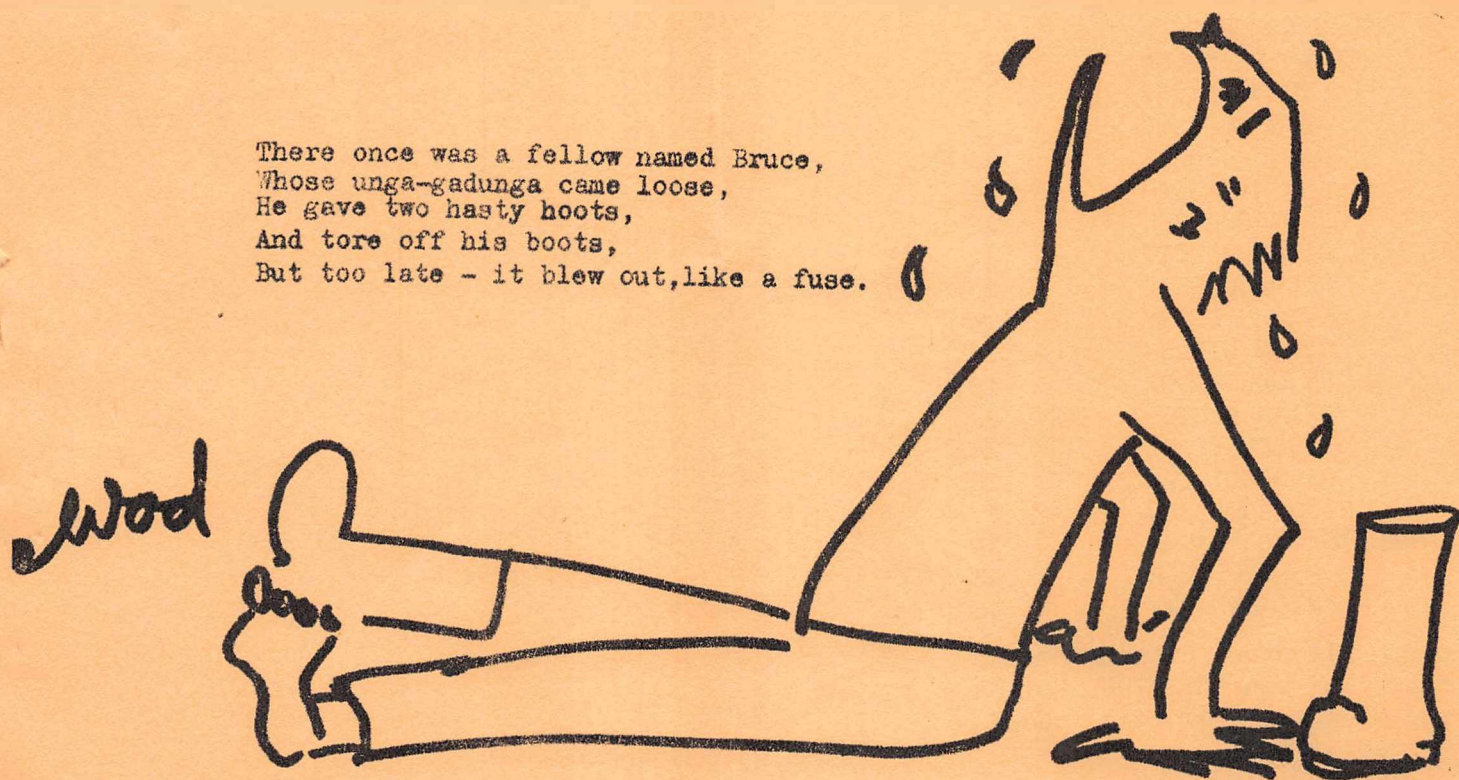


# S F COMMENTARY 33

MARCH 1973, 50 PAGES, is edited, typed, published, printed, and everything elsed by BRUCE R GILLESPIE, GPO BOX 5195AA, MELBOURNE, VICTORIA 3001, AUSTRALIA. (Phone 47 1303.) Available for letters of comment, contributions, or traded magazines; or subscriptions; \$3 for 9 in Australia; USA: \$4 for 9 surface mail; \$10 for 9 airmail; from Dena and Charlie Brown, 3400 Ulloa Street, San Francisco, California 94116. England: £1.50 for 9 surface mail; £4 airmail; from Malcolm Edwards, 75A Harrow View, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 1RF. Australia in 75!

There once was a fellow named Bruce,  
Whose unga-gadunga came loose,  
He gave two hasty hoots,  
And tore off his boots,  
But too late - it blew out, like a fuse.



...is the first letter of comment in an issue of this magazine devoted to letters about past issues of this magazine. The people who star in this issue are:

JACK WODHAMS	1
PHYRNE BACON	3, 20
BRUCE McALLISTER	8
KEN FORD	8
MARK MUMPER	9, 29
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plus Selected Entertainments from the pen of THE EDITOR and others, including people mentioned in:

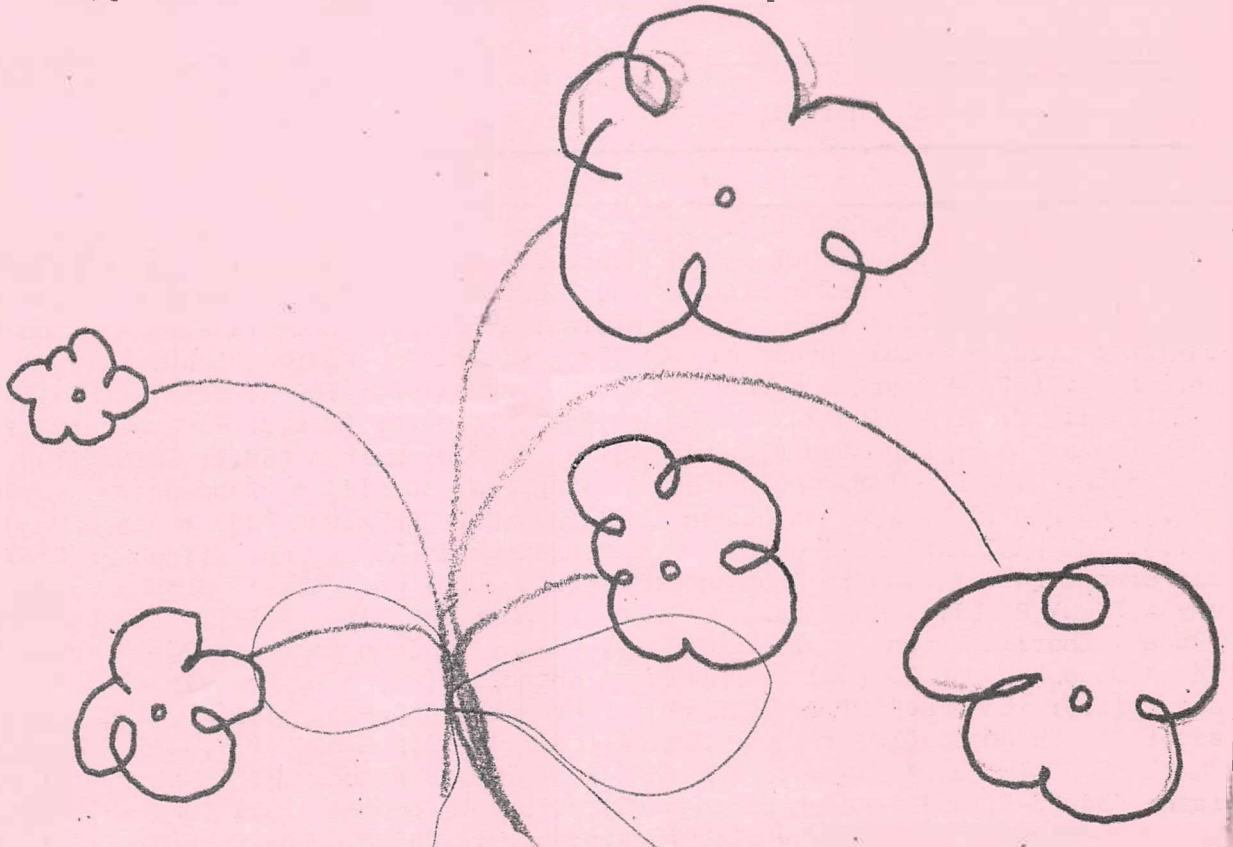
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Thank you so much for SFC/JOE. It looks like a lot of fun. Sort of like gathering autumn leaves and pasting them on paper. I must admit to having read only one of the stories mentioned: The assassination of JFK considered as a downhill motor race. And although the excerpted passages were curiously interesting to me, I do not feel much temptation to read the rest of the originals. I consider something like Kodachrome to be more than a little frightening. My genetic-cultural programming has been designed obviously to deal with linear sequences terminated by reward or failure. A very small deviation from linearity I find somewhat enjoyable. But I am also conditioned to operate in the relatively small arena of present necessity. So that the seemingly unnecessary introductions of different frames of reference have a tendency to cause me to experience a vertigo somewhat similar to sea sickness. Or the vertigo of an amusement park.

WHAT PEOPLE WON'T DO FOR FUN THESE DAYS!

A copy of this artifact has been sent to Foyster.



There is this curious little estrangement about SFC/JOE which I feel sure that Darko Luvin (see SFC 20) would recognize as science fiction.



### INDISPENSABLE ITEMS ARE:

RATS MAGAZINE, edited by Piotr and Laurel Olozewski, seemingly on behalf of and with numerous contributions from the members of Melbourne s f fandom. In recent issues, \*Lee Harding\*, Paul Stevens, Colin Stevens, Gerald Carr, John Litchen, Bernd Elbeshausen (who?), and Bruce Gillespie. RATS also features the work of Jon Puckridge and many others. Graphic trips, fiction, poetry, s f, everything. \$5.40 for 12 months from 448 Station Street, Carlton, Victoria 3054.

LOCUS, for which I am agent. \$3.50 for 10; \$8 for 26. Indispensable for book news, fanzine reviews, what the pros are doing, changes of address, and every other detail you need to know. Editors are Dena and Charlie Brown. LOCUS arrives airmail from USA fortnightly. A double Hugo winner.

I am also agent for:

VECTOR, which, although I hate to admit it, now beats SFC and SPECULATION for coverage of the s f scene. Latest issue is the Brian Aldiss Issue, with a chapter from THE BILLION YEAR SPREE (mentioned in this issue of SFC), Brian's own article about BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD, and tributes to Brian from Harry Harrison and James Blish. Plus Malcolm Edwards' brilliant editorialising. \$5.50 for 10.

SPECULATION, whose No 31 (mentioned in various places throughout this issue of SFC) is almost unbeatable. (Do Pete and Malcolm stand and grunge at each other at British conventions?) No 31 has the best fanzine cover of the year, plus brilliant articles about s f, and brilliant letters from such people as Gillespie and Rottensteiner. Reviews are very good; when did you last see a review in a fanzine?? \$2 for 4. Pete Weston is a Good Guy who needs the money.

SCIENCE FICTION BOOK REVIEW INDEX is useful for finding out magazines-which-reviewed-your-latest-novel-but-didn't-send-you-a-copy-of-the-review - and it's good for readers who want to check on reviews. \$1.50 each. Hal Halls produces it.

### MENTIONED IN THIS ISSUE - S F COMMENTARY 33 CHECKLIST

Jim Adriano (11) \* ADVENTION 73 (2) \* John Alderson (48) \* Brian W Aldiss (14, 22, 24) \* Brian Aldiss: BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD (23) \* Brian Aldiss: BEST S F STORIES OF BRIAN W ALDISS (23) \* Brian Aldiss: THE BILLION YEAR SPREE (22-24) \* Brian Aldiss: REPORT ON PROBABILITY A (22) \* Brian Aldiss: A SOLDIER ERECT (22-23) \* Brian Aldiss: SWASTIKA! (23) \* Poul Anderson: TAU ZERO (31-32) \* Piers Anthony (21) \* William Atheling Jr (32) \* Phyrne Bacon (20-22) \* J G Ballard: THE ATROCITY EXHIBITION (35) \* J G Ballard: VERMILION SANDS (35) \* Roy Ward Baker (dir.): FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH (49) \* John Bangsund (14, 45, 48) \* Charles Barren (ed.): FOUNDATION (47) \* John Barth: THE FLOATING OPERA (30) \* Greg Benford (14) \* John Berry & Ted White (eds.): EGOBOO (15) \* Ernst Bloch: ENTFREMDUNG VERFREMDUNG (45) \* Peter Bogdanovich (dir.): THE LAST PICTURE SHOW (7) \* Dr Ron Boscott (18) \* Anna Brigadere (36) \* Bertolt Brecht (45) \* Cleanth Brooks: THE WELL WROUGHT URN (42) \* Brooks Purser & Warren: A STUDY OF LITERATURE (42) \* John Brosnan: MRS B'S WANDERING BOY (SFC 17) (15) \* Dena & Charlie Brown (eds.): LOCUS (4, 45-46) \* John Brunner (20) \* Frank Bryning (18) \* Joseph Campbell (34) \* A Bertram Chandler (48) \* Cy Chauvin (12) \* Jean Cocteau (dir.): LA BELLE ET LA BETE (7) \* Frederik C Crews: THE POOH PERPLEX (43) \* Margot D'Aubbonnett (12) \* Kevin Dillon (48) \* Philip K Dick (37, 47) \* Philip Dick: A MAZE OF DEATH (6) \* Thomas M Disch (49) \* Thomas Disch: THINGS LOST (45) \* Thomas Disch: 334 (5-6, 45) \* Leigh Edmonds (5) \* Leigh Edmonds: 1971 (SFC 28) (45-47, 49) \* Leigh Edmonds & Bruce Gillespie (organisers): BRINGYOUROWNCON (9, 17) \* Malcolm Edwards (ed.): VECTOR (4) \* Geo. Alec Effinger (46) \* Ehrenburg (36, 40) \* Bob Ellis

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 50

## I M U S T B E T A L K I N G T O M Y F R I E N D S

\* I count 77 letters of comment in the file. I'd like to print all of them, but at the moment I don't want to publish a 200-page fanzine. Also there's another 100 letters sitting on the shelf over there; I haven't answered those yet, so I'm not sure how many are letters of comment and how many are not. It's the letters that keep this magazine going; keep 'em coming. I'm not sure what policy I will use when editing this column - just pick the letters that look most interesting, and leave the rest, I suppose. Such power!

\* In the meantime I want to get this column back to its original format, i.e. formatless. "Serendipitous" is a better term - whatever you're looking for, you will have to read the whole thing to find it. :: Last year I published my 1971 "Best" lists in a rather elaborate 14-page essay which wasn't really about my 1971 "Best" lists at all. Nobody except Barry Gillam and Leigh Edmonds understood what it was about, and the SFC 28 that Bernie Bernhouse read seems to have no relationship to the SFC 28 which I published. So, having been given the pushoff, the old Muse (which inspired my "1971" article) has folded its silver wings and flown off to parts unknown - probably to Leigh Edmonds' typewriter, curse it. In the meanwhile, I'm going to burden you with my lists for 1972. I haven't done the list for Best SF Short Stories yet, because I haven't read any of the magazines for 1972 yet.

### FAVOURITE NOVELS 1972

I should say that I've hardly read anything serious or worthwhile for nearly six months (having sustained severe injuries to the brain circuits) and so my list of novels is lightweight, to put it mildly. Only the first three would have been in the competition for 1971's list.

- 1 THE MAN WHO LOVED CHILDREN, by Christina Stead. (The edition I read was Penguin Modern Classics 14 002834; the novel was first published in 1940; it is 523 pages long.).
- 2 THE TIN DRUM (DIE BLECHTROMMEL), by Gunter Grass. (1959; Penguin 14 002359; 580 pp).
- 3 SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE, by Kurt Vonnegut Jr. (1969; Jonathan Cape; 186 pp).
- 4 334, by Thomas M Disch. (in NEW WORLDS QUARTERLY 4; 1972; Sphere 62200; 98 pp).
- 5 A WIZARD OF EARTHSEA, by Ursula Le Guin. (1969; Ace SF Special 90075; 205 pp).
- 6 THE FABULOUS RIVERBOAT, by Philip Jose Farmer. (1971; Putnam; 251 pp).
- 7 THE LATHE OF HEAVEN, by Ursula Le Guin. (1971; Gollancz; 184 pp).
- 8 TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO, by Philip Jose Farmer. (1971; Putnam; 221 pp).
- 9 A MAZE OF DEATH, by Philip Dick. (1970; Doubleday; 216 pp).
- 10 THE STORY OF MY HEART, by Richard Jefferies. (1883; MacMillan; 145 pp).

An odd mixture. 334 is there because... well, at 98 pages I can barely count the section in NWQ as a "novel", and I had hoped that I would be able to get the McGibbon and Kee text (supposedly published in August in Britain) before the end of the year. But anyway, if the complete text contains the NWQ section it would at least get No 4; possibly the entire book would rate even higher. THE MAN WHO LOVED CHILDREN is the best book about a family that I've read; on a sustained level, even better than ANNA KARENINA. THE TIN DRUM is indescribable - devotees of the book can spend hours recounting weird incidents and phrases and characters from it. SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE is my introduction to Vonnegut, and the only book that I've really enjoyed during the last six months. I've got a long list of one-line quotes from the book which I'll regale you with sometime. Nobody in fandom (except, I notice, a letter writer in ENERGUMEN 14) seems to have any idea what Ursula Le Guin's books are about; probably John Bangsund has, but he's not telling. Anyway, in A WIZARD OF EARTHSEA, Ursula Le Guin seems to work out even more effectively the themes that were taken up again in A LATHE OF HEAVEN. I just happened to like WIZARD better than LATHE, which still should have won the 1972 Hugo Award for Best Novel. Again, contrary to a vast weight of fannish opinion, I liked THE FABULOUS RIVERBOAT even better than TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO. I feel a bit of a heel placing A MAZE OF DEATH and THE STORY OF MY HEART so low on the list - but A MAZE OF DEATH isn't the best Dick book that I've read, and THE STORY OF MY HEART is more a dramatised philosophical essay than a novel or autobiography, but I included it anyway. It has some good quotes, too, one of which I was going to use as the epigraph for SFC 30.

NON-FICTION: Not a bad year, when I look back and realise how little I've read in 1972 beside 52 issues of NATION REVIEW. The following are in the order in which I read them: A SELECTION FROM SCRUTINY, edited by F R Leavis (1968; Cambridge University Press; CUP 508, 509, 632 pp); THE INFORMED HEART, by Bruno Bettelheim (1961; Paladin 586 08017; 270 pp); FADS AND FALLACIES (IN THE NAME OF SCIENCE), by Martin Gardiner (1952/1957; Dover T394; 355 pp); DESCHOOLING SOCIETY, by Ivan D Illich (1971; Calder & Boyars; 116 pp); IN BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE, by George Steiner (1970; Yale University Press; 141 pp); THE IMPROBABLE IRISH, by Walter Bryan (1969; Ace 36990; 223 pp); CELEBRATION OF AWARENESS, by Ivan Illich (1971; Calder & Boyars; 189 pp); and THE VAGABOND PAPERS, by "The Vagabond" (1877-8; Melbourne University Press; 256 pp). The Leavis and DESCHOOLING SOCIETY are the best of those, but I enjoyed all of the rest, especially Walt Willis in his shamrock disguise of "Walter Bryan".

BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR does not fall into either category. Let me put it this way; if I had always had in my mind an idea of the Ideal Short Story, then that ideal is mostly nearly matched by the stories of Flannery O'Connor. Last year was published FLANNERY O'CONNOR: THE COMPLETE STORIES (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux; 555 pages; \$US 10) which Barry Gillam was kind enough to buy for me in New York. It combines the two volumes of short stories published some years ago by Faber in England (A GOOD MAN IS HARD TO FIND and EVERYTHING THAT RISES MUST CONVERGE) plus twelve stories from O'Connor's first, previously unpublished volume, THE GERANIUM. Flannery O'Connor lived most of her short life in a small town in Georgia; most of these stories capture the sense of what it is like to live in a place like that. I gather that she was slowly dying for quite a while and the best of these stories contain a grim, highly concentrated and heightened sense of mortality and the lunacy of "ordinary living". O'Connor's presentation of Georgian dialect is brilliant. She has the finest art of all - the ability to know what to leave out - so in the best story, THE LAME SHALL ENTER FIRST, mere scraps of dialogue and violent events evoke a complete hell. Buy this book if you can get hold of it. Thanks to



## FAVOURITE FILMS 1972

EDITOR

- 1 LA BELLE ET LA BÊTE - directed by  
Jean Cocteau.
- 2 THE LAST PICTURE SHOW - Peter Bog-  
danovich.
- 3 JOUR DE FÊTE - Jacques Tati.
- 4 THE BOY FRIEND - Ken Russell.
- 5 CARNAL KNOWLEDGE - Mike Nicholls.
- 6 MODERN TIMES - Charles Chaplin.
- 7 WHAT'S UP DOC - Peter Bogdanovich.
- 8 CABARET - Bob Fosse.

No particular justifications here, It's a pity that I just happened to see BEAUTY AND THE BEAST this year rather than some other year, since I would really have liked to put THE LAST PICTURE SHOW No 1. For me, 1972 was the year of THE LAST PICTURE SHOW. Sometime, if I have the emotional stamina, I will see it for the third time and write a proper review of it; in the meanwhile all I can say is that I find it unbelievable that this film was made in USA by an American with American money - I mean, this film actually contains some truth in it! The film was made about a small Texan town in the '50s, but so many people have said to me something like, "That's just like Swan Hill a couple of years ago", or, "I grew up in a town just like that one." Ararat was certainly going that way by the time that I left. (It's picked up a bit since I've been in Melbourne. Gerald Murnane, whose reviews will start to appear in SFC soon, said to me, "One of the greatest scenes ever put on film was the one where two blokes from a small Texan town go into a cinema to watch a Western!" And what does one bloke say to the other? "Good film, wasn't it?" "Yep." Ah well; maybe the American cinema has stopped telling lies at last.

## FAVOURITE MUSIC 1972

This is a difficult one, since John Bangsund sold me more than 100 records at the beginning of the year, and I've heard many of them only once. The best of them would have to be the Abrahams version of Mahler's 7TH, and the Ormandy version of Deryck Cooke's Mahler's 10TH. Also, I received SONG OF THE EARTH for Christmas. The only time I get to listen to music is when I'm producing fanzines, so during the last few weeks I've really started to explore the collection. Pop lps are easier to talk about: BEST RECORD - A NOD'S AS GOOD AS A WINK TO A BLIND HORSE, by the Faces. Superb rock 'n' roll, with the drummer on this record (Kenny Jones) outdoing Charlie Watts. EXILE ON MAIN STREET by the Rolling Stones wasn't too bad, but as almost everybody else has said, the double lp contains only enough good songs for a single lp. Also bought and liked: three records by Ry Cooder, RY COODER, INTO THE PURPLE VALLEY, and BOOMER'S STORY; THE CHUCK BERRY LONDON SESSIONS; also by Rod Stewart and/or the Faces, all their records; the Beatles' PLEASE PLEASE ME only nine years after it was first released; CHEAP THRILLS by Big Brother and the Holding Company; AMERICAN PIE by Don McLean; SELF-PORTRAIT by Bob Dylan (the only Dylan album I have); PAUL SIMON; and the best pop lyricist since Paul Simon, LOUDON WAINWRIGHT III. (I have ALBUMS 1 and 2.) LEON RUSSELL and LEON RUSSELL AND THE SHELTER PEOPLE are my two most-played rock records. Pop singles: I can think of about four pop singles for the year which were tolerable - AMERICAN PIE, by Don McLean, which is a great song, WITHOUT YOU, by Nilsson, which has that Orbisonish intensity which I like so much in pop songs. and which has almost disappeared during recent years, THE FIRST TIME EVER I SAW YOUR FACE by Roberta Flack, and Aussie records GINGER MAN by Brian Cadd and MIDNIGHT BUS by Johnny Chester.

EDITOR

And, if I can bear to read the s f magazines, I'll have an s f list along sometime.

\* Did somebody just remind me of those 77 letters that are waiting in the files? I'll start with the people who sent me their "mini-autobiographies" in response to Houston Craighead and those I published in SFC 26:

\* BRUCE McALLISTER  
2928-B Pepper Tree Lane, Costa Mesa, California 92626, USA

No, I'm not a dirty old pro. I certainly tried to be a couple of years ago, but I just don't have it in me (typing speed is reason enough - huntandpeck twelve Silverberg novels in a year?). I'm teaching a creative writing workshop at the University of Redlands, an English class at Long Beach City College, doing some sales-product information writing for an educational film division of Doubleday and Co, and some consultant work for a small advertising firm, and also working in a sporting goods section of a discount store... and still making a subsistence living. Caroline, my wife, is a freelance photographer, and bringing in substantial bread to add to our financial resources. With all this, plus some poetry writing and the EDGE thing, I haven't been doing much fiction writing - but I do have a good novel making the rounds, two short stories out, and a novel portion-and-outline in the works - so I'm not totally alienated from the field.  
(April 16 1972)

\* "The EDGE thing" prompted the exchange of letters that produced Bruce McAllister's mini-autobiography. Bruce asked me to make some suggestions for a special s f supplement that he was editing for an international literary magazine called EDGE. Naturally I sent him one of my articles (I've even been paid for it; my first freelance sale) and a Lem article and a few other things. I haven't seen a copy of the magazine yet. I was especially pleased to hear from Bruce McAllister since - well, he's got a Scottish name too - and I chose him as "Best New S F Writer of the Year" in SFC 1. Since then he's published very little. Now I know why. Bruce's novel, HUMANITY PRIME, was published some time ago in Ace Specials.

\* KEN FORD  
PO Box 167, Robinvale, Victoria 3549

I am Kenneth Charles Ford (which is the name given when Betty Lorraine didn't arrive) who is at present seventeen years old but will turn eighteen on May 13. This year I am repeating HSC, because last year I did not obtain a bursary. I have an ambition to become a psychologist, but also, and this will kill you, a part-time writer of s f. The subjects I am doing this year are English, English lit. (no s f on the course), Aussie history, economics, and social studies. It's a very interesting, but time-consuming conglomeration. Last year I did a maths and science course so you can see the change. I did achieve a compensatory pass but that's all. My other interests include stamps (I have about 3½ thousand completely different stamps and very many doubles), comics (a great big collection of Marvel comics, especially KA-ZAR, X-MEN, FANTASTIC FOUR, CONAN, and DOC STRANGE), and science fiction (I have 178 books at the moment, most of them s f). And then there are the short stories I have written, and a novel I am working on.  
(May 1 1972)

8 SFC 33 \* Ken wrote to me during the year after a chance meeting between him and my sister. Since then Ken has become a Real Fan, and got through HSC this



year with an A in English literature (i.e. first honour), and a couple of Bs. Fan editors who want articles from Ken Ford should stand in a queue. Ken attended BringYourOwnCon (as one of the star cricketers) and has joined ANZAPA.\*

MARK MUMPER

1227 Laurel Street, Santa Cruz, California 95060, USA \*

I am an aspiring writer who is hampered by a great sense of laziness and sloth, and also perhaps a lack of confidence. I work in the s f medium, but I don't like categories and I reject their limitations. As yet I have not sold anything, but if I get over my current slump I may break into some good markets. My reading interests vary - I try to study as many styles and authors as I can. I'm still a student, but of course this is no handicap; I intend to remain so for the rest of my life. As of the present I am young (but weary), out of school, and out of work. I don't enjoy working for other people and I can't stand a forty-hour week. The activities that have kept me from my normal s f-oriented work have revolved around George McGovern's campaign for President. (June 4 1972)

\* In that letter Mark also said things like, "McGovern may be the spearhead of a truly new approach to the political systems of this country." Well, he wasn't. Yesterday (January 24) Nixon, duly re-elected, announced the "end of the Vietnam War". Does anybody out there really believe that? Anyway, I followed the McGovern campaign from Hunter Thompson's articles in ROLLING STONE, but I don't think even Thompson could account for the way that McGovern ruined his campaign after he was nominated. Australians do take an interest in these things, you see; ask not for whom the bomb falls, it falls on thee; Aussies must put up with the American president as much as the Americans do. \*

GERD HALLENBERGER

3550 Marburg (Lahn), Alter Kirchhainer Weg 52, West Germany \*

I'm 18½ years old, just finishing school, and will begin studying sociology this fall. I have been in fandom since 1970, editing TELLUS and parts of ANDRO-Nachrichten. I like serious criticism of s f, surrealist paintings, most kinds of electronic music (from Pink Floyd to Pierre Henri). I'm a member of the Social-Democratic Party (SPD). I like most kinds of literature, especially modern short stories and s f. My favourite s f authors are Brian Aldiss, Jim Ballard, Tom Disch, and parts of Philip Dick and Norman Spinrad.

Dieter Steinseifer, the co-editor of TELLUS is 31, has been in fandom for fourteen years, and is the most active fan in Germany (TELLUS, working for FOLLOW, ANDROMEDA, ANDROMEDA-Nachrichten, vice-chairman of the SFCD, Lord of Follow, active player of Armageddon), as well as studying physics (just doing his diploma) and very active in politics. (June 11 1972)

\* That's two mini-biographies in one. I've found TELLUS quite a useful news-magazine, especially for its coverage of the first Eurocon. I haven't heard much from Gerd for awhile, but he, like everybody else, hasn't heard much from me.

ALAN SANDERCOCK

1 Michael Street, Lockleys, South Australia 5032 \*

Beside the usual mundane stuff like trying to get a PhD in Inorganic

ALAN  
SANDERCOCK

Chemistry, I have a wide range of interests in popular music. My current favourite groups tend towards the instrumental combo type, with Chicago leading the lot. Also I am very fond of Santana, Blood Sweat and Tears, Deep Purple, Moody Blues, and Jefferson Airplane/Starship. It's difficult for me to list favourite film directors since I've seen the work of very few foreign directors. I don't particularly enjoy Godard films since I object to long boring lectures in the middle of films. Especially in WEEKEND, Godard's political propaganda has about as much subtlety as a sledge hammer. A MARRIED WOMAN also suffers from long sections of dialogue. Maybe I was annoyed with the film because it was subtitled and the fellow in front was blocking my view. One director that you seem to have missed is Resnais. His film on time travel, JE T'AIME JE T'AIME would surely appeal to a P K Dick fan. Also I like Kubrick, Hitchcock, Truffaut, and Losey, as well as Polanski, Antonioni, Nichols, and Russell.  
(June 14 1972)

\* GRAHAM J RAWNSLEY

3 Puckridge Place, Port Lincoln, South Australia 5606

I'm 25, 5'10", average length hair, reasonably well dressed although I don't try too hard to keep up with modern fashions. I'm an electrical engineer with the Engineering and Water Supply Department of South Australia, currently working in Port Lincoln on the Lock Kimba water supply scheme, trying to keep contractors and gangs in hand. I obtained my BE at Adelaide in 1968, spent a good portion of my four years at university surfing. I got married in 1969 and now have two kids, a boy 2 and a girl 1. Apart from surfing I do a bit of golfing, squash, and fishing. I'm a member of the British Interplanetary Society, which means that I subscribe to the society's magazine, SPACEFLIGHT.

\* TONY WATERS

3223 Nash Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45226, USA

My interest in s f goes back to grade school. Somehow I joined the S F Book Club at that time. I can still remember picking out the "book of the month" and then going to mother to have her write a cheque to send away. Later I would have to "work off" the amount of the cheque. The books that I got in this way can still be recognised: they're all gray. Fandom itself impinged on my consciousness only about six months ago. I'm still trying to figure out the various abbreviations. I am especially interested in fanzines. In high school two short-lived, small-circulation "underground" magazines arose. They were THE WEEKLY VEGETABLE and THE AMERICAN APPLE PIE MONTHLY. I contributed once or twice to the former. A friend and I wrote the latter, which I typed and published. I was also an editor for the school magazine.

In the fall I'll be a college senior in math. I've worked at the University (of Cincinnati) library for about three years now. This June I took my first real trip; to Russia. It turned out that our guide is an s f fan. (I found out only on the last day.) I chose Russia since I have taken three years of Russian language at UC. I would like to start a little magazine devoted to translations of and articles about Russian s f. Valia, my guide on my trip, somehow snuck (that word is "nonstandard" according to the American Heritage Dictionary) her address into my pocket near the end of the trip. Perhaps she can be my spy on current happenings in Russian s f.  
(July 29 1972)

JIM ADRIANO \*  
5080 Dundas Street West, Islington 678, Ontario, Canada

JIM  
ADRIANO

I started reading s f about five years ago - with fantasy really. I was given a copy of THE HOBBIT by my English teacher. Ever since I have been looking for something as good but I have not found it. I am twenty-two, and currently working in Toronto's best book store. I have been in fandom for about four years, semi-active. I have attended two conventions, with plans to attend two in the future, Torcon and Australia in 75. Once upon a time I was very interested in comics fandom and churned out a magazine. I will start another one very soon as I have had this urge to become more active than in the past. (Material is welcomed; free issues available.)

(July 30 1972)

DAVID GORMAN \*  
7934 Ella Dobbs Lane, Apt 38, Indianapolis, Indiana 46227, USA

I'm twenty-two, bearded, married, 6 feet tall, and plan to return to college someday, maybe to major in philosophy. I would like to run for political office someday, but I'm afraid I might end up like McGovern - a winner. \*What a bummer\* ((\*brg\* ? \*)) I started reading science fiction with authors like Ellison and Silverberg but quickly found my real favourites... Disch, Aldiss, Dick, Moorcock, Tucker, and Cordwainer Smith. Also I tend to favour Leon Russell music, Volkswagen automobiles, and the cold season. The reason I exist is my desire to be an editor of either NEW WORLDS or S F REVIEW or POPULAR SEXUAL MECHANICS.

Betsey Gorman is twenty, very pretty and sexy and likes the Rolling Stones and Beethoven (at last, a girl with the same interests as you, Bruce) plus reads gothic novels and digs Walt Disney movies (almost, Bruce, almost). Betsey works in the data processing field like her husband but would rather be a liberated housewife.

Agamemnon is our cat who likes to lay on WHO PUT THE BOMP and STARLING - probably a rock and roll freak if all were known.

\* All I can say to that (apart from the fact that I'm jealous) that if ever I get to Indianapolis, watch out, Gorman, watch out... \*

V NIRANJAN \*  
74 Major Street, Toronto 179, Canada

I am 25, 5' 7", and have black curly hair. I wear glasses almost one inch thick. I joined fandom in 1972. I started publishing in 1969 - not fanzines but my own research results. I received my B Tech in 1968 in Aeronautical Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, India. Received my M A Sc in 1969 in Aerospace Sciences from the University of Toronto, Canada. I hope to complete my Ph D in the summer of 1973 at the University of Toronto. My thesis is on an experimental study of the properties of human and animal bone, with the aim of designing internal orthopaedic prostheses. I have taken a serious interest in s f only after arriving in Canada. Thus far my favourite writer is Arthur Clarke. I am apolitical, which is another way of saying that I am an ignoramus in political terms. I cannot attend the Australian World Convention in 1975. I would definitely tell my fan friends about the convention.

(August 2 1972)

SFC 33 11



CY  
CHAUVIN

- \* CY CHAUVIN  
17829 Peters, Roseville, Michigan 48066, USA

I'm about six feet, brown eyes, black hair, slim. I've just finished two years at Macomb Community College, and have transferred to Wayne State University, where I'm planning to major in journalism. I first encountered fandom in the form of AMAZING and S F REVIEW. I'm interested in such things as geography, anthropology, fairy tales, music (folk, rock, or anything else that is "interesting", whatever that may mean), biology. I think my worst fault is not being able to concentrate on one thing to the exclusion of all others: I'm too easily diverted into doing something else.

"Why do I bother to exist?" To experience - flowers, people, trees, fanzines, crowded expressways, s f, Bruce R Gillespie. They're all unique and interesting, and if there is anything I'm really sad about, it's knowing that I can't experience them all. I've often felt that about fandom, too, as the letters stack up: I would honestly like to know all the people who make it up, but it's impossible. (August 15 1972)

- \* Same here; and it's even more impossible for me to get to know all the people who make up fandom. At present fandom is made up mainly of people I would like to meet someday, people such as: \*

- \* MARGOT D'AUBBONNETT  
26 Ridge Street, Merewether, NSW 2291

ME! Born France, 1920, Came to Australia with foster parents at the ripe old age of seven. Couldn't speak a word of English - incidentally, isn't it a beastly language to learn? Can speak it now though with a slight American accent (my teacher was a French-Canadian). Lived, when not at boarding school, near Melbourne, on a cattle-sheep station. Got burned out in the big Gippsland fires. Did my Senior Public and came to Sydney. I was in second year at Sydney Uni studying anthropology when I got violently patriotic and joined the Army. Special wireless group; had a bit of fun for a couple of days dodging Jap bombs. They were rotten bomb-aimers - all we lost was one latrine! Then proceeded to make one colossal mistake - I got married, unfortunately to the wrong man. That business lasted seven years, then finis! Result, one son, Peter, whom I would cheerfully murder on occasions - like every morning when I'm trying to get him out of bed.

I am quite mad; I started with an advantage; ask any student of French history and they will tell you that all of the House of Bourbon (Legitimate and illegitimate) were and still are quite nuts! Worked at quite a variety of jobs to keep the infant and myself. Draughtswoman, company secretary (the company went broke), wages clerk, etc. I can't really pinpoint the time when I became interested in s f. I think to start with it was a form of escapism. I remember being hauled up before the headmistress for reading AMAZING STORIES when I should have been studying. You see, at school, I was "different" and you know how cruel children can be to each other...

Generally these days I can be found slopping around in slacks - five feet two of me, hair more white than brown now. When I work, my modus operandi (lovely expression, that) is to stew over an idea for a month, write it, let it simmer for six months, then re-write it. (September 21 1972)

\* When I look at this pile of letters, I chew my nails and keep wondering how I could forgive myself if I left out this or that letter. I must get the highest percentage of publishable letters that any fanzine editor receives. Some of these letters comment on SFC 24 (remember way back then?; YEAR OF THE QUIET SUN and all that?). I've kept one really good letter that comments on No 23. So I will just have to rely on your memories and start with two letters about SFC 24, and work forward. If I get that far I'll end with a few comments on SFC 28, and leave all letters on SFCs 29-32 until next issue. I might as well start at the top, with: \*

RICHARD E GEIS

PO Box 11408, Portland, Oregon 97211, USA \*

S F COMMENTARY 24 arrived last week and I see myself mentioned and also see that I must answer some charges by Chris Priest regarding my review of his INDOCTRINAIRE in SFR 43.

He thinks my review dishonest, and damaging. Gee, I didn't know I had that much power. Nice to know. I will admit that I didn't write the best review that I was capable of, and not the one that I wanted to write. But, as usual, space limitations crimped me, and the time to do a full-length job wasn't available.

But I got across my main point - that INDOCTRINAIRE was absurd, or Absurd, depending on the author's intent. I fail to see why I should meet a book on its own terms, as a reader. And as a reviewer I am a reader who happens to know something of writing and to have a bit of experience in s f reading. But above all else, usually, I review as a reader, and my concern is with the person who is perhaps willing to spend money on buying a book; he deserves to know if the book is worth the money, what kind of book it is, and what the plot is generally about. A lot of writers seem to think that readers are obliged to read their books on their terms, which often are highly esoteric and "artistic".

I failed to mention in the review, and happily do so now, that parts of the book are memorable and vivid, and that Chris is a very good writer. But the book - the story - is an insult to the reader, a cheat and a thief of time and reader emotion. Why? Because its irrationality is linked to rationality in such a way that the reader is ever expecting the story to "make sense" and in the end to be resolved. But time and again the irrationality of the characters is not explained, nor is the implausibility of the circumstances and action made credible. It is a measure of Chris' skill and talent that he makes a reader (me) put up with this as the pages roll by. I salute him, but I curse him. The reader is insulted time and again, and in the end, with that ending... the whole book is revealed to be a waste of time, and that the concern engendered in the reader's mind for the hero (or central character) was wasted. In fact, the reader is slapped in the face for caring. INDOCTRINAIRE may be an intellectual exercise in style and plot, and brilliant in that sense, but it isn't fair to the reader who isn't an intellectual with emotional distance. Some parts of the book are brilliantly executed, but the whole is less than its parts as far as I'm concerned, and I think for most readers of s f.

(February 29 1972)

\* I'd agree that INDOCTRINAIRE isn't a success, though for different reasons.

FUGUE FOR A DARKENING ISLAND is much better; it's a brilliant book in many ways. :: Dick's fanzine RICHARD E GEIS is \$1 a copy from the address above.\* SFC 33 13

RICHARD  
E GEIS

I have received S F COMMENTARY 26 from two people. If you think I'll believe that you, a sane person, spent decades in a closed room with a hot typewriter retyping pages so he could have justified right-hand columns, you mistake me for a fool! Obviously Banger did that incredible job; you put out the Gillespie appreciation issue. Self-praise is always the best.

As for that monstrous total of 120 pages! Aiii. It boggles my imagination. ((\*brg\* Not half as bad as it boggled the duplicator, which fell apart altogether.\*)) Why would Banger do it? I fear we'll never hear from him again. Surely he lies prostrate on the post office floor, a mute monument to fanac disease.

We have a lot of such monuments in fandom. Say a prayer over his corpse for me.

And now, to reality: you really did it, didn't you? I admire your reviewing and your thoroughness. I'd admire it even more if I were a writer whose book(s) you reviewed. Solid thinking. I wish I had the integrity and the character and energy to do such jobs. I'm a slap-dash man who doesn't quite think there is all that much content in 99% of the s f books I read, to justify a long, in-depth critical look. But that could be simply my sloth talking. "I resent that, Geis!"

I'll grant that Aldiss is a thinking man and all. His work does stand up to a critical look. It even looks back.

And I hope you can keep on putting out S F COMMENTARY in all its dedication and purity. But if you keep on this way, justifying right-hand columns, putting out Perfect Issues, you'll be ignored and ridiculed in fandom. Your zine requires thought and work, sir, and that will never do! Readers quali-er-quil-er-quail at that. You are not entertaining fandom, Bruce. May Ghod have mercy on your soul. (August 8 1972)

\* Well, I'm keeping up the dedication but getting pretty sick of the purity. However, in the absence of anyone willing to relieve me of this unfortunate trait, I'm still publishing SFC, right-hand margins justified and all. Nothing much else to do, you see. I think you can be fairly sure that I'll make it to SFC 100. Sometimes I wish that fandom would get sick of SFC, and then I could cut the print run. But all the readers keep on supporting the magazine year after year, and show no signs of the weariness that often afflicts its editor. Lots of them even pay subscriptions and send me letters. Thanks for yours, Dick. Keep publishing your own magazine, that's all. \*

\* JOHN D BERRY  
35 Dusenberry Road, Bronxville, New York 10708, USA

I wish I could be as egoboosting about SFC as you are about EGOB00. Too many of the earlier issues went unread, when I was terribly busy and I kept getting incredible quantities of fanzines to be reviewed, but I tried to get into them when I could. In the meantime, periodically I loaned the latest issues to Greg Benford, who dug them, and who I imagine has since gotten on your mailing list himself. You're a prolific editor, and I'm not a prolific reader, but I've been reading snatches of your most recent issues. Mostly I'm interested in your editorials, and in similar commentary about people. The other day I sat down to read the current issue (No 24, I mean), with the intention of reading each issue thoroughly from now on, and I ran right up against my trouble with reading SFC.



I don't read very much s f, although I am certainly an s f reader and I love the stuff, so most of your discussions are about books and authors that I've never read. I enjoy some s f discussion - I like SPECULATION, I enjoy talk about the field, and I'm always interested in discussion of books or stories by friends of mine - but I have absolutely no interest in reading reviews even of all the books I've read, much less of ones I haven't read. This lets out a lot of the material in SFC.

But there's something else that bothers me in your fanzine. A lot of your writers - or perhaps only a few of your writers who contribute a lot of the prose - like to write dogmatic putdowns - very sharp, very sure of themselves, very opinionated. To me these sound arrogant and bitchy, and I find such writing varying from irritating to boring. John Foyster indulges in this kind of prose, but I like him most of the time, so I try to ignore his excesses. Franz Rottensteiner seems to love this sort of thing, and I find him nothing but a pain in the ass. (No, it's his writing, and indeed only the small part of it that I've encountered, that I find a pain in the ass; if I were to meet him, I might find him a merry, fun-loving person whom I would like a great deal. Maybe.) I found out in this issue that even an article on an author who is one of my favourites, Ursula Le Guin, can be unpleasant: Stanislaw Lem sounds arrogant and dogmatic, too. It may well be only that Rottensteiner did the translating, picking a snotty, irritating style in English. I just had the impression in reading the article that Lem wasn't talking about the same book that I read. Well, actually, I guess he wasn't; he was talking about the book that he would have written, not what Ursula Le Guin wrote.

I've been flipping through some more SFCs, following threads through several issues as far back as No 16. There are a lot of nice things in these issues, many of which I had missed until now. (Most enjoyable, of course, was John Brosnan's account of getting to England. But there were s f-related things too, such as the letters from Le Guin and Dick.) So, right now I raise my right hand and promise that I'll be more diligent in reading S F COMMENTARY in the future. Please keep on writing personal editorials, like the one in No 24. (February 23 1972)

\* I've printed this letter because probably it presents the views of quite a few of SFC's readers. Doesn't mean that I'm going to change the style of the magazine, though, unless of course I feel like changing it for good reasons of my own (as set out in SFC 31). The fact that you don't happen to have read many of the books that SFC reviews, John, is an insurmountable logistical problem. I don't suppose that I can reasonably expect any reader to read every bit of every issue of SFC. But quite often it's worthwhile to read comments about a book that you haven't read more to find out about the reviewer than about the book. All my reviews are done from a very personal standpoint, anyway. I don't really need to add to what I've said about other members of the "staff" before: that, as Franz said in SFC 29, he is a "polemicist", and polemicism is vigorous intellectual exercise so long as nobody takes it personally. "Nice" or padded reviews - or writing of any sort that is offensively made sweetness and light - is a bore. However, Franz and John and the others sound the way they do because they write nothing but what they want to say - and if they do muck around, I cut out the padding. If I make every word count, then obviously every word will hit much harder than in the average piece of fan writing. :: EGOBOO, edited by John Berry and Ted White, is worth writing for, by the way. You can't pay for it, except by letter of comment, arranged trades, or other expressions of interest. John is no longer fanzine reviewer for AMAZING, which is a pity.

JOHN  
GIBSON

\* JOHN GIBSON  
2 Baringa Street, Blaxland, NSW 2774

Re SFC 25: I appreciate Barry Gillam's reply to my taped comments. I agree with Barry's list of films 95% - the other five per cent I haven't seen. However I have seen THE CAT PEOPLE and THE CURSE OF THE CAT PEOPLE (which, in spite of its lurid title, is an extremely sensitive film about lonely children and their "pretend" playmates - the invisible friends of the Stevenson poem quoted in the film).

The first movie, THE CAT PEOPLE, is Tourneur's horror piece on "werepanthers". There is an unforgettable moment of belly-freezing in this: a girl is being stalked by an unseen panther in a darkened indoor swimming pool. She can hear the cat snorting and coughing but cannot see anything but the occasional vague movement in shadow. She dives into the pool, treading water in the centre. The sounds of breathing and snorting shift slowly around the pool. Nothing can be seen. Shadows waver before the eyes. Is that the cat - that darker darkness? The girl slowly swims a revolution of the pool, trying to stay on the farthest side from the breathing. Bang! A rubbish tin is overturned. The girl gasps. The audience rises visibly from the seats. Enough said: see the film. It seems that we never lose our childhood fears of the dark, of that monster who treads right at our backs on lonely moonless nights. Tourneur is a master at reviving these primitive feelings in us. But I still don't know why it is we enjoy being scared.

I would add to Barry's list Alexander Korda's Wells' THE MAN WHO COULD WORK MIRACLES, Corman's OUT OF THE DARK, Oboler's FIVE, Pal's THE TIME MACHINE (the best of Pal's s f), Hawks' THE THING, (?s) ICARUS MONTGOLFIER WRIGHT (cartoon). I was delighted by Barry's inclusion of Don Siegel's very underrated THE INVASION OF THE BODYSNATCHERS and Losey's THE BOY WITH GREEN HAIR and THESE ARE THE DAMNED. I cannot altogether go along with Barry with style: some of the best films I have ever seen have been styleless - it was the acting, the script, the camerawork, the brilliance of locations and compositions, the reconstruction of a period (the BBC series on the Roman emperors is one of the last), even the music and its relation to the images. Any one of these factors can make me like a film. Naturally, I like a film more when all these factors are integrated into a successful artistic whole. But this is such a rarity that I accept gladly what bones are thrown. However it is my belief that bad directors and producers often ruin artistic work by cameramen, scriptwriters, and actors. Walt Disney, for example, ruined some fine nature documentaries with stomach-revolting cuteness. (I have come to the conclusion that Disney still lives - as an animatronic robot.) (January 25 1972)

\* HARRY WARNER JR  
423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland 21740, USA

Barry Gillam is awfully generous with that line he draws on movies for his list. MYSTERY OF THE WAX MUSEUM is hard to classify as fantasy of any sort; it simply concerns a nasty old man who gets figures for his wax museum by coating humans with wax. If that's eligible for the list, I would insist on a place for two W C Fields classics: YOU'RE TELLING ME, which has Fields as the inventor of an improved type of punctureless auto tire, and NEVER GIVE A SUCKER AN EVEN BREAK, which offers an episode involving remarkable mechanisms to reach and depart from an isolated mountain peak. Not to mention THE BIG BROADCAST of 1938, where Fields messes around with

a ship which is testing a new type of propulsion, and INTERNATIONAL HOUSE, where he's mixed up with an Oriental inventor of an advanced sort of television. But you never can tell about these fantasy films. For no particular reason, I'm reminded of a recent "film festival" over a Washington television station. It publicised the series of movies on successive nights at the same time: KING KONG, RETURN OF KONG, KING KONG vs GODZILLA, and COUNTESS FROM HONG KONG. (May 19 1972)

\* Not to mention the story of "King Kongcrete" which Pete Weston tells in the latest SPECULATION, available now from your friendly agent - me. \*

Re. SFC 26: The conreport in your editorial makes an odd impression for its similarity to the way people describe American cons, combined with just a suggestion here and there that it's really a different side of the world after all. There was a story years ago about a bem invasion of the world which consisted of their altering familiar things so gradually that hardly anyone noticed the difference until these tiny changes had made it an entirely different Earth. Just this kind of barely visible changes in behaviour and surroundings turns up in your conreport. I hope that it'll make a lot of American readers anxious to visit Australia and experience this kind of subtle novelties themselves.

\* So this is the place for a convention report (as I am sure somebody-or-other has said somewhere-or-other very recently in some other fanzine). Two conventions have taken place recently in Australia. The first was the BRINGYOUROWNCON, or if I write it in lower case as BringYourOwnCon, you might see what it was supposed to be. The less said about it the better, so I won't say anything, except that Australian fans (well, Melbourne fans) still like things done for them, and that our hosts, the Foysters, Liz and Peter, and Lee and Irene, did a very good job. I won't be organising, or non-organising, as was the proper intention of Leigh and me, any more conventions for awhile. :: Q-CON was rather better - so good, in fact, that it managed to relieve me of the blues which had afflicted me during the month before the convention and still afflict me nearly a month afterwards. As the person who took upon himself sole responsibility for the convention, Dennis Stocks did an outstanding job. My days of long convention reports are over (except in the unlikely event that something like Syncon takes place again someday, perhaps in 1975), so I will just mention a few things that struck me. Brisbane is a city that is quite different from any of the other three state capitals that I have seen. It's green, for a start; Melbourne has a drought at the moment, and while flying from Melbourne to Sydney I could see very little green on the ground. But Brisbane had had a tropical downpour a few days before the convention, and the air was humid all the time that I was there. All of the houses seem to have much larger gardens than any suburban houses in Melbourne; most of the houses I saw were surrounded by trees and shrubs and looked delightfully un-neat. Brisbane looked like a place where people could actually enjoy their home surroundings without needing to "escape the city" every weekend. :: But I'm getting ahead of myself. When I arrived at the hotel (which gave excellent service all the time, compared with you-know-which-other hotel) a few people were upstairs in the convention room. I met Helen Hyde for the first time, met Neil Rahman for the first time in two years, and of course ran into all the other people who travelled interstate (including Gary Hoff who had come 4000 miles from Western Australia). When Dennis began the program, it didn't stop. I hesitate to say that the convention had too much program; certainly it had far too much for me, but many of the people who attended had never been to an s f convention before, and the style of the convention suited them very well. Just don't ever try that style of program in SFC 33 17



more fannish areas, Dennis. Nearly every item on the program was enjoyable: on Friday, December 30, Dennis Stocks chalked funny little drawings of space weapons on a board and spoke on TAKE THAT, YOU ALPHA CENTAURIAN SWINE!, Roy Russell gave one of the better talks I've heard about UFOs to an audience that was a lot less murderous than the one that heard a similar talk at the 1972 Eastercon; and Christine McGowan spoke about THE INTERGALACTIC LAWYER. This was the first time that I had seen Christine give a speech, which went over very well, aided by the enthusiastic, almost luminescent expression on Christine's face while she spoke. The main convention room was not air-conditioned, compared with the guests' rooms, so at night it became far too hot for me to stay to watch the MINI FESTIVAL OF CLASSIC GERMAN FANTASY FILMS. Those who could stand the heat enjoyed it. I went to the Hydes' room and had a very long, interesting conversation with Leigh and Helen, the two stalwarts of Canberra fandom. During the rest of the convention, the Hydes more or less held a continuous room party, although I hope they got some sleep sometime. I enjoyed talking to Neil Rahman again; last time I met him, we didn't have much to say to each other, but over New Year he showed us some of the better spots in Brisbane and generally helped to extend good ole Queensland hospitality. Vaguely I recall that Bill Wright also let loose the "mighty juggernaut of his personality" as he likes to call it; in other words, he told some very funny Bill-Wright jokes. :: Sunday's program started much too early for most people who missed out on some interesting people, including Frank Bryning, talking about SCIENCE FICTION ILLUSTRATION.. A DYING ART?, and me, with the only fannish item on the program (hear ye and tremble, ye unregenerate sercon people out there!); I MUST BE TALKING TO MY FRIENDS, during which I bludgeoned various members of the audience into telling the rest of the people about their own experiences of fandom; Ron Boscott's quietly chilling account of how drug companies expect THE ANIMAL UMBRELLA (i.e. us, the human guinea pigs) to "test" the toxicity of the many drugs that are now on the market (Dr Boscott was quoted on the ABC National News, although nothing else about the convention was); a film and a panel about THE FUTURE OF MAN IN SPACE; and, just after lunch, the highlight of the convention, Jack Wodhams' Guest of Honour speech. Even with a transcript of the speech I could not describe the way in which Jack's speech kept us all entranced for nearly an hour. Jack started on his chosen topic - WHAT MAKES A STORY? - but, during question time, began to speak about some of the Great Questions which obviously have been burning in his mind while he has been slaving away in his bush hut in Caboolture (or wherever he lives). The last few moments of his speech were inspiring, but, as I say, indescribable. At night we watched PLANET OF THE APES, which I hadn't seen since 1968 (it's still a great film) and BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS, which was awful. Dennis put on a New Year's Party for everybody, and after midnight, Jack Wodhams sat down and told us the funny story of THE BUNYIP. We had a room party afterwards in the Hydes' room; I left at 3 am. :: Quite a few people had to leave early for other states on Monday, January 1, but Dennis still managed to put on several films in the morning and a panel called CAN WE SURVIVE OUR OWN FUTURE? As I had just done a fair bit of research on this topic for Publications Branch, I'm afraid I talked a bit too much on this panel. Neil Rahman showed some of us the Great American Disaster restaurant which served me some very good, very thick French onion soup and had a loud juke box. When we arrived back at the hotel, most people, including Dennis, had left, so we played tapes of LACON and I talked with Ian Gould, who is an eleven-year-old fan who has read about twice as much as I have and seems to know about three times as much. After the convention he and his father offered to show me around Brisbane. This was the most pleasant part of my journey to Brisbane. We drove out to the Goulds' place at Indooroopilly. After we had travelled about three

18 SFC 33 miles from the centre of Brisbane we seemed to go down a country road. Then

we re-emerged in another suburb, which, as I said earlier, looked like a green park dotted with houses. I met the other members of the Gould family, who are all s f readers, although this was the first convention that any of them had attended. We went to visit a marvellous little "farm" (or "property", or whatever it was) tucked away in a small valley in the hills - only nine miles from the centre of Brisbane. What a place to live in. However, the Goulds told me about their encounters with the local members of the Nazi Party, who seem to be more active in Queensland than anywhere else in Australia, and about the horrors that the state's premier, Jo Bjelke-Petersen, lets loose on this peaceful state. Next morning I set off for Melbourne, was delayed for an hour in Sydney, and faced temperatures of 105° in Melbourne, after leaving Brisbane, 1200 miles nearer the equator, which had a temperature of about 80°. Lunatic Australian weather. I had planned to stay a few days in Sydney, but I had too much work to do at home. The only disappointment of the convention was that neither Shayne McCormack nor Margaret Oliver attended, but I managed to survive that blow. Bill Wright lost his luggage on the way back to Melbourne and he only just survived that blow.

Now, Harry, what are the "tiny differences" between that convention and your conventions? Ours was very serious, even for an Australian convention, but somehow everybody kept up the fannish mood, anyway; there can't be many cities in USA like Brisbane; but on the whole s f conventions always have the same camaraderie, wherever they are held.

Back to Harry:

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It's hard to say anything about COGNITION AND ESTRANGEMENT that I might not regret later on. It left me feeling terribly inadequate, something like the sensation that an unusually intelligent dog must have as he tries to catch the half-dozen or so words he knows while listening to a lively conversation among humans and as he senses that there is more meaning in all that talk than he can understand. Simultaneously, I can't escape an accompanying sensation that there's really nothing there behind all the elaborate and literate prose except the truisms and self-evident facts that we've all known since we read a dozen or so science fiction stories. In general, I feel, it's wrong to give a fanzine an article written in this style, simply because of the hackles it is bound to raise among most of its readers who will equate it with the worst faults of their academic years and won't try hard enough to find the good in it. Meanwhile, whatever happened to that proposed crusade to wipe out the rampaging epidemic of "genre" in writings about science fiction? It's about as necessary in most places as the "Man!" which appears as an interjection two or three times in each sentence spoken by the more determined superproletarians in the United States nowadays.

John Gibson's article on AFTER LONDON is a very model of how much a first-rate reviewer can get from one book and how he can turn it inside out for the person who hasn't read it, revealing aspects of it that should enlighten him when he finally finds opportunity to read it weeks or years later. ((\*brg\* So there, John Berry. That's a lot of what SFC reviewers try to do.\*))

Among the projects I had always intended to accomplish in old age, and never got around to, was a collection of things like the Lancer edition of THE TIME MASTERS with its omitted final page. There was the E E Smith novel which in its magazine version lacked its denouement because the final paragraph was "The End" and someone cut that line, thinking it to be a convention which the magazine didn't observe when it published fiction. The recent collection of Kornbluth's early fiction has James Blish listed

HARRY  
WARNER

as the author on its spine. I'd like to have a whole batch of these professional items handy so I could rattle off their names and publishers to every person who criticises fanzine editors for publishing blunders. I just remembered another one: a long-ago story in ASTOUNDING which was identified on every page as THE EXHALTED.

Phyrne Bacon's letter is the exact opposite of the Darko Suvin article. While he puts into academese the things that we all know to surfeit, she writes clearly the things that we ought to realise but never manage to bring to order in our minds until we come across such an inspired narrative. In fact, all through your letter section in this issue I find items which could stand very well as separate articles, almost all of them by individuals who almost never write fanzine articles. I wonder why it's so much easier to say the same things in a loc? I do it all the time, omitting the padding that I would have inserted if I'd expressed the same thing in an article, and yet requests for fanzine articles keep arriving and I can never think of subject matter for articles. It doesn't matter, when I do it, but I hate to think that a half-century from now, when someone writes a definitive book-length study of John Brunner, he'll fail to draw on the fascinating three pages in this SFC, simply because he leafed through fanzines for research help and read only the articles which might be relevant, never thinking to delve through all those pages of letters where the real gold lay buried.

Continued on next loc.

(October 6 1972)

\* Actually, I have the next two locs somewhere in my other file (cf as-yet-not-answered letters). :: If ever I get around to my pet project, a volume of THE BEST OF SFC, a high proportion of the contents would come from the letter columns, so perhaps this problem might yet be solved. If anybody wants to read such a book. (Anybody any suggestions for the contents, by the way?; I have a fairly clear idea of what I would like to include, but extra suggestions would be very helpful.) :: Talking of articles, what about telling us sometime more about the historic occasion when Bill Wright visited you, Harry? Was he the first Australian fan you ever met, as I suspect?

\* And talking of Phyrne Bacon... Well, I could write many pages about Phyrne Bacon, who, in recent months, has written me the best letters I've ever received from anybody. A great person, and one of the two or three people I most want to meet if and when I get to USA. The following letter is one of the few she has sent me that I am allowed to print. It doesn't really have much to do with anything else in this magazine, but Harry mentioned Phyrne's ability to write letters, so:

\* PHYRNE BACON  
3101 North West 2nd Avenue, Gainesville, Florida 32601, USA

Bruce, you know just reading your list of articles in SFC 26 makes me very uneasy. I mean I can see (sort of) that typing a fanzine can lead to ego-boo and all, but I cringe to even think of all the time ~~lost~~ involved in typing such a thing! It's not of course that I don't waste my share of time, but usually I try to be lazy about it. Oh well, each to his own ego flavour. I mean, I should talk, what with planning to spend most of my summer keypunching and correcting Piers Anthony's index to book reviews in science fiction magazines. I wrote a dedication for it the other day. "To the authors of FUTURE OF AN ILLUSION and FLYING SAUCERS: A MODERN MYTH OF THINGS IN THE SKY, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, interpreters of dreams."



I might also have added, "Dreamers par excellence, but I didn't. You might wonder why I would be writing the dedication. Piers has said repeatedly that the index is a group project, and I felt like writing a dedication - at least for my part of the project - so I did. I have had an offer from Texas A&M Libraries (alias Hal Hall) to publish the index (1000 copies) if I get it to them before September. They would like it sooner, but right now I am sort of unwinding from all the excitement of passing my Ph D preliminary orals, and having submitted a research announcement. Probably I won't hear anything about that before September. ...More specifically I had been designing electronic tests for tape-controlled test equipment. Mylar tape. We never did find a good way to splice mylar tape. Of course when they were demonstrating the test equipment to visiting VIPs, the technicians added extra holes here and there so that the test equipment would bypass all the tests that would have given NO GOs. I felt like it was all a sort of gigantic fraud. And was glad to get away from it. Also of course there was the underlying feeling that all the work I had been doing was totally transient and not really worth doing in the first place.

Which of course would leave me open to the question - along the lines of what you asked about - what do I consider important? Hmmm... one of the primary questions that bothered me for a long time, until I became a subjectivist, and until internally I solved the population-justice problem... What was the purpose of all this - of all of what I am, and all of what I and we can be? But of late I have rather slipped into the internal role of Admirer of the Universe. Which is, of course, for me, centred in the emotional mind-body that I am. There are many things that I enjoy - and I suppose I assume that all other people are similarly motivated by their feelings - and one of my primary enjoyments has been my attempt to try to make a gestalt of it all. And in a sort of internally reflective way, I consider that a gestalt is a wonderfully powerful and exciting tool, for one's internal and one's external relationships. But mostly I enjoy working on my own. And curiously, or perhaps not too curiously, I enjoy seeing other people working on their own relationships within the flux of reality. I might remark in passing, that there was nothing that helped my understanding of animal populations nearly as much as my tender loving care of my guppy strain (which I still have by the way). In fact, it was coming to grips with this that made me give up my hopes for any self-control within our species and at the same time any hopes of wide-scale justice. I suppose that I am almost at the position where I can see justice as cruelty and cruelty as justice. But enjoyments remain. So I can always hope that other people will enjoy themselves, even if their enjoyment is in their own suffering or in the suffering of others. Which is a huge even if. It is, I suppose, my own answer to Karl Popper's contradiction of tolerance. His question was - should those people who believe in tolerance tolerate intolerance in others? (See THE OPEN SOCIETY AND ITS ENEMIES which I consider one of the best books ever.) I suppose that I have decided to empathise with or enjoy all pleasures to some extent - even the pleasure of not allowing some pleasures. A dark pleasure indeed. Aside from that I work, as I am sure that most people work, at getting by, at structuring my life so that I have enough to eat, to wear, to do, etc. The comforts of home, the comforts of accomplishment, of recognition, of communication, of love, of sensual pleasure, of excitement appeal to me. I am fairly much at home in the world of my present existence. But I fear for the future of the world as I know it. I have tried on occasions to try to make some small change in the world as I know it, but too often my very deep irrational fears prevent me from doing much of anything.

(June 23 1972)

EDITOR

\* No matter what is in the rest of this issue of SFC, that letter is the best thing in it. Like John Gibson in SFC 31 - all of which ties in well with this letter rather than with the rest of the contents of this issue - I've come to believe that "living a life of quiet desperation" is not enough - but the continued publication of this magazine is an act of noisy desperation, and I don't know how to do anything else. Anyway, Phyrne and I have discussed this question between ourselves about as far as it can go... I leave readers to contribute their own thoughts. Last I heard, by the way, the Sage of Phyrne's Ph D had reached the stage where she was writing the final dissertation. \*

\* BRIAN ALDISS  
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S F COMMENTARY 26 has so much of interest; many thanks... I think in particular of the discussion circling around Miss Le Guin's novel and Wilson Tucker's. There is a lot in what Malcolm Edwards says about his (Tucker's) excellence and neglect. But is not part of the reason that Bob Tucker was a great old fan, and thus can never be taken seriously by fandom? Fannish memories are long; but here is a case where that is not an advantage. I bought YEAR OF THE QUIET SUN in the States last November, recalling with pleasure THE LONG LOUD SILENCE. My continued work on BILLION YEAR SPREE has prevented my reading it so far but at least I have pleasure from the title, which is beautiful and promises many things: an amalgam of science and religion, of East and West...

THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS is another superb title. An evocative title is some sort of guarantee. Considerable awe - or something - was generated by the letter you print from Miss Le Guin. It left the spoor of someone speaking absolutely straightforwardly from the heart of an enigmatic personality.

Nevertheless, Lem's criticism remains. The bisexuality in the novel is centrally interesting, yet never centrally examined. One accepts Miss Le Guin's reply to this point, accepts and understands; nevertheless, she wrote a science fiction novel, not an ordinary novel, and in a science fiction novel one does expect such a dramatic donnee to have some pivotal function. Perhaps our expectations should alter; but there must be persuasive reasons before they do.

Sorry; I'm writing very politely today. Can't think why. "Miss Le Guin", indeed! Perhaps it is because SFC really is astonishingly sober and good, and your correspondents make great efforts to think and stay in their seats! (Maybe they are too well aware of the enormous black shape of Franz Rottensteiner, crouching in his corner, ready to spring!)

I note that you are re-embarking on your hazardous task of writing me up. I note it with mixed feelings, and as yet have not had the heart to read what you say. Let others comment. May I, like Miss Le Guin, speak straightforwardly from my enigmatic personality. I am extremely grateful not only for the attention but for the quality of the attention. And yet - much though I hate adverse criticism, I am also discomposed by praise, because I have the sense (which surely any writer must have) that so often I could have done better, that so often I have not achieved what I hoped to achieve. Is one not supposed to say such things? And if not, why not? All the science fiction I have ever written will be in print in hardcover and/or soft cover by the end of this month (June); which is obviously some sort of a success. But at present only PROBABILITY A and A SOLDIER ERECT

among my novels satisfy me. (Amazed you don't care for the latter - it's a deep true book which I've had stored for twenty-five years... but what is that beside individual taste?!) )

Of course I may feel better tomorrow! Life is just so great that I resent all my time away from fiction while I'm writing BILLION YEAR SPREE. But BYS is now finished in first draft, and I am rewriting. Some chapters have been rewritten four or five times. But it's impossible to do all my contemporaries justice. All the same, my belief is that I have established certain canons for the s f field which will help its writers and readers - without that belief, I would have given up long ago (you know I am writing the volume on my own, Philip Strick having been too busy to do his share). I suppose some people will be shocked when I say that Gernsback was a great disaster to the field, and so on; but the only way of doing such a volume is to get clear what you really think and then say it as effectively as possible - the first half of that prescription is the difficult bit.

Anyhow, my hope is that SFC might be interested in treating BYS thoughtfully. I'll see that you get an early copy. Weidenfeld and Nicholson publish in UK next March (1973), and Doubleday follow suit in Fall '73. It will be a big full book, with illustrations, every page numbered, etc.. etc..

And when it's finished, when it's finished... ah, Margaret and I drive round Europe for a magazine, living well at its expense, and life in general - and writing in particular - begins again! Just think of those books I'm going to write! (Well, the anticipation excites the hell out of me, whatever it may or may not do to you!)

Note to your correspondent Philippe Hupp in Metz. When he writes a dissertation on THE INFLUENCE OF METZ IN SCIENCE FICTION for HORIZONS DE FANTASTIQUE, he must recall that BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD opens in Metz; that's the strange city where Charteris' illusions begin to begin.

Note to Ted Pauls, supposedly reviewing Harry Harrison's YEAR 2000 and taking the chance to repeat a poor joke about the BEST S F series, which he admits he made a while ago, to the effect that the volume should be called "Some Pretty Good S F..." etc... Harry gets into the anthology business because publishers know that they can rely on his taste and the anthologies sell; but no publisher is going to use a down-grading title as suggested. Only the very naive can expect any real definitive semantic sense behind that publisher's flier, BEST S F. I had a similar problem; when Faber sold out of BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES OF BWA and wanted me to select for a revised edition, I tried to persuade them it should be called THE SECOND BEST. They would not wear it - even to humour me. Rightly, I'm sure. Authorial or editorial modesty should not be allowed to get in the way of sales. Pauls is also incorrect in his comment on NOVA 1 (another volume he was supposed not to be reviewing). He claims that no story in it will be republished; my story, SWASTIKA!, has been twice reprinted in English and three times published in translation; a stage version is now in preparation. Other contributors in NOVA 1 may have similar experiences.

George Turner is doing you some fine reviews!

(June 4 1972)

\* "Miss Le Guin", indeed! I didn't know whether to edit that out, or write SFC 33 23



EDITOR

it as "Mrs Le Guin", which is more accurate, or as "Ms Le Guin", which is more polite these days. :: Lesleigh told us some very interesting things about Bob Tucker when she was in Australia, things that make me want to tell all SFC readers to go out right now and buy all the Tucker books you can lay your hands on. The pity of it is that I see few signs that any of the fan reviewers understand or can account for the unique qualities of Tucker's writing. With enough work, I think I can, but I haven't written a long review of anything since March 1972 (when I finished THE S F NOVELS OF BRIAN W ALDISS, part 2), so I hope that Bob will be just a little patient. :: SFC is "astor-ishly sober and good" because the editor usually is - not that it benefits him at all. And the correspondents stay in their seats because if they try to jump out of them I push them back immediately. (Which means that I cut most of the letters that I publish here, and I cut most of them severely.) :: If you read the second of my articles, Brian, and the letter that Jim Goddard published recently in CYPHER, you might not be so "discomposed by praise". I have many reservations about even your best novels, and I always try to express those reservations as part of the general discussion. I hope that SFC does get a copy of BILLION YEAR SPREE; it sounds marvellous. In the meantime I can only apologise (and have done so by private letter) for my neglect of some of your recent books, e.g. HAND-REARED BOY, A SOLDIER ERECT, and THE MOMENT OF ECLIPSE, all of which I have done elaborate review notes for, but none of which has compelled me to write long reviews. One of these days... :: And I hope that you are already planning to travel to Australia in 1975, Brian and so is everybody else. \*

\* JEFF CLARK

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Despite sloth and occasional other debilitating pressures, a need for correction and a bit of shame are finally making me write a letter of comment on S F COMMENTARY 26. Your magazine is, indeed, my kind of meat, and once upon a time I had intended submitting something for your perusal. But I've found it increasingly difficult even to loc fanzines in a substantial manner, let alone the chatty banter, which I can't seem to manage at all.

It is certainly nice to see casual mention of "Jeff Smith's and Jeff Clark's PHANTASMICOM" (note the "M"), but I must protest that by no stretch of the imagination can I be considered to have a major part in the practical production of the fanzine. The byline should read, "Jeff Smith's and Don Keller's". Nevertheless, I do appreciate the mention, at least on behalf of the 'zine itself.

\* I have a queasy feeling that I've done very badly by PHANTASMICOM, which is definitely my kind of meat. I don't think I've put your change of address in my book, yet, Jeff; it took me a long time to change that of Jeff Smith; and I have that same sinking feeling that I've never put Don Keller on the list at all. The problem is that I get to know the people who receive SFC only when they write me letters. Since I've started to receive letters from the "PHANTASMICOMob" (which is how I tend to think of you) I've only just started to sort out which of you is which. \*

I enjoyed Barry Gillam's little piece on WILLARD. He is certainly right: the film didn't even titillate - let alone scare - my thirteen-year-old brother. I gather that Barry has not read the book that the film is based on. RATMAN'S NOTEBOOKS is a remarkably sustained piece of viewpoint writing and a vivid character portrait of the narrator; the author (Stephen Gilbert) never lets you get far enough back to see how outrageous (as well

as horrifying) are the unfolding events. Again Hollywood has managed to flatten every texture of the written work: apart from the one mechanically obvious and obviously superfluous bit of playful stroking, the film's creators even miss the subtle erotic attachment that the narrator has for the rats. This becomes (in the book) a bit more hypnotic than unnerving. But this is to be expected. The title name WILLARD was fair warning that the result would be Hollywood playing up the central character as a cutesy, ineffectual neurotic enmeshed, a sort of perverted and oddly practical Walter Mitty type. The book has small-English-town settings; the movie reaches - stoops - for a kind of Hollywood/California Gothic... The review of THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN was pretty well aimed, too.

I can pick bones over your nicely conceived review of JACK OF SHADOWS. In fact, I can make myself contentious over just about any review of Zelazny: the point is that I don't often agree with the allegedly important merits of the man's writing (as presented by most reviewers), nor with the reasons for his denigration. I have a special interest in your review because certainly you aren't typical, and because I've done a rather lengthy piece on the book myself. ((\*brg\* In PHANTASMICOM.\*)) You show clearly the details of the novel's "transition", yet I can't really see how the matter applies in any important sense to the book that we both read. I simply didn't read it in that way, and I don't see a contradiction in tone between the separate parts. Jack is not a traditional hero, and obviously he is running around without a soul at the story's opening; you can't apply the traditional concept of "identifying" with the character to the overall composition and organisation of the book. I don't believe that the first chapter is typical and cliched at all, but quite subtle in mood(iness) - perhaps because I tried to approach the book without prior expectations. Also, I've never known Zelazny really to "torture" the English language; often he is unorthodox and outrageous as hell, but he can achieve effects that are beyond the comprehension of other writers in this field.. Gradually I've come to the belief that he cannot always be approached as other s f writers are; he is not necessarily an earnest slum boy trying to make good in the rich fields of respectable literature; his (irrational) sensibility cannot be denied, and he simply writes altogether much better than most people around. (August 9 1972)

\* But, like most s f writers, he could write a great deal better. :: If, in JACK OF SHADOWS, the reader cannot identify with the hero, then with what can he identify? I mean, there must be something there in which to be interested, and one of the things that I pointed out in my review is that Zelazny makes Jack into such an amorphous, contradictory figure by the end of the book that the reader loses all interest in him. In the first half of the book the reader can be excited by the deliciousness of its best prose and the splendour of its settings, but even most of these disappear during the second half. In many s f books the reader can identify with the ideas, but in JACK OF SHADOWS the ideas are light as feathers, although they acquire a bit more weight in the second half, just when the hero, who might have borne these ideas, has nearly disappeared as a figure of identification. :: And, in Australia at least the "fields of respectable literature" are not "rich"; the American s f field is much richer in financial terms; I think Zelazny should and could write much better for the sake of his Muse rather than for his pocket. \*

BARRY GILLAM

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BARRY  
GILLAM

enjoyable issue that I can remember and the letters are the best of it (although I'm prejudiced there). Of course the acknowledgement of my work is extremely gratifying and I thank you for printing so many letters. Your new policy of using the writer's name at the bottom of the page is welcome. I don't think I've mentioned this, but your format of editorial-cum-locs is excellent and gives the section a quality of conversation. In a fanzine dedicated to criticism, this is wonderful; a dialogue is going on simultaneously with the serious presentations.

26:17: You should know very well that you can't leave an incomplete list concerning films around and expect to get away with it. (On the other hand, you are trying to provoke letters and you are succeeding.) Therefore, here is my list of directors, the first rank in a roughly descending order and the second in a cowardly alphabetical order.

First line: Ozu, Chaplin, Keaton, Renoir, Ford, Dreyer, Mizoguchi, Ophuls, Hitchcock, Murnau, Bresson, Griffith, Welles, Sternberg, Lubitsch, Rossellini, Hawks, Stroheim, Lang, Flaherty, Bunuel, Dovzhenko, Pudovkin.

Second line: Aldrich, Antonioni, Bergman, Bertolucci, Boetticher, Borzage, Capra, Chabrol, Cocteau, Cukor, Edwards, Eisenstein, Fellini, Forman, Fuller, Godard, Kuleshov, Kurosawa, LaCava, Losey, Mann, McCarey, Minnelli, Passer, Peckinpah, Preminger, N. Ray, S. Ray, Resnais, Siegel, Sirk, Sjostrom, Stevens, Stiller, Sturges, M Tourneur, Truffaut, Visconti, Walsh, Wilder.

These lists, like all recent auteurist criticism, have their base in Sarris' THE AMERICAN CINEMA, the one essential book of film criticism. Several more categories are really necessary, but I'm a bit rushed right now.

26:18: Paul Anderson: I too had disparaged SUMMER OF 42 but some friends recommended it and I went. It is one of the best American films of last year. Which is a neat and sneaky segue into my Ten Best list for 1971, which follows: THE PRINCESS YANG KEWI FEI, CLAIRE'S KNEE, SOCRATES, NEW TALES OF THE TAIRA CLAN, CHIKAMATSU MONOGATARI, DEEP END, LE BOUCHER, SUMMER OF 42, THE CONFORMIST, THE LAST PICTURE SHOW. Second Ten: DIRTY HARRY, A NEW LEAF, TAKING OFF, THE GO-BETWEEN, BANANAS, THE HOSPITAL, INNOCENCE UNPROTECTED, RIO LOBO, THX 1138, and THE GRISSOM GANG.

By the way, Paul, have you seen SUMMER OF 42? The observation of gesture and the emotional rightness of it are astounding. Mulligan has externalised Grimes' feelings. The soft focus and slow motion are perfect representations of the memory of an intensely observed moment. The drugstore scene and the meeting of Grimes and O'Neill are aching depictions of how terrible it is to be adolescent. Grimes' frustration with his environment and himself is beautifully conveyed in the attenuated scenes. We never see and only once hear Grimes' parents: they are the dross of his life; the film shows us what makes this summer a special memory. ((\*brg\* All this sounds depressingly familiar - me being the oldest adolescent in the business \*n\* all - so I think I will still give this film a miss. There must be some films around that don't hit me right between the shoulder blades.\*)) The end may be wish-fulfillment, but daydreams are so important to young people, so real and strong, often stronger than the mundane life one is forced to live, that the sublimation at the end into a waking dream is totally justified. And the seduction may be the nearest thing to Borzage since the great man left the scene.



26:25: I've read A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN three times and I still don't like it. I like DUBLINERS and the poems, love ULYSSES, and find the WAKE fascinating. But the PORTRAIT doesn't touch me, through either the characters or the style. Stephen is meant to be a callow young man, but the book itself is just a little too callow.

26:25: I'm not sure that SOLARIS is quite as good as you say, but then I've only read it once. The film, directed by Andrei Tarkovsky, whose ANDREI ROUBLEV is considered the best Soviet film since Eisenstein, was shown at Cannes. VARIETY: "He (Tarkovsky) spins a strange, slow, but absorbing parable on life and love in the guise of a sci-fi theme. Its length (165 minutes), philosophical asides, and measured pace will limit it abroad though it may find a place in archive and school usage... Space effects are not in spectacular vein but efficacious, and playing is intense and effective, as are moral statements about love, life, and humanity."  
(May 31 1972)

\* The continued great success of SUMMER OF 42 in both Melbourne and Sydney led to the following fascinating exchange of letters in NATION REVIEW, which, better known as just THE REVIEW, is still Australia's best newspaper, and probably the world's freest, most irreverent publication apart from the "underground press". (The important thing about NR is that it is not underground, except in Queensland, where it is banned; last I heard it was selling more than 40,000 copies a week and has probably increased greatly since then.) Anyway, "The Professor", of Niddrie, wrote in NR Dec 16-22, 1972:

An ardent reader humbly submits his thesis on the psychological effect of a filmic evening on the Mss of the species.

Three times have I seen SUMMER OF 42. I have thrice watched the sexual awakening of the philosophe Hermie and the coy anticipation of the nymphet Miriam. Three times the bull-at-a-gate eagerness of the lusty Oscie and Banjie's prepubertal disdain for his comrades mishandling of their romantic excursions. Herein lie the roots of a modern imponderable.

Three times. The first was with a friend (male, platonic) so the purpose was ~~let's-see-if-this-film's-any-good~~, rather than ~~let's-see-and-then-go-back-to-the-flat-for-some-coffee~~(smirk).

The second time (keep reading, it gets interesting here) I escorted a bird I had been dating for some weeks and who had thus far received my advances well. But during the film I noted with unease her changing mood. Watching the exploits of Hermie et al had, it seemed, transformed that mood from feminine warmth to cold reserve. The relationship never recovered.

I thought at that time that there must be something about the film. Now I'm bloody certain, for when forced by unbelievable circumstances to take another bird to Sofft I noted again, this time with positive horror, a similar change of attitude.

I believe this a warning for all men. Don't take a bird you don't know well to this film. From the above shocking experiences I can only conclude that watching a film about a poor bastard who knows he wants something, doesn't know what it is but has a fair idea, and doesn't know how to get it but is hellbent on finding out, turns the modern Mss right off

EDITOR etc

the unsuspecting victim who takes her to see it.

Granted, it could have been my company at fault... but let me shun that. As Lear might have said - that way madness lies. Anyway, such marked reversals of form demand investigation of all contributing factors. I appeal to the omniscient Ellis to advise us all - should we take birds only to films starring Robert Redford or Rudolph Valentino?

\* "The omniscient Ellis" is of course Bob Ellis, NR's fabulously mad film critic who annoys more people each week, I'm sure, than even Billy MacMahon did before we dumped him out of the Lodge. Ellis replied:

The fate of The Professor (LETTERS, December 16), who took two women to SUMMER OF 42 and scored with neither, touched me more than somewhat. I too have taken women to deflowerment films and failed to score. I think the reason is that the subject matter stirs remembrance of their own first night, and the night was either ghastly, which turns them against you, or beautiful, which turns them to thoughts of how good it was, and how rotten you'd be in comparison, or how humiliating it was, which turns them to thoughts of what beasts men are, and that includes you, and in no case do they come across.

In my experience a sex film is the very worst thing you can take a woman to, because the objective contemplation of the threatened union makes them very uptight. It's like showing a soldier a war film on the eve of the battle: the battle itself he might enjoy, but he doesn't enjoy thinking about it.

The best films are violent films, horrible experiences after which you soothe them (I took eighteen women to SPARTACUS and rarely failed), or boring awful films from which you spirit them away in the middle murmuring, "I think this may have been a mistake." The basic trick is to take them to something that is not in itself a complete and satisfying experience, because then the evening is over. "I've had a lovely time," she says, "let's not spoil it." But if it's a miserable or a terrifying experience, the evening has to be saved. "Let's take a ferry ride," you say...

But the big trick is to take them to a five o'clock session, so that then you've still got four or five hours after the film ends to comfort them, wine and dine them, and invite them round to hear some records, for the night is yet young. I cannot overemphasise the importance of this. The hour between eleven and twelve is just not long enough.

My short list in order of films to get in after are, in Melbourne, DELIVERANCE, THE GODFATHER, WILLARD, MACBETH, COUNT YORGA VAMPIRE, PRIME CUT, ZPG, 2001, EASY RIDER, THE ASSASSINATION OF TROTSKY, and WAIT UNTIL DARK; and in Sydney DELIVERANCE, THE EMIGRANTS, THE PROFESSIONALS, and I CAN JUMP PUDDLES. Two dark horses that go against the rule might be DECAMERON and GONE WITH THE WIND but don't bank on it. The best film ever made for what I think we should call the Comfort Effect is THE WILD BUNCH, and the best for the Boredom Effect LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD. I urge anyone who takes my advice to send in a report on what happened as it's a matter of urgent national importance on which detailed information is desperately needed, and pronto.

Bendigo, Victoria, says, "Let us hope that (Bob Ellis) has effectively stamped out the dangerous rumour that women are capable of appreciating a film as anything other than an involved and uneasy prologue to the doubtless heady delights of being scored off by Mr Ellis. Now let's have no more of this crap about women being anything other than near-children who, cursorily entertained, will come across (that's what they're for isn't it?). Keep it up, Bob. We're all rooting for you." Joyce Stevens, of Roseville, NSW, says among lots of serious things, "Many women are no longer prepared to deny their sexuality but neither are they prepared to have their humanity denied. It will take more than a dinner or two to overcome the 'message' of SoffT." Barbara Jones, East Melbourne, Vic: "Bob Ellis has struck a blow against his mates everywhere and done an incomparable service for women. From now on girls accepting invitations to dinner and a film will know it won't be a man they're going out with but only a talking prick instead."

On the principle of "Don't talk about what you don't know about" I should write no more. But I would point out that 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY should be struck from Mr Ellis' list - although I'm prepared to consider that the company was at fault rather than the film; and I should also say that since the Liberated Lady still allows the bloke to pay for the meal and film, she can't complain too much if the guy has more on his mind than a pleasant after-dinner chat. Readers who have done rather more extensive research on this subject than I have might like to write to NATION REVIEW, GPO Box 531288 Melbourne, Victoria 3001, and if you have any sense at all, send \$A 21.84 for a subscription.

It's fun doing the reading for this column isn't it? Now back to science fiction. Science fiction???.

MARK MUMPER

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S F COMMENTARY 26 is a treasure, and you deserve every bit of praise that (I have no doubt) will be coming your way. For myself it is probably the most valuable and noteworthy single item of s f interest I have seen this year.

Pleasantly surprised to hear that Welles is a candidate for your favourite director. He is a man whom I've liked immensely for some time, although the bulk of his work is still unfamiliar to me. A few weeks back he spent ninety minutes on the DICK CAVETT SHOW, being his large and witty self, reminiscing about all the notables (Churchill, Hitler, etc) it has been his pleasure (or displeasure) to mingle with. I'd truly like to spend a few hours with him; he noted that he disliked being treated as anything but a person by adoring strangers, and this is undoubtedly where his fascination lies. He is a human being to the nth degree.

On the same page in which Welles is mentioned (p 17) you ask the question, "Why do you bother to exist?" Now, this is the sort of thing I thrive on when it comes to communicating with others, as I have so many differing but equal answers. At the moment I suppose I must say that I bother to exist because it's too much bother to cease to exist. I have yet to find a method of suicide that is simple, unmessy, readily available, and not conducive to ridiculous speculation on the part of one's surviving friends and relatives. ((\*How about a complete reading of Gillespie's Collected School Exercise Books - With Footnotes? Deadly enough for the hardest soul.\*)) At times existence does become a tremendous, black, ugly



MARK  
MUMPER

struggle, with its resolution more often a whimper than a bang; at other times it can be a great era of happiness and glowing life. At present I would have to say that I'm merely waiting for either of these states to recur, because I am now in the bleary centre of universal mediocrity, with no great reason to live (other than life itself) and no overwhelming compulsion to die. This is but a lazy attitude, for if I truly recognised the mediocrity and its meaninglessness I would be able to throw all rationalisations of "existence" to the wind and start to simply enjoy life. We spend too much time thinking about life/death and not enough time feeling its beauty. An excellent exploration of these hurried thoughts is found in John Barth's first novel, THE FLOATING OPERA. Barth takes a suitably unsolemn outlook on life as he seriously traipses through its manifestations and meanings. In the end he realises that life is for no other purpose than living, which is as it should be. Simplicity is the key.

By all means reread Joyce's PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST... - I have recently read it for the first time, and although it encourages, even demands, many rereadings, its beauty and incredible creative power struck me from the first. It seems that as Dedalus delves deeper into his life, and as his character (himself, of course) grows older, the structures of the book become more complex. In the first section the narrative and images are fairly straightforward, while at the finish the stream of consciousness causes the images to become more deep and symbolically hazy. I don't think that this is entirely attributable to my progressive identification with the style, as it does seem a valid technique. I'll have to go back to the book to find out, of course. Meanwhile, on to DUBLINERS.

I don't suppose that I can ever read Franz Rottenstainer without commenting, but that's all right since he makes for lively counterthrusts and sometimes even new ideas and perceptions. Hopefully my thoughts on his latest letter will do for more than just argument. It is quite obvious that Stanislaw Lem is not "isolated" to the point of ignorance of American happenings, but Rottenstainer torpedoed his own argument when he admits that "I don't think he knows much about Silverberg or Anthony; since I don't consider that those two authors are worthy of attention, I don't send him their stuff." I really think that Franz has done Lem more harm in American circles than good, especially because of such idiotic statements as the above. This censorship of two better-than-average American writers (I consider Silverberg to be excellent, with enormous potential) may not cause a gross case of cultural deafness on Lem's part, but enforced isolation it nonetheless is.

About Suvin's COGNITION AND ESTRANGEMENT: I normally shy away from attempts to define the s f genre, believing that more good can be done in other areas; but more of that later. As Suvin has said elsewhere, he religiously believes that "s f" must be defined satisfactorily before it can be fully interpreted and criticised. This will not be a wasted effort, surely, and it may be necessary to establish such "givens", but I have a notion that it is apt to become the end-all and be-all of some scholarly discussion, causing one to forget what the true critical "purpose" is - to explore what s f does, and how it does it, not grey areas of uncertainty such as "what it is". (Or, more annoying, "what it is not".)

Brecht's characterisation of Galileo, and Suvin's paraphrasing it in his discussion of estrangement, is a simple yet profound revelation of the nature of s f's mode of delineation. This, if nothing else, is the prime

ingredient of science fiction and "speculative fiction" that gives it its characteristically valuable angle of perception - the ability to see anything, mundane events and fantastic possibilities, with a cognitive detachment that aids in a better, fuller understanding. Maybe this is what "grokking" is.

Yet, even though I appreciate Suvin's efforts and revelations, I must take issue with his use of the word "myth". Strip the word of its definition as a fixed, determined outlook (which is as he sees it) and it can be said that s f does in fact contribute a mythic viewpoint to literature. However I believe that the myth genre is not a dogmatic, supernatural estrangement, as Suvin sees it, but its very nature changes with the society in which it operates. That is, myth will always be with us, but it need not remain the limited form that he defines. His myth is that of the ancients, who saw the universe as fixed, ruled over by the natural pantheon of gods. What other kind of non-empirical literature could the ancients develop? Their "s f" dealt with the world as seen through their "science", which was their view of how the world worked. Much the same is true of nineteenth-century s f, which existed in a world every bit as fixed, understandable (and yet deterministic) as that of classical man, with the one difference that such a worldview came from contemporary science instead of religion. With the advent of the "modern" scientific view and its relativistic, uncertain universe, myth did not disappear, but altered its nature to provide a cognitive perception of man and his world. Today's myth is science fiction; Suvin's categorical definitions would perhaps not allow this, but I think it is nonetheless true.

This is where my greatest objection lies to efforts such as Professor Suvin's to categorise and pin down (as with a beautiful but dead butterfly) areas of art. The more one delimits literature, the greater the clarity may be within one's own framework, but ultimately I believe confusion is the only result when entering into general territories. Others become unsure of what one is saying, thus making most attempts to define and categorise only add to the infinite number of equally correct but differing opinions - the "prevailing confusion of tongues" that Suvin speaks of. Such white noise doesn't often aid communication... May we move onto more important areas of criticism?

Of which your critique of the early Aldiss novels is a fine example. Sad to say that most of his work is still unread by me, but I think your enthusiasm, objective and honest as it is, for his work may be the needed catalyst to get me back to him. The depth of reading that went into THE GREAT ADVENTURES is readily apparent, and the conclusions made by your intricate levels of prose awareness provide an angle of attack to Aldiss' fiction that I don't believe I've come across before. I eagerly await further explorations...

Since my last letter I have read TAU ZERO, ((discussed in SFC 25)), and my feelings on it are probably closer to yours than Sandra Miesel's. I think that I enjoyed it more than you seem to have, but in the final analysis I feel that Anderson has not done the best with his theme and material. His character interactions are not convincing, and the fact of the cosmos being reborn before their eyes seems to affect them little. They have an unnatural, alienated relationship with the universe, somewhat cold and uncomprehending. If they were more feeling and loose in their perceptions the event would have been a truly religious (or cosmic, if you will) experience. As it is, they lack a true emotional appreciation of their

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position. In THE GOLD AT THE STARBOW'S END (ANALOG March 1972) Frederik Pohl makes a much better artistic realisation of the same idea and approach. Pohl's characters become one with their environment, while Anderson's are always at odds. I believe that the former outlook is by far the more successful and fulfilling, and Pohl has done a much better job. I do think TAU ZERO is an important work, though, and worthy of comment both for Anderson's viewpoint and the book's interesting failures.

(August 30 1972)

\* Your comments on my first Aldiss piece were the same as those of several other correspondents, so I printed one example of such comments - i.e. I liked it, but I haven't read Aldiss' novels in Idontknowhowmany years, and I can't say a thing about them. This is a bad state of affairs - everybody had better go out and stock up on Aldiss novels before I finish the series. As Brian said, they are now all available in some form or another. The first Aldiss piece has been printed twice, but only one person has given me any sort of fight for my trouble. That was Alex Robb, and his objections to the article seemed so wrong-headed that I could never bring myself to write a reply to that particular letter. :: I do prefer my own style of criticism to the style that Darko Suvin uses in COGNITION AND ESTRANGEMENT. However I can also see what he was trying to do: obviously he plans a large number of critical projects and before he starts he would like to set out a few critical assumptions that both he and his readers might share, or agree to disagree about. Anyway, I did understand most of what Dr Suvin was talking about, compared with some of the Panshins' recent meanderings, which merely make me say, "Why don't you get on and talk about some science fiction?" For me, the best three articles about criticising s f (as distinct from defining it) to appear within the last few years have been John Foyster's articles about the ideal s f author and the ideal s f critic, in SFC 10, and George Turner's ON WRITING ABOUT SCIENCE FICTION, which first appeared in ASFR 18. Standard texts, such as Atheling's, remain. Lem's articles are on a different level altogether: spectacular fragments from a much larger work which would contain the entire shape of a critical jewel. Franz Rottensteiner is right about most things (although he should remember that the last thing an s f fan can afford to be is right) but like me, he writes about particular works, and rarely attempts the kind of article that Suvin presents in SFC 26. As a compendium of opinion about "defining s f", John Foyster's serialised JOE 6 (SFC 32 and ff) should become a standard text within fandom. I just wish that he would type it on decent stencils.

\* At the beginning of the following letter, Paul Anderson wrote that "I received your massive SRC 26" - and proceeded to write a massive letter in reply. I can't hope to use it all - but it does reply to Damon Knight's reply to Paul Anderson, and I can't deny Paul the right of reply, especially as (a) this is the first "regular" edition of SFC since No 26, and (b) this is exactly the kind of correspondence that I have always tried to encourage. But Paul will just have to excuse me if not much of his original letter is left: \*

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Damon Knight's first point: I suppose that I could have quoted that passage but I did not want to spend too much space on his variation of the easily gained "philosopher's stone". The dry cell batteries seem to be more devices for the storage of power than as a primary source of it. I could have qualified my statement by saying, "(it) does not seem to have an adequate power source". The energy requirements of the Gismo would be



fantastically high. The energy required for such a machine could melt the Gismo into a shapeless, useless mess. The description that Knight gives omits any details of safety provisions or insulation, details which could have been included in:

The glass was a curious-looking cloudy stuff, possibly not glass but a plastic, and it was coated with copper on both sides. On the bottom side of each block there was a small copper hook. It looked to Breitfeller as if the glass or whatever it was would be plenty to insulate that hook from the feeble current that would go through the loop of wire.

If the current is so feeble then how could it create something out of thin air, or wherever else the duplicated items came from? Compare this with the quotation from page 7 about the power source of the battery or dry cell arrangement:

You closed the switch here; the current went up here, through these little contacts, and around here, past the left hand glass-metal block but not through it, and then over here, doing the same to the right-hand glass-metal block, and then back to the dry cells. It seemed to him that nothing could possibly happen if you tried it.

I can only agree.

The Gismo provides many possible points of discussion. What happens when it begins to malfunction because of normal or abnormal wear and tear? It might have no moving parts but it could not operate permanently without deterioration. Also scientists can disassemble the glass-metal blocks in order to find out how it works or improve it: the book says that succeeding models have been improved. Things can be "duped on the Gismo, but incompletely". The process is stopped in the middle so that the thing that comes out is a "gnarled lump of quasi-matter that could be stored in a pigeon hole and would keep forever". But (a) could a near-instantaneous process be stopped halfway? (b) could a totally instantaneous process be halted? (c) why does this quasi-matter not explode, as it decomposes from its original state into either total energy or normal matter?

Knight says that the Gismo duplicates arms and other weapons to quell the slave revolt, but he does not consider the possible uses of the Gismo as a weapon rather than as a means of supply: the equivalent of a "western hero" having an inexhaustible supply of bullets in the magazine of his gun. The security arrangements for the Gismo are pathetic, as the strongholds are very vulnerable to a kamikaze type of saboteur.

Damon Knight's second point:

The wording in the draft that I made was, "The slaves are for the most part only sketched in very roughly... and come over only as near-identical featureless robots." Therefore it is apparent that something or other is missing from their make-up as people. The one that comes closest to being a person is the "old man" who rules with supreme power over the revolution. So I did not ask why Frankie is the leader, but why he is unchallenged for the role by either a Hank the carrier or another Frankie that has lived past his normal span of life as a slave. "There were others who had not been upstairs for years." Apart from its post-duplication experience each slave would have an equal potential for rebellion against his

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lot. Surely there would be many who would have both the disillusioning experiences necessary to get the individual slaves to rebel and to be good co-ordinators, and would have the training given by some special jobs.

Also, because human slaves are duplicated, many underground operatives who could not be distinguished from their fellows could have been infiltrated into positions of power.

The book states that the record number of Frankies is only 350; the nearest number is Hank the carrier on 100 to 110. This would give a very large number of different slobbs to make up the 300; which is one ratio that Colonel Rosen states. Would other types of slaves remain happy under the leadership of one Frankie, or would they want to supplant him with a leader of their own type? Then why would the others accept it when the Frankies are smuggled down there instead of being destroyed, while nothing is done for the other slobbs? This could be explained if the organisation was made up of only Frankies, but then the old man could not say, "There's over three hundred slaves to every freeman in Eagles. We only had to put out our hand." (page 138)

I stand by the review on these two points at least.

(June 14 1972)

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## 1 A LETTER

I suppose I owe you a real one. In the absence of shared assumptions and experiences, forcing a reader to try to follow an argument presented in stream-of-consciousness prose cannot help but produce weariness, puzzlement, and incomprehension. So I will define terms as I go along.

However, I cannot resist an indulgence based on FAUVE THIGHS AND FINAGLES OF MR B (I cannot make out if this item is SFC 27, an apa insert I got by mistake, or some third thing... certainly not the promised chunk of SFC 19, so my Bs will not include Basho.) Whatever it is, my reaction, explicit, is Newtonian and you've only yourself to blame, if indeed there is any need for blame.

As I continue, you will note that fundamentally our disagreements are minor, fierce arguments about subtle points.

## 2 ARCHETYPAL ANALYSTS

are a school of literary critics overly fond of Jung and Sir James Frazer. D H Lawrence also provides some of their inputs.

The most literate (and only part-time) member was the late Stanley Edgar Hyman. At the moment Joe Campbell is the ablest and most impressive practitioner: THE HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES, four volumes of THE MASKS OF GOD. I do not respect Campbell because he is a Jungian, a third-rate philosopher, a wonderful human being, or a great scholar. I respect him because he managed to talk Viking into publishing a four-volume, eight-kilo tome of very limited commercial appeal.

For comedy Leslie Fiedler is an endless delight: LOVE AND DEATH IN THE AMERICAN NOVEL, WAITING FOR THE END, THE RETURN OF THE VANISHING AMERICAN, and AN END TO INNOCENCE.

Archetypal Analysts have a talent for titles. Unlike the New Critics, they recognise and even admit that a work of literature has an external context and an author; however, only those contexts having "roots in the Race Mind" or "Collective Unconscious" are deemed worthy of serious attention. Hence, Fiedler writes endlessly about a very tenuous homosexual relationship between Huck Finn and N----- Jim while paying scant attention to Twain or the novel. Different strokes for different folks, I guess.

Debased forms of archetypal analysis are beginning to appear, Charles Reich's CON III nonsense having achieved considerable notoriety.

### 3 ASSUMPTIONS

My old sergeant's favourite one-liner was: "Assumption is the mother of all fuckups." My old sergeant was a wise, even an elegant man.

### 4 BALLARD AND LES FAUVES

would not be my peg or my analogy. If a turn-of-the-century mode is desired, Beardsley is much more apt. Ballard has the same lovely feel for decadence (non-pejorative meaning). VERMILION SANDS is excellent, his true mode; minor to be sure, but there is no disgrace in that. We can't all be like Picasso, who sneezes at a canvas and has an A-2 Influenza Period.

Of course Ballard has a perfect right to borrow paste pot and scissors from William Burroughs, impress a lot of impressionable people, have a fine old time, and waste ten years trying to become a verbal Fauvist. But the enterprise is futile.

The fallacy of alphabeticisation is excessive optimism. The reader is expected to become co-author of a piece. Like most authors, most readers are clods incapable of such delicacy of comprehension and such close attention. (Offhand, Plato would.) As a result the technique degenerates into a pretentious exhibition of ego.

To be precise, the only parts of ATROCITY EXHIBITION I have seen are those that came out in ENCOUNTER. To me they reveal, not Ballard's profundity and/or playfulness, but a failure of editorial taste on the part of Lasky, Spender, Enright, and Dennis. Since I do not share many assumptions (apparently) or any experiences (evidently) with Ballard, I as co-author cannot do too much with his free-associations and my puzzlement is inevitable.

### 5 CENSORSHIP

is the explicit injunction: Thou shalt not publish! imposed by the full force of the state. Thus, publishing a forbidden item becomes a crime against the state. In the English-speaking world today you can find a sucker to publish anything, be it sense or nonsense. On the whole, I should say that nonsense has a slight advantage.

My favourite example of this is Immanuel Velikovsky. Sixty and more years ago H G Wells, not an especially great physicist, pointed out the basic flaw in THE MAN WHO COULD WORK MIRACLES. When you stop the rotation of the earth you must expect effects. Wells did not have the magnitudes right but that's no great fault. The last calculation I have heard is



that the top fifty kilometres of the crust would be vapourised by the kinetic energy of rotation converted to heat. A cataclysm of some magnitude. Had it happened in historical times neither you nor I nor Immanuel would be here. Nevertheless, great numbers of nominally intelligent people expend thought and energy on WORLDS IN COLLISION, its sequels, and similar fantasy of poor quality. I cannot say that it bothers me much. There's one born every minute, as P T Barnum said before the start of the population explosion. Sense is more fun, but when not available, substitutes are needed. Gorgeous nonsense in judicious doses will serve.

So if you want to get published: the difficulty is a commercial not a political one and for it many remedies short of violent overthrow of the government are available:

Little magazines (literally thousands)

The private press movement (many hundreds of them)

Fanzine agitation a la Piers Anthony and HASAN

Self-publication in a one-shot as Blish with DR MIRABILIS (US edition)

Or, those two courts of last resort: the local printer and the vanity publisher.

Twain published himself and made both an artistic and commercial success of it. As Robert Frost remarked playfully, "Nothing is quite honest that is not commercial." And I have not by any means exhausted the possibilities.

## 6 CHILDHOOD MEMOIRS

(actual or fictionalised) are a very important Eastern European literary tradition. An element of Bildungsroman and self-discovery is involved but the main emphasis is on self-definition, an attempt to imagine, create, or remember a foundation, a usable past. Tolstoy's CHILDHOOD, BOYHOOD, AND YOUTH is probably the best-known example.

The motivation is obvious. A man without a past is a catatonic. Nor can the tradition be flouted with impunity. A writer who neglects his childhood and writes strictly from the present (or party-line) viewpoint becomes a man without a future, as in the voluminous Ehrenburg memoirs, a vulnerable hedonist. Childhood memoirs thus tend to be the most revealing item that an Eastern European writer ever publishes. Reading them you can pretty well judge what sort of man wrote them. Or, Anna Brigadere is a good example. What a woman. My personal favourite, Valdis' STARBURAGA BERNI, is thought of as a children's book, but it has resonances. One wishes the author had had better luck in 1905.

Most of the stuff is of course sentimental and trashy but not any less revealing for that. I will not make up my mind about Lem until I see his memoirs. I expect that they will be superior to Ehrenburg's; the question is by how much.

## 7 CONCERNING PARANOIA,

a parable without an explicit moral. It was told to me as a true story and is charming enough that it deserves to be true.

Once upon a time there lived in a far and fabulous city called New York a practitioner of an arcane art. His name is Shrink.

One day a man ran into his office, plopped down on his couch, and said, "Help me, man. They're after me. They're trying to kill me."

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"Who is trying to kill you?"

"The mafia, man. The mafia."

"There, there," said Shrink preparing an injection. "Relax. Take it easy. I'll help you."

"They're out in the street waiting for me," said the distraught fugitive. Shrink gave the chap a dose of tranquilisers and gave him some happy pills. "Don't worry," said Shrink. "I contribute to the Italian American Anti-Defamation League and our President, Joe Columbo, says that the mafia is a myth."

By this time the fugitive was already off on his happy trip and probably did not hear the reassuring words. Soon after he got up, walked out of the office, down the stairs, and into the street where he was promptly gunned down by the trigger men waiting for him.

Question: Despite the psychiatrist's professional opinion, would you consider the victim paranoid? (Footnote: Joe Columbo of IAADL was shot last year because his fellow mafiosi did not approve of his efforts to modernise the Honoured Society. During his incapacity, the Profaci Family of which he is boss is under the temporary leadership of his underboss, Mr Salvatore Mineo.)

\* That sounds very much like the sort of question Mr Philip Dick (featured in SFC 31) could answer better than I could. I seem to remember that some of his best short stories sound very much like the anecdote that you have just told. \*

## 8 CONSUMMATION

Professor Suvin's onomastic consummation looks identical to Blish's: s f is what I call s f when I point to it. Blish said it better. Suvin's essay is poor by any standard. Georg Lukacs in his decadence after HISTORY AND CLASS-CONSCIOUSNESS (1923) never did anything as wooden and uninspiring. Suvin is obviously more impressed by Lukacs' Stalinist period than by the early work. No accounting for taste. The early British Romantics also preferred picturesque ruins to the extent of sometimes building new imitation ones.

My late uncle, who spoke all the major European languages and some twenty of the more important dialects like a native, might have been able to search through his memory and come up with a proper expression of amused contempt. A more limited observer, I am only saddened. Certainly academic attention of this kind is not going to damage s f, but it could only harm some of the younger, less sophisticated, less self-confident s f writers... by distracting them from writing s f to trying to write literature. ((\*brg\* Let's hear three cheers for Prof Suvin, then!\*))

We live in times that are subsequently called Golden Ages. ((\*brg\* I bet the Vietnamese don't think so.\*)) What we have thought and done during the past hundred years and what we are doing and thinking today will make the pattern for the next few millenia. Art vs science is a peripheral and

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largely meaningless aspect of the myth and legendmaking process underway, From my perspective much of the art-for-art's-sake rubbish with its resentful tone that is so widely published today is evidence of superfluous hacks recognising but not willing to admit their superfluity. They are the leftover talent; most of the truly imaginative practitioners have preferred to go into other fields where their talents are more fully employed: dreaming up field equations and imagining particles we are never going to see play in fields we can never walk; or processing information elegantly; or distorting abstract universes in abstract topological games.

In the arts as in the sciences this is a time of great opportunity and subtle temptation. I suspect that s f writers are a little more favorably situated than other literati to participate constructively, but lacking an extensive usable past they are more vulnerable to distraction by the tertiary universes our modern Alexandrians, critics, and criticasters, sell on street corners like the unsuccessful Fauvists in Paris used to sell pronographic postcards. Great writers do not set out to write literature. They write to confront the primary universe we inhabit with poems, stories, essays, novels, etc.; books, secondary universes that can rival and sometimes even surpass the model. Time, readers, and circumstance then turn most books into paper pulp and some few into literature.

\* I'm not quite sure what you're driving at here. However - I cannot recall ever finding a human character or finding out about myself or other human beings from a field equation or an abstract topological game. But that presumes that literature is "for" anything; most great stuff is written because the writer could not do anything else but do his best to write great stuff. Many great pieces of literature are published, but I suspect that the world's greatest books are still lying in desk drawers all over the world or long since destroyed by philistine heirs of tired housewives or bank clerks who died one year after retirement, never having been able to finish "the" novel. Great writers may not set out to write "great literature", of whatever kind. Most of them are too modest to think of doing such a thing. But all writers should aim to write as well as they can, and few s f writers seem to do that. No, that is probably wrong; they do try to write the best they can within a very narrow set of standards, apparently formed by reading old s f; by trying to write "literature" they would at least raise their standards. In short, in this matter as in anything else, I say, "Never be contented with second best." Which means being never contented, I suppose. \*

#### 9 DATA RELEVANT TO PARANOIA ABOUT EASTERN EUROPE follows.

I started from there and remember a great deal first-hand because I have very nearly an eidetic memory which can return as far back as the winter of 1940/41 when I was a year and a half old. Only segments; continuity came toward the end of the third year. Very few people can do as well and in a sense they are fortunate because by selective editing they can change their past and alter their present. On the other hand they can never have the esoteric amusement of watching others edit their memories.

The winter was not a very happy time.

An uncle, the multilingual philologist (and only authenticated genius in the family during the last three hundred years), was given two choices by the Russian occupation authorities: to become minister of education in the puppet government, or to visit Siberia with his entire family. He found a third alternative, but he was only a scholar and not a politician so his



self-pyrololysis (messy even when done by experts like the Buddhists on much less provocation) was so botched that he took several days to die. The ploy was successful; his surviving descendants constitute the main branch of the family today.

Another uncle was tossed off a bridge by drunken Russian soldiers onto jagged rocks twenty metres below. He was a reasonably tough farmer and also took his time dying.

A grandfather, a sixty-year-old farmer of no singular accomplishments, was executed by firing squad for no particular reason that anyone could figure out after.

My father spent several years in the woods with the Greens (the Whites and the Reds go into exile when the other side is in charge; the Greens take to the woods, hence their name.) He was picked up in 1945 and survived twelve years in Siberia.

Eleanor Roosevelt's favourite tovarich Andrei Vishinsky declared me an enemy of the state in the summer of 1941 when I was a damned dangerous two-year-old. It was a common enough honour shared with five to ten per cent of the population who were rounded up over the space of two nights, packed aboard cattle cars like sardines in a can, and shipped off to Siberia. About twenty per cent died en route; one in twenty lived to hear of Stalin's death. I was luckier than most. My mother had thirty minutes' warning before the roundup; she tucked me under her arm and hopped a freight travelling west.

Vishinsky's (and his master's) political theory was and remains sound: Chop off the head, and the body politic becomes tractable. Most of the available evidence indicates that changes in Eastern Europe since my departure have not been profound nor practically significant, merely cosmetic.

I do not think that my attitude about Eastern Europe is paranoid. (Over there paranoia is not a psychosis but a healthy adaptation conducive to long life.) As a matter of fact, the rationality of my attitude often appalls me. Not that I blame you for your ignorance of matters Eastern European. Reliable information is hard to get, and when it is gotten, the content is so unappealing to minds not accustomed to difficult things that often they prefer to shrug off the unpleasantness with, "It can't be that bad; I just can't conceive it."

I will guess that you were born in 1947 or later, ((\*brg\* Yes; 1947.\*)) missed the very educational Phase Two of the Great European Civil War, and have led an easy (relatively speaking) and safe middle-class life since then. This estimate is not meant to be condescending; I simply mean that I can see why you have a limited perspective on events: PASP, pink (a skin colour, no more, no less) Anglo-Saxon Protestant, or reasonable facsimile thereof.

10 dnq

11 DRESDEN

was a lovely city even in 1944, they say. I cannot confirm that. My brief stay was during an unusually warm day in February 1945.

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Even my memory fails here. All that I can summon from the past is a tantalising but unidentifiable fragrance on the wind. Not roast rump of human, as a literary critic I talk with sometimes once suggested, nor even the putrifying smells of a few days later when the ruins had started to cool.

I asked Vonnegut about the possibilities a few years ago and he suggested a burning grain warehouse. Perhaps.

## 12 EHRENBURG

in his memoirs says, "I was right when I said a very long time ago that our age would leave few living documents behind it. It was rare for anyone to keep a diary..." Damn right! Only a fool gives the political police the raw materials with which to convict himself the next time that the party line changes.

## 13 EXTRAPOLATION,

not the fanzine, but the art.

Extrapolation is a difficult art seldom seen in science fiction. ((\*brg\* Mainly because it's nearly impossible, except at the trivial level of..\*)) Heinlein had a great talent for it and even he could at best manage only a span of twenty years. Example: THE ROADS MUST ROLL is a technological failure; I never get a clear notion of precisely how they roll, but as sociological extrapolation it is an uncanny story: the most precise study of Jimmy Hoffa and the Teamsters Union ever published. Perhaps one or two academic sociologists have as good a grasp of how society functions as Heinlein did in the forties. And they don't care to publish having watched the crucifixions of Ed Banfield and Pat Moynihan and learned their lesson.

The present crop of s f writers deals largely with the present... the present, mark it, not the timeless, despite numerous claims, yours included, to the contrary... and the average reader is content with the situation. He is interested in entertainment, not the limits of extrapolation.

And some interesting entertainments have been produced. I have recently been going through a five-year batch of Silverberg novels and was impressed by his talents as a reporter. His charming, half-assed, incompetent messiahs are strictly contemporary and very sharply observed. Mass media and Gresham's Law have combined to produce plenty of examples of the breed for civilised folk to laugh at, and Silverberg does. There is nothing very profound about books like these. They are simply professional entertainment, slightly cynical, reasonably self-consistent; done without Ellison's panache, but then also without his stridency. It's unkind of me to say it, but I doubt that either man will be read by anyone but specialists and/or computers fifty years from now. The same as Lem.

## 14 FACTS

do not persuade but in their mute fashion can at times impress.

## 15 GAS OVENS

are much talked about by people who know very little about them. Before the ovens there was the shower.

Rough wooden benches and sawdust on the floor; the "shower heads" much higher overhead than one could reasonably expect to find in a conventional delousing station.

VALDIS  
AUGSTKALNS

When the SS lieutenant found out that he'd messed up and pulled the wrong train off the tracks (some five minutes before the hydrogen cyanide shower was to begin, by my conservative estimate), he did not do the obvious thing and bury his error. Rather, he was honest enough to admit his mistake. We put our clothes on and got back on the train.

Germans can be as hard to figure out at times as Americans.

## 16 GEOPOLITICS AND GEORGE MCGOVERN

If you were an Australian chauvinist, you might argue a case for supporting McGovern. ((\*brg\* Certainly, if I had been in a position to "support" any of the US presidential candidates, I wouldn't have thought of supporting anyone else. Not that I think that even he would have been a very exciting president; I suspect that now, and indeed during most of the history of the US, it is impossible to be a "good president" of USA.\*))

Those Chinese nuclear facilities in Sinkiang are a great temptation to the Russians. I judge them to be the major temptation on the face of the earth at the present moment. Five hundred years of enmity between a growing Russian empire and a static or declining Chinese one is a lot of historical inertia. And those facilities could be the turning point. The Chinese are working hard to re-elect Nixon ((\*?\*)) because they fully understand their terrible vulnerability as the minor distraction of Vietnam draws to its end.

The Russians are supporting Nixon probably because they expect better trade relations and prefer a known enemy to an irrational and wishy-washy type like McGovern. True, they need those 120 divisions tied down in Eastern Europe by intractable natives if they want to conduct significant operations in Sinkiang. McGovern would give them that by a unilateral withdrawal of American troops from NATO, but what might he do when it comes to the crunch? They expect to negotiate an American withdrawal at the European Security Conference in 1974 (my prediction) from Nixon. I am an optimist and give them only one chance in four. So my estimate is that Phase Three in 1975 is a sure bet with McGovern. Like the Chinese, I judge the odds better with Nixon around even though I do not particularly care for their shortness. But then, I've lucked out in much tougher spots than one in four.

Phase Three would make Charles XII(of Sweden)'s Great Northern War look like a wet firecracker. The mantle of empire that passed from Britain to the USA would fall to Australia and South Africa. So the rationality of McGovern for an Australian chauvinist.

I remain hopeful that a massive McGovern defeat will shake up the old, incompetent lawyers that litter the halls of Congress (young lawyers too) and lead to social policy based on data and common sense rather than on the theoretical ideological fantasies that have been the foundation of most of the legislation over the past twenty years. Some of the presently intimidated sociologists might even get some guts and publish. ((\*brg\* Come now; you don't really expect any government in its right mind to base its policies on "data and common sense", do you?\*))



17 LAST TIME THE KNOW-NOTHING PARTY

had a viable candidate was in 1856 when Millard Fillmore, a former President, managed to carry Maryland and win 20% of the popular vote. One cannot deny that McGovern is in a solid American political tradition.

18 LEAVIS, SCRUTINY, AND THE SALVATION ARMY

are linked in my mind.

I gather from SFC 26 that you have that massive paperback selection from the pages of which Eric Bentley edited a few years ago. I am afraid that the selections did not do much for me, but at least they did not turn me off either. I turned the book over to the Salvation Army for a tax deduction the last time I cleaned out the basement.

Most of his students are pretty gung-ho individuals, from which I infer that Leavis is quite an impressive personality having considerable messianic talent. A kind of Billy Graham of literature. But delete his Laurentomania, which I think is fair enough, and you get a pretty commonplace academic of English vintage. Lawrence himself was a much better critic than Leavis and that may explain why Leavis praises Lawrence as a novelist. I am quite willing to concede that there are critics worth reading. Lawrence was one, I A Richards and William Empson are others. Leavis, I am afraid, is a teacher at best. ((\*brg\* Must have been a different Leavis from the one I read; Frederico Rudovich Leavis perhaps? The staff of the English Department at Melbourne University would be amused to hear themselves described as "gung-ho individuals". The volume I have was edited by F R Leavis, not "Eric Bentley", whoever he was.\*))

19 NEW CRITICS

are not so new anymore.

The school comes out of Ezra Pound and the young Eliot. Other names associated with it are John Crowe Ransom, Allan Tate, Robert Penn Warren, Cleanth Brooks, Andrew Lytle. Fifteen years ago the gospel was embodied in a textbook called A STUDY OF LITERATURE by Brooks, Purser, and Warren. Brooks' WELL WROUGHT URN contains some good essays; Warren's ALL THE KING'S MEN is deservedly well known, but that damned textbook would break your heart.

The main doctrine of the New Critics is that a work of literature is sufficient unto itself, that it is absolutely autonomous. It has no context and for all practical purposes no author. As an approach to writing about literature, there is a seductive and practical advantage in ignoring the author. One can free-associate on the basis of a context-free text. Irrelevant and anachronistic examples of one's own erudition can be introduced to snow the reader.

I do not disapprove too much. As an analytical tool New Criticism has some value, worthless though it be when it comes to synthesis. The New Critics played a hypocritical game to be sure but the playing kept a lot of overeducated people (some of them my friends) off the dole and did little harm. Ignorance of life is a defect only in extreme situations and knowledge of literature can be a consolation that permits indulgences in fantasies of superiority. In rare instances fantasies have become realities.

And infinities do exist in a grain of sand. All that is required is the proper observer. What I was saying is that Lem is your grain of sand.

VALDIS  
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Don't ask me about fantasy or reality for a few more years yet. You will be much better off finding out for yourself. I draw a very strong distinction between your essay on YEAR OF THE QUIET SUN, no great work but not pretentious, and your foray into SOLARISland with all erudite banners billowing in the wind... self-generated. A man, if he is wise, should understand his faults and failures more thoroughly than his successes and Lem brings out the worst in you, Bruce. I advise you to think upon this. ((\*brg\* SOLARIS also brings out some of the best in me, since it is a book of which I am very fond. A few others also like it. I have two more articles about the book in the files, and the film is being shown in Australia. Haven't been thinking about much else beside my "faults and failures" recently - but that's not quite what you meant.\*))

An excellent if overspecialised antidote to criticantery is Frederic C Crews' THE POOH PERPLEX. One really should know the people being pilloried to properly appreciate the thing, and some of it is already outdated; nevertheless, I recommend it to you before you get past the point of no return.

## 20. PUBLISHING IN POLAND

has some plusses over conventional Western mass-media-style publishing. And also some disadvantages.

Certainly, the state publishing house puts out books you and they like, but at the expense of opportunity for others to publish books they dislike and you might like. The dangers of a single source of supply, a full-blown monopoly, are obvious to me and should be obvious to you.

In the twenties fools praised Mussolini because he made the trains run on time and neglected to inquire into the broader implications of how the trains came to run on time. Sales of books are good in Poland for several reasons. Mass media are still primitive compared to the American and the bad has not yet had a chance to drive out the good. Furthermore, people tend to favour the least objectionable entertainment (i.e. the least propaganda-laden) which provides the most freedom in use (i.e. one can skip in books the sections of nonsense, an option not as readily available in more intrusive media like radio or the telly.)

## 21. SFC 26

is a handsome issue. Good layout and reproduction. Adequate substance. Impressive. I hope that the intended effect, a Hugo, is realised. ((\*bg\* The size of SFC 26 had nothing to do with Hugos; simply, as with this issue, general guilt re. the immense amount of publishable material still lying in the files unpublished.\*))

Gibson on Westerns blows a point by an inappropriate example. "They are his balm, his dream to ride an empty landscape on a horse, no other man for miles." This is still a realistic dream in the US today. One night a few years ago I was flying from Vegas to Chicago and was profoundly impressed by the emptiness. Not a light in two hours at 707 speed. East of the Mississippi it is hard to fly for five minutes and not see the jewelled outlines of a town in all its electric glory. We seem to be

VALDIS  
AUGSTKALNS

crowding together not from any real need but simply from an instinct to herd. Out West the empty spaces still beckon. Only the contrails of a jet flying overhead might interfere with the dream of the empty landscape.

## 22 VIETNAM

is a minor border war. Something akin to the First Afghan War more than a century behind us. In another hundred years some George Macdonald Foster will write another FLASHMAN and put it all in perspective for our grandchildren. Until that time, the rest of us will just have to muddle along and mouth nonsense about the topic. ((\*brg\* Johnson and Nixon have done nothing else but mouth nonsense about the topic.\*))

## 23 WHAT IS MAN THAT THOU ART MINDFUL...

is often asked. The Eastern European definition of man is Trinitarian: body, soul, and passport. (August 9 1972)

\* I can't even begin to answer all this, so I won't, except in part. Besides I've scattered asides through the letter. They may entertain somebody or other. Needless to say I disagree with 95% of what Valdis has to say, but I know at least one friend of mine who will be tickled by Item No 23, which is exactly what he has been trying to tell me during the last few weeks. Firstly the Vietnam War is one of the greatest catastrophes of twentieth-century history, just because most people living in the USA do think of it as minor. There cannot be any form of warfare more inhuman than B-52 bombing - i.e. bombs dropped from a vast height by people who have no personal interest in killing any of the people who are killed; dropped on people who may or may not have any connection with a war against the people who drop the bombs. Some friends and I were discussing a few weeks ago whether Russia or USA has had the most destructive effects upon countries beyond their legitimate influence, and we decided that certainly within the last ten years, the world has been far worse off because of American imperialism than of Russian imperialism. But it's not even a matter of "imperialism"; it's a matter of as much explosive power being unleashed in three days as was unleashed during the explosion of the A-Bomb over Hiroshima - all on a country which, although it has had a considerable influence on other countries around it, never has and never could conceivably have had any influence on continental USA. Anyway, all this is commonplace to most of SFC's Australian and European readers; the level of political apathy among American fans seems to be as complete and uncomprehending as among the rest of the US population.\* :: But that does not cover a point that does hit home. My personal experience is limited not so much by the year in which I was born but the country in which I live. In some ways I don't think Australia is as insular as USA, but geographical factors make it fairly difficult for Australians born since the war to get more than a fragmentary picture of the rest of the world. Australia is insular because very few of its citizens (except, of course, people who came here from Central Europe after World War II) have experienced violence on any level other than an after-football-game booze-up or an encounter with a pugnacious policeman. I've begun to realise recently that Australia is just too comfortable for the good of any of its people. So, "body, soul, and passport" - for me, perhaps, this year.

Some people may ask why Valdis wrote this letter at all. He wrote a loc about SFC 24 in which he offered a very odd interpretation of SOLARIS. I wrote back a long letter (remember the days when I wrote letters?) and this letter is a reply to that. I hope it is interesting enough by itself.

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\* except for Dick Geis (in ALIEN CRITIC 4) - and Mr Augstkalns, of course.



SFC 28 tries to give me the impression that Australian fandom is in large part an attempt, perhaps even a sercon attempt, to recreate a fin de siecle bohemia. But I just can't believe that. I spent over a month in Canada this spring and summer working with a couple of chaps from Australia and they assured me you all (pronounced yawl) are well into the 1930s now. ((\*brg\* And trying our best to avoid getting any closer to the Savage Seventies.\*)) O'Malley's photo does have the proper amount of satiric overtones: Thin Maiden-In-White In Weird Landscape, but really, it's no match for any of THE SAVOY covers that Beardsley did and which you would have to get the correct turn-of-the-century effect.

Edmonds' 1971 almost made me change my mind but he blew it in the end. I read it and a vision of two copulating toy teddy bears floated up in my mind. (It's pollen season here, very bad for certain allergies, and I am slightly under the influence of antihistamines, which accounts for the visual output from the verbal input.) Teddy bears! I shook my head and the images rearranged themselves slightly and turned into a pair of koala bears. Perfect. Just too damn precious for words.

By the way, and in anticipation of a possible objection by you or Prof Suvin on my previous letter: I have read Ernst Bloch's ENTFREMDUNG VER-FREMDUNG. The English translation reads better than Prof Suvin's other prose and I attribute that to the fact that Anne Halley, the co-translator, is a competent minor poet. ALIENATION, ESTRANGEMENT is I think the only really interesting essay on Brecht. Its seminal power comes from the fact (this is my guess only but it has a certain plausibility) that Bloch was unwilling to admit to himself that Brecht was a psychopath before going on to consider the writing. So the essay is like a cat with amnesia. He worries an object that he does not recognise as a mouse but he can't let go because instinct compels him to keep pawing it. The reader senses the compulsion and participates in the amnesia. A very mysterious effect.  
(September 13 1972)

NOEL KERR \*  
24 Rosstown Road, Carnegie, Victoria 3163

Firstly, congratulations on taking the Ditmar. It's about bloody time. I only hope you can go on and take the big one.

\* Well I didn't, and never will. But this is as good an excuse as any to talk about awards and things.

Firstly, an award to the editors of LOCUS for the most dim-witted remark of the year, i.e. the review in LOCUS 131 of S F COMMENTARY 30 as "con reports only, this time." Not to mention photos of Australian fans (\$115 worth of photos, to be exact), probably the best article that I've written, etc., etc. With friends like these, who needs enemies? (I don't mind bad reviews, Browns but a bad review of that issue...??)

This issue of SFC won't reach USA before the Hugo nominations are in, but I might as well say something about them. LOCUS' rather obvious attempt to influence the Hugos prompts the following remarks: NOVEL: none look interesting except WHAT ENTROPY MEANS TO ME by George Effinger and A TRACE OF MEMORY by Gordon Eklund. Haven't seen a copy of the Effinger yet. NOVELLA: 334, by Thomas Disch. NOVELETTE/SHORT STORY: THINGS LOST, by Thomas Disch. It is not on the LOCUS list. Nothing for DRAMATIC PRESENTATION. No preferences for EDITOR. PRO ARTIST: John Schoenherr. FAN WRITER: The Browns have me on the list, but not John Bangsund. This is idiotic since John has been since 1966, SFC 33 45

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and still is, the best fan writer in the world. FAN ARTIST: Bill Rotsler. NEW WRITER (JOHN CAMPBELL AWARD). A difficult one since, as the Browns say, so many writers that you think are new usually have had one or two stories published in obscure places before they start to attract people's notice. Effinger is the best of the writers listed by the Browns.

New paragraph for BEST FANZINE. My list is rather different from that in LOCUS. Firstly, the fanzine that you should vote for is ENERGUMEN. Last year it received in the final ballot some incredibly high percentage of its average print run in votes (about 140 first-place votes; print run of 240). LOCUS won with a print run that then ran between 1250 and 1350. My own list of favourite fanzines goes something like this (in alphabetical order); ALGOL, CHAO, RICHARD E GEIS, SCYTHROP, S F COMMENTARY, SPECULATION, STARLING, VECTOR, and YANDRO. Damned if I know what to choose from among them. Nominate as many Australian fanzines as possible. You can't nominate RICHARD E GEIS because Dick didn't publish four issues during 1972; either he's too modest to run for a Hugo this year, or the poor old chap is suffering from a bad case of over-extended libido. We all should have such problems.

Back to Noel:

\*

You had a first and so did I. Your latest issue of S F COMMENTARY is the first one that I have read right through and I enjoyed the lot. Leigh Edmonds' 1971 was a real eye-opener. I would say that this was the highlight of the issue. I finished his article at work just on lunchtime and rang him at work to tell him same. I dare say there would be a couple of red faces around town if your fanzine reaches certain people.

Although I thought that your 1971 was extremely clever, I don't think it got to me as much as your loc to Bangsund's THIS ISN'T S F COMMENTARY. (That I thought was a gem.) However, other fans may get (and most likely will) more out of it than I did.

Poor Bill Wright... he is always falling out or into something. This time it's a train. Now you really have to be drunk to do that. Next time he intends to do that I only hope he has a huge pile of Australia In 75 posters in his arms. The publicity would be tremendous. (Sorry Bill.) In all it was another very interesting soul-bearing article. Now we all know the real Bill Wright. ((\*brg\* Cynical laugh from W Wright. That's what you think.\*))

Although Harry Warner Jr is a household word in fandom, would you believe that this is the first time that I have read anything that he has written? When you get back on your seat I'll continue. Yes, and now I realise what I have missed. What a tremendous person he seems to be. A person quite willing to help others even though under great strain himself. He, for my money should head the list of fans who should be brought to Australia under the up-the-Duff fund. ((\*brg\* After reading SFC 30? Not a hope.\*))

A very interesting breakaway from your usual S F COMMENTARY format... I hope there is more. (September 5 1972)

\* As soon as people start writing SFC 28-style material, there will be. Meanwhile, Noel is not the only person who received some surprises:

\* ERIC LINDSAY  
6 Hillcrest Avenue, Faulconbridge, NSW 2776

46 SFC 33 I liked SFC 28, mainly because of L'Edmonds' contribution. This does not

ERIC  
LINDSAY

mean that I liked the first (1969) section of his contribution. It was like a dull version of REPORT ON PROBABILITY A. But, 1971...

I didn't know Leigh. He was, to me, just someone in Melbourne fandom who published rude little fanzines full of phallic symbols, and complained about COMORG. Then a bit later I found out that he had started ANZAPA and thought, "Gee whizz, I wouldn't have thought that he would be the type of person to start that." At this time Leigh was just another tall long-haired chap I saw sometimes at conventions. When I visited Melbourne this year the second place that I visited was Leigh's. This was not intentional; I hadn't planned to go to your place at 9 pm. Actually after leaving your place the next morning I intended to see Robin Johnson first since his street appeared to be on the map. When I reached what I thought was his place I found that my map did not show the street, and when eventually I did find it there was no answer. (Later I found out that Robin is well able to sleep through minor interruptions like people banging on his door.) So I went looking for Leigh's place with only my memory of the map to guide me, and accidentally I found myself going along the right street, and even stopped in front of the right house, all without knowing where it was. I spent a most enjoyable afternoon at Leigh's, even though I didn't understand what was going on, and I still want to find out why Carey Handfield brought his car battery over to get charged (he did explain, but I still don't understand). However that afternoon made Leigh more than a faceless name in fanzines; but it was the article in SFC 28 that really told me what it was like to be Leigh Edmonds. I have now read it three times; normally I read fanzines only once. (September 6 1972)

\* WE ALSO HEARD FROM, which might become longer than the rest of the column put together: CY CHAUVIN, who sent four long and interesting letters, most of which are now out-dated. Also out-dated, but maybe interesting to some readers is a list of Cy's "most memorable" short stories of 1971 (following the argument that Hugo voters pick the "most memorable" stories, not the "best"): THE PEACEFULNESS OF VIVYAN, by James Tiptree Jr, THE PALASKI MAN, by Stuart Dybeck, THE AUTUMN LAND by Clifford Simak, IN HIS IMAGE by Terry Carr, A FREE PASS TO THE CARNIVAL by Goo. Effinger, A TAPESTRY OF LITTLE MURDERS by Gerald Bishop, ALL THE WAY UP, ALL THE WAY DOWN by Robert Silverberg, and BOOMER FLATS by R A Lafferty. I remember that I liked the Dybeck, Effinger, Bishop, and Lafferty. :: JEFF SMITH said that in my review of SOLARIS I had made a mistake about one of the details. This "discovery" upset me for months until I checked back and found that I had been right all along. Paul Anderson (address in this issue) is Australian agent for Jeff's magazine PHANTASMICOM. :: HOUSTON CRAIGHEAD wrote reams of marvellous stuff about Philip Dick, and eventually we established some points on which we agree. "Dick... is a poor writer with some interesting ideas" - well, that's not one point on which we agree. Houston also thinks that SOLARIS is "boring". Why are the people with whom I disagree usually more interesting than the people with whom I agree? :: ANDY PORTER keeps sending letters, which is kind of him, considering that this relationships with Australian fandom were not what they could have been during 1972. (Well, he did get fifty per cent of the Australian DUFF vote.) Andy keeps trying to convince me that ALGOL is God's gift to fanzine fandom, because Andy spends a lot of money on it; go on, nominate him for a Hugo and see if I care. Re. SFC 24: "People I've known for years have changed in one direction while I've changed in another. And the same sort of time machine, each person going through time at their own rate and pace, has operated for me." :: JAN RUITER, from Utrecht, Netherlands, was trying to find materials on Walter Miller Jr's A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ the last I heard. That was on March 6 1972, when I received his letter. His SFC 33 47



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address is Van Lieflandlaan 54-12, Utrecht, The Netherlands. :: DAVE HULVEY wrote me some letters that made sense. (At the time when I received them, none of his other communications with fandom did.) He agrees with John Alderson about "gun-happy Americans" and says, "We should be able to do more with the rapidly rising standard of living and technological advancement than pad the rich and build more and better bombs." Amen. Also he talks about Alf van der Poorten's reviews of Silverberg books in SFC 25. :: JERRY LAPIDUS still has two letters in this file, and several more that I haven't answered. If Jerry is too busy to publish fanzines these days I'm sure you will understand what I mean if I say that I'm jealous of the reason why. Jerry did not like SFC 26 as much as some other correspondents. :: I have here still a very good letter from ED CAGLE. I was going to fit it in at the end, but I don't think I've left enough room. (I'm still assuming that this will be a regular-sized magazine; I may have changed my mind by the time that you get it.) "Bangsund, along with four or five other Australian fans, have qualities that attract a lot of attention from US fans, and for that you can be thankful... John Alderson reminds me of myself. I live far from the restless hordes, and with a certain amount of glee engage in annoying people... Australia has a good reputation among Yanks who are aware that it exists... But you're a weird mob. (Just to bring you down a little.)... News of progress from the A in 75 committee has been scarce. It isn't that I'm morbidly curious, only that I get the feeling you might find many people willing to boost you at all the spring-summer conventions." Despite San Francisco's unexpected capitulation, the last statement is as true now as it was this time last year. And, by the way, I don't think for the moment we've "won" the convention until I hear if officially at Torcon. Too many imponderables still. :: SANDRA MIESEL said, "Let's not have any more cracks like your unwarranted slam at my sensies... You've never met Zelazny. You can't have a valid opinion on the man's dark, close-grained, tendrilly, knobby appearance for that is precisely how he looks... I have no mental picture of what you may look like but I do have an image of your verbal personality - it looks like a lithograph by Scottish-born printmaker Edouardo Paolozzi, a melange of current scenes." There, there, Sandra; I didn't mean you to stop writing sensies altogether, which seems to have happened. Anyway, I sent you SFC 30 airmail so that you could see that a less Paolozzian person never lived. :: KEVIN DILLON sent me lots of stuff, some of which I could nearly understand. In SFC 26, Kevin was pleased to see the attention that John Gibson gave to Jefferies, and says, "Some more on Morris would not go amiss, in this day of renewal of Morris admiration by young people," and wrote a footnote to his letter "while finishing my porridge made with leftover cold-type instant coffee plus bread (brown), jam (fig and honey, a story there), and sourest cream from left-over milk. Great. Yesterday I used apples in the porridge. Just an old mad experimenter, me." He protests (to John Bangsund, I suppose) about "strange zines in mailbox which Claim To Be What They Are Not". Kevin signs his letter "a fan still" - and I think Australian fandom would collapse without him as its mascot. :: A BERTRAM CHANDLER (well, that's how he signed the letter) wrote in June to say that his recently published books were THE GATEWAY TO NEVER/THE INHERITORS (Ace Double) and THE HARD WAY UP, also from Ace. :: JACK WODHAMS wrote a very long letter about "cants" and "can'ts" and "donts" and "won'ts". I think he's protesting about my sub-editing, but perhaps my guilt complex is showing again. Whatever I or the contributors did wrong this time, Jack, we apologise. :: TED SERRILL has been a subscriber to SFC since it began, but finally something or other in SFC prompted him to write. "You call your magazine S F COMMENTARY. That's what I like to read and that's what I would write if I were writing 'reviews', which I don't because I spend most of my free time reading and watching films. These detailed analyses of yours and others don't impress me much as being right-headed, because your standards are

too high." :: NICK SHEARS told how Sarf Efrican fans get to see banned movies, and tells why he would not want to see Dick Geis revive SFR. :: ALLEN EVANS subscribed and also praised the work of Thomas Disch, who seems to be Allen's favourite s f author. Good bloke, Allen. :: TOMMY COBE was "glad to finally see some mention of the Roy Ward Baker film of Kneale's QUATERMASS AND THE PIT." Also known as FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH, the film had little distribution in USA. "You mentioned looking for a way to be able to spend all your time putting out SFC. Could you get some kind of government subsidy or apply to some local support-the-arts program? You are also sending part of Australia, a piece of downunder culture, into other parts of the world." It's a nice thought. One of the ministers in the previous government was Minister for Education, Culture, and Aborigines - as someone said, the three things that Australians are most intent on stamping out. The performing arts get magnificent grants now - gaudy shows 'n' all, but generally writers have been ignored. CLF grants usually go to already established writers. The crux of the matter is "spending all one's time on SFC". I would need enough money to do that, or it wouldn't be worthwhile to spend any more time than at present on it. :: GEORGE HAY was impressed by SFC 26. "I don't think this is quite the largest bulk in fanzines I've ever received, but, given the absence of illos, it must certainly be the one giving the greatest value in bulk+content." SFC 26 prompted George to try to get Richard Jefferies' AFTER LONDON reprinted in England. He's still trying. George is one of the editors and main boosters of FOUNDATION: THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION, 50 p a copy from The Administrator, The Science Fiction Foundation, North East London Polytechnic, Barking Precinct, Longbridge Road, Dagenham, Essex RM8 2AS, England. :: DAVE PIPER discovered that "The Big Secret is Out! I'm pretty sure that I saw somewhere that Franz is Lem's agent. This would explain his continual championing of Lem's work. It all comes down to dirty loot." It has been generally known for at least two years that Franz is Lem's agent outside of Eastern Europe; and last I heard Lem had made very little money from USA and England, and Franz is probably very much out of pocket for translations, etc. Franz explains his support for Lem in SPECULATION 31. :: SYD BOUNDS sends a letter of comment for each issue that he receives. Of SFC 24 he says, "My own private time machine is music. So often a snatch of music will carry me back to the time I heard it before, where I was, and who I was with, with the realisation that I am a different person from what I was then." One of my articles prompted him to read SCHOOL IS DEAD by Everett Reimer, a buddy of Ivan Illich. :: LORNA OLLIF, a subscriber from Sydney, has recently had published ANDREW BARTON PATERSON in Twayne's World Author's Series. :: MICHAEL O'BRIEN says about SFC 28, "Leigh's contribution is so stunningly honest and successful in presenting his personality to the reader that I wish I didn't have this middle-class hang-up about being so reticent." It helps to write things down, Michael, which is why I publish fanzines. Mike adds as a footnote a thought that has crossed my mind from time to time, "Have you noticed that the first three fanzines in the Hugo awards this year all have two editors? All you need to do to add a Hugo to your Ditmar is to expand circulation a bit and git yourself a co-editor!" How?

\* It is now the beginning of February. I have been working non-stop on these magazines for five weeks. I keep saying to myself, "It's a monster! Let it off the leash! Go away, monster, go away!" But there are still three hundred pages of brilliant material in the files; letters; tons of mail still sent to me. This week: VECTOR (Special Brian Aldiss Issue), APA-45 mailing (Glicksohns in at last), books from Barry Gillam, who has finally been drafted, ALIEN CRITIC (i.e. RICHARD E GEIS). The painters haven't arrived yet, two weeks after their scheduled start. A 95-page issue next time - but when? Work resumes on Monday. Friends, thanks for your company. Last stencil typed



S F COMMENTARY 33 CHECKLIST - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

(28-29) \* Faces: A NOD'S AS GOOD AS A WINK TO A BLIND HORSE (7) \* Philip Jose Farmer: THE FABULOUS RIVERBOAT (5-6) \* Philip Jose Farmer: TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO (5-6) \* Leslie Fiedler (34-35) \* W C Fields (dir.): NEVER GIVE A SUCKER AN EVEN BREAK (16) \* W C Fields (dir.): YOU'RE TELLING ME (16) \* Millard Fillmore (42) \* Ken Ford (8) \* George Macdonald Foster: FLASHMAN (44) \* John Foyster (15, 32) \* John Foyster: THE FAUVE THIGHS AND FINAGLES OF MR B (SFC 27) (1, 34-35) \* John Foyster (ed.): S F COMMENTARY 32/JOE 6 (32) \* Richard E Geis (ed.): RICHARD E GEIS (13, 46) \* John Gibson (22) \* John Gibson: THE NIGHTMARE OF BLACK LONDON (SFC 26) (19, 43-44, 49) \* Stephen Gilbert: RATMAN'S NOTEBOOKS (24-25) \* Barry Gillam (5) \* Bruce Gillespie: I MUST BE TALKING TO MY FRIENDS (SFC 24) (43, 47, 49) \* Bruce Gillespie: I MUST BE TALKING TO MY FRIENDS (SFC 26) (17, 19) \* Bruce Gillespie (ed.): S F COMMENTARY 28 (5) \* Bruce Gillespie: S F COMMENTARY 30 (45) \* Bruce Gillespie: THE S F NOVELS OF BRIAN W ALDISS (SFC 26) (22-23, 31-32) \* Bruce Gillespie: STEPS INTO THE HEART OF NOWHERE (SFC 24) (43, 47) \* Michael & Susan Glicksohn (eds.): ENERGUMEN (6, 46) \* Jean-Luc Godard: WEEKEND (10) \* James Goddard (ed.): CYPHER (24) \* David & Betsey Gorman (11) \* Goulds (18-19) \* Gunter Grass: THE TIN DRUM (5-6) \* Gerd Hallenberger (9) \* Gerd Hallenberger (ed.): TELLUS INTERNATIONAL (9) \* Hal Halls: S F BOOK REVIEW INDEX (3) \* Carey Handfield (47) \* Harry Harrison (ed.): NOVA 1 (23) \* Harry Harrison (ed.): THE YEAR 2000 (23) \* Robert Heinlein: THE ROADS MUST ROLL (46) \* Gary Hoff (17) \* Helen & Leigh Hyde (17-18) \* Stanley Edgar Hyman (34) \* Ivan Illich: DE-SCHOOLING SOCIETY (6) \* Richard Jefferies: AFTER LONDON (49) \* Richard Jefferies: THE STORY OF MY HEART (6) \* Robin Johnson (47) \* James Joyce (27) \* James Joyce: PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN (27, 30) \* Damon Knight: A FOR ANYTHING (32-34) \* D H Lawrence (42) \* F R Leavis (ed.): A SELECTION FROM SCRUTINY (6, 42) \* Ursula K Le Guin (22-24) \* Ursula Le Guin: THE LATHE OF HEAVEN (5-6) \* Ursula Le Guin: THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS (22) \* Ursula Le Guin: THE WIZARD OF EARTHSEA (5-6) \* Stanislaw Lem (15, 22, 36, 40, 43, 49) \* Stanislaw Lem: SOLARIS (43-44, 47) \* Georg Lukacs: HISTORY AND CLASS-CONSCIOUSNESS (37) \* Bruce McAllister (18) \* Bruce McAllister (ed.): EDGE supplement (8) \* George McGovern (9, 11, 41-42) \* Christine McGowan (18) \* Daniel Mann (dir.): WILLARD (24-25) \* Walter Miller Jr: A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ (41) \* William Morris (48) \* Robert Mulligan (dir.): SUMMER OF 42 (26-29) \* Mark Mumper (9, 29-30) \* V Niranjan (11) \* Richard Nixon (41, 44) \* Flannery O'Connor: FLANNERY O'CONNOR: THE COMPLETE STORIES (6) \* Lorna Ollif (49) \* Peter & Laurel Oljewski (eds.): RATS (3) \* Edouardo Paolozzi (48) \* Alexei & Cory Panshin: S F IN DEMENSION (FANTASTIC) (32) \* Frederik Pohl: THE GOLD AT STARBOW'S END (32) \* Karl Popper: THE OPEN SOCIETY AND ITS ENEMIES (21) \* Andy Porter (ed.): ALGOL (47) \* Christopher Priest: FUGUE FOR A DARKENING ISLAND (13) \* Christopher Priest: INDOCTRINAIRE (13) \* Neil Rahman (17-18) \* Graham J Rawnsley (10) \* Alain Resnais (dir.): JE T'AIME JE T'AIME (10) \* Bill Rotsler (46) \* Franz Rottensteiner (15, 22, 30, 32, 49) \* Roy Russell (18) \* Alan Sandercock (9-10) \* Andrew Sarris: THE AMERICAN CINEMA (26) \* John Schoenherr (45) \* Robert Silverberg (30, 40) \* Jeff Smith & Don Keller (eds.): PHANTASMICOM (24) \* Christina Stead: THE MAN WHO LOVED CHILDREN (5-6) \* Dieter Stienseifer (9) \* Dennis Stocks (18) \* Dennis Stocks (organiser): Q-CON (17-19) \* Philip Strick (23) \* Darko Suvin: COGNITION AND ESTRANGEMENT (SFC 26) (1, 19, 30-32, 37-38, 45) \* Andrei Tarkovsky (dir.): SOLARIS (27) \* Hunter Thompson: FEAR AND LOATHING (ROLLING STONE) (9) \* M Tourneur (dir.): THE CAT PEOPLE (16) \* M Tourneur: CURSE OF THE CAT PEOPLE (16) \* Wilson Tucker (24) \* Wilson Tucker: THE LONG LOUD SILENCE (22) \* Wilson Tucker: THE TIME MASTERS (19, 22) \* Wilson Tucker: THE YEAR OF THE QUIET SUN (22, 43) \* George Turner: ON WRITING ABOUT S F (ASFR 18) (32) \* Imanuel Velikovsky: WORLDS IN COLLISION (35-36) \* Kurt Vonnegut Jr: SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE (5-6) \* Richard Walsh (ed.): NATION REVIEW (6, 27-29) \* Harry Warner Jr: 1971 (SFC 28) (46) \* Tony Waters (10) \* Orson Welles (29) \* H G Wells: THE MAN WHO COULD WORK MIRACLES (35) \* Peter R Weston (ed.): SPECULATION (3, 15, 17, 49) \* Jack Wodhams (18) \* Bill Wright (18-20) \* Bill Wright: 1971 (SFC 28) (46) \* Roger Zelazny (48) \* Roger Zelazny: JACK OF SHADOWS (25).