explain afterward, except to say that it "happens".

G Davis Belcher's JUST DEAD ENOUGH (previously published in ORBIT 5 as THE PRICE) is a sneaky and delightful tour de force about transplants, morals and money (the line between which is invisible?), and death and life (the line between which is divisible?). Ed Bryant's SENDING THE VERY BEST gives a shot in the arm to the short-short story, which has been in ill-health since Fredric Brown stopped writing them. This is an irreverent, slightly naughty, and very funny "greeting". (Bryant's much less good THE SOFT BLUE BUNNY RABBIT STORY gives credit for the ironic title to Harlan Ellison... but the shallow debt goes deeper than that, more's the pity.)

NORMAN: FRIENDS AND OTHER STRANGERS is a touching story (in more ways than one) by Lynnda Stevenson. She offers insight to all who may wonder of what those barriers between people are made; while Evelyn Lief's THE INSPECTOR is almost misleadingly simple in accurately calculating the psychological payment humans must always make when searching for lost emotions. The ladies seem to show up exceptionally well in this book: Octavia Estelle Butler's CROSSOVER, Maggie Nadler's THE SECRET, and Vonda McIntyre's ONLY AT NIGHT, also fare well, even if they are not as interesting as the previous stories.

George Alec Effinger is represented by three stories, all of them slickly written but only one of them worthwhile. A FREE PASS TO THE CARNIVAL depicts a group of alien tourists taking in the sights of Earth, while Effinger spotlights an oblique view of a "cultural enclave" which seems depthless until the final surprise twist suddenly looks through the other end of the telescope.

While all the stories from the Clarion Workshop are not really good, not one is truly poor, so we cannot class this automatically as the puerile efforts of untrained hopefuls. If you think that, you may be in for a surprise.

II In the introduction to QUARK/ 3, editors Delany and Hacker discuss the aesthetics of speculative fiction (or science fiction - the editors interchange the terms without differentiation) with a minimum of aesthetics and a refusal to accept any confines on the contents of this new series of books. They have done more than break down compartmentalisation, it seems;

they have turned QUARK/ into a catchall, something between a collector's case and a garbage bin and something very similar to the final chunks of unclassifiable this-and-thats featured by NEW WORLDS just before it expired. Experiments, especially literary ones, can be invigorating and interesting, or they can be deadly dull, alienating the reader's concern. After all, the reader must face the end product rather than the act of creation. When experiments work, fine; when they don't, why offer them?

QUARK/ 3 contains its share of both successes and failures and I cannot yet give up faith in the series. It features such complete, wonderful successes that I can almost (if not easily) forget the time wasted on junk. On this basis, I continue to support the editors' efforts, but I must add that I will withdraw this support the moment I feel the balance shifts too far the wrong way.

On the bright side we have Joanna Russ, dropping a subtle hint in her opening tagline, "Hommage a Hope Merrilees", and proceeding to show that Judith's New Wave isn't really quite that new - at least, Hope Merrilees wouldn't think so! THE ZANZIBAR CAT is ultra farce, a super VOLPONE-ironic fantasy-cum-laude in which the author delivers a lecture on the importance/reality of fantasy but never forgets for a moment she is telling a story as well. Miss Russ' writing is a wonder - elegant, witty, and full of beauty, touched by that most wondrous enchantment of all, honest emotion. No more can be asked.

Though scattered with the idiosyncratic round-robin dialogue which R A Lafferty delights in, ENCASED IN ANCIENT RIND takes on a very different tone from the majority of Lafferty's work. A serious but not quite disheartening outlook on the results of pollution - a question of balance, effect and countereffect, a possibility of adjustment - this is a very strange story which seems especially suited to our mixed-up world.

Brian Vickers' THE CODED SUN GAME is also especially interesting. It is a tangle of subliminal, symbolic, kaleidoscopic patterns (unpatterns?) of light and dissociated darkness. A "light-orientated" man pieces his view together from a starting point of all-apartness through an extended maze of mind-blowing analogies. Which is reality: the scientific, clinical, detached stimulus/response; or the direct-experience, emotional, esoteric, stimulus/response? What is madness: a breaking of the accepted code, or a discovery of something beyond the code we know? Experimental fiction, yes, but the kind which leads us to new frontiers in exploring the deepest mystery of all, the dark pathways of light in the human mind.

Kate Wilhelm's difficult but holding WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN, BILLY BOY, BILLY BOY? is a very masculine (though that term might offend Wilhelm) s f story with a synchronised-jumble time sense - a technique she uses often, but well - which adds a purposeful chill to this weird death-wish future which leaves the son of the Man-with-the-Scythe with something like, but not quite like, guilt.

Is Virginia Kidd's BALLS: A MEDITATION AT THE GRAVESIDE the essence of the American delusional compulsion? A diehard tie to youthful images of Disney and his creations? Follow the bouncing ball... right off the screen and straight at your head? Meaning ripped from the casual and casualness seeping out of meaning? Whatever, Kidd does some effective ~~tail~~-talespinning.

Gordon Eklund's HOME AGAIN, HOME AGAIN is a crude, but sometimes catching picture of Frankenstein in the future. The human race essays the role of the

misguided genius whose creation is bereft of soul. Samuel R Delany's DOG IN A FISHERMAN'S NET has some devilish whirls of colour and drama but suffers from much the same failings as Antonioni's filmic look at English culture, BLOW-UP - his symbolism becomes shallow when it reflects too much surface patina. M John Harrison's RING OF PAIN, a last-man-and-woman story, has something to offend everyone... which possibly means that Harrison strikes the vital nerve he aims for. And Hilary Bailey's TWENTY-FOUR LETTERS FROM UNDERNEATH THE EARTH is a sad and depressing journey along the unbridgeable gaps, both physical and mental, which stand as unwanted monuments to failure.

I cannot, in honesty, recommend the rest of the book, except to the masochistically curious. James Sallis annotates FIELD with his usual irrelevant notes that annoy even more than they should. Richard Hill's BRAVE SALT embodies social commentary and literary criticism in a "condensed" novel of satire with a total lack of humour. Josephine Saxton's NATURE BOY dreamily centres on death and derision, but for what purpose I haven't the slightest notion. I stack it up next to Saxton's list of thematically incomprehensible items. Tom Veitch's A SEXUAL SONG is even more muddled and sits on the shelf next to Saxton.

QUARK/ 3 also has the usual pages of verse and art, all of it quite bad to my way of thinking. So, in the end, what do I tell you? Read the good stories and forget the rest? Read it all and make up your own mind? I confess, I'm chicken - you know what I feel about these stories now, so you make up your own mind. Buy the book, but any residual guilt (or anger, or for that matter, pleasure) you may feel is entirely on your own head.

III Terry Carr's new series, UNIVERSE, begins with a clutch of both familiar and new s f authors, and although I find it a reasonably entertaining collection, I had somehow hoped that it would be much better than it is. It's attractively packaged and it features illustrations for the stories by the highly praised Alicia Austin. Carr immediately tells us what type of stories he presents in his introductory remarks: "...and there'll be no 'speculative fiction' at all... I also think that boundaries and labels exist for a very simple basic purpose, to let people know the kind of stories they're buying." This is all well and good, but Carr's book is disappointing in that he pre-announced it to s f writers only and therefore had no "slush pile" to take up time and space. It should have been better.

The best story comes from an author who has made a lasting impression on the s f field although he has published very little there. Most readers know his DAVY, MIRROR FOR OBSERVERS, and several often-anthologised shorter works. Edgar Pangborn's MOUNT CHARITY is a quite lovely tale of three aliens who have lived on Earth for thousands of years in the "adopted" bodies of animals. They tell of their fear to make contact with humanity because, "More than once I have seen human kindness reach out to save a moth from the flame, and the hand frightens the silly beautiful thing directly into death." Yet in the end they must find a home for their legacy, a written account of all human history. At last they must turn to man. A few may scoff at the sentiment of Pangborn's conclusion, but he fills it with hope and love and he effectively makes his point.

Carr calls Robert Silverberg's GOOD NEWS FROM THE VATICAN "clever". A not-entirely-disinterested observer tells of the voting deadlock in Rome when one of the nominees for Pope is a robot. Though not uproarious (despite an ending cloaked in a satirical cloud of Hollywood's best effects) this story is

funny in a quiet and unsettling way. Unexpectedly, it is clever in execution rather than concept.

R A Lafferty and Joanna Russ, both of whom manage to be everywhere at once these days, each offer something a bit on the odd side. Lafferty's NOR LIMESTONE ISLANDS offers an explanation for all those Fortian oddities that occasionally fall from the sky. Would you believe in stone islands that float up there, with people living on them? Well, some people do. You might be one of them when you finish this tall - er, elevated tale. Russ' POOR MAN, BEGGAR MAN is a ghost (?) story involving Alexander the Great. It is fascinating and for the most part well-written, although Russ literarily drenches it with a certain coyness that I hope was not intended. Russ pussyfoots around an issue most historians have already noted and it is to her credit as an able writer that she maintains interest despite the fey psychological games she practises here.

Barry N Malzberg again writes a slightly distorted parable in NOTES FOR A NOVEL ABOUT THE FIRST SHIP EVER TO VENUS, in which he introduces his meaning at an unexpected slant. Edward Bryant's THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE VILLAGE MONSTER weaves a social garment of such simple design that one hardly notices the noose-neckline until it is already in place. THE ROMANCE OF DR TANNER by Ron Goulart features Murdstone, another of the author's improbable, silly, and cockeyed planets that he creates expressly to bring the reader into a relationship with his own environment. You like Goulart or you don't, and no one seems to agree on when or how - take your choice. And George Alec Effinger's ALL THE LAST WARS AT ONCE has a serious side to its purposeful absurdity about the day when all splinter groups declare final war on each other - black vs white, Catholic vs Protestant, worker vs artist, male vs female, etc - and the result is total chaos. It's that final page which so coldly and flatly reasons the horror behind it all which gives this one a hefty and surprising kick.

Man's first expedition beyond the known planets (with the discovery of a tenth one) returns to Earth, its members sealed into a comet and awaiting rescue after its orbit goes astray. The drama of WEST WIND, FALLING dissolves when the authors, Gregory Benford and Gordon Eklund, decide to blend social and individual consciousness of guilt, and end with a bleakly unendurable slop of soul-suffering. I felt a twinge of something at the end, but I'm sure it had more to do with a Dickensian dab of mustard than with this weepy melodrama.

Edward Bryant offers another of his "Cinnebar" stories, JADE BLUE, which he peoples with likeable characters but plots with Scotch tape and flour paste. Wilson Tucker's TIME EXPOSURES parleys into a puzzling murder then, satisfied with its buildup, tacks on a senseless denouement which makes the rest valueless. And Gerard F Conway's MINDSHIP is very frustrating because it delivers some good moments in a story of a ship driven by mindpower, in which one person acts as the "cork", but loses interest by repeated slips into overdramatic crises and an unexciting climax.

So, here are three new books, all of them worth reading in part, but none living up to the expectations of those who would like the very best. If you buy them you haven't really wasted your money; they'll pass a few hours from your life but they'll give you far less re-reading time in the future than you might wish for. It's your money; take them or leave them.

- Richard Delap 1971

SANDRA MIESEL & BRUCE R GILLESPIE Whoops! There Goes Another Galaxy

(I read Sandra Miesel's article, "...AS HARD A TASK AS HUMAN BEINGS EVER UNDERTOOK" when it first appeared in ENERGUMEN 5 (February 1971), but I had forgotten most of its fine detail when I wrote my own review of TAU ZERO. In the meantime, Sandra had sent me the original script of her review, so I decided to put side by side these two views of one book, two views written quite separately.)

Sandra Miesel and
Bruce Gillespie discuss:

TAU ZERO

by POUL ANDERSON

Victor Gollancz :: 1970 Doubleday :: 1970
208 pages :: £1.60

I "...AS HARD A TASK AS HUMAN BEINGS EVER UNDERTOOK", by Sandra Miesel.

TAU ZERO embodies the most ambitious concept Poul Anderson has yet employed - human survival beyond the death of this universe. Greatly expanding his GALAXY serial, TO OUTLIVE ETERNITY, Anderson runs human and scientific problems in characteristic parallel. On the one hand he shows the application of strict Einsteinian physics, and on the other hand he presents an unprecedented test of will. The main characters' hardships are torments of mind and spirit only. The novel shows no physical privations nor personal violence beyond minor fisticuffs.

TAU ZERO's premises were explained at length in SFWA FORUM. Briefly: a colonial expedition comprising a cross-section of humanity in 25 couples is launched to travel 30 light years in a "Bussard spaceship". Fuelled by interstellar hydrogen, it travels close enough to the speed of light to take advantage of the time dilation effect. But en route an accident occurs. As the crew make repairs, the ship approaches limiting velocity so closely that she travels unimaginably far beyond her galaxy and her time. Then it is decided to drive tau even closer to zero - tau approaches zero as the ship's velocity approaches the speed of light - so that the voyage continues past

the dissolution of this universe and the formation of the next.

The idea of new beginnings has long fascinated Anderson (cf. FLIGHT TO FOREVER, WILDCAT, EPILOGUE, AFTER DOOMSDAY, and numerous lost colony stories). Here he writes about a beginning of uniquely absolute newness.

But before the Rebirth, there must come the Death. Placid Earth of the twenty-third century is slowly stagnating, slowly dying. After an atomic war Sweden has become the international peacekeeper, not without the resentment of former great powers. The Swedish-dominated world is generally clean, orderly, and just - but not innovative or creative. Extrasolar colonisation will provide the necessary fresh frontier. As the colonists prepare to sever ties forever, Anderson evokes the homeworld's beauty and intimations of its mortality. Hero Charles Reymont takes a last pessimistic look: "'I'm only certain that nothing is forever. No matter how carefully you design a system, it will go bad and die.'"

Reymont, "pragmatism personified", is one of Anderson's most indomitable characters. His beloved, Ingrid Lindgren, is an ideal romantic humanist. Although her tact and sensitivity are important for the company's survival, his determination and leadership are indispensable. (Similarly, WAR OF THE WINGMEN/THE MAN WHO COUNTS contrasted attractive and effective behaviour.) Supporting characters represent a variety of viewpoints: Elof Nilsson is a neurotic realist, Johann Freiwald a cheerful Nietzschean, Emma Glassgold a devout Jew, Lars Telander a staunch Protestant, etc.

Some critics, like Christopher Priest in SPECULATION 26, have objected that Anderson makes the microcosmic composition of the group too schematic. Although the device is hoary, it is nevertheless plausible. Good genetics and good public relations would suggest to the organisers that they should choose representative racial types for such a colony, even though Canadian readers may have as much reluctance to identify themselves with lusty Jane Sadler as Americans with boorish Norbert Williams. Stateless Reymont is the only exception to the pattern: he is a Western-flavoured universal man.

Although the colonists are supposed to represent humanity's best, they are all too frail. Their plight demands a tougher response than romantic humanism. Ferociously stubborn Reymont makes himself de facto king of the expedition and forces it to survive sanely even against its will. To him the voyage is "our way of fighting back at the universe". No Ballardian resignation to natural disaster here: "I think we have a duty - to the race that begot us, to the children we might yet bring forth ourselves - a duty to keep trying, right to the finish." Instinct prevails where philosophies fail. Once settled in the new world Reymont gladly lays down his burden and his crown. Anderson's familiar theme of kingship comes to a remarkably tranquil resolution, without irony, without that lacrimae rerum touch we so often encounter in his serious writing.

The magnificent communal accomplishment submerges individual failures, numerous as these are. Although the author resisted the temptation to write the great intergalactic pornography novel, we might fault the somewhat prosaic interactions between his characters. But this is a deliberate feature of TAU ZERO. The petty lusts and jealousies of individuals contrast with the epic experience of the group. In this work and others (such as NO TRUCE WITH KINGS) Anderson maintains that real heroes are often quite unglamorous. He shows that "stubbornly ordinary" behaviour persists always and everywhere. Or as Auden reminds us in MUSEE DES BEAUX ARTS, during the holiest martyrdom

"dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse/Scratches his innocent behind on a tree".

In order to handle his large cast conveniently, Anderson uses a cinematic technique: he simply observes his characters externally. Therefore the subsidiary characters look somewhat flattened, but Anderson effectively renders the fiercely private personality of Reymont. As usual, the author shows most interest in the adventure, not the "grubby little personal neuroses" of the adventurers.

Anderson uses an especially successful stylistic device to propel the voyagers through time and space: the time scale of TAU ZERO is a logarithmic progression. Shipboard time is "logarithmically" related to cosmic time. (Recall $\log N$ increases very slowly as N approaches infinity. $\log 10=1$ but $\log/10,000,000,000 = 10$.) The opening chapter takes place in a few hours, the next in a few days until eventually eons fleet by in heartbeats. No one infuses astrophysics with such passion as Anderson. He paints Benestell images in sensuous words. He paints the beauty and terror of the infinite spaces where icy winds of passage rush past the pitiless stars. You can best appreciate this breath-stopping sweep if you read the novel in one sitting.

The death and rebirth scenario of TAU ZERO culminates in a true Magnus Annus during which the entire universe is destroyed and recreated. The highly economical climax parallels childbirth and cosmogenesis. Anderson does not name the infant girl whose "first cry responded to the noise of inward-falling worlds". He leaves her potential mythic significance to the reader's imagination.

Within this structural framework, name-symbols like Reymont (king's mountain) and Lindgren (green linden branch) yield to examination but Leonora Christine, the ship's name, needs special explanation. Leonora Christine Ulfeld was a seventeenth century Danish princess who endured 22 years of solitary imprisonment with sanity intact and wrote celebrated memoirs upon release. Like the ship's company, she endured and triumphed.

The ramifications of Leonora Christine's triumph are staggering. The universal paradise myth gave past human cultures a sense of loss and failure as their starting point. What kind of civilisation would the descendants of men who had outlived their universe create? What epics would they write of their ancestors? Would they apotheosise them? (They are conveniently sorted for a pantheon.) And most intriguing of all, would future ships repeat the Leonora Christine's feat, propagating our species forever and ever, human world without end?

TAU ZERO is rigorously hard's f forged out of personal conviction. Its contemporary significance should not be overlooked. We are all aboard a Leonora Christine - spaceship Earth. The tenacity and dedication that saved that fictional spaceship are the same virtues Anderson advocates for saving this real worldship.

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II ANDERSON'S TOY UNIVERSE, by Bruce R Gillespie.

In TAU ZERO, a group of fifty people sets off for a distant planet, in another solar system. Protected by a force shield, and powered by "ram" engines that compress the hydrogen atoms that lie between the stars, the Leonora

Christine approaches the speed of light. The ship suffers an accident, so that it cannot slow down when it reaches its destination. The ship's crew speeds up the ship, so that they can reach inter-galactic space, where matter will be so thin that they can switch off their force-screens, repair the engines, and then return to their galaxy. However, after a series of unfortunate manoeuvres, the ship continues to accelerate. As the ship approaches the speed of light, it becomes more and more subject to the laws of relativity; time slows down within the ship, but within the ship it seems that exterior time speeds up. In this way, the ship endures until the present universe collapses and dies, and is then reborn with the new universe.

Poul Anderson writes about an idea that takes one's breath away: firstly, because nobody before Anderson has seen so many possibilities within the idea of sub-light-speed; and secondly, because Anderson sees that the physical idea contains the spiritual idea that mankind can still find new ways to attempt the impossible and discover the unknowable. No matter what the newspapers show, Anderson is convinced that *We Ain't Dead Yet*.

Unfortunately, Anderson throws away the whole idea. And since he tries to inflate his whole book with the single premise, he has no cushion when he lets the premise leak and the whole book falls flat. Where does he put the pin in the balloon?

For a start, the language of the book falls very flat indeed. Anderson writes two types of narrative in *TAU ZERO*. Conventional narrative makes up most of the book, interspersed with passages of scientific description. The book begins in the Millesgarden in Sweden. Charles Reymont and Ingrid Lindgren bill and coo at each other. Both of them have volunteered to travel in the Leonora Christine to the stars. Before they step aboard, they become very well acquainted. But before the reader steps aboard with them, he realises that his travelling companions might be very boring people. "I'm beginning to feel what a stranger you are to me, Carl," says Ingrid. "Eh!" says Charles Reymont, whose company grows increasingly unendurable on the voyage, "My biography's on record." Neither of them can think of particularly good reasons for taking the trip. Reymont is "restless" and "couldn't advance further (in civilian life) without playing office politics". Ingrid volunteers out of "sheer romanticism". These people bring so few ideas and so little experience to the journey that we wonder if they are capable of realising its significance. Ingrid and Charles are Anderson's main characters, but from the beginning of the book they speak in boring clichés and show few signs of the intelligence or wisdom that the journey will demand of them.

The reader's distrust of Anderson's rhetoric only strengthens when he comes to the first of Anderson's scientific side-shows. I hesitate to pin to these sections the usual label of "Anderson's lectures". In form, they are lectures, but they also flow as a separate, concurrent stream within the rest of the narrative.

As pieces of English prose, they are disastrous. At the beginning of Chapter 2, Anderson tells us that "Seen from one of the shuttles that brought her crew to her, Leonora Christine resembled a dagger pointed at the stars." So far, so good; a nice image. On the same page, he says that "her outward simplicity was required by the nature of her mission and was as deceptive as a human skin." Now, in the first sentence Anderson presumes that the reader is travelling on "one of the shuttles". In the second sentence, Anderson makes his reader shift his position abruptly so that he is looking at a tiny scale model of the ship.

Turn to the next page. We have changed position again. Now we are sitting in a lecture hall and Anderson is giving a lecture: "All this, to send fifty people to one practically next-door star? Right. That's the size of the universe." Yes, sir! Nobody can blame us if we thoroughly distrust the author at this point. In the next paragraph, Anderson performs an even stranger trick. "Staring away from sun and planet," he says, "you saw a crystal darkness huger than you dared comprehend." Does Anderson imagine that we have suddenly slipped outside the ship's hull again? What will happen once the ship begins its journey? Will we ride along with the ship like omnipotent pillion passengers?

Anderson's explanatory style becomes almost ludicrous by page 30. He keeps up the pretence that his readers are spacemen ("You would float off, cursing, nauseated by spin forces..."); takes us abruptly inside the ship ("...and you looked wearily through your faceplate at the stars, with a band of headache behind your eyes"). Next paragraph, Anderson stops pretending that we are looking, and returns himself to the box seat, taking up his ordinary narrative style. He maintains no consistent tone, and invites us even to observe the death and resurrection of the universe "from the outside".

And, if that is not enough, Anderson phrases most of his sentences in the passive tense instead of the active tense. This is a major reason why his prose becomes so soporific for so many readers.

Be that as it may, Anderson's "scientific bits" still comprise the most readable sections of TAU ZERO. Joined together, these passages form a continuous "story within a story", and the author certainly sketches some breathtaking ideas as the Leonora Christine races through the universe. In fact, Poul Anderson should have welded together his passages of scientific description, abandoned the rest of the book altogether, and forged a short story that would have taken science fiction by storm. But Poul Anderson tries to write about people as well as ideas.

In the gardens of Chapter 1, we have already found that at least two of the book's main characters can barely speak above a grunt. As the Leonora Christine sets off for the stars, we find that nobody else can be called articulate either. Charles Reymont is a monomaniac ("I'm trying to... somehow... keep alive some idea of authority") who despises "culture" and almost any type of creative thought. Chi-Yen, who, in her newest and most colourful cheong-sam "could almost have belonged to a different species from Glassgold", is the first of a long series of national stereotypes. Emma Glassgold comes from the Negev, where her father is an engineer in a desalinisation plant, and her mother is an agronomist. Why did she embark on the journey? "I thought I might find... a purpose?... out here." Amen, we say, because Anderson hasn't provided her with one. Elof Nilsson has a "raspy voice", and so annoys Reymont. Elsewhere, Anderson not only introduces a cliché American, Norbert Williams, but introduces him as a "drunken American". All these stock figures say exactly the things that you would expect them to say. We almost feel that Anderson calculated their endless conversations with a pencil and slide-rule.

Consider (if I may speak in Anderson-language) a crew of fifty of Earth's most intelligent and restless people, give them all the skills that a new planet will need, and thrust them into the most awe-inspiring situation yet encountered by human beings. Heat well under the pressure of prolonged human contact and high danger, and you might wait for the emotional and intellectual explosion...

Instead... Some people worry about the identity of the next night's bed partners. The rest wonder whether they will retain Telander as captain, or appoint a bossier boss, such as arch-hardhat Charles Reymont. Nobody explains why these people need so much authority: they are a placid, sheep-like mob. Telander advises his flock: "Unless you believe in God, regulations are now the only comfort we have." (That line really shook me.) When the ship's crew realise that the Leonora Christine can never decelerate, they try to think of some diversionary activities for the passengers. Here are fifty international whiz-kids, and they don't know what to do!

The Leonora Christine's passengers are not people at all. They perform like giggling, fuming, love-making puppets. Before the passengers suffer "death" and resurrection, Reymont says: "I think we have a duty - to the race that begot us, to the children we might yet bring forth ourselves - a duty to keep trying, right to the finish." But he can say no more; neither he nor any of the other characters can articulate any coherent expression of this extraordinary experience. Nobody on board can, for instance, conscientiously observe the death and rebirth of the universe for the sake of science, or just for the sake of the experience itself. At the end of the book, we find no joy, or sorrow, or excitement among the people, but only the smug story-teller rattling out his narrative.

In TAU ZERO, Poul Anderson wants to show us some scientific wonders that we may never have considered before. He also wants to show how these wonders affect the people who experience them at first hand. To do this, he describes a microcosm (the Leonora Christine and her crew) and a surrounding macrocosm (the pulsating universe). Now, no matter how magnificent Anderson makes his macrocosm, he can only show its magnificence by comparing it with the microcosm. In other words, the people within the microcosm must experience the universe's magnificence and in some way reflect its truth, before we can gain any idea of the universe's greater reality. But this will only work if the microcosm is an adequate reflection of the macrocosm. Anderson makes the Leonora Christine into the centre of the universe; if that centre collapses, then so does the rest of the structure. Anderson's universe does collapse because it is not a world of human beings but only a toy rocket filled with toy dolls. By comparison, the macrocosm also shrinks in size, until it becomes a nice little side-show, a toy universe which is safe, comfortable, and no longer really interesting. Anderson misjudged the power of the central idea, and he sadly misjudged his own power as a novelist.

Who pricked the balloon and let it fall flat? Why, Poul Anderson did.

- Sandra Miesel 1970
Bruce R Gillespie 1971

author, purely as a matter of interest. It is easy enough to see why Mrs LeGuin did not go into these matters very deeply; to do so would have meant overloading the work with detail not essential to her theme; she wanted to offer the difficulties of communication, not a psycho-biological thesis. While I would have liked a little more detail, I appreciate her wholly literary reasons for not turning the work into just another gimmick novel.

Lem's trouble stems from his initial mistaking of the plot for the theme. And that, if you care to think it through, disposes of the list of questions in his closing paragraph,

LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS is a science fictional triumph. But it doesn't have to enter the World's Classics stakes to be that. To me its main value lies in its demonstration that a valid s f novel, on the lines of classic simplicity and form, can be written without recourse to New Wavery, super-gimmickry, trick writing, or symbolic morass. In fact, Mrs LeGuin has joined the mainstream - which is where the future of worthwhile s f lies. (December 19 1971) *

* I'm not going to join this discussion: I'm sure there are enough rabid LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS admirers and detractors among us already. I'm loth to admit that LHD didn't attract or repel me particularly; Mrs LeGuin didn't place a word wrongly, but she didn't impress me with razzle-dazzle exciting prose, either. And, like Lem, I was disappointed that it had just another "happy ending". (I just don't believe in happy endings, I suppose.) It seems to me that the crux of Lem's argument is his statement that "Mankind invented culture as religion and mythos in order to turn the cruel indifference of blind statistics into a meaningful transcendence." In two essays in a row, Lem has outlined human sexual characteristics as one of the most cruelly indifferent features of blind statistical nature. Isn't anybody going to take issue with the assumptions of SEX IN SCIENCE FICTION and LOST OPPORTUNITIES, because I find them at total odds with current psychological and sociological opinion in the Western world. (Foyster put it more bluntly; but I can't induce him to commit himself to print.) Anyway, I'm sure a lot of people will be grateful to both Stanislaw Lem and George Turner for articulating just what does make people feel so strongly about LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS.

Let's lay off Lem for a minute (don't push there; you'll get your turn to hit him any minute now). In SFC 22 there also appeared Part 2 of THE ORIGINAL FICTION ANTHOLOGIES, which had a lot to say about some stories by: *

* GENE WOLFE (27 Betty Drive, Hamilton, Ohio 45013, USA)

Well, that was a downer, wasn't it? But I thank you for sending me SFC 22. After reading the review of my stories I had intended to demolish you (and Australia) with a ballistic disease vector I retain for that purpose, but after your (too brief) description of the Space Age Book Shop I repented. You actually bought a book. If I am ever on a jury the defence attorney could get his client off cheap if he could prove to me he spent \$20 per year on (non-text) books.

Besides, I admire your taste. No one who likes Lafferty and life (because to like Lafferty is to love life, the old man is so ardently in love with her himself) can go on looking, looking, for the next rock, can be all bad. ENTIRE AND PERFECT CHRYSOLITE was also up (for the

short story Nebula) you know; I wish you had mentioned that. The others were stories by Laumer, Harrison, Gardner Dozois, and (here it comes, Bruce) Jim Sallis and Kate Wilhelm. NO AWARD beat us all. We were told to quit, if you want to put it that way, but I don't really think any of us considered it.

And you liked THE ASIAN SHORE, which I think has been given poor treatment by the critics here (though it has been picked by Harrison and Aldiss for BEST S F: 1970, and deserves it). Disch always seems to be badly underrated with us, though I don't know why. You appreciate him better in the Empire - or at least that's my impression.

Anyway, I have stories in ORBIT 8 and ORBIT 9, so perhaps there will be something there you'll care for; I hope so. EYEBEM has found a place in a McGraw-Hill text on s f, or so I'm told (meaning - not paid for yet). And I'm currently doing an anti-sequel to THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR DEATH, talking to two characters named Nicholas (the anti-Tackie) and Ignacio (the anti-Ransome). I'll give them your love.

(October 1, 1971) *

* That'll be cheery, since the originals were a bit too creepy for me. I get the idea, though, that you haven't put that ballistic disease vector back in its rocket silo. You're just saving it until you can wipe us right off the map. (Or perhaps you've been reading Lee Harding's THE CUSTODIAN.) The reference to "The Empire" really brought me up short. Do you Americans really think that there is still a British Empire? I know we still have a Governor-General and six state Governors, but Mr McMahon is really in charge of the country... What was that? We're now part of the American Empire? :: But I agree with your real point - Tom Disch has become a more British writer than most English writers ever were, and he beats them all at their own game. :: And I still insist that I was using Gene Wolfe stories as ammunition for my argument against Knight. Perhaps I should have picked on Gardner Dozois. *

* SANDRA MIESEL (8744 North Pennsylvania Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46240)

I'll comment on SFC 22 first because it arrived first. Barry Gillam's sensitive and exhaustive film reviews are an asset to your fanzine.

I'm getting curious: what is Stanislaw Lem Really Like? But we only read his non-fiction through Rottensteiner-coloured glasses. SEX IN SCIENCE FICTION is simply inadequate. It's hard to see how it could have been otherwise. Given Lem's physical and linguistic isolation, how can he possibly have read everything? While LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS appeared too late for mention, that excuse does not apply to DANGEROUS VISIONS, Ellison, Spinrad, Delany, Silverberg, Anthony, Stein, et al. The discussion of Leiber is grossly insufficient. Weird erotic stories have been a staple of F&SF from the beginning. (Several of the stories Lem mentions originated there.) The whole idea that s f puritanically avoided sex until very recently is one of the more unfortunate misrepresentations in the genre. Many people seem to confuse sex in literature with clinical descriptions of sexual behaviour. Lem seems to feel that sex must be the uppermost subject in a story that deals with unusual sexual phenomena - it certainly isn't in LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS. I presume his dismissal of mono- and multisexual societies and hermaphroditism on page 5 refers to items like Anderson's VIRGIN PLANET which is a simple humorous adventure tale. Yet

that parthenogenic society is logically enough worked out - complete with a clan of career lesbians. It is less easy to see how he can brush aside Delany's long-standing interest in hermaphroditism and bisexuality (the source of which appears to be Delany's philosophic ideal of harmonious union of opposites), especially in EINSTEIN INTERSECTION and ..AYE, AND GOMORRAH. The latter has to be one of the most gruesomely effective depictions of absolute, devouring lust. (**brg* Agreed.)) There is nary a line of clinical sexual description in the story. The story achieves his effect by inverting all the values he ordinarily espouses.

Now if the fashionable "serious" novelist Lem cites would never dream of writing novels about astronauts, well, it's his loss if he imposes such limitations on himself. Would he also scorn to write of sea-captains? It had always been my naive belief that all and any subjects were feasible for "good" literature. Fortunately no such bias exists in the visual arts. Among the recent achievements of renowned American artist Robert Rauschenberg are lithographs of Apollo spacecraft and scenes around the Kennedy Space Centre. (Some American readers may have the chance to see these in the Gemini show of modern printmakers now touring museums.) Rudy Pozzati is another excellent American printmaker who has been inspired by the space program.

Originally I had planned to launch a lengthy THUS WE REFUTE ROTTENSTEINER section, inspired by his review of THE DISAPPEARING FUTURE in SFC 21. But the prospect proved entirely too painful and that is the sole reason this letter took a month to write. So instead I will restrict myself to only a few points. My own personal view of s f as the literature of change is that it encourages stochastic thinking, encourages readers to be constantly asking themselves, "What if?". This intellectual technique is not only the basis of modern molecular biology, but it is also a useful tool for studying history. (In fact I have taken history examinations structured like alternative-universe premises which I naturally passed with ease.) Why have no s f writers written from a serious Marxist point of view, despite the importance of this philosophy in our world? Perhaps we might just as validly ask why none have written on the Islamic point of view despite its importance to millions of people now and in the past thirteen centuries. On the one hand American writers whose private political views are radical are interested only in revolutionary results, not Marxist theory. We do have thoroughgoing Maoist Bruce Franklin but he is not a writer of fiction. On the other hand, Marxism is such a pervasive system that it would be well-nigh impossible to pick up enough ad hoc expertise to do the job properly. The amount of double-think involved makes this impractical. The problem is not comparable to working out the ethos of an imaginary world or an unbeliever borrowing Christian concepts. (October 28, 1971) *

* I must back Rottensteiner on this one, although there are parts of A SYMPOSIUM OF INNOCENCE with which I completely disagree. Science fiction is essentially a game of double-think; Lem shows this clearly in A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF S F (SFC 9; WSFA JOURNAL 74), and John Foyster has shown several times what would be demanded of an s f writer if this were not true (esp. in FROGS & SNAILS & PUPPY-DOGS' TAILS: THE SCIENCE FICTION WRITER, in SFC 10). Take one master of ingenious double-think, Cordwainer Smith. If I'm not completely mistaken, the elements in Smith's writing that seemed so "alien" to readers, come mainly from Paul Linebarger's Chinese background and professional

interest. Many of his other sources spring from European folk-lore. At the same time, Linebarger was fairly notorious among colleagues for his right-wing views. When I wrote DR LINEBARGER AND MR SMITH (in MENTOR 14), I said that I had been surprised to learn of Linebarger's right-wing leanings, because I found in the stories a consistent human sympathy and almost Elizabethan concern for the balanced life, that I do not usually associate with such political opinions. Which was the real Cordwainer Smith then? I would make a guess that Linebarger made a rigorous commitment to his sources when he wrote the Smith stories, and so they are partly games played in the Chinese style. (I still have some hopes of reading Lem's work on Smith, before I make any definite statements.) In a similar way, Philip Dick has been sinking himself in Eastern philosophy in the last few years, but I probably wouldn't have known from the books themselves. I would have said only that Dick's work seems very "alien". It seems only one step from what people like Smith and Dick and (so I'm told) Delany have been doing, to s f stories which explore the intricacies, strengths, and absurdities of Marxism. Perhaps somebody is doing this already, and I haven't recognised the sources. I would also agree with Rottensteiner and Foyster that none of this game-playing constitutes serious literature; we have to look elsewhere in the work of Smith, Dick, etc., to find the "literature" in it. :: I would still like to see the THUS WE REFUTE ROTTENSTEINER article, with references to SFC 19 as well. Franz would enjoy reading it. *

* BARRY GILLAM (4283 Katonah Avenue, Bronx, New York 10470, USA)

Re S F COMMENTARY 21: John Gibson: I'll agree wholeheartedly with you about Vigo. All four of his films, but especially his two masterpieces, deserve attention. L'ATALANTE is the one French film, outside of JULES ET JIM, that can stand with the best of Renoir. You don't mention Jean Renoir, though. Renoir, along with Chaplin, Keaton, and Ozu, belongs to a unique, irrevocable level of mastery in the cinema. Incidentally, what is undoubtedly the first book on Vigo in English will be published shortly by Praeger. John M Smith is the author.

There is room for many a difference of taste in film, but I'd have to say I think you're wrong about the comparative quality of Kubrick and Godard. Kubrick has a very persuasive brand of eclecticism, which in his best films - DR STRANGELOVE, LOLITA, and THE KILLING - can bring a degree of cinematic excitement to the screen. Godard, however, has created, after his masterpiece PIERROT LE FOU, a number of films which, in the few years between their release and now, have acquired a surprising look of classicism: BREATHLESS, A WOMAN IS A WOMAN, LES CARABINIERS, BANDE A PART, ALPHAVILLE, MASCULIN FEMININ, LA CHINOISE, and WEEKEND. I'm not exactly sure how to characterise the superiority of Godard, but this may help. When I read a great book, I want to find out not so much how the story comes out as what happens with the style. In Nabokov, Joyce, Proust, Sterne, and others, "what happens at the end?" has no meaning except in regard to the stylistic progression. Perhaps Godard is a little too blatantly stylistic, but this must be preferable to a director who never ventures or evinces, for that matter, a style. Kubrick seldom does - and it is just these few times that make Kubrick interesting. That sounds a bit too pejorative, but in comparison with Godard, Kubrick is a minor director. I like his best films, and 2001, which is his next in quality, but PATHS OF GLORY and SPARTACUS are both so flawed in their initial visions that their superficial flourishes can hardly redeem them.

Playing the derivation game is a reductio ad absurdum. The precredit planes of DR STRANGELOVE go back at least to Sternberg's JET PILOT and the toenail painting in LOLITA to Lang's SCARLET STREET. Mr Gibson is right: many films do isolate people in a house. But the threat in NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD and THE BIRDS is of a different order from that in STAGECOACH. The alienness of a human if implacable foe is not on the same level as the alienness of the supernatural. And as to the arms through the walls: The sentence originally was less definite, reading: "And were those grasping arms from the walls original with Cocteau...?" rather than "And weren't..." as it appears in SFC 16.

I caught BEDLAM on tv the other night and, as Mr Gibson says, the arms from the walls, combined with the lighting, give a fine effect. The film as a whole, one of Val Lewton's lesser productions, is forgettable except for the above-mentioned, and a rather well done scene in which the inmates of the asylum try Karloff, who, as superintendant, has been maltreating them. Only there does Karloff's acting ability show through the surface. In general, the horror films that featured Karloff denied him any chance to act. Was he ever as good - or chilling - in a horror film as he is in Hawks' THE CRIMINAL CODE? Was he ever as effective a lead as he is a supporting actor in Hawks' incredible SCARFACE? Even straight films fell through: Ford's THE LOST PATROL and Karloff's part in it are both awful, but Karloff does enliven LeRoy's FIVE STAR FINAL considerably.

Since I've been reviewing s f films regularly I've gone rather more methodically about a list of the best s f movies. How does the following sound, in roughly descending order? I include fantasy, s f, horror, and supernatural categories, not being quite sure where to draw the line in some cases.

UGETSU (1953; directed by Mizoguchi), DAY OF WRATH (43 Dreyer), TABU (31 Murnau), VERTIGO (58 Hitchcock), PSYCHO (60 Hitchcock), FAUST (26 Murnau), ORPHEUS (49 Cocteau), DIE NIEBELUNGEN (24 Lang), VAM-YR (32 Dreyer), THE TESTAMENT OF DR MABUSE (32 Lang), THESE ARE THE DAMNED (65 Losey), THE BIRDS (63 Hitchcock), DR STRANGELOVE (64 Kubrick), METROPOLIS (26 Lang), INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (56 Siegel), ALPHAVILLE (65 Godard), NOSFERATU (22 Murnau), PICNIC ON THE GRASS (60 Renoir), BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (46 Cocteau), THE OLD DARK HOUSE (32 Whale), REPULSION (65 Polanski), FAHRENHEIT 451 (66 Truffaut), DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE (32 Mamoulian), I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE (43 Tourneur), DR MABUSE, DER SPIELER (22 Lang), DEAD OF NIGHT (45 Cavalcanti, Chrichton, Deardon, Hamer), ZVENIGORA (29 Dovzhenko), MAD LOVE (35 Freund), ROSEMARY'S BABY (68 Polanski), THE MAN IN THE WHITE SUIT (52 Mackendrick), KURONEKO (68 Shindo), THE BOY WITH THE GREEN HAIR (48 Losey), WAXWORKS (24 Leni), 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY (68 Kubrick), THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN (35 Whale), KWAIDAN (64 Kobayashi), THE INVISIBLE MAN (33 Whale), FREAKS (32 Browning), THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS (67 Polanski), THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE (62 Frankenheimer), SECONDS (66 Frankenheimer), THE UNINVITED (44 Allen), THX 1138 (71 Lucas), DER MUDE TOD (21 Lang), THE HAUNTED PALACE (63 Corman), THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN (57 Arnold), KING KONG (33 Cooper and Shoedsack), WOMAN IN THE MOON (28 Lang), NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD (69 Romero), THE BEAST WITH FIVE FINGERS (46 Florey), BARBARELLA (67 Vadim), IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE (53 Arnold), FRANKENSTEIN (31 Whale), DEVIL DOLL (36 Browning), BURN WITCH BURN (62 Hayers), THE MUMMY (32 Freund), DRACULA (31 Browning), THE MYSTERY OF THE WAX MUSEUM (33 Curtiz), CURSE OF THE DEMON (58 Tourneur), VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED (60

Rilla, THE MASK OF FU MANCHU (32 Brabin and Vidor), THE CABINET OF DR CALIGARI (19 Weine).

Bruce: I really ought to write a review of Baxter's S F IN THE CINEMA and append this list there, where it belongs. ((**brg** That's a deal.*))

Notes to the list: Certain films are excluded because I simply have not seen them (CAT PEOPLE, THE POWER, etc) and a number more because I haven't seen them recently enough to place them (LOST HORIZON, THINGS TO COME, FAIL SAFE, etc.). Then, a note about what belongs on the list and what does not: Baxter includes BREAKING THE SOUND BARRIER. If one accepts Lean, shouldn't one also include Dovzhenko's EARTH and Eisenstein's THE GENERAL LINE or, perhaps more sensibly, Kurosawa's I LIVE IN FEAR, Ichikawa's THE BILLIONAIRE, and Aldrich's KISS ME DEADLY? I really don't know. Oh yes: there's another category of films excluded from the list. Some films, for no perceptible reasons, gain rather exaggerated reputations. Thus Walsh's THE THIEF OF BAGDAD (24 with Douglas Fairbanks), and the Lon Chaney HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME (23) are the kind of films I must force myself to sit through - and wouldn't if I didn't want to see them and be finished with them once and for all. A few more random notes: VERTIGO's supernatural elements are explained away, but Hitchcock evokes them in a way that is far superior to most fantasy films. Brunner mentions Bunuel's THE MILKY WAY as s f, while I have excluded surrealism from the list. And where do Lindsay Anderson's expressions of the imagination stand?

Short films? LA PETITE MARCHANDE D'ALLUMETTES (28 Renoir), THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER (28 Epstein), LA JETEE (62 Marker), THE CONJUROR (99 Melies), PARIS QUI DORT (23 Clair), AN OCCURRENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE (Enrico).

Jerry Lapidus: You're right in that my summary was awkward, but I felt that I needed to balance the review with some sense of proportion (of STAND ON ZANZIBAR in SFC 16). One could write as much again finding fault with SOZ as I did praising it. SOZ was not as good as NOVA or PAST MASTER, both of which were passed up for Hugo. Brunner's characters, I said, "are simple though not superficial". Upon reading this, my sister commented that what was wrong with Brunner was the superficiality of his characters. Delany's and Lafferty's may be only animated symbols, but animation is one thing Brunner's characters lack. PAST MASTER is Lafferty's least successful novel but it is still better than SOZ. Brunner also must be compared stylistically to Delany and Lafferty. I do not think that a flashy style is necessary - and in SOZ it would have been out-of-place - but you must still recognise that here SRO and RAL have it over Brunner's utilitarian narration. Only occasionally does Brunner seem to come into his own dramatically, as in THE TOTALLY RICH, and THE WHOLE MAN. What I must complain about in Brunner is exactly his strength: the protagonists of SOZ, THE JAGGED ORBIT, and THE SQUARES OF THE CITY, are as much the societies as the men. This strength has its assets and debits. When Brunner examines the interaction of man and society, it seems to be fine, but when we look more closely at the characters they are a little too thin, too much an extension of the society. In Brunner's own terms, he is successful. But we must inevitably make some comparison with other writers. Brunner does not so much place his heroes in the frame of the society as make them merely functions of their

society. It is interesting to see just what Brunner has done. SQUARES OF THE CITY posits a group of men who are trying to force people to become personifications of social forces. Brunner says here that one cannot do this and therefore the attempt is doomed to failure. But in the later books he bases his characters on this aesthetic proposition. And it is here - with his characters as personifications of social forces - that I have reservations. SOZ and JAGGED ORBIT are sociological s f of a high order, but at the same time I feel that this proposition limits - however slightly - the success of the books.

(July 29, 1971) *

* I have little to say about this epic, except that it forced THE OLD DARK HOUSE out of this issue. Comments invited. For the record: my two favourite films are THE BIRDS and 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY, both of which appear on Barry's list of fantasy/s f/supernatural films etc. I strongly suspect that I would like quite a few more films on the list if only they had reached Australia. In the case of THESE ARE THE DAMNED (in Australia, THE DAMNED), it might as well have not reached here. The Australian distributors cut the last half hour to ribbons, leaving a few minutes at the end of a narrative that had otherwise made sense. (The distributors did this for commercial not censorial reasons, which made the crime only worse.) From what I could gather when I saw the film at the 1968 Melbourne S F Convention, THE DAMNED is one of the most truly horrifying films ever made. Living in Australia can be a handicap. :: Just room for a few snippets: *

* POUL ANDERSON (3 Las Palomas, Orinda, California 94563, USA)

Thank you for the copy of S F COMMENTARY 21. I have a couple of questions for Hr Rottensteiner.

(1) Naive I may be, but apart from a few special situations when modern weapons are presumed to be unavailable, where have I ever suggested that the fine art of fencing will be of much help to anyone in the future?

(2) Since he considers science fiction to be so unworthy of him, why does he bother with it? (October 1, 1971) *

* HOUSTON CRAIGHEAD (P O Box 5033, WCS, Rock Hill, South Carolina 29730, USA)

You know, I wonder a lot about who are the people that write all the columns and letters in fanzines. I wonder, in fact, what kinds of people most fans are (if any particular kind of person is a fan). Perhaps you have in past issues run some kind of autobiographical sketch of yourself. I'm curious to see it again, though, if you have. I'd also like to know something about the people whom I read in nearly all the fanzines (people like Lapidus, Eisenstein, Porter, etc.). There is very little fanac in my area. Rock Hill is just on the state line between North and South Carolina. :: But maybe I should include an autobiographical sketch of myself if I would like one on others: I'm 30, married to a lovely girl named Allison, have a 9-month-old little boy, Blake, am associate professor of philosophy at Winthrop College a medium-sized (3800) women's college which plans to go co-ed in 1972, attended Baylor University and The University of Texas, finished doctoral degree in 1970, enjoy the hell out of s f for entertainment, relaxation, and the philosophical ideas expressed in the

best of it (such as in THE LATHE OF HEAVEN), hate acid rock except when I'm drunk and then I like anything, like folk and classical music, am interested primarily in contemporary novels (when not reading s f), metaphysics, and the philosophy of religion. I have a number of pet peeves: (1) Prejudice against the South. It is terrible, but so is every place else. The grass isn't really green anywhere; (2) People who sell insurance, or nearly anything in the business world for that matter; (3) Large automobiles; (4) All the floppy, uncomfortable new men's clothing, such as double breasted coats and bell bottoms; (5) The VN War, of course, racism, pollution, and the usual Big Issues. I support McGovern, don't like Nixon, and am beginning to feel that these autobiographical sketches can get to be a huge bore. Stop.
(October 21, 1971) *

* I disagree with the last sentence. You've just reminded me to do something that I have meant to do since this magazine began - to run short biographies of my contributors. In a way, I don't need to give an autobiography, since the whole run of the magazine forms a kind of autobiography. But many of my Australian contributors should be better known in world fandom. It is partly my fault that they are not. In his magazine THE MENTOR, Ron Clarke has been running a series of Australian Fan Biographies. (MENTOR costs 2 for \$1, or, preferably, letters of comment or contribution, from 78 Redgrave Road, Normanhurst, NSW 2076.) The biographies published so far have all been interesting, although of uneven quality, and they have included very few of the people who write to S F COMMENTARY. Contributors to SFC 25 include GEORGE TURNER (one of Australia's better-known mainstream novelists - THE LAME DOG MAN, A WASTE OF SHAME - and an observant s f fan and critic for over thirty years); PAUL ANDERSON (an s f fan who lives in South Australia and who has a larger s f collection than I have - curses! - and who works in the tax department in Adelaide; member of the organising committee of the Adelaide S F Convention); DAVID BOUTLAND (wrote s f under the name "David Rome", and has been for several years one of Australia's most successful television writers under his correct name); ALF VAN DER POORTEN (otherwise, Dr Alfred van der Poorten, Ph D plus several other degrees, and a leading member of the Mathematics faculty at the University of New South Wales; in reality, a most unassuming bloke, and just as addicted to s f as the rest of us); and ME (the heart of kindness, despite all my attempts to disguise the fact; an s f addict and evangelist, 6' 1", no beard and not much long hair, hates noise, cars, and television, likes Beethoven and the Rolling Stones (about equally?), Phil Dick, Brian Aldiss, Tom Disch, and Cordwainer Smith. OVERSEAS CONTRIBUTORS? I hope they send me their autobiographies. * Although the Advention has happened, I won't talk about it til next issue. Officially it hasn't happened yet. *

S F COMMENTARY CHECKLIST - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

Pangborn: MOUNT CHARITY (35) * Rudy Pozzati (45) * Robert Rauschenberg (49) * Jean Renoir (46) * Franz Rottensteiner (49) * Franz Rottensteiner: A SYMPOSIUM OF INNOCENCE (SFC 21) (45-46) * Joanna Russ: POOR MAN, BEGGAR MAN (36) * Joanna Russ: THE ZANZIBAR CAT (34) * James Sallis: FIELD (35) * Josephine Saxton: NATURE BOY (35) * Robin Scott Wilson (ed.): CLARION (32-33) * S F FILMS (47-48) * Robert Silverberg: GOOD NEWS FROM THE VATICAN (35-36) * Robert Silverberg: HAWKS-BILL STATION (17-18) * Robert Silverberg: THE TIME-HOPPERS (17) * Cordwainer Smith (45-46) * SPACE AGE BOOKSHOP (3) * Olaf Stapledon: SIRIUS (23) * Lynnda Stevenson: NORMAN: FRIENDS & OTHER STRANGERS (33) * George R Stewart: EARTH ABIDES (6) * Robert Thurston: ANACONDA (33) * Robert Thurston: WHEELS (33) * Wilson Tucker: TIME EXPOSURES (36) * Brian Vickers: THE CODED SUN GAME (34) * Jean Vigo: L'ATALANTE (46) * A E van Vogt: THE GHOST (14) * A E van Vogt: THE SEA THING (14) * A E van Vogt & E Mayne Hull: THE SEA THING & OTHER STORIES (OUT OF THE UNKNOWN) (13-14) * Kate Wilhelm: ABYSS (12) * Kate Wilhelm: THE PLASTIC ABYSS (12) * Kate Wilhelm: STRANGER IN THE HOUSE (12) * Kate Wilhelm: WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN, BILLY BOY, BILLY BOY? (34) * Bernard Wolfe: LIMBO 90 (24) * Gene Wolfe (43-44) * Last stencil typed December 26, 1971.