



Number 21

science fiction review

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1955

COVER by Bob Kellogg

Noted by the editor

The Dollar and the Dream

.....by damon knight

Illo by Dave Hammond

Mary Had A Little Lamb

.....by Curtis Janke

Illo by Jack Harness

The Top Shelf

.....by Noah W. McLeod

by Dan Adkins

Dialogue by the editor

Illos by Bob Kellogg, Bob
Stewart, Ralph Rayburn Phil-
lips, and Robert Burleson.

Letter From New York

.....by Harlan Ellison

Times Have Changed?

by Richard Lupoff

Letter From Britain

by Fred L. Smith

The Corner Shelf

by Jim Harmon

Comment by the readers

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NOTED: One part of me wants to ignore the goof
on the cover, but another more honest
and sincere-type part wants to warn everyone not to
assume that grey on grey or blue on blue, or even
black on black will merge together when the repro-
duction is half-tone photo-offset. Clearly I should
have set up the logo on a large piece of grey and not
on a strip of grey and then pasted them onto another
piece of the same material. Possibly if I'd feathered
the edges it would've been alright. In any case I
goofed. Be warned. Learn from my experience. I cer-
tainly have.

The damon knight article in this issue is pretty near-
ly the speech which he gave at the FanVetCon last April
in New York. He very kindly wrote out what he had
said, and I very kindly am presenting it in this issue.
Now you readers please make kindly remarks in your
letters and perhaps mr knight will contribute again
...or make another speech.

The only other defect in this issue is the typing.
There are a few typos, I suppose, but the main trouble,
obviously, is that this Remington Noisless Standard
is NOT a good stencil typer. It wouldn't type a mas-
ter for a ditto machine, and it looks very much as
though it won't type a good stencil...even with a
typing plate. So....a new typer is in order. Now,
if enough of you subscribe.....

I don't know what's wrong with me -- I only know that
I am mercenary...mercenary.....

I rather like the green ink, don't you? If the typing
were more firm...the letters typed more heavily...the
green would be even prettier. I purchased a mimeo-
scope (bills...bills...more bills....) and the letter-
ing is about 1000% improved. However, speaking of the
cover, I must add that there'll be no more photo-off-
set covers til Christmas, when you'll be treated to a
Ron Cobb effort. There are two reasons: the first is
that \$16.40 is too much to pay for 500 copies. If I
had a 1500 circulation, yes, but not now. Once in a
while only. Stanafax will do nicely.

Gee...I think I spent too much space running down
this issue. On the whole I think it came out pretty
well. Face it, it looks good, don't it?
BOOST, DON'T KNOCK! See you next issue. ---REG

REVIEWERS and EDITORS attention!

A FREE sample copy of SFR will be sent to
anyone who sends his name and address.

SAMPLE

the dollar and the dream

A DISCOURSE ON COMPETENCE BY — DAMON KNIGHT

you can all go and have dinner. So now, if you'll just sit back and salivate quietly, I'll get on with it.

We have with us --- or we had, til the discourtesy drove him away -- a non-science-fiction-reading editor who came down here, at my invitation and in a friendly spirit, to see what the science fiction nuts looked like in a bunch. Well, he saw.

But although this editor is not a steady reader of science fiction, he does have one or two eccentricities of his own. He's a collector. He has the damndest collection of gum-wrappers and used Dixie cups you ever saw. So he's an addict, and as such he knows what we know --- that an addict is at the mercy of whoever produces the thing he has to have. Some of you may be old enough to remember a few years ago, during the war, when we couldn't get a cigaret, we smoked anything that looked like one. Well, speaking for myself, I'm a science fiction addict; when I can't get good science fiction, I read what I can get; and I read an awful lot of crud.

Why is it so bad? We keep asking ourselves this question, and getting about one million answers, all equally good. Here's one more. It's an oversimplification --- there are others that are as valid -- but I happen to like it. It has to do with competence.

Every now and then in our field, demand suddenly increases. This seems to happen about every ten years. And when it happens, there aren't enough competent writers, editors, illustrators ---- anybody connected with science fiction ---- to go around. Somebody has to fill in, and inevitably, somebody does. The result is large quantities of bad science fiction.



(I owe thanks for this title to Ray Van Houten, who ingeniously mortared it together out of two alternative suggestions I gave him.)

Ladies and gentlemen, and editors. I have one thing to say to you which I'm sure will please everybody, except possibly some of the lushes in the bar; and that is that when I have finished this speech, which will be short if not sweet,

Now, what is competence? Let's see -- not to nail it down forever, but just to see what elements we think of when we use the word. There's talent -- training -- and experience, to enable you to use the talent and the training. Is that all? I don't think so. I think there's one more element that's so obvious it gets overlooked --- the one simple Fact of Life that all the wise guys don't know: that to do good work in any creative field, you have to like to do it, and you have to think it's worth while.

And to our sorrow, we have about a hundred and forty steady producers of science fiction, and editors galore, who are not competent in those terms -- without talent, without training, without experience, or worst of all, without the honest desire to do good work in this field.

I would like to say that I'm in favor of writers getting paid. I think the worst science fiction I have seen has been about evenly divided between that written only for glory and that written only for a buck. I think it's nice for writers to eat, and I'm not against that at all.

But here's what happens. The field expands --- the incompetents, the hacks, the beginners, the wise guys rush in to fill it --- and then the thousands or hundreds of thousands of new people who have been attracted to science fiction, after weeks or months, turn away from it in disgust -- literally in disgust -- and go back to comic books or cross-word puzzles. and the field contracts again, to perhaps a little larger dimensions than it had before.

Science fiction works something like a flush toilet.

All right; what can we do about it? As a group, not much. If we were more numerous or more unanimous, we could do a lot, but we aren't. There is one thing we can all do --- try to refine our tastes, to distinguish more clearly between good science fiction and bad; and whenever the occasion offers, stand up and holler, "It stinks!"

There is something else that some of

us can do; and looking back on our history, I think we can see what it is. In the last boom, when science fiction was spreading out in the magazines, publishers had the idea that anybody who could read and write, or edit a love magazine or a Western, could edit science fiction. But somehow, one science fiction fan wormed his way into a job editing an s-f magazine; and then another, and another, until it got to be an accepted thing in the industry that science fiction magazines should be edited by people who like the stuff and knew something about it.

The results were not uniformly good. I can think of at least one fan turned pro who I think has set this field back ten years; and on the other side, I know people who have come to this field cold and done well at it. But in general, in the long run, I think it's established that the best editors, best writers, best illustrators, are people with a long history of love for this field and interest in it. They have more to give.

Well, I suppose we have got to wait for the next ten year boom now, because science fiction in hardcovers is certainly a bust this year. But I think it'll happen. Some kid from the sticks, or maybe some New York kid, is going to get himself a job editing science fiction books for a trade publisher. I don't know how he'll do it; I wouldn't know how to do it myself. But it'll happen; and then another, and another ----- and then we'll start having good science fiction in hardcover books.

If you want a longer range prediction, for what it's worth, I don't think science fiction is ever going to be the literature of the future. I think the most we can legitimately hope for, and expect to get, is to become a field like other fields -- like the detective field, for instance --- with a little stability and freedom, and with the slick-paper-critics no longer asking, "These fantasy fans -- are they human?" and with a little slice of pie to cut up now and then.

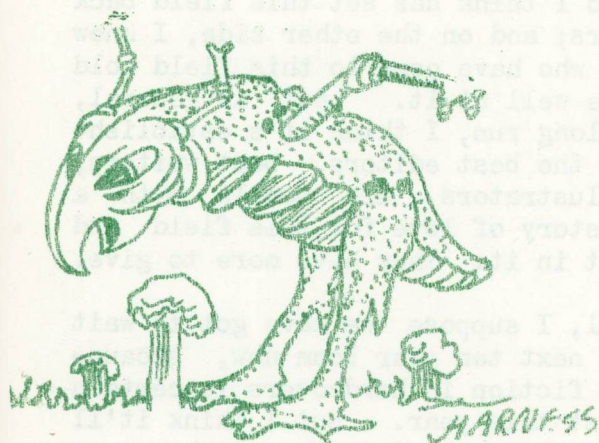
Here's to that, and here's to your good appetite.

---Damon Knight

Mary Had

A Little

Lamb...



....BY CURTIS JANKE

Ever since a certain female-type ancestress of mine got involved with a certain marquis who made a career of being sort of churlish to people, there's been a streak of sadism in the family which, I am happy to say, has reached its first full fine proud flowering in me. (However, due to my advanced age, it should be more properly called the creak of cadism.)

Well, anyway, an idea for taking advantage of this Geis-sent opportunity to keep the dirty pros from making a fast easy buck presented itself to my foul fannish mind. You all know the old gag where the dewy-eyed young thing says,

"And I love you too, Murgatroyd", but because some mad scientist has reground her gears or because she's been standing on her head to develop her...ah.....personality, or something real scientific like that there, it comes out: "dyortad-rum, oot uoy evol I dnA" Backwards yet.

I've always been rather skeptical of these backward in time stories, besides being rather full up with them. I doubt very much that anyone has ever found it possible to do a really rigorous job on that sort of thing; the human mind just can't take care of all the millions of details that that would call for. In fact, I am of the opinion that it would be utterly impossible to even imagine such a state, much less communicate or have any sort of contact with a human being living backward.

I'd been itching for a chance to show up the Phonies Who Get Money For What They Write ever since a manuscript of mine came back from PLANET marked "echh", and here it was.

I don't know what's wrong with me,
I know only that I am evil...evil.

I considered an experiment. I knew I couldn't do it with a taper, because splicing a section of tape into a reel backwards merely turns over the tape on a twin-track job, so I was forced to dust off an old wire-recorder and use that. I set it up, recited a bit of high-class not-prose into it in my best prune-shaped tones, then clipped the wire and began blithely to reel it off onto the floor preparatory to putting it back in reverse.

Of course anyone who's had the misfortune to have any truck with a wire job could have told me what would happen but no one did.....so I had to find out the hard way. I soon found myself ankle deep in tangled wire and blue brimstone.

J'ever try to untangle a few miles of recording wire? Don't. There are faster, pleasanter ways of driving yourself nuts. But a fiend in hell ain't even in it with a Janke who thinks he's

thought up a way to queer somebody else's pitch. So about 16 hours and 10,000 curses later (I reached heights of extemporaneous-type improvised profanity that even my mimeo hadn't inspired; it was sheer poetry, I tell you....a truck driver who was standing below my window was seen to shake his head and tip-toe quietly away) I'd rewound the stuff onto the spool backward, had made a shaky peace with the angels, and was ready to roll.

The first thing I discovered was a pitiful inability of the human ear and the Latin alphabet to cope adequately with the obscene gibberish that came curdling out of the speaker. For a time I was in a superstitious ague; I was sure that to punish me for my intended crime against Them As Gets Money For What They Writes, the ghost of Lovecraft was haunting me by having oozed into the recorder and reading the Necronomicon at me in his best f'tagn-shaped Cthulhued tones, but a few cases of Old Tennis Shoe enabled me to shake off this egotistic fancy and so, with head as clear

as a Fuggy Day In London Town, hand as steady as a humming-bird's starboard airfoil, and hopes and breath as High As The Moon, I got to work to transcribe the Foo-forsaken mess. Of course for the next few days everybody thought I was talking Sanskrit when I'd absently ask someone to ssap eht rettub, but I made it, and here it is, and there you are, and aren't you sorry you read even this far?

KEY FOR DECIPHERING FOLLOWING MESS

The upper lines are the verse just like you learned it way back when you were a child-delinquent-type little monster instead of the adolescent-delinquent-type little monster you are now; the middle lines are written backwards just like a 10¢ per word pro would do it and the lower lines are the way it sounded to me backwards. The apostrophes are to indicate glottal up-chucks, the letters in brackets indicate sounds that gave the impression of being there even though there is no way of accounting for them.

A)	Mary	had	a	little	lamb		
A')	Yram	dah	a	elttil	bmäl		
A'')	(H)ayram	daa	heh (ho'sh)	teh'tl	mal		
<hr/>							
B)	Its	fleece	was	white	as	snow	
B')	Sti	eeceelf	saw	etihw	sa	wons	
B'')	Steh	ceelf	zow(p)	(sh)tehw	zaa	wonss	
<hr/>							
C)	And	every	where	that	Mary	went	
C')	Dna	yreve	erehw	taht	yraM	tnew	
C'')	(D)na	(h)yeerveh	(h)rehw	(sh)tath	(H)ayram	(sh)ne(lp)	
<hr/>							
D)	The	lamb	was	sure	to	go	
D')	Eht	bmäl	saw	erus	ot	og	
D'')	Uth	mal	zow(p)	(h)rosh	(v)oosh(t)	(h)we(d)	

I don't advocate that the harrassed pro writer subject the above to an exhaustive analysis in order to lend verisimilitude to his efforts the next time he decides to come on with that "dyortagrum, oot uoy evol I dnA" jazz.

Nor do I advocate that he recite every bit of his dialogue into a wire-

recorder and rerun it backwards to transcribe it in such a way as to propitiate my passion for perfection.

No. What DO I advocate? I'm saying "Just drop the whole furshlugginer mess for something a little less moss-eaten."

---Curtis Janke

THE Top Shelf

BY NOAH W. McLEOD

EARTHLIGHT by Arthur C. Clarke; Ballantine Books, Inc., 404 Fifth Avenue, New York 18, N. Y.; paperbound, 35¢.

Clarke needs no introduction. He is the most brilliant English science fiction writer since the death of Stapledon. His writings seem to be directed to one purpose: to get Man into Space.

The plot of EARTHLIGHT is easily told. Man has conquered the Moon and the nearer planets and is pressing outward. But there is one flaw in the picture: Earth has a near monopoly of heavy metals; vital elements such as tungsten and mercury are buried too deeply on other planets for men to reach. The ambitious frontiersmen of Mars and Venus are dependent on Earth for vital raw materials.....and Earth uses its monopoly for power politics.

An obscure cosmologist has proved that these elements exist far below the surface of the Moon, but not too deeply that they cannot be mined. In spite of all precautions, the secret has leaked to the other planets. The most likely leak is among the staff of the Lunar Observatory, and Sadler, the hero, is sent to investigate.

While Sadler conducts his investigation, the frontier planets prepare to grab the Moon and its heavy metals. The Battle of Pico, fought with such weapons as radiation fields, ends in the virtual annihilation of both combatant forces. In

the resulting negotiations the Moon becomes an independent republic.

Sadler did not find the spy, but several years later on a trip to the Moon on private business, visits professor Molton, who was a member of the Observatory staff during the abortive war, and confirms his suspicion that he had been the information leak.

The gadget extrapolations and the descriptions of life as lived on the Moon are really superb and show Clarke at his best. His word pictures of Lunar scenery is prose poetry. I wish I could say the same about the political and social extrapolation.

The plot is slight and simple; one feels that Clarke is not much interested in the fate of his characters. He eliminates all sex angles by the simple expedient of making Sadler a married man separated from but very much in love with his wife.

The society Clarke depicts is unfortunately the same Western society with the same parliamentary democracy that exists in the West today. Surely, judging from the changes wrought in Europe by the discovery of America, the opening of space would have more effect than



that. Sadler has the same ideals that his 20th century counterpart would have. We are told that a certain engineer kept an expensive mistress; surely the relations between the sexes must have changed more than that in the intervening time.

The Moon an independent republic? Weak but rich countries soon disappear, whether by peaceful annexation as in the case of Texas, or by outright conquest.. like the Transvaal.

The characters are shadowy. Sadler is no hero, neither is Molton a villain, although Clarke apparently intended to model one after Klaus Fuchs, the atomic spy, and the other after Scardon, his captor. The other characters are just as unrealized.

The contest between spy and counter-spy never quite comes off; it is soon superceded by the contest of man against nature, into which the Battle of Pico (the real climax of the story) intervenes. These shifts of interest damage the continuity, and with it the suspense.

The real center of interest of the story is not the contest between Sadler and Molton, nor the political high-jinks of Earth and the Federation, but the description of how man lives on the Moon and the wonderful weapons used in the Battle of Pico. Clarke could have used any other plot and have had just as good a book, as long as he kept these elements. The sense of wonder, even more important to science fiction than suspense, is present in EARTHLIGHT to a very large degree. This is one of those stories whose principal interest is the setting, not the action or people.

EARTHLIGHT is worth the thirty-five cents asked, not so much as a story, but as a prediction of how man will one day live on the Moon. Clarke did some superb popular science writing and gadget extrapolation, but fell flat on his face in social extrapolation, plotting, and characterization.

Speaking of social extrapolation, I have been running across some lousy jobs in the sphere of sex. It may be enough in a "drum and strumpet" historical novel to have the heroine bed with various males for motives of lust, greed, or ambition, but it won't do in science fiction.

In serious science fiction at least, certain questions arise; how does the heroine keep from becoming pregnant?; how will pregnancy affect her social status?; do the mores and folkways in regards to sex differ or agree in a given society?; how are girls brought up to regard their bodies and their feelings toward men? It seems to me that an honest science fiction writer must consider at least some of these questions before putting an unmarried woman in bed with a man. But apparently most do not, and this omission supplies just the touch to render an illicit romance unconvincing.

---Noah McLeod

Ian T. Macauley has been re-zoned. His address is now 57 East Park Lane, Atlanta 9, Georgia.

Harlan Ellison has changed apartments in the building where he lives. His correct address is now 611 W. 114th, Apt. 4B - 119, New York 25, N. Y.

The So. Nevada S-F Foundation
620 Avenue I,
Boulder City, Nevada,
would like to correspond with other S-F fans and interested people. I assume they would also like to see some fanzines.

To fill space, and in case anyone is interested, I will plug a sort of a fanzine printing service I'm running.

YOU type up your zine on Gestetner stencils and send them to me. I will run them off on the new Gestetner.

Work done on 20# white mimeo bond...the paper this is printed on. The price is a flat 50¢ per printed side per 100 copies.

DIALOGUE

BY — THE — EDITOR

STARTLING STORIES

SUMMER --- 1955

"A beautiful cover wouldn't you say? Emsh does an excellent job, both on covers and interiors. I fell in love with his style when I first saw it and am still madly enthralled."

"Well, granting Emsh is good, there is a new star arising, if you care to indulge in a metaphor."

"I suppose you mean Kelly Freas?"

"Yup. Now, there is a boy with a bit of grace and real style in his art... especially in his covers. Now, you look at the cover he did for the Summer PLANET STORIES. Now, there I just lost my heart to his spaceships. Those diamond shaped pulses of power, those wide-flaring fins, that red-hot tube casing, the symbolic woman in a skin-tight---"

"All right already. I thought we were going to talk about the Summer issue of STARTLING?"

"I got carried away."

"You keep that up and you'll be carried away all right...on a stretcher."

"Awrrrrr...."

"Now. There is in this issue of STARTLING a very good illustration of what is wrong with science fiction today. The stories, in one way or another, point up glaring defects that are all too prevalent."

"Which story gets the axe first?"

"An Apple For The Teacher by Robert F. Young. He spent---"

"A curious thing about this Young guy; his work has appeared in at least one other sf mag that I know of, yet I hadn't ever heard of him before. And for an author to suddenly burst full-blown into lead novellete position is rather unusual in my book. I rather am inclined to suspect that Robert F. Young is a pseudonym for someone like Gordon R. Dickson. Perhaps even Alfred Coppel.... though I doubt it."

"Are you finished?"

"Oh. I interrupted you, didn't I? I



am sorry. Go ahead."

"Thanks. As I was saying, Young spent almost all of his story building up a situation in which a very love-starved, ineffectual young school teacher, female, comes across some aliens who are posing as average citizens and sending their young boy to school. It is then slowly revealed that the boy is no ordinary boy...or even an ordinary child alien.

"The characterization of Miss Ellis, the school teacher, is built up rather nicely until she actually begins to seem human and three dimensional. Her handsome but very stiff and reserved school principal, Mr. Findley, even though he actually only speaks a few lines in all, seems to come alive as he is seen and remembered through Miss Ellis. A lot of time is taken to delineate Miss Ellis's inner life and personality by describing her dreams.

"Yet, after having built up this convincing characterization, the author threw it away with a hasty, cheating finish that left more questions hanging fire than it answered.

"Lyle, the little alien boy, turns out to be an alien psycho-therapist who is trying to cure a couple of alien regressives from a sub-normal culture. He uses a child-parent relationship in his therapy. His "mother" is also a hopeless romantic who, after observing Miss Ellis and Mr. Findley, decides to "make a match". So, on the next to the last page of the story, an apple is on the teacher's desk. It is a doped apple put there by the "mother". Of course Miss Ellis bites into it, and of course Mr. Findley comes in and takes a bite, and the two young people are all-at-once-in-love-with-each-other."

"Deux Ex Machina, eh?"

"Precisely. Someone comes along, and like a god, solves the problems of the main character, thereby invalidating all the preparation that went before."

"Well, anyway, there was a nice Finley nude as an illustration."

"Yeah, the nude was purty, but that isn't all that is wrong with the story."

"All right, get on with it. I expect you are wondering, like me, why the child-sized psycho-therapist wasted his time in an Earth school when he should

have been busy therapizing. And also, being an intellectual superior to any of the other characters in the story, he went all through the rigamarole of leading the mousy school teacher to the conclusion that he was unusual and that his "parents" were alien. After all, the note he wrote to the teacher, explaining the situation, indicated that he didn't approve of the match-making efforts of his "mother" patient, so thus his motivation in "revealing" himself to the teacher is altogether shrouded in mystery. It appears that author Young goofed but good in this one."

"Damn you. You said it all."

"Don't feel hurt. There are other stories to talk about in this issue. Why don't you pitch into Moon, June, Spoon, Croon by the suspect Mr. Gordon R. Dickson? After all, a story that describes the love affair between a computer and an experimental rocket and their resolve to die together rather than be parted.... And all this is started when a janitor asks the computer a question dealing with love and marriage and then leaves the power on, allowing the machine to equate itself with men...or something. Gaaaaa."

"Yeah, but I think it was rather good---"

"GOOD? Are you batty? it was the most cruddy, horrible, lousy---"

"Lemme finish! I was gonna say I thought it was good satire."

"Satire? Satire. Hrrmmmmmmmmmmmm."

"You took it too seriously. Right from the start it was too too bad even for STARTLING. Even for PLANET. It was a rather good satire. Though I suppose the editor will receive many letters from fans and readers calling it a lousy story. And, too, I suppose there will be a few sentimental slobs who will find in it a beautiful sentiment.."

"Yeah.... Well, score one for your side."

"I did like An Angry House by Richard R. Smith, though the idea of an awareness of self by the super-automatic house seemed to be a bit too advanced in the way of science for the apparent era: the woman thief was wearing a dress, bra, panties.....even a wristwatch; she searched a mattress. All this seems to indicate a period not

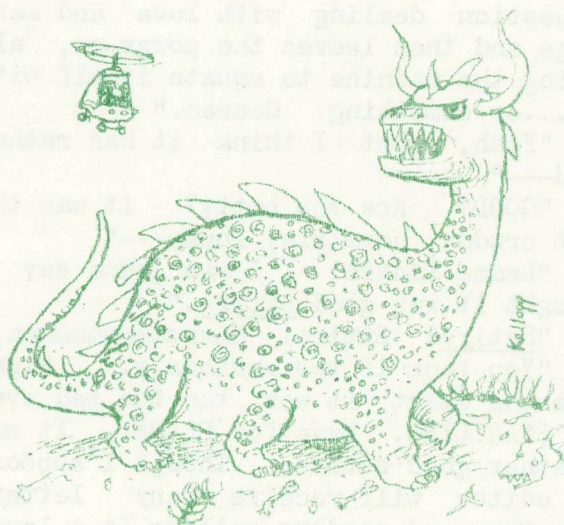
too distant in the future. Yet the house is equipped with anti-gravity."

"You quibble too much. It was a good story. Don't split hairs."

"Well, sure, but it did seem a bit hard to swallow."

"Well, have fun picking apart White Spot by Murray Leinster. There is one glaring plot-cliche in it which shouts to be examined."

"Ah, yes. The crew of a small spaceship, their drive blown, make for the nearest Sol-type star and find a planet on which they can land and make repairs. As they approach, they notice a white spot on it. The spot turns itself into a huge mirror, and tries to burn them out of space with a solar beam. Fortunately, they have a screen that protects them...barely. They land at one of the poles, and promptly have trouble with one of their crew, a psychopath. He---"



"I WONDER IF IT BITES!"

"What's a psychopath?"

"What's the matter with you? Don't you read the books I give you? A psychopath is a person without a super-ego. Literally, he is a person without a conscience----right and wrong are not a moral matter, but a purely selfish equation."

"Like the gal in The Irish Ballad as sung by Tom Lehrer? She killed off her entire family, rickety-tickety-tin. She threw her father in the creek, and

the water tasted bad for a week."

"Haw... Yeah, like her."

"And she set her sister's hair on fire, and then danced around the funeral pyre."

"Yes, that's right. You---"

"And one day when she had nothing to do, she cut her baby brother in two, and served him up as an Irish stew..... and invited the neighbors in. Rickety-tickety-tin."

"ALL RIGHT. Yes. Just like her a psychopath is."

"So who needs to read your old books?"

"To get on with it, they have this psycho under guard, but he gets away with vital star maps and such, and they cannot leave without them. He heads toward the white spot, believing it to be the center of a civilization. The others follow, and discover that the white spot is a malignant-but-intelligent protoplasmic-type alien life-form that has covered the only livable area on the planet, is over 300 miles across and had killed off the previous inhabitants of the planet who had quite a high civilization before the Thing came and...literally...absorbed them, leaving behind millions of undigested, completely separated bones."

"Ugh."

"Well, the hero and his wife and a diffident young man rig up a walkie-talkie, connect it to a convenient power source, and talk the protoplasmic creature to death by spouting unpatterned prose, poetry, songs, etc. at it via the carrier-wave of the walkie-talkie. It is driven mad by the terrific impact of the---"

"I don't know why you are reciting the plot. Why don't you just say you objected to the villain, the psychopath, getting killed so very conveniently at the end of the story?"

"Yeah, perhaps you're right. Here Leinster has this bad man poised as a threat over the heads of our hero and wife and friend for the entire story, then when the Thing is disposed of and the showdown comes between the villain and the good people, the poor slob trips and shoots himself."

"I guess Leinster got tired of typing about then, huh? Maybe wanted to go fishing and---"

"Hell. This killing-off-the-villain-by-his-own-hand, poetic-justice-style, is dishonest writing. Especially so in this case. It solves a lot of disagreeable problems, sure, but it is the lazy way, and altogether too prevalent."

"Yeah. Lemmee see now.... There's that mad scientist in Winston Mark's Bleedback in the August IF; he got killed as a result of his own Evil Machinations. In the Summer PLANET there is a story by Lu Kella, I think, called The Brides of Ool in which another mad scientist inadvertently kills himself with the weapon he intended using on the hero. In the August FANTASTIC another mad scientist---

"And I thought at one time that nobody wrote stories anymore about mad scientists."

"----is destroyed by his own evil creation; in this case a robot who goes berserk and runs amuk. Kill....kill... Oh, Ghod, what crud."

"Agreed. FANTASTIC and AMAZING have sunk so low that it is a positive retching experience to read them. I don't think I will anymore. Apparently Browne is aiming for those young fans who are uncritically reading everything in the way of science fiction they can lay hands on, and the low I.Q. readers who actually like what he prints. I suppose there is a market for such stuff, but I'll be damned if I'll dignify it with a review. Milton Lesser and Paul W. Fairman do all the writing for the mags, anyway. And Lesser is a pure hack, period. Fairman has written a few good stories, but being a staff writer has its drawbacks, I suppose. Especially with editorial policies like those of Browne."

"Browne will hate you."

"Well, shall we get back to the Summer STARTLING? We seem to be drifting all over the field in these reviews."

"I didn't get beyond the third paragraph of The 13th Juror by Leslie Waltham. I simply couldn't swallow the basic premise of the story. The reader is asked to believe that by the 23rd century 'The lower emotions had already been bred out of the people. Envy, hate, avarice and kindred responses were virtually non-existent.'"

"You tried real hard, but you just couldn't gulp it down, eh? 'The lower emotions'! Man, what a value judgement... And all in only 300 years."

"Yep. I just couldn't see how all emotions could be BRED out of the human race. For obviously if hate is out, so is love. To do away with the emotions would leave..... Hell, I can't even imagine it. The human body wouldn't be the same, the brain wouldn't."

"This story is sheer tripe, ignoring what is patently impossible for the sake of a hoked-up story situation that could not EVER happen as the author says. His



"EEK! DON'T SHOOT!"

story contradicts itself on the first page."

"The same might be said of Awakening by Bryce Walton. In this item a robot with gears, machinery, a thermostat, is in love with her master. Walton names the robot Alice, so I guess I'll go along and say "she". So Alice is in love. She has all the symptoms of it, and Walton moons for half a page about how she has a soul, for Christ's sake... He is very specific about this soul business, and seems to be quite an authority on the matter."

"Say.... I just happened to have a thought. Do you suppose---

"Don't interrupt. Now, it seems that Alice-the-robot is not just spiritually in love with her master. Nup, she's all hot and bothered in a sexual way. 'Seeing his strong naked beauty there, she felt her machinery pounding and the burning in her eyes. It wasn't anything that could be controlled by the thermostat. She needed his arms....' Now...

really, I ask you---

"But couldn't this story be another satire?"

"Now, the idea of a non-flesh and blood piece of tin feeling the complex physical chemical actions and reactions that make up sexual feeling in the human body is..... satire?"

"Yeah, why couldn't this be a satire of all such stories in which robots are humanized?"

"Ah...yes. And when the letters come in praising the story and not recognizing the satire, then the editor and the author laugh like hell over how stupid are the fans. Very neat. but I wonder if the editor knows that two such satires of stf in one magazine is enough to turn the full fury of all fandom upon his head. It does not pay to laugh at a favorite literature. There may be harsh words in the next letter section."

"One thing bothers me though. Might it not be possible that The 13th Juror is also a satire on all the extreme future societies that stf writers love to set up?"

"Only barely possible. Therein lies madness, for it might also be possible that White Spot is a satire on all the last-minute-weapons-that-saved-the-world stories; perhaps written on two levels."

"And could it be possible that Browne is indulging in Olympian laughter at how us fans keep yapping at the subtle satire which we take to be bad writing?"

"Here, boy, stop. You go too far."

"Could be. Anyway, if Awakening is not satire, it is sure an insult to science fiction and its readers."

"Ho. and did you catch that goof on the title page? Whoever composed the blurb either didn't read the story or was very careless.....or didn't know the difference between an android and a robot."

"Could you keep quiet for a moment? I'm reading Time Out For Redheads by Miriam Allen deFord, and it is almost as incredibly bad as some of the "satires" in this issue."

"Careful, there. Some of them ARE probably satire. What's the matter with the de Ford story?"

"For twelve years this mouse of a man is a clerk. He is the kind nobody notices, a complete non-entity, a guy whi is a complete dud, from the word go,

who never did nothing unusual in his life, who is terribly shy, who sticks to a dreary routine and is content. So, having established this colorless character with no ambition, talent, etc., the authoress has him clerking one day when a beautiful redhead smiles at him. Then she screams and falls to the floor in an ever-widening pool of blood. Some one hands him an ancient knife with some gore on it, and he stares at it, stupi-



**WHAT WOMEN WILL
WEAR IN 1995, BY
THE GREAT PROPHET
PHILLIPS**

fied with the sudden events. THEN he 'lost his head' and becomes a fleeing fugitive, one would think, because he never has been involved in violence before."

"Ah.....I don't understand. You say he is running from the scene of the crime because somebody pushed the murder

weapon in his hand and because he has never been involved in violence?"

"Yes."

"But...that doesn't fit with his character as you described it. Wouldn't it be more consistent with his character if he had not run, had cowered back and wondered if this business would lose him his job, and had at the same time taken a certain grizzly interest in the body?"

"Certainly, but you should know that the inexorable requirements of plot and bad writing demand that either a character have no personality at all, or act completely at variance with whatever has been given him. Meek characters always burst out with hero-type actions when the plot demands it. This fellow is no exception. He dives into a time machine, used by many citizens for vacations in the past, and winds up in modern Los Angeles. Naturally, he is not prepared for his week's sojourn in our fair time, and is in a funk. Then a girl with red hair asks the time. He doesn't know. She points to time-porter on his wrist.....a gimmick to return him to his proper time at end of week. He then breaks a prime rule for time vacationers: not to tell "natives" that he is a time traveller."

"It would seem to me that a fellow like he is supposed to be would follow each and every rule religiously, especially when in trouble like he is."

"Sure, but he blabs it all to this redhead. Plot requires it."

"Seems to me he'd be very cautious of redheads."

"He would if he acted true to character, but that is a luxury few science-fiction writers indulge in; very few of their people act or talk to match their personality, however sketchy it is."

"What happens next?"

"It gets worse. He and this girl discuss the situation, she slowly coming to believe him, and it is revealed that in the year 2839 there is no crime and the police are not equipped to handle anything like murder. Then---"

"Wait a minute. No major crimes in his society?"

"No. But they do a lot of business making historical novel-type films which feature crime."

"Well, if that society uses crime

shows for amusement, and has citizens which are brought up, or are allowed to grow up without proper outlet for natural bodily needs, it would seem to me that crimes are as sure as you know what and taxes."

"Ohhh. Eeeech. Ugggh. Gecccck. I just read the last page of the story. It seems that the murder was actually just a fake, a scene they did for a historical crime show without telling the clerk because they felt it would add realism to his role."

"Really? That's how the story ends? Are you serious?"

"Yes. A busy and impatient executive fetches him back to his time and explains. He also mentions that the gal who did the acting was just dying to meet him, thinking him cute. Our hero is now a changed character and is eager to meet her. I got the impression that his lifetime of meekness is over. He will marry the star and live ever after as a 100% red-blooded American, circa 1955, would like to."

"Do you have the uncomfortable feeling that this story isn't worth all the yakking we've been doing?"

"Yes, damnit."

"Speaking of wasting time, do you want to talk about The Rogue Waveform by H. W. Stockheker?"

"No!"

"Why not?"

"This is why not: 'I could have used a little premonition and second sight too. It would have kept me from getting mixed up with Panda, the beautiful Ph.D. It would have kept me from taking that fatal fall to Dr. Stanley MacCluett's synthetic symbiotic wave. I could have gone on for the rest of my life being the same old obnoxious Freddy Booten.'"

"I see. Yes. Well, are there any general comments you'd like to make about this Summer issue of STARTLING?"

"Just that in the stories in this issue are the most glaring faults found in science fiction today, and the discouraging thing about it is that in fully half the magazines on the stands, the writing level is perhaps even lower. Specifically, I was shocked at seeing Leinster dispose of his villain in such a very hacky manner. It wasn't worthy of him at all."

"I'd like to mention that the illustrations were by far the best part of the magazine. The Emsh cover I liked very much in spite of my earlier comment about Freas. These boys are both very, very good craftsmen. A pity the same can't be said about the writers. The only story we didn't mention was Touch The Sky by Alfred Coppel. I didn't say a word about it because it was so very much a trite and overworked idea that I expected you to explode if I so much as spoke the title aloud."

"Right. If I have read that same story once, I've read it a dozen times. I expect that the editor felt that a new generation had sprung up and wouldn't realize the story was a cliché when Gernsback published WONDER STORIES."

"White Spot, with all its faults, was still the best story in the issue. And except for Moon, June, Spoon, Croon and The Angry House, the others should never have been printed.

"What magazine do we take apart next issue?"

"I thought we might devote some attention to FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION."

"And after that let's examine GALAXY and Preferred Risk. It should be completed by then."

"Okay by me. I haven't read the installments yet. I like to read them all at once."

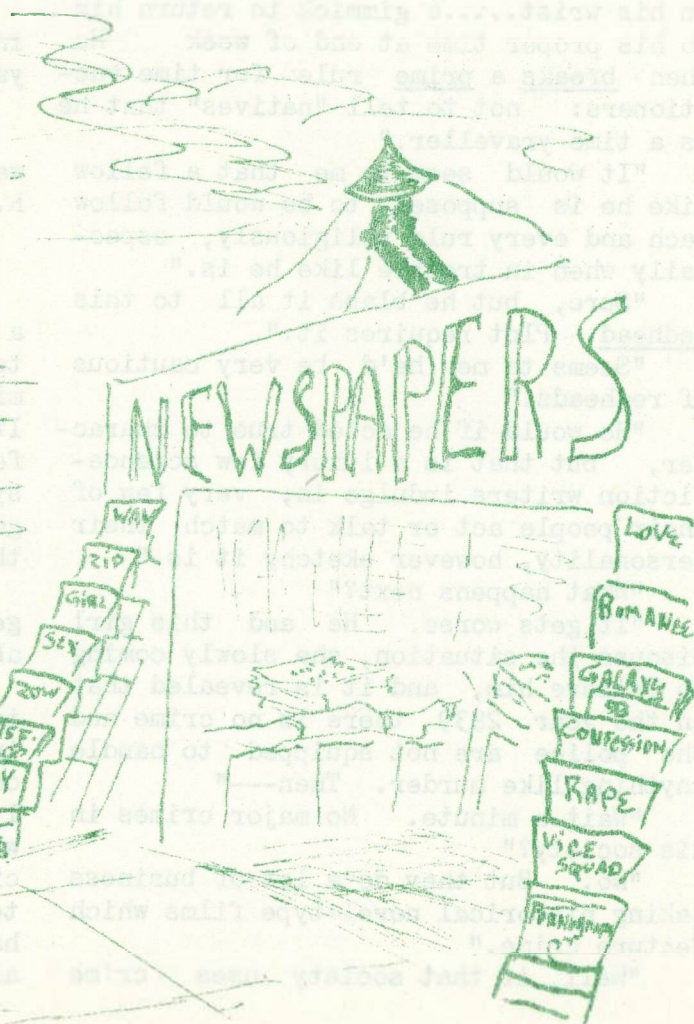
"How can you stand to wait? Well... see you next month, huh?"

"Yep. Goobye."

---Richard E. Geis

KAYMAR TRADER

If you buy, sell, or trade STF mags and books be sure to get the current listings and prices. Just a thin dime will bring a copy of K-T to your mail box. Gary Labowitz, 7234 Baltimore, Kansas City 14, Missouri.



—letter from new york—

HARLAN ELLISON

Dear Dick,

What with 95 degree heat and higher for the past three weeks, things here in the Nation's largest city have come to the Nation's largest slowdown.

The science fiction scene is in a peculiar state: dormant, but rumbling as though about to awaken with a blast of flame and smoke. Rumors--some substantiated, some mere supposition--have it that before September and the Convention, there will be 12 new magazines on the stands.

Howard Browne is taking another crack at a semi-slick, semi-mainstream book like the first few FANTASTICS, and Harry Harrison, late of the Space Publications chain--recently successfully sued by Fletcher Pratt--is diddling with the idea of a new entry in the science fiction sweepstakes. There is, of course, the new Larry Shaw-edited venture, INFINITY, which will be out in September for certain. I know, because they bought a story from your correspondent, and though he is breathlessly awaiting the opening of INFINITY's bank-account to get paid, still all yarns have been selected, handed out to be illustrated, and the book is rolling.

Standard will make a blazing re-entry into the field with two new books--with all-new titles--but this reporter looks with some trepidation on the venture unless they can dig up a mastermind like the Merwin of yore. Standard just lost the touch after Sam Merwin left them. If they were to lay out all the issues that Merwin edited--and which boosted their circulation to the very top of the scale--they would be able to spot the secret, right in the covers themselves. But then, I suppose the fellows over at Standard are too busy editing to stop and recapitulate.

A number of people are now making news in NYC: Ex-Peoria habitue Randall Garret is now living in New York, writing full-time, with a recent assignment from his agent Scott Meredith to do an expose article, much like your reporter's current offering in LOWDOWN Magazine. Garret is residing uptown, and is firmly determined to make \$10,000 this year--from writing. We have our doubts.

Bob Sheckley is back in town. We had lunch with him a week ago and talked over Florida, the advisability of renting out Sheck's boat for fishing trips, how he could get us down to Long Island to sand and caulk the yacht before taking us out on the Sound, and what has happened to the calibre of his writing. Bob was quite concerned with the aspects of the question, and was particularly interested in the comments of a certain Mr. Atheling. We looked over his den and grabbed a quick look at a ms.--in-progress. All we could tell was that three of the characters were Dr. Huer of Buck Rogers, The Shadow, and--I believe--Superman.

Jan Sadler, Mississippi's latest fan offering, stopped by several weeks ago for chit-chat and sarsaparilla. Jan, a remarkably experienced fan for his brief tenure in fandom, is currently undergoing coaching in his writing, in Jackson, Miss. from Eudora Welty, of whom the more literate are enamoured. Jan's first issue of SLANDER should be out by the time you read this.

Algis Budrys has joined the torrent of writers moving out of the city, and slip-

ped into an apartment in suburban and somewhat less frenetic Redbank, New Jersey, in close neighboring to Fred and Carole Pohl, Lester and Evie del Rey, and the Fletcher Pratts (who are bit further upstate in a weird Addams-like fantastic of a house on weekends). Edna Budrys is working on her first right now, and (as AJ calls him) Foetus Budrys should make an appearance sometime in October. AJ has a dread fear the kid will come in on a broomstick just at Hallowe'en.

Dave Mason is severing connections with fandom in lieu of attractive Katherine MacLean and a more sophisticated crowd. Can't say that we blame him, but what will the Fanarchists do now? COUP will continue as before.

Bob Silverberg's first novel, Revolt On Alpha C --with the suspiciously-named characters Larry Stark and Harl Ellison--is out, and Bob has sent the prospectus for his second one off to Crowell for approval. In a search to discover just how much sex he can allow in the plot, with hopes for a pocket reprint, Silverbob spent some time poring over a copy of your correspondent's Rolling Stones by Heinlein and several other stf juveniles. Mr. Silverberg, it might be added, is currently in the process of getting engaged to a charming young woman who for the nonce will be referred to simply as "bobbie."

Comment should herein be injected, I feel, as to the reports that Calvin Thomas Beck and his Mythical American Science Fiction Society are making bids to handle the 1956 Convention in NYC. To my knowledge, which at this point is rather complete, there is no substantiated club called the A.S.F.S. save in the rather sick and warped interior of Mr. Beck's mind. No credence should be given to any claims, accusations, diatribes, or slander campaigns carried on by Beck and/or his deluded consorts (One of whom, whose name we feel it best not to mention, under the name "Martin Glasser", wrote a rather frantic article for Maurice Lubin's fanzine, entitled Why New York Should NOT Get The Convention and which is currently being answered at length by Sam Moskowitz and your reporter in those same pages; it might be to your advantage to get a copy of this entire discussion, for more knowledge when voting at Cleveland.). Mr. Beck is as foul a ball-player as we have ever run across, and any vesting of power, influence, money or such, will be an invitation to disaster. Further data given on request.

Till the next time then, I remain, yours most sincerely,

Harlan Ellison

TIMES HAVE CHANGED?

---A DEPARTMENT BY RICHARD A. LUPOFF---

"When I left the States, promising to keep in touch with the fantastic pulps, there were three titles, each appearing monthly. Now I find that, of these three, little recognizable remains. One has become a veritable Eton snob; another has added an adjective to the title and subtracted everything of worth from its content; while the third has become so utterly nauseating that I cannot believe it. As for the new eruption of magazines of this type, little can be said. I am reminded of nothing so much as the raucous din of the marts and bazaars of which tourists make so much. Despite the popular song, I cannot say that I care to go out in such a mid-day sun...." Letter-to-the-editor from Stafford Chan, appearing in the March 1941 issue of COSMIC Stories.

— letter from britain —

— FRED L. SMITH —

Dear Dick,

Although the progress of British science fiction reflects that of its U.S. counterpart to some extent, it seems to me that the home grown product is in a healthy position with five magazine ploughing along (fairly) steadily and the book field still expanding. Or perhaps we just haven't reached the saturation point yet.

The reprint mags, however, have been disappearing like blown chaff. In fact, looking round the bookstalls today the only one I could see was old standby aSF, although GALAXY and one or two others are supposed to be still extant. This state of affairs must be nice for our editors who have, incidentally, taken to omitting the date from their own mags to ensure longer newsstand display.

The NOVA twins, NEW WORLDS and SCIENCE FANTASY, are shining particularly brightly at present and in my opinion rank up with the big three U.S. productions. The accent here seems to be on entertainment of a purely sf kind as opposed to aSF's "message" style, GALAXY's Satevepost type, and F&SF's "precious" shorts. In fact, literary values aside, I would reckon that NEW WORLDS is closer to the spirit of aSF's fabulous forties than any other magazine in the world.

The occasional American reprints in the monthly NW and the bi-monthly SF have led to some arguments between fans and editor John Carnell but the policy has apparently been so successful with his British and Commonwealth readers that he intends continuing it "so long as he can obtain the right type of new American story". The August NW carries Kornbluth's Alien (from STAR SF No.3) together with a new novellette by J.T. McIntosh, The Way Home, and shorts by E.C. Tubb and others.

Scheduled for future serialisation is Tucker's The Time Masters. This was originally intended for the NOVA NOVELS series but has been switched because the pocketbooks haven't proved as successful as anticipated. The current novels in this series are van Vogt's Weapon Shops Of Isher, Tucker's City In The Sea, and due now Sturgeon's The Dreaming Jewels and Blish's Jack Of Eagles. The recently concluded Tubb serial Star Ship in NW, a fine variation on the Universe theme, is slated for hardcover publication towards the end of the year.

Carnell has introduced a number of interesting new writers in his mags, notably ex-fan James White and unknown Brian W. Aldiss, but has been having trouble with SCIENCE FANTASY "owing to the dearth of good material submitted" and states that he may even reach the stage where he "can't publish on time because of lack of material".

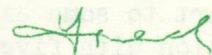
On the other hand Peter Hamilton of NEBULA has been having distribution difficulties (only just solved) and is currently looking for a new and better printer. However he hopes to re-commence publication on a regular bi-monthly basis in August or September and states that contrary to rumors NEBULA will definitely not fold and may even go monthly next year. Material he has lined up includes items by William F. Temple, F.G. Rayer, Ted Tubb (the ubiquitous), James White, H.K. Bulmer, Eric Frank Russell, etc. and a reprint of Heinlein's Green Hills Of Earth (again!). Some of the pleasanter aspects of NEBULA are the fan departments conducted by Forry Acker-

man (Films), Ken Slater (Books) and Walt Willis (Fanzines).

This, unfortunately, can't be said of AUTHENTIC SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY, nor of the BRITISH SPACE FICTION MAGAZINE, both of which are heavily larded with departments of the "real science" kind. However I haven't space to discuss these mags in detail so I'll just finish by quoting Dragon Publications (The B.S.F.M.) blurb:

"Good English literature which can be read by any member of any family of discrimination."

Best,



the corner shelf — BY JIM HARMON

OF ALL POSSIBLE WORLDS by William Tenn. Ballantine, \$2.75, 35¢.

I have a particular interest in this book since I rewrote the introduction to it. You won't find me credited but Tenn has rewritten his SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES article to make the corrections I pointed out and answer questions I posed in a long letter appearing in that magazine. That introduction remains a cry for further "freedom" of expression in science fiction. It remains only a cry for excuse of sloppy thinking and sloppy research in science fiction stories. Again, he maintains a scientific error in various works of Heinlein would be unimportant. Once more, I ask him to find me those mistakes in Heinlein's works. Probably he would still be a fine writer if he was more sloppy, but I think it is to his credit that he is not.

Tenn isn't noticably a sloppy writer -- he strays out of the field of science fiction into parable and fantasy but that's no crime. The most remarkable thing about the book is that all but two of these stories come from second class magazines like SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY (such as most of my work appears in). Offhand, you wouldn't think that there are enough stories by any one writer from these pulps to make up a really good short story collection of even a talented, promising writer.

There isn't.

ADVERTISEMENT, by Ghod.

I find that I am MADly disenchanted. This means that I am prepared to...ah...dispose...of my MAD and PANIC collection. Unfortunately, someone "borrowed" a lot of my early copies of both MAD and sister PANIC, but listed below are what I have left.

Available of the PANICs are: #5 - #6 - #7 - #8 - #9 - #10

In MAD I have #10 - #11 - #12 - #13 - #14 - #16 - #17 - #18 - #19 - #20 - #21 - #23

(Don't crowd) All of the above are selling for
20¢ apiece, postpaid.

(Form a line, please)

COMMENT

BOB KELLOGG Time at last to comment on the (choke) final issue of PSY. With heavy heart and trembling fingers I bid adieu to that Peerless Periodical -- That Aristocrat of Fandom. I'm gonna miss it lying around, getting in the way. And I'm afraid that SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW will not quite fill that empty space left by PSY's demise. While I enjoy your reviews hugely, they lose a little of their kick when one hasn't read the magazines being reviewed; and I doubt whether even that great stimulus will be enough to send me out to the newsstand for a harvest of all the magazines being currently published. There is just too much to read, and I have found that there is too much chaff to wade through for the meagre kernels of satisfaction present. However, chances are that I will have read the books that Noah McLeod comments on, and it's always a pleasure to disagree with him.

Yours will be a tough job. The critic of regular literature has it rough enough, but how does one go about analyzing the good and bad points of science fiction? Can anyone judge it on an absolute standard -- say fidelity of human experience (not necessarily whether it is "true to life" or not; but whether the characters seem like genuine members of the human race -- and if not human, do the aliens have real characteristics?)? Because if stf is judged by that method, certainly better than 90% of the yearly output would receive thumbs-down.

Few science fiction writers either are interested or have the ability to go deeply into the problem of how people would really act if confronted with various unusual experiences. They are usually more interested in the event or experience than they are with the aliens or people involved. That, I believe, constitutes a main part of the difference between pulp-type and mature sf. Among all the novels and stories I have read in the last few years (including some of the 'classics') virtually none have participants that are anything but names indicating that people are having things happen to them. Seldom have I read a story where the hero emerged as an individual and stayed with me even after I had put the book aside. And few authors in the science fiction field are able to create such characters, excepting possibly Bradbury, Matheson, Sturgeon, and a few others.

As a result, the medium for me becomes a sort of relaxation, a spice for my literary meal, as it were. It makes my life more pleasant, and I would never volutarily give it up, but for the meat and vegetables, the staff of life, I'll take the "mundane" field. Not the historical novels, the form stories that make each issue of the Saturday Evening Post exactly like the last, but the essence of life: men and women like Thomas Wolfe, Dostoyevsky, Irwin Shaw, D.H. Laurence, E.B. White, Dorothy Parker, Collette, Steinbeck, Joyce, Baudelaire, Huxley, Salinger and Tolstoi; poets like Keats, Arnold, Browning, Whitman and Shakespeare. I wonder if many fans have investigated the weird world of Truman Capote or Carson McCullers?

You talk about "conformists" and "non-conformists"! Read Irwin Shaw's The Troubled Air. See how a man of intelligence and vision treats the subject of McCarthyism, censorship and mud-slinging as it affected the radio industry and its personnel around 1950. It is the first book in quite a while that compelled me to miss precious sleep and finish it in one sitting.

((But even in the mundane field at least 90% of the books published are entirely in the crud class. Fortunately, there, as in stf too, a great deal of it is deliberate crud. Face it: a lot of people like crud and wouldn't be happy without it. ## I read the Shaw book a couple years ago. Agreed that it is a good one.))

JULIAN PARR You will probably have heard that the action against the German promag UTOPIA for publishing stories which "glorified war, death and destruction" has been rejected by the Federal Board of Examiners... The latest issue of UTOPIA, #22, contains an announcement on the foundation of the Science Fiction Club Deutschland (SFCD): Germany's first stf club -- although I myself am rather sceptical of a club run under the auspices of a promag. Still, THRILLING WONDER did a lot to develop fan activity by promoting local chapters of the SF League, so that UTOPIA may give German fandom the start it needs before it can develop on its own momentum and gain its independence.

((Someday, after the magazine has built up a large stf audience in Germany, I expect there'll be a "boom" with lots of competition, and UTOPIA might drop by the wayside...just as did TWS a few short months ago. Is nothing sacred?))

CHARLES HARRIS In social studies class several months back, I did a research paper on the good and bad effects of advertising (inspired by The Space Merchants). I found, though, that some of the things I wanted to say weren't in any books or weren't in the words I wanted to use. Therefore, among my 47 footnotes, you'll find three that read: "Geis, Richard Erwin & Harlan W. Ellison, Advertising in Theory and Practice, Boston, Little Brown, 1949," followed by a page number. Also, I wanted to start the paper off with a good violent anti-advertising quote, but couldn't seem to find one that exactly suited my purpose. Nonetheless, the paper does start off with a good violent anti-advertising quote, footnoted: Moreen, Dennis, The Magnificent Deception, New York, Viking Press, 1950, p.3." My mark on the paper? A-plus, with the comment: "Very superior work."

((I'm flattered. I really am. Send that paper along sometime. I'd like to read what I said.))

CAL BECK The letter section was about the most outstanding item in PSY. Keep it that way--and if you can, longer--in SFR. McLeod's review of Knight's book, it appears, saved me 35¢. However, the dig at Christian Science "and all similar cults" indicates the writer has no knowledge of this world-wide organization.

((I wanted to quote more of your letter, Cal, but two things happened: I ran out of room, and a bottle of stencil cement gurgled all over your letter. What a way to die....))

ONE thing has become painfully clear to me this issue: justified edges are too much work, and two columned pages are utterly impossible. At least for a monthly.

In a few days I expect to have a different typer -- one that, with the help of film stencils, will type a nice stencil. Send in your sub and find out how this daring experiment comes out. Will I get a typer...will it cut...will.... "Echhhh!" ---REG

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