



# SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

30

APRIL 1969

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"It has been about a hundred days now since the new Number Two has taken over in the White House..."

"Well, Geis, you have a crafty look in your eye this time. What's up? You going to talk about—"

"No, not him!"

"Oh. Then why not talk about characterization in science fiction?"

"I'm supposed to write Alexei Panshin a letter on that subject for the SFWA Forum. I can't use that—"

"Go on! Be selfish. Many SFWA members read SFR, so you can go ahead and—"

"Alexei won't be happy."

"You can write him something on another subject, sometime..."

"Yes, next year..."

"Of course. Good intentions count for something, don't they?"

"Not very often, I'm afraid. Now, about characterization—"

"There isn't much of it around, is there?"

"Yes and no. Depends on what is meant by the word. Hand me that book, will you? Thanks."

"The Priest Kings of Gor?"

"By John Norman, yes. It is remarkable in several ways."

"Is it fair, Geis, to use a sword and sorcery novel as an illustration of—"

"Priest Kings of Gor is sword and science fiction! Or sword and science fantasy. But it is not pure fantasy. Actually, very little of what is called s&s is pure fantasy."

"Yes, okay. You were saying about characterization—?"

"Tarl Cabot, the Hero—and he is a hero of the first magnitude, well deserving of the capital H—is singularly lacking in characterization and personality and individuality, while people all about him...even the insect-aliens, the Priest Kings...do have at least a minimum of depth. Even minor characters have enough individuality to make them memorable. Yet I don't remember once reading even a partial physical description of Cabot. He is simply a faceless warrior with a one-track mind. He is a robot, a zero, a personality-less shell with a sword arm and Courage."

"Maybe John Norman isn't skilled enough—"

"No, no! He has the skill to individualize the other characters, but he deliberately has written Tarl Cabot empty."

"Is it the function of a True Hero to be empty?"

"I don't know. For me, this personality vacuum was the difference; the book would have been very good if Cabot had come alive. As it was..."

"Thumbs-downs-ville, eh?"

"Yep. Little noted nor long remembered."

"But isn't it inherent in science fiction to short-shrift characterization in favor of plot and action and the science-fictional elements—the strange beasts, strange societies, strange cultures, spaceships, devices, and so on?"

"I've heard that said, but—"

"I just said it!"

"—I don't believe it is necessary. Over all, I see characterization as tri-leveled. Now, Character—"

"LECTURE! LECTURE! RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!"

"Character is basic; infant and child-formed traits plus heredity and instinct. Personality is closer to the surface and is a reflection of character plus experience, adjustments, defenses, ego games, et cetera. And—"

"We don't see much real character in sf characters, do we? And precious little personality."

"Right. Because showing these in a character, and creating them in the first place, is hard work for a writer. Often more work than the story is worth. Too, there are many writers who don't know how to turn the trick even if they wanted to. They stick with easy, imitative stereotypes all the time."

"Why?"

"I think because the ability to show character and personality in a characterization requires a great deal of self-knowledge and empathy. Sometimes this takes time and hard knocks to acquire."

"Granted, Geis, but it seems to me that putting a little personality into a character isn't that difficult."

"It must be, or there would be much more of it in evidence in science fiction."

"What are you saying, that 90% of the sf writers are either lazy or inadequate as writers?"

"Yes! But there is a third element in characterization I want to talk about—individuality—which can be used to color a character and make him seem to have personality and depth and which is easy to do, even though most writers don't even bother with that."

"You'll have to explain..."

"It's simple to individualize—a character can, for instance, have a left earlobe gone, a liking for Royal Fizzes, a squint, a preoccupation with new Belchfire Eights... Anything!"

"Hey! Geis—"

"He can have a hatred of kids, a fear of ants, a lust for pistachio-nut ice cream, an odd way of dressing, a constant pocketful of change, a self-given haircut! Just so the character is in some way unique! That in itself would be enough in most cases. But do we get even this?"

"Geis—"

"NO! We get faceless, mindless, stereotyped creatures who often are clothesless and bodyless as well, who do predictable and unjustified things and mouth predictable words. And as I said, I wouldn't mind even the predictability of things if the character had a hole in his pocket, a cavity in his upper left molar and was queer for pineapple juice."

"THAT'S THE LAST STRAW! Did you, did you HAVE to describe me...use me this way...just to make a point— NOW ALL THE READERS WILL KNOW ME! I'M EXPOSED!"

"Oh. Sorry. At least I didn't mention that you're four-foot-six, pot-bellied, with brown hair, brown eyes, a bulbous nose—"

"GEIS!"

"Don't cry. I hate to see a...what did you say you were?"

"I HATE YOU. I have one satisfaction from all this. Now at least one editor who reads about your ideas on characterization will read your mss and expect your characters to be—"

"Awk! Give me these pages. Burn them!"

"Too late, Geis. AHHAHAHAhahaha....."

#### BITS AND PIECES OF MY MIND

Hear Ye! There are no copies of earlier issues available before #28.

The University of Wisconsin-Green Bay announces two summer credit workshops in inter-curricular theater—June 23 to Aug. 15. The first four weeks have to do with film and focus on the British film, "It Happened Here", and the television series, "Star Trek."

VAUGHN BODE has sold a series of cartoons to CAVALIER. He also edits JIVE COMICS, an underground monthly tabloid that is a Dangerous Visions of comic art. There are some incredible things in the first issue. Check to see if your local head shop has copies.

RUTH BERMAN has moved to 5620 Edgewater Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55417.

HARLAN ELLISON is developing a tv series titled "Man Without Time"...science fiction...and reports that Leonard Nimoy is interested in it. ELLISON is also working up a series titled "Astra-Ella."

CALIFORNIA STATE COLLEGE at Fullerton is lusting after anything related to sf. They want books, mss, papers of sf writers, and even fanzines. They are (CSCaf) fast becoming a major center for the scholarly study of sf and offer an accredited course in sf.

The scholarly rape begins.

M. G. ZAHARAKIS has moved to 1326 14th S.E., Portland, Oregon 97214. He also sent a news release about the 1969 National Fantasy Fan Federation story contest.

Deadline: Nov. 1, 1969.

Length: up to 5000 words.

Who: anyone who has not sold more than two stories to the pro sf and fantasy mags.

A 50¢ fee for each entry, any number of entries, and be sure to send along a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Keep a carbon.

For further info write Leo P. Kelley, (N3F Story Contest), 100 East 85th St., New York, NY 10028.

JOANNE BURGER, 55 Blue Bonnet Ct., Lake Jackson, Texas 77566, has published SCIENCE FICTION BOOKS PUBLISHED IN 1968. 30¢ in stamps, 35¢ in cash.

MEREDITH PRESS is publishing Tomorrow Times Three in the Fall: unpublished novellas by Bob Silverberg, Roger Zelazny and James Blish.

Also this Fall they have scheduled an original full-length novel by Silverberg—Starman's Quest. Set in the year 3876, it deals in the human problems inherent in the dilemma of the compression of time in space travel.

WILL JENKINS has deposited his papers, mss and letters in the Syracuse University's Manuscript Division. Jenkins is now 72 years old and is still writing. His best known pen-name is Murray Leinster.

JOSEPH De BOLT, Dept. of Sociology, Anspach Hall, Central Michigan Univ., Mount Pleasant, Mich. 48858 is leading a class in sf. He would like contact with fans in the Central Michigan area.



Tim  
Kirk  
-69

# Black thoughts

## An Essay On Creativity

The witch-burners are with us again. The Self-appointed judges of what we should read and what has "seriously undermined" the fundamental values of speculative fiction. They are one with the sexually-constipated tribunals of Salem, descendants of Torquemada and his Santa Aermudad, a breed akin to those citizens for decent literature who would use the tactics of a McCarthy to insure that nothing is written that would be unfit for the mind of a thirteen-year-old. Like the cultural maggots who would condone the horrors of naze and chemical-bacteriological warfare, all in the name of patriotism, they are the frightened. They are the reactionary. They are unwilling to let the dissenters have their say; or rather, they would appear to let the dissenters have their say, as long as their insults and demands are not acted upon. They are the forces of constriction and repression in the world today. They are Le Legion Francais in Algeria; they are Nigeria to Biafra; they are the Afrikaaners in apartheid South Africa; they are the John Birch Society; they are all the Muzak-lovers who condemn rock music.

What follows is an essay written as post-script to Hank Stine's novel "Season of the Witch". It was originally written to capture the flavor of "newness" in that novel, but having used it as part of lectures given on the art of story-telling at the University of Chicago, Cal State Fullerton and Synanon, I found that it seemed to have even more universal relevance for those who came to listen. It is reprinted here with permission of Essex House, the original publisher, and their brilliant young editor, Brian Kirby.

This essay, and the letter to John J.



By Harlan Ellison

Pierce in the rear of this magazine, are my answer to the book-burners. Damn them! Let them encyst themselves if they fear the real world so much; but, damn them again, we must fight them for the privilege of living our lives as we wish!



What are we to make of the mind of man? What are we to think of the purgatory in which dreams are born, from whence come the derangements that men call magic because they have no other names for smoke or fog or hysteria? What are we to dwell upon when we consider the forms and shadows that become stories? Must we dismiss them as fever dreams, as expressions of creativity, as purgatives? Or may we deal with them even as the naked ape dealt with them: as the only moments of truth a man calls throughout a life of endless lies.

Who will be the first to acknowledge that it was only a membrane, only a vapor, that separated a Robert Burns and his love from a Leopold Sacher-Masoch and his hate?

Is it too terrible to consider that a Dickens, who could drip treacle and God bless us one and all, through the mouth of a potboiler character called Tiny Tim, could also create the escaped convict Magwitch, the despoiler of children, Fagin, the murderous Sikes? Is it that great a step to consider that a woman surrounded by love and warmth and care of humanity as was Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, wife of Percy Bysshe Shelley, the greatest romantic poet western civilization has ever produced, could herself produce a work of such naked horror as Frankenstein? Can the mind equate the differences and similarities that allow both an Annabell Lee and a Masque of the Red Death to emerge from the same churning pit of thought-darkness?

Consider the dreamers: all of the dreamers: the glorious and the corrupt:

Aesop, Attila; Benito Mussolini and Benvenuto Cellini; Chekhov and Chang Tao-ling; Democritus, Disraeli; Epicurus, Eichmann; Faure and Fitzgerald; Goethe, Garibaldi; Huysmann and Hemingway; and on and on. All the dreamers. Those whose visions took form in blood and those which took form in music. Dreams fashioned of words and nightmares molded of death and pain. Is it inconceivable to consider that a Richard Speck was a devout Church-going Christian, a boy who lived in the land of God? Does the mind shy away from the

truth that a Bosch could create hell-images so burning, so excruciating that no other artist has ever even attempted to copy his staggeringly brilliant style, while at the same time producing works of such ecumenical purity as "L'Epiphanie"? All the dreamers. All the mad ones and the noble ones, all the seekers after alchemy and immortality, all those who dashed through endless midnights of gore-splattered horror and all those who strolled through sunshine springtimes of humanity. They are one and the same. They are all born of the same desire.



Speechless, we stand before Van Gogh's "Starry Night" or one of those hell-images of Hieronymus Bosch, and we find our senses reeling; vanishing into a daydream mist of what must this man have been like, what must he have suffered? A passage from Dylan Thomas, about birds singing in the eaves of a lunatic asylum, draws us up short, steals the breath from our mouths and the blood and thoughts stand still in our bodies as we are confronted with the absolute incredible achievement of what he has done. The impossibility of it. So imperfect, so faulty, so broken the links

in communication between humans, that to pass along one corner of a vision we have had to another creature is an accomplishment that fills us with pride and wonder, touching us and them for a nanoinstant with magic. How staggering it is then, to see, to know what Van Gogh and Bosch and Thomas knew and saw. To live for that nanoinstant what they lived. To look out of their eyes and view the universe from a new angle.

This, then, is the temporary, fleeting, transient, incredibly valuable priceless gift from the genius dreamer to those of us crawling forward moment after moment in time, with nothing to break our routine save death.

Mud-condemned, forced to deal as ribbon clerks with the boredoms and inanities of lives that may never touch — save by this voyeuristic means — a fragment of glory, our only hope, our only pleasure, is derived through

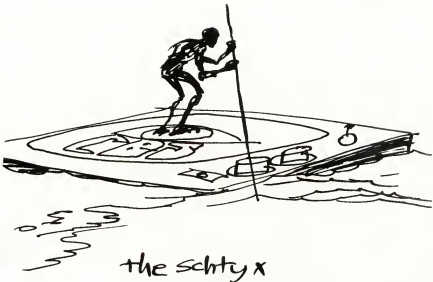
the eyes of the genius dreamers; the genius madmen; the creators.

How amazed...how stopped like a broken clock we are, when we are in the presence of the creator. When we see what his singular talents — wrought out of torment — have proffered; what magnificence, or depravity, or beauty, perhaps in a spare moment, only half-trying; he has brought it forth nonetheless, for the rest of eternity and the world to treasure.

And how awed we are, when caught in the golden web of that true genius — so that finally, for the first time we know that all the rest of it was kitsch; it is made to terribly, crushingly obvious to us, just how mere, how petty, how mud-condemned we really are, and that the only grandeur we will ever know is that which we know second-hand from our damned geniuses. That the closest we will come to







our "Heaven" while alive, is through our unfathomable geniuses, however imperfect or bizarre they may be.

And is this, then, why we treat them so shamefully, harm them, chivvy and harass them, drive them inexorably to their personal madhouses, kill them?

Who is it, we wonder, who really still the golden voices of the geniuses, who turn their visions to dust?

Who, the question asks itself, unbidden, are the savages and who the princes?

Fortunately, the night comes quickly, their graves are obscured by darkness, and answers can be avoided till the next time, till the next marvelous singer of strange songs is stilled in the agony of his rhapsodies.

...

On all sides the painter wars with the photographer. The dramatist battles the television scenarist. The novelist is locked in combat with the reporter and the creator of the non-novel. On all sides the struggle to build dreams is beset by the forces of materialism, the purveyors of the instant, the dealers in tawdriness. The genius, the creator falls in to disrepute. Of what good is he? Does he tell us useable gossip, does he explain our current situation, does he "tell it like it is"? No, he only preserves the past and points

the way to the future. He only performs the holiest of chores. Thereby becoming a luxury, a second-class privilege to be considered only after the newscasters and the sex images and the "personalities." The public entertainments, the safe and sensible entertainments, those that pass through the soul like beets through a baby's backside....these are the hallowed, the revered.

And what of the mad dreams, the visions of evil and destruction? What becomes of them? In a world of Tiny Tim, there is little room for a Magwitch, though the former be saccharine and the latter be noble.

Who will speak out for the mad dreamers?

Who will insure with sword and shield and grants of monies that these most valuable will not be thrown into the lye pits of mediocrity, the meat grinders of safe reportage? Who will care that they suffer all their nights and days of delusion and desire for ends that will never be noticed? There is no foundation that will enfranchise them, no philanthropist who will risk his horde in the hands of the mad ones.

And so they go their ways, walking all the plastic paths filled with noise and neon, their bee-eyes seeing much more than the clattering groundlings will ever see, reporting back from within their torments that nixons cannot save nor humphreys uplift. Reporting back that the midnight of madness is upon us, that wolves who

turn into men are stalking our babies, that trees will bleed and birds will speak in strange tongues. Reporting back that the grass will turn bloodred and the mountains soften and flow like butter, that the seas will congeal and harden for iceboats to skim across from the chalk cliffs of Dover to Calais.

The mad dreamers among us will tell us that if we take a woman and pull her inside-out we will have a creature that looks like an astronaut's survival suit. That if we inject the spinal fluid of the dolphin into the body of the dog, our pets will speak in the riddles of a Delphic Oracle. That if we smite the very rocks of the Earth with quicksilver staffs, they will split and show us where our ghosts have lived since before the winds traveled from pole to pole.

The geniuses, the mad dreamers, those who speak of debauchery in the spirit, they are the condemned of our times; they give everything, receive nothing, and expect in their silliness to be spared the gleaming axe of the executioner. How they will whistle as they die!

Let the shamans of Freud and Jung and Adler dissect the pus-sacs of society's mind. Let the rancid evil of reality flow and surge and gather strength as it hurries to the sea, forming a river that girdles the globe, a new Styx, beyond which men will go and from whence never return. Let the rulers and the politicians and the financiers throttle the dreams of creativity. It doesn't matter.

The mad ones will persist. In the face of certain destruction they will still speak of the unreal, the forbidden, all the seasons of the witch.

Consider it.

Please: consider.



# Space Thing



The ad caught my eye immediately. The eyes may have reached the place where glasses are required for working on printed circuits and the like but they can still spot a stf reference at 100 yards or more.

"The first ADULT science fiction movie. SPACE THING. It's Buck Rogers for adults. Now playing at the Guild Theater."

"Hmmm," I muttered, "ought to go see that. Whereinell is the Guild Theater?" East Central Street address. Break out the city map. Oh, yeah, out past the University. OK. Slide into the wagon and make my way across town with the usual comments about the idiots, licensed and unlicensed, who drive in Albuquerque.

The Guild Theater turns out to be a hole-in-the-wall with a seating capacity of maybe 200. I stood just inside the inner door a few minutes waiting for the eyes to make the transition from the bright New Mexico sunlight to the cave darkness of the theater. Most of the seats were occupied — not, I venture to say, by SF fans — but I spotted one just as the feature started. In glorious color, too. The feature, not the seat.

Opening scene: A half-lit room. A man is lying in bed reading a copy of THE GREATEST SCIENCE FICTION EVER TOLD. Scattered about are other stfzines including the August 1968 IF, a

copy of AMAZING and a couple of others. A woman's voice from the other bed says, "Why don't you turn out that light and come to bed, you sonofabitch?" Obviously his wife.

You Sonofabitch apparently of Slavic extraction from the name, expounds briefly on the wonders of the universe and infinite time tracks and the like. Mrs. Sonofabitch climbs out of bed. She is wearing nothing but a scowl. Full front to the camera. ("By ghod, old Roy-tac," I thought to myself, "we've come a long way since the Flash Gordon serials.")

Mrs. Sonofabitch wanders off camera and shortly there is the sound of a toilet being flushed and she comes back into the scene and gives voice to a familiar line: "I don't see what you see in that junk."

You Sonofabitch tries to make some explanation but his wife cuts him short: "Since you started reading that science fiction stuff you don't do anything anymore. We don't even have sex anymore."

With that You Sonofabitch closes his magazine and leaps out of bed. He grabs Mrs. Sonofabitch by whatever is at hand (and there was a lot to grab no matter which way you looked at it/them) and there follows a big sex scene with much rolling around and panting and heavy breathing on the soundtrack. After which Mrs.

*A Movie Review*

**By ROY TACKETT**

Sonofabitch rolls over to go to sleep and You Sonofabitch opens up his copy of THE GREATEST SCIENCE FICTION EVER TOLD again.

Cut to credits. Something or other Pictures presents SPACE THING written by, produced by, directed by, photographed by and starring a lot of pseudonymous people. Cosmo Politan? Kara Koos? Would you believe April May and Fancher Fagut? I can't say as I really blame them. If I had been involved in SPACE THING I'd want to use a pseudonym, too.

It is now 2069 and You Sonofabitch is in the service of the Emperor of Planetaria. The background information was given rather hastily but I think he had lost his ship in a battle with the Terraneans and, still determined to defeat them, disguises himself as a Terranean and seeks to board their ship. How does he accomplish this? He knocks on the door, of course, which is opened by a luscious lovely wearing only a towel. There isn't any airlock but don't let that bother you.

Aboard the Terranean ship we find Captain Mother, Crew Astrid, Portia, Cadet and Willy. Captain Mother is apparently the female star. Her mammary equipment would have beaten out Princess Kubilee at the New Mexico State Fair. Princess Kubilee was the prize-winning Guernsey cow. Astrid is a blonde type, Portia is the towel-wearer (it slipped, of course) who let our hero in the door. Cadet is a sulky, handsomish male, and Willy—well, Willy just had to be played by Fancher Fagut.

Our hero is determined to destroy these Terraneans but he is a bit unsure of himself so decides to use his power to make himself invisible to spy on them so he can learn more about them. He makes himself invisible. (Isn't that wonderful?) He spies on Portia and Cadet who are making it in the Captain's cabin. It is the only place on the ship where there is any privacy, Portia explains. One needs privacy, of course. But Captain Mother, like Big Brother, is watching it all on television (so is Willy) from the control room. She demotes Cadet to Private for playing with the privates of her private stock. Follows a big lesbian scene between Captain Mother and Portia after which Captain Mother grabs a whip and beats the bejesus out of Portia for messing around with (now Private) Cadet.

We are on the bridge where Our Hero—and Willy—watch all this on the Captain's closed circuit tv. Our Hero wants to find out about

the ship's controls so he can destroy it. There is a viewplate showing deep space (a piece of black paper with some holes punched in it and a light behind it). There are asteroids whizzing by. Whizzzzzz. Our Hero's studies are interrupted by the arrival of Captain Mother who orders him off the bridge. He decides to see how well he knows the Terraneans so he pays a call on Portia who obligingly crawls onto the couch with him. After assorted other irrelevant hanky-panky Our Hero seizes the opportunity to dump the ship's fuel supply and they are forced to land on an asteroid which just happens by.

This gives us the opportunity for some outdoor sex scenes, you see. Captain Mother makes out with Astrid who, it turns out, isn't really a blonde after all. Our Hero is having another go at Portia when Cadet comes on the scene and Our Hero disintegrates him. Willy is watching, of course.

Finally Captain Mother decides it is her turn with Our Hero but he says not out here in the sand (it's a little grainy if sand gets in it, you know) so they all troop back to the ship. Captain Mother goes to her cabin to slip into something comfortable (she is wearing a G-string) and Our Hero seizes the opportunity to run to the bridge. The viewport is still showing the deep space view even though they are landed. Our Hero takes a last look at a picture of his wife—a BEM—and blows the ship up with an atomic bomb he just happened to have in his pocket. The End.

Oy!

It was apparent that no expense was spared in the making of SPACE THING. There were no expenses involved so none were spared. Sets were a couple of thinly disguised rooms. Props were such futuristic items as light switches (for the control panel), overturned plastic wastepaper baskets for chairs, a three dollar Hong Kong transistor radio for a communicator. Costumes were minimal and what there was consisted of a little bit before and a little less than half of that behind. The dialog was minimal and what there was was too much.

SPACE THING. The first adult science fiction movie? Not, old chums, in my book.

# BEER MUTTERINGS

This column was originated by Phil Bronson for the MFS Bulletin in the high and far-off days of our youth.

Years later I started it again in the short-lived but rather fabulous VORPAL GLASS. And now, by a kind though probably misguided invitation, here it is back. It will appear irregularly until public outrage brings about its suppression. The format will be equally irregular: one or a few short pieces at a time, each consisting of whatever I damn well feel like writing. You will have to decide for yourself whether any given sentence holds fact, fiction, serious opinion, or irresponsible jape. If it gives you a little fun, its purpose will be served.

\*\*\*\*\*

A few months ago, I went to a historical movie. Yes, I did; actually and literally. Once I was a tremendous fan of what Sprague de Camp calls chariot operas. But it got to be too much at last, that almost without exception the studios appeared to have spent such huge sums on the (often gorgeous) sets and costumes that nothing was left to hire script-writers and actors. On the whole, if you don't count Ingmar Bergman's rare ventures into the Middle Ages, which are mostly metaphysical anyhow, no one seems able to screen a real epic



## A Column

### By POUL ANDERSON

except the Russians and Japanese. I will be delighted to hear of any others.

I thought one might have come along in "The Red Mantle," aka "Hogbarth and Signe." After all, it was from an Old Nordic saga. It was done by Scandinavians, who would presumably know and respect their own tradition. It had drawn rave reviews.

I should have stayed home and watched "Ironside."

Let me be fair. The photography was beautiful, in a moody fashion. The acting was competent. The story followed the general line of the original, which is a sort of early "Romeo and Juliet." I don't know why the setting was changed from Denmark to Iceland (unequivocally Iceland, complete with lava beds). Perhaps it was easier in the latter country to find areas uncluttered by paved roads and telephone poles, though you can do it here and there in the former. I can think of no reason for changing the period from pagan to early Christian, and indeed this makes the heroine's suicide less plausible. However, none of this is too important.

What does matter, and turns the whole thing into a farce, is the filmmakers' seeming contempt for their audience. We are assumed to have no more background of elementary information or ability to reason than the average member of Students for a Democratic Society.

In the saga, people behaved logically, within the context of an era where blood feud and overweening pride were the accepted norm. Composing a quarrel was as difficult as settling a war is nowadays; inevitably, it involved protracted negotiations with the help of go-betweens, payments in cash or in kind, the swearing of solemn oaths. By the same token,

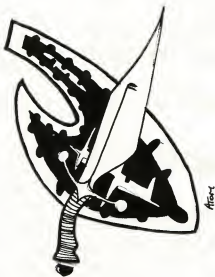
and because a vendetta was so grave a business, you didn't break the peace lightly; and when it was broken, although certain rules of behavior were sometimes recognized, your objective was not to dance through a ritual but to kill your specific enemy before he cooled you.

In the movie, Hagbarth and his brothers are out to avenge their father, who died at the hands of Signe's old man. Instead of going after him, they fight his sons in a ridiculous tournament which drags on for hours while he sits watching. Finally he suggests reconciliation and invites the newcomers to be his guests. Battle stops on the instant. In effect, the feudists answer, "Well, okay." They remain a while at the house of this petty king who did in their father. Hagbarth and Signe fall in love. A mischief-making gaffer ends the truce simply by telling one set of young men that the other set is plotting to fall on them. Nobody investigates his yarn, not even by accusing somebody else. On with the armor, out with the weapons, whambo! You needn't be a historian to recognize this for an idiot plot.

Of course, you might not happen to know that there were no kings in Iceland, just as there were no wolves (Hagbarth kills one: torreador style!) or, for that matter, owls. You may likewise be indifferent to the fact that the characters habitually fight on horseback, which North Europeans of the Dark Ages did not. And you would probably have to belong to the Society for Creative Anachronism to grok in fullness how ludicrous the fighting techniques are, a vague sawing at the air.

But you will notice that when the film opens on its set-piece mortal combat, all players — in an age of handicrafts and individualism — are dressed identically, in a chainmail jacket with a coif. It has not occurred to a single one of them to put on a helmet, let alone equip himself with any number of other common-sense items. To be sure, helmets may be unnecessary if you have no more brains than to come to such an affray without assistants. Like, there the king sits unguarded on the sidelines the entire while, and he's the guy Hagbarth & Co. came after, and everybody concerned is too dim to think that one might dash aside between charges at the defending team and take a whack at him.

Or is it that these jokers are invulnerable? After their prolonged gallop-gallop-



gallop-slash-miss-gallop has ended, we do not see so much as a scratch — not a bruise when they're together, stripped, in the sauna afterward — and damn it, I know from personal experience that a wooden sword can break bones!

This has brought us to the king's home. It is a fairly good reconstruction of a yeoman's steading, but not of a royal hall in any period. It stands altogether isolated, without a sign of neighbors, cultivation, or grazing. In and around it moves hardly an animal, servant, warrior, skald, artisan, tenant, any of the figures that made the real scene as crowded and alive as you may read of in "Beowulf." The erstwhile foes sit dining in an emptiness, an absence of noise and movement, that soon grows downright eerie. Hagbarth's family place, to which he returns later, is and exists in the same void.

Now for some logic. We must abandon the invulnerability hypothesis. When fighting starts anew and Hagbarth's brothers are slain, he himself wipes out several men, some of whom he had encountered earlier, before he must flee. In other words, what he could not do with his kinfolk to help, he can do alone, against worse odds, in minutes. Similarly, in the climactic scene, surprised naked and weaponless in Signe's bedroom, he defends himself to equally good effect with a post. Oh, well, at least there I enjoyed watching Signe.



During the second battle, the armament goes through the bodies of men in chainmail and is withdrawn (unstained; we never see blood) with equal ease. Sherlock Holmes demonstrated that a harpoon would not ordinarily transfix a hog carcass. But let that pass; let us assume these are very mighty men. In that case — if their byrnie is so readily pierced — why do they bother with them? for show? This explanation is made somewhat plausible when one chap, killed in the surf, floats around in his mail.

I could go on. But enough. You have been warned. Yes, Virginia, the Scandinavians can louse up the past every bit as thoroughly as the Italians. Maybe that was what they wanted to prove in "Hagbarth and Signe." You know, racial pride, mustn't be outdone, that sort of thing. I don't care. I'm looking forward to the next reissues of "Alexander Nevsky" and that possibly best film of all time, all categories, "Chushingura."

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Some years ago, in a letter to PITFCS (that's Proceedings of the Institute for Twenty-first Century Studies, it was kind of a fanzine for pros, and the acronym was pronounced exactly as you think) my friend Winston P. Sanders wondered why this or that writer is so often called "courageous." As long as we have the First Amendment, what does anybody risk by writing anything that isn't libelous, except a rejection slip? Even pornographers, who might seem brave since they do chance prosecution, seldom get into trouble; only their publishers do, as another man replied to Sanders with fiendish glee.

Since then it has occurred to me that a person who writes part time — which is the usual case — might conceivably find his regular job at stake, if he gets something into

print that his boss doesn't like. Still, the guts involved here are of a different type from what the critics seem to mean, if literary critics ever mean anything. They are the guts of any free man who speaks his peace. The fact that this particular fellow speaks it on the typewriter rather than with his mouth looks almost incidental.

So does writing have any unique occupational hazard?

Poverty, eyestrain, ulcers, insomnia, nightmares, melancholia, alcoholism, loneliness, paranoia ... no, nothing off a list like that is peculiar to writers, and not all writers suffer from such-like ills. Probably the majority don't. In the main, we're disgustingly cheerful lot.

About the only risk I can think of, then, which we run to a greater degree than average, is enmity. (And even here we are less exposed than politicians.) Somebody will dislike what you, the writer, said — more frequently, what he thinks you said — and promptly decide that you are a revolving son of a bitch.

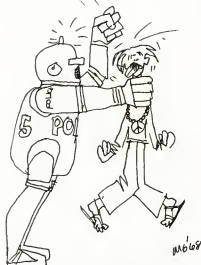
Or, if he is of temperate character, he will assume that you have some bastardly opinions, however pleasant you may be in person. Sometimes, of course, he's right. But often he is only reacting because you happened to jab him in one of his tenderest prejudices.

What brought this on was taking the late Norbert Weiner's The Human Use of Human Beings off the shelf and coming upon mention of Kipling's early science fiction story "With the Night Mail." Now before anyone accuses me of accusing Norbert Weiner of anything, I hasten to say that he was an admirable man and all I want to do is express polite disagreement about something as a takeoff point for something else. "It is rather a fascist picture which Kipling gives us," he writes, "and this is understandable in view of his intellectual presuppositions." (In justice to both, I should also quote the last sentence in the paragraph, following several technical arguments: "Nevertheless, with these natural reservations, Kipling had the poet's insight, and the things he has forseen are rapidly coming to pass.")

Kipling? Fascist? Huh?

Well, for a while during the Starship Troopers hooraw, some people were saying that about Heinlein, too. Actually, Kipling and Heinlein have been among the most eloquent ad-

CHICAGO IN '80



YOU'RE A LONG HAired  
COMMIE FOG LEFTIST  
ANARCHIST LOOTER!

vocates that the cause of liberty has had in this century. The society of Starship Troopers turns out on examination to be more free than our own today. (Whether it would long remain thus is an entirely separate question.) So does the society of "With the Night Mail," though this is made plainest in the sequel "As Easy as ABC," which Dr. Welner had perhaps not read.

As far as that goes, I lay claim to the same advocacy if not to the eloquence, and have also been called a fascist. What do we three, and other writers like us, have in common that provokes this kind of thing?

After pondering it for a beer or two, I came up with a tentative answer. There are certain qualities which a leftist friend of mine calls the fascist virtues. In fact, they are not per se. Their explicit formulation goes back to Sparta and to Plato's Republic, and was entirely accepted by the authors of the United States Constitution. But in our era they have been more loudly exalted by totalitarians than by others. That's a pity; but let's not make them guilty by association.

They are quite real virtues — discipline, courage, devotion to the community above self, and (here is where they part company with the Communist virtues) a readiness to live with tragedy.

Now obviously these are insufficient by themselves for a civilized human being. We need compassion and inquiring minds as well, to name only two things. But to get to the point, those of us who are interested enough in preserving liberty to make a study of the relevant phenomena have, in some cases, reached the conclusion that the Spartan virtues are necessary for the long-term survival of this institution. Not sufficient, I repeat; not sufficient by several light-years; but necessary. Feeling that they are dangerously under-emphasized in modern Western society, we sometimes lay stress on them in our writings. This, I suspect, is what makes our more excitable readers pounce to the conclusion that we are preaching fascism.

No such thing! In a dictatorship, virtue is imposed from above and consists essentially of conformity. The free man has to produce virtue from within himself. But how can he, if he's never learned it in the first place? This is why my theories on the upbringing of children run a little toward strictness (and a lot toward love). To be free as adults, they have to have self-discipline, and that has to be acquired early in life. Furthermore, freedom without a corresponding sense of responsibility is bound to lead to abuses whose correction demands measures curtailing freedom.

End of sermon. Fill my glass, will you, while you're on your feet?





## Fans We All Know...

### And Perhaps Wish We Didn't

#### THE POLEMICIST: Part One

Joe, the Old Guard, fades slowly away...but Tertius Quimby, alas, is likely to be with us for some time.

The lofty and disdainful Tertius generously shares an important characteristic with the plebian Joe — for both, fandom is a way of strife — but he is otherwise quite a different sort. He is light, whereas Joe is heavy. Quick, whereas Joes is slow. Ironical, whereas Joe could never force more than one meaning at a time into a sentence. Joe boasts of himself as "a fighter," and one sometimes hears in his voice a note of admiration for a shrewd and forceful antagonist. But Tertius hates an antagonist — he wants only a butt.

In short, Tertius is a humorist, a satirist, a polemicist. He prides himself on being a master of the cutting remark, the penetrating and deflating epigram, which he always delivers, like the duelling Cyrano de Bergerac in Rostand's play, with a self-congratulatory exclamation of "Thrust home!" Or, more accurately in Quimby's case, with a self-congratulatory chuckle.

This conscious relishing of his own wit is something which runs through all of Quimby's playful work and is the key to much of its success. He sings, for instance, in his own Gilbert and Sullivan parodies and, altho' he hasn't much of a voice, his tongue-rolling and eye-rolling enjoyment of his own comic lines, always carries the day...or the evening. And it will be noted, on re-reading almost any of his essays, that there is very little defineable wit: the comic atmosphere consists largely of that air he exudes of saying something exceedingly droll.

Largely, but not entirely: for, admittedly, Tertius is sometimes rather clever. His



long, stately poem, "Stanley Farber's Farewell to His Greatness," has some witty lines and, before it breaks off (Tertius never finished it, having lost interest) achieves something very like poetic power. In his satirical drawings, which are immensely popular, he has hit upon a manner which is economic and uniquely his own. He turns them out with a wonderful spontaneity under every sort of circumstance, but most frequently, perhaps, at conventions, where they are carefully and gleefully passed from hand to hand — and sometimes carelessly

By

Arthur Jean Cox

left lying about where the gleeless glances of their subjects can fall upon them (as happened most recently with the drawing, "Norman Raymond Renounces the Grapes," with what results we all know).

I myself would think more of Tertius as a cartoonist if he knew where to draw the line. I strongly advised him against circulating his sketch, "Sydney Berkowitz as the Great Samaritan," made when Sydney, who has a reputation of being tight with a penny, declined to contribute anything to help out a fellow CRAPS member whose mimeograph had been repossessed...but Tertius has that weakness common to satirists of being unable to resist a Good Thing. I confess to having felt more than one kind of gratification when it was learned shortly afterwards — through the indignant protests of the recipient of the charity, who had seen the sketch — that Sydney already, quietly and on his own, had done more than all the rest of us put together to help his old friend.

Tertius takes part in every feud in Fandom. He is not at all embarrassed by the facts that he himself has no personal stake in a quarrel, that he often has never met the chief persons involved, and as it usually happens, is not overly acquainted with the particulars. These are incidentals. He can recognize at a glance the nature of the contending parties, and what more does he need to know? He knows which is the side of the Enemy, the 'Party of Stupidity' That's the side which is dull and grave and deficient in writing talent (sounds like a description of Joe, doesn't it?) and which, furthermore, is conservative, bourgeois, philistine, Babbly, 'Establishment-oriented,' and so on. And he knows which is the Side of the Angels — a favorite phrase of his. That's the side on which the other participants, his future allies, are liberal and sophisticated and clever and talented. (Sounds like a description of us, doesn't it?)

Tertius says he "loves controversy," but that's debatable. Controversy is a two-way street, and he likes to see the traffic all moving in one direction — like a pack of hunters and hounds after their fleeing prey. He cares not so much for argument as for invective. He hasn't an enemy but a quarry. He wants only to run with the hounds. He wants the blood-stirring excitement of the chase, up hill and down dale and through the bosky wood, the sound of the baying delighting his ears, the deep-voiced tho' tuneful howls and their echoes (which he calls "repercussions") all mingled together in

one musical confusion, a sweet discord, such as was never halla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn, in Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly — at least, let us hope not. It is the most glorious out-  
ing ever, a pursuit in which some poor wretch is worried to....well, never to death, I suppose, but often enough to distraction and exhaustion.

Quimby's powers as a controversialist must be judged considerable, if you judge them solely by their effectiveness in the Arena (and how else, he once asked me, can you judge them?). He has a remarkable talent for rendering the Enemy almost helpless with rage — a Hard Hitter like Joe could never leave anyone so speechless, without resorting to a physical knock-out blow. I know part of Quimby's secret. He has read Turgenev: "If you want to annoy an opponent thoroughly or even harm him, you reproach him with every defect or vice you are conscious of in yourself." But he has many stratagems, too numerous to be catalogued here. It is enough to say that his favorite modus operandi, now and always, is ridicule. If he can make the opposition look ridiculous, then it doesn't matter, it would seem, what the issues are, or how they should be decided; and to that end any tactic is fair. And so he habitually seizes upon what are not only, too often, inessential errors in the other side's replies, but even upon misspellings and mistakes in grammar, holding them up with a laughing flourish, or sometimes with a less amiable gesture, of contempt. As, for example, not too long ago: "What an ignorant creep we have here! He thinks there's such a word as 'normalcy' this guy! Whereupon Quimby feels that he has pretty well disposed of that fellow's pretensions forever. Which is very unreasonable, for we all,



good guys and bad guys alike, make such slips  
...even Tertius Quimby.

In support of this last proposition I will put into evidence only one incident chosen from among many. Once, when the Reverend S. Peptune was Enemy of the Month, Quimby announced in a tone of hearty scorn that the "Rev. Sammy," as he contemptuously called him (for the clergy, it seems, is not on the Side of the Angels), had made on a certain page of the fanzine IN QUESTION an error in syntax: with which word, used in connection with Peptune's calling, Tertius had a great deal of fun. The good-natured Peptune was unable to forebear pointing out that Mr. Quimby, in his haste, had somehow seized upon a passage which he, Peptune, had quoted at some length ("out of context," added Quimby) from him — in other words, the error was Quimby's own. This brought a slight external check to our friend and ally, as he was at that time, for none of us could help laughing, but, as I particularly observed, not the slightest flush to his pale cheek. "After all," he remarked, in a tone so quietly and patiently reasonable it was like a reproof to the rest of us, "a mistake of that kind doesn't really matter, does it?" And I felt for the first time, contemplating Quimby, a passing inward chill. (It was during the following month that he made the remark about 'normalcy'.)

Quimby's writings are much admired for their light touch and airy freedom. It is marvelous how he manages to combine these qualities with the gravest sense of responsibilities, for he is fearless in exposing abuses. He names names and states particulars, although he's not overly particular about those particulars. I have even detected him in inventing his own, licensed by a droll smile and a mischievous wink. He thought my attitude towards that matter decidedly stodgy. It had been, he informed me, a Bold Stroke; it had shown Imaginative Daring...and besides (his tone modulating downwards from an almost elated whimsicality to weary disdain) what did it matter? The Enemy was contemptible anyway. He must have been provoked by my continued obtuseness, for he forgot himself so far as to compare himself to Swift and to Pope. I didn't challenge the comparison to Swift, partly because I was so staggered and partly because that comparison had been certified by Grey O'Hare, assistant instructor in Eng. Lit. at Iompoc, but I recall objecting, rather uncertainly as I gradually recovered my footing, that Quimby's satiric practices didn't really much resemble those of



the author of The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot, with its fictive names abstracted from all actual incident and situation:

"A lash like mine no honest man shall  
dread,  
"But all such babbling blockheads in his  
stead."

No — the one thing you can be confident of where Quimby is concerned is that the names are of actual, breathing persons.

He can't think why people are so thin-skinned. No one, after all, has ever drawn blood from him — or from a potato. He is curiously immune and this gives him a great advantage as a polemicist, for it is one of those things which makes him safe from reprisal.

You leave the Convention Hotel, wanting a quicker mean than they serve at the Minute Chef and, to your horror, you behold Quimby confronted on the opposite side of the way by Stanny Farber and the ferocious Manful Daisy, the two persons he has been most abusing these past several weeks. You dash across the street to intervene. No doubt he deserves it, but two against one isn't fair and, besides, things mustn't be allowed to go that far. You arrive precipitately, to find that the trio are all smiles and talking together almost gushingly, as if they were not only old but rather warm friends. They break off to stare at this idiot who has charged into their midst — heated, breathless, flustered, a fit object for Quimby satire. And you realize your mistake: Quimby has done it again!

Whenever he meets an enemy-fan, Quimby is not merely courteous and good-humored, he positively disarms the other with the light, the jesting way in which he speaks of the quarrel, his gracious willingness to let bygones be bygones. He is so magnanimous and forgiving that the other quite often forgets that it is Quimby who has been the aggressor. If by some chance the other fan shouldn't respond to this generosity, if he should make some remark expressive of diffidence or hostility, Quimby will raise an eyebrow, lower his eyes and purse his lips: which is meant to signify that the other is behaving in a ridiculously "immature" way. The fellow is showing Bad Form!

If you, honestly puzzled, should ask Quimby why he is exercising his terrible satirical powers against this or that person or party, he will reply that he is doing it "for the General Good of fans everywhere." He would seem to have forgotten Blake's dictum, "The General Good is the plea of the Hypocrite, the Flatterer and the Scoundrel." But Quimby always lays impressive claims in his writings to high moral standards. What makes this so ludicrous to those of us who know him personally is that he habitually displays, when relaxing with his friends and allies over hamburgers and ice cream sodas, an amused "emancipated" superiority to such square values as honesty, truthfulness, earnestness, "and all that sort of rot." It is often difficult to make out the colors of the standards he hoists aloft, they are so faded and he hoists them so very high. But, whatever their colors, they are rather flimsy banners under which to march into battle some 8000 metaphorical miles from his own country — especially, when all he is doing, to take the first instance which comes to mind, is siding with a husband against his wife, as he did when the domestic quarrel of Bill and Coe (Marjorie) Dove escalated into a fannish controversy.

The question naturally arises, why does Tertius concern himself so energetically with matters so distant? The answer which lies most readily to hand is that these things provide the opportunity for a public display of his wit. Consider, in such light as this sheds, his relations with Stanny Farber. We all know Stanny for a harmless fellow; "a mild-mannered minionite," Quimby has called him. Why, then, has he devoted so many reams of paper to him? What is Stanny Farber to he, or he to Stanny Farber? Why pick on him? Stanny's conduct in that case last year involving the visiting English fan, Herbert George Balder-Dashe, surely left some-

thing to be desired, but there were a dozen other persons more deeply dyed in villainy. Blankety (Mel) Blanc, as we all know, was nine-tenths of the thing. He was at the center, whereas Stanny, whose chief fault is that he is so easily persuaded (and of course he did owe Blankety \$2.48) barely flickered about the edges. Yet Tertius devoted all that writing, at once comic and severe, to Stanny, while cursing Blankety Blanc only in a cursory way. But then, Stanny, with his well-known quirks and foibles, is so funny, whereas Blanc is personable and writes and speaks well.

"If Stanny Farber didn't exist," Stanny once remarked, "Tertius Quimby would have to invent him." I have often heard Tertius quote this, with that freedom from personal pique on which he...well...piques himself. "That's not half bad," is his usual chuckling comment (but I have an idea that there's at least one implication in it of which he's not quite aware). He had been rather surprised by the remark, really. You don't expect an epigram from Stanny. The Enemy is always dull, not the source of cleverness but the occasion for it, an occasion to which Quimby always rises. His is the great witty, or anyway laughing, crusade against all forms of dullness and those who embody it.

"Tertius Quimby is a repressed dullard" is another of Stanny's sayings — but "that one," opines Tertius, "fell flat." So it did. But sometimes, in idle moments, I pick it up and turn it over, speculatively; pondering, wondering whether there might not be something in it, after all....

End of Part One





# The Banks Deposit

## Prozine Commentary

describes the cover scene in exact detail, then the story was written after the cover.

When an artist paints from a writer's description, he never shows the scene exactly as the writer tells it. The usual excuse for this from artists is that writers don't understand visual values and composition, so things have to be changed. Maybe so, but then artists don't understand plot development, but writers are conscientious about twisting story lines around to match pictures.

Some artists are more conscientious than others. Hannes Bok complained about a red-headed girl holding a red flower on the red planet Mars in Roger Zelazny's "A Rose for Ecclesiastes", but he painted it. Of course, he combined two scenes and moved them outdoors, but his illustration was a perfect emblem for the story.)

Magazine editors do strange things for obscure reasons. One of the strangest, to my mind, is the time-hallowed practice of buying a cover painting and then commissioning a writer to do a story about it.

Now to a businesslike editor, the only purpose of a cover is to sell a magazine, and the only purpose of a story is to sell the next issue. Which is chicken and which is egg probably doesn't concern him.

No doubt, any editor could explain it to me in Lucite-clear words of one syllable. Certainly it enables the artist to peddle a picture without having to read a story (an onerous task for some, I'm sure), and gives the writer a sureshot sale and one that, if he's a hack, he won't have to work over too hard. If he's not a hack, he may have to work twice as hard as usual and still be unsatisfied, but maybe it's good discipline (or that's the stock excuse for something disagreeable).

Whatever the reason, the practice is of ancient origin and is still with us today, mainly in GALAXY and IF.

I think I've stumbled onto a way to spot a story written after a cover. It may not single out every story so written, but when it does work I think it's an infallible test (i.e., it's a sufficient, but not a necessary, condition).

The test is simple enough: if a writer

James Blish's "Our Binary Brothers" in the Feb. '69 GALAXY was written for Pederson's cover. The picture shows two Little-Orphan-Annie-eyed louts guarding a man wearing a spacesuit without a helmet; in the background is an improbable rocket ship.

At the beginning of his story, Blish describes the scene:

"Huge, brownskinned, and ninety per cent humanoid they were; the only visible differences were the rather ropy hair and blank eyes — actually eyes covered with a nictitating membrane ...

"Dane ... was almost as brown as they were... And come to think of it, his own red hair had gotten pretty ropy by now, too, along with his mustache."

Blish goes on to tell what they were all wearing and eventually accounts for every detail in the picture. He's so thorough that he even brings in the ropy hair, which strikes me as merely Pederson's stylized technique.

A Column By

## Banks Mebane

The story is set in our time; Dane is a wealthy twentieth century Earthman who had his own spaceship built. This is more plausible than you might think, because Dane's Earth is not our Earth: details of recent history are slightly different, the solar system has ten planets, and Caligula followed Claudius as Roman Emperor.

Blish pulled a sly trick with his shift of the story into a parallel universe. It's done so unobtrusively that I almost missed it, thinking he'd only made a few slips that he hadn't caught on revision. I should have known better; Blish makes damned few mistakes, ever, and he's so often putting complex little subtleties into his stories.

"Our Binary Brothers" isn't really one of his best, but it does show how he solved the story-problem of the cover, which was generalized enough to lead into almost any interplanetary plotline.

In a letter in THE WSFA JOURNAL #64, Blish discussed the writing of stories from covers. He said: "One mistake many authors make is to accept the obvious situation (in the picture) as 'given'. This immediately makes his story superfluous."

The obvious situation in Pederson's February cover was that the aliens had captured the human and were leading him away. The situation as Blish almost presented it was that the Ranidae regarded Dane as a god and were giving him a guard of honor; but then, not satisfied with this simple switch, Blish switches it halfway back — the more advanced of the aliens realize that Dane is not divine and, under pretense of honoring him so as to not anger his primitive believers, are leading him away to an interview.

Another example of Blish's switch technique is his story for Vaughn Bode's Nov. '68 IF cover, which shows a robot watching a small boy. Blish gives his solution (in the same letter): "The robot which appears to be menacing the little boy is actually his guardian; furthermore, the little boy is several hundred years old." The story was a variation of the old Adam-and-Eve theme, although again Blish enriched it with some thought-provoking additives.

I think Blish is wrong in feeling that acceptance of the cover scene at face value necessarily makes a story superfluous. He may be right if the writer sticks to a one-inc-

ident short story, an anecdote. But if the scene remains an incident in a more complex story, or if the scene is generalized enough not to suggest any particular plotline, then it can be taken at face value. (If an artist, painting from a story, shows a crucial scene, does that vitiate the story?)

Gordon R. Dickson based his novelet "Building on the Line" (Nov. '68 GALAXY) on Dember's cover. He took the picture as he saw it and used it as the triggering incident for a satisfying plot.

My "infallible test" worked in an odd way on the Dickson story. He described the cover exactly as he saw it, but he saw it wrong — sometimes the writer has to work from a muddy black-and-white print of the picture, so it's easy to see it wrong.

Dember's painting has a spacesuited figure dragging another unconscious one through a shower of small meteorites on Titan (the only satellite of Saturn with an atmosphere). Part of Saturn's disc shows above the horizon with the rings almost edge-on and two other moons appearing as small globes in the plane of the rings. Dickson saw the moons as the terminals of electrodes and the rings as a spark leaping between them, and this is how he wrote it up. (I may be wrong in saying he misinterpreted it: he may have been doing a switch as Blish does, but I doubt it.)

Pederson's cover on the May '68 IF is a scene so generalized that it permits almost any imaginable storyline. It has two spacesuited men standing among wisps of mist with a spaceship in the background and what appears to be a large orange sun. In "Dismal Light", Roger Zelazny described this down to details



of what the men were carrying in each hand, but they had mere walk-on parts in the plot. Although "Dismal Light" passes the "infallible test", it has a strong existence independent of the cover.

Maybe reducing the cover scene to triviality in the story is not facing the problem square on, even if Zelazny did take his story background from the background of the picture. But then some covers (like Pederson's for "Dismal Light") show scenes that are in themselves trivial. (And if the end result is a good story, who can complain?)

Others may be impossible to present as objective reality — the solution Robert Silverberg found for Bode's Aug. '68 GALAXY cover was to make it the hallucination of a deranged computer.

The one thing writers never do (well, hardly ever) is to interpret the picture as an emblem. Artists, when they're working from a story, often do come up with a symbolic painting, but writers seem to be too literal-minded to reverse the process.



I don't have any profound conclusions to offer. The practice will continue, so it's well to be aware of it. It will lead to some good stories and some poor ones. It will continue to give writers headaches and a guaranteed sale (and I don't think any writer so lacking in imagination as to need inspiration from a picture will ever be assigned one to do). It will enable artists to do covers when they have time, rather than getting an assignment and a story to read when they have fifty other commissions hanging fire.

Anyway, it's fun applying the "infallible test" and seeing how each writer solves his problem.

Feb.-Mar. 1969



# BOOK REVIEWS

JOHN BOARDMAN  
RICHARD DELAP  
EARL EVERS  
JOHN FOYSTER  
RICHARD GETS  
BILL GLASS  
BANKS MEBANE  
CREATH THORNE  
ROBERT TOOMEY, JR.

GALACTIC ODYSSEY by Keith Laumer—Berkley, 60¢

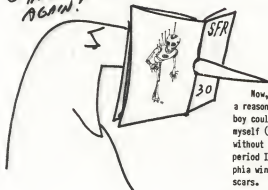
I don't know of any other sf writer besides Keith Laumer with twelve titles (both paperback and hardcover) on the stands at the same time. From this kind of profligacy you would expect him to be a clockwork writer like Carter Brown, turning out nothing but trivial sludge — and you wouldn't be entirely wrong. Buried in the mountain of crap are a few good pieces like King of the City and Worlds of the Imperium, but even in those there's not much new or important. Laumer's method seems to be to take whatever happens to be lying around, polish it to a highly reflective surface, crank it up to a breakneck pace, harden it with wise-cracking metaphors (like Raymond Chandler, but without the depth, without the disillusionment, almost always without the love-hate-compassion that characterized Chandler at his best as in The Long Goodbye), then pat it on the ass and send it out. His work is fun to read and, as with masturbation, there's a certain amount of fleeting satisfaction, but it doesn't really last and there's always a bit of irrational guilt afterward, resulting from having enjoyed such an empty pleasure so much.

Galactic Odyssey is a classic example of a potentially fine writer who's running too fast to keep up with himself. He touches only a few bases when he might have touched them all with a little more effort. The whole thing reads like first draft, ground out in a hell of a hurry to pay off those delinquent bills — you can hear the clockwork machinery ticking away. Odyssey is a thoroughly bad book and, like a thoroughly bad woman, it's pretty enjoyable but nothing anyone would want to take to heart.

The story opens with a poorly conceived scene that carries no conviction whatsoever. Nineteen-year-old Billy Danger (Laumer has never quite gotten the hang of naming his characters and most of them sound like they've come straight out of Tom Swift or The Rover Boys.) is caught unprotected out in a snowstorm and is well on his way to being frozen to death. Apparently Danger has reached a dead end as so many of Laumer's characters do. Remember Chester W. Chester in The Great Time Machine Hoax or Legion in A Trace of Memory?

Now, I find it impossible to believe that a reasonably healthy and competent 19-year-old boy could sink this low. I've been that route myself (when I was seventeen), on the road without a penny in my pocket and during that period I managed to survive both a Philadelphia winter and a Texas sandstorm without any scars. If worse comes to worse you can always

I SEE  
YOU'VE GOT  
YOUR NISE  
O IN A BOOK  
AGAIN!





find yourself a train station or a bus depot and lock yourself up in a stall in the men's room. It's not a Hilton Motel, but if you're tired enough you can learn to sleep sitting up. But Galactic Odyssey is a pastiche of the Horatio Alger series, and you can't really expect it to make too much sense, can you? Which brings up another point that I'll not dwell on: Laumer's "old fashioned" way of telling a story. In some quarters this is considered a virtue.

Anyway, the kid is out there freezing, and as a dramatic device for accomplishing a necessary plot function (to get Billy stowed away aboard a spaceship, which he takes to be a barn he can use as shelter from the cold) this ranks — and I use the word rank in several senses — with the old "Tennis, anyone?" gambit that went out of use about forty years ago as a means of getting unwanted characters in a play off the stage.

Well, Laumer got him aboard the spaceship anyhow, and then he brings in another coincidence (this book is very long on coincidences and they happen with alarming regularity). He gets him a job as gun-bearer on a hunting expedition to other planets conducted by three humanoid aliens whose regular bearer has died. What they were doing on Earth in the first place and why they went to the trouble of learning English is never fully explained. Oh well. Who cares?

By a strange coincidence one of the three aliens is a beautiful young girl, and shortly after Billy's perfect love (perfect love: all desire and no fulfillment) for her becomes obvious, the two men are both killed by a rampaging animal on a minimum survival planet. Remember now, they were both skilled hunters. Doesn't matter. The purpose is accomplished. One of them (the nice one) charges Billy with the Lady Raine's safety and he, Billy, our hero, instantly turns into an expert woodsman, keeping them both alive on this hostile world.

Don't forget that Billy couldn't even tie his own shoelaces back on Earth with plenty of civilization all around to help him. They can't even get back into the spaceship because it automatically locks up when unoccupied. Makes you sort of wonder how he got in in the first place, doesn't it?

Okay. They set up housekeeping — on a strictly platonic basis; gracious lady, faithful servant with stars in his eyes but purity in his testicles, although Billy orders the

Lady Raine around a bit for her own good. Seems she just gave up hope, and can you blame her?

By an odd coincidence Billy finds ANOTHER spaceship buried underground and some of the devices are still functional. After some repair work (Billy suddenly becomes an electronics genius at this point, stout lad) they set up a radio beacon and then sit back to wait for help, though maintaining a respectful distance from each other at all times. Well. The distress signal is finally answered, but by an odd turn of events it is answered by the only intelligent hostile alien lifeform IN THE ENTIRE KNOWN UNIVERSE, a race that everybody thought had died out just centuries ago. They (nasty beasts) kidnap the Lady Raine and give Billy SUCH a beating and blasting that they leave him there for dead.

But, by a strange quirk of fate, he isn't dead at all, just badly damaged. You know, wounded and bleeding and all. But, undaunted as they say, he manages to recover and set up housekeeping again, this time without the broad. Another ship answers the distress beacon which is fortunately still signalling away, this time, thank God, a moderately friendly bunch. They salvage the old locked spaceship and Billy gets a cut of the proceeds — a modest fortune —



and sets out after the Lady Raine, although neither he nor anybody else has the faintest idea of where she might be. I mean, he lether get kidnapped by those nasties, didn't he? So it's his like sworn duty to get right out there and rescue her. Right? Certainly.

Well, it goes on like this with one wild, roaring adventure after another until he finds her in as neatly as anticlimactic a (am I over-using this word?) coincidence as I've ever seen, saves her from a fate worse than death (is there such a thing?) at the hands of HER OWN FAMILY, and they fall into each other's arms simply, I guess, because it tastes so good. And the sun spreads its rosy glow in the west.

In spite of all this (or because of it one conventionally adds) the book is superfast reading if you can take it. Even with all of his faults, Laumer is a natural storyteller, which is a good start. I only wish that Frederik Pohl, who bought this story first and serialized it (in the thrice Hugo-winner IF) had the editorial gumption to make Laumer rationalize the holes in the plot. If the editors don't give a damn, why should the writers? The readers obviously don't, not if they keep giving awards to the magazines that publish such juvenilia.

Doesn't ANYBODY care?

—Robert E. Toomey, Jr.



ISLE OF THE DEAD by Roger Zelazny—Ace 37465, 60¢

Zelazny has proven he excels in tackling science fiction from a vantage point of psychological probing, and with such poetic finesse that his successes appear beautiful from any angle.

The last two years have found him in what I take to be a period of transition to something as yet undefined. His short stories have all been all mood and message without any thought to creating substantial plots as backbone, and his novel *Lord of Light* met with great popularity and success by taking Eastern religion and slapping it around in a self-indulgent "form as story." Needless to say, I've been quite annoyed by Zelazny's recent work.

*Isle of the Dead* may be the first glimmer that the transitional period is finding a direction...and what do you know, it seems headed back to the same place the author was at the beginning.

To be sure, there is still the mythological hang-up — this time seemingly created of bits and pieces from many sources — but there are also people who live, react and, most importantly, *think*, grabbing at the reader's emotions and catching hold out of similarity.

The whole book maps the sub-surface of the mind; the terrain is often incredible, fascinating and less so in turn, sometimes unfathomable. Somehow, despite the varying gravities pulling from uncountable directions, each part maintains a firm grip on its counterparts and everything hangs together. (I use the word "hang" quite consciously...it's not unlike climbing hand over hand on a rope and finding yourself, at the other end, still at the bottom instead of the top.)

It is the 32nd century and Francis Sandow, born in the 20th century, has by advanced science lived many lifetimes in allegorical years as compared to a normal person's days. But he has passed the stage of being merely human; he is also a god (Shimbo of Darktree Tower, Shruger of Thunders) of the alien Pei'ans, supposedly a human (the *only* human) representative of this intricate pantheon. He is rich, famous, so-far immortal, and rather indifferent to the power his religious position offers. It is on the Isle of the Dead in Lake Acheron (Greek: "River of Sorrows") upon the Sandow-created world of Illyria that he finds himself an element in a battle that forces him to use world-shaking powers befitting a god.

Immortality is not so much the theme as is its effect, and the effects of its effect. From the recurring memories of a brother who died in Tokyo Bay through the scrambled intro-versions of the following centuries, the reader is led through Sandow's maze that tantalizes by its very complexity, building a piece-work mosaic leading to the hidden contents of the mind on the Isle of the Dead.

If I've made the book sound downbeat, it isn't at all, despite a lack of humor (Zelazny perhaps thinks calling a shit list a "fecal roster" is amusing, but he fortunately doesn't indulge in this sort of silliness too much... at least, that I caught). I may be mistaken in my assumptions, but the names of many of the characters seem cribbed from many-sourced religions and mythologies — surely it is no accident that Sandow/Shimbo's antagonist, Belion, is so closely named to the Hebrew devil Belial.

This is not the author's best book by any means (and it is about 30 pages too long), but it is so much better than his recent output that despite its few flaws it stands as a solid re-entry into storytelling for Zelazny. And if it sometimes confuses you, the author explains (p.164): "It's funny how, if you live long enough, friends, enemies, lovers, haters move around you as at a big, masked ball, and every now and then there is some mask-switching." Read it, with the fair warning to keep on your toes.

This is another in Ace's series of "specials," with an absolutely stunning cover design by Leo and Diane Dillon.

—Richard Delap

OPERATION TIME SEARCH by Andre Norton—Ace 63410, 60c

You've probably all seen fiction of this sort. A stalwart young American or Briton (depending on the author's nationality) travels to a Balkan kingdom where the rightful king is struggling to gain his heritage. The hero is taken on by the good guys, is menaced or tempted by the bad guys, and winds up leading the forces of truth and light to victory.

Well, here's the whole story, but with time travel added. The occultists' sunken continents of Mu and Atlantis are the scenes of the action, which is presumed to take place at some distant time in the past. (Of course, there is not and could not be a continent in the middle



of the Pacific, but Miss Norton is not for a minute going to let this stop her.) The good guys are an insufferably benevolent aristocracy at the top of a caste structure. The bad guys are the Muvian colonists on Atlantis.

The hero, a contemporary Earthman named Ray Osborne, is sent into the distant past by a "ray", and is precipitated into the middle of the struggle between the psi-talented "Sun-born" Muvian aristocrats and the rebellious folk of Atlantis where "the people chose their own ruler" and as a consequence "turned from the path of life to assail the wall between the Shadow and our Earth." Apparently the deplorably democratic Atlanteans kicked out a kinsman of the Muvian ruler and turned to the Shadow-god Baal. Needless to say, Osborne leads a foray into the Atlantean capital, overthrows their heterodox ruler, and restores a member of "the House of the Sun." Or, as L. Sprague de Camp wrote in Lost Continents, "If these occult-Atlantist novels have any moral, it would seem to be that religious liberty is evil and that the ideal state is a priestly dictatorship."

—John Boardman



THE STAR FOX by Poul Anderson—Signet P2920, 60¢

First, a warning: The Star Fox, except in a few isolated passages, is not science fiction. It is space opera; and it is space opera by one of the masters of the genre. Anyone who likes big, burly heroes full of fire and action who are constantly in and out of danger will love this book. But I think the rest of us, we who ask of a book more than the basic fights, deceptions and triumphs, will find the book, for all its skill in technique, rather empty.

To specifics: The Star Fox was originally published as three novelettes in F&SF. The magazine claimed each novelette could be read without first having to read the others. The claim is true; but now it hurts the book. In particular, "Arsenal Port," the middle third of the book, could be completely eliminated without harming the book at all.

In a recent issue of NEIKAS, Anderson wrote a short piece where he said that there is nothing glamorous about the author's work; that he is a craftsman just like many other people; and that writing does not carry too much excitement with it. Now I think there are many authors around who would disagree with Poul; but the reason I mention his statement here is that I believe it has some bearing on this book. As I read this book, too often a sense of duty and obligation to finish it was stronger than any sense of excitement in what was going on. Anderson is an experienced writer and he handles what he does well; but too often he seems to be forcing himself into those tried-and-true situations that he's written before and will write again. In "Arsenal Port" there is a forced march across an alien planet, and along the way the characters run into a number of obstacles. In my mind I can see Anderson thinking to himself, "Well, I've used the moving forest trick; how about a destructive robot on the loose? That's always good for a few pages."

I'm not saying that Anderson did say this to himself; nor am I saying that his piece in NEIKAS led me to believe that this is what he thought. I'm a firm believer in examining the story in itself and for itself. Reading "Arsenal Port" led directly to this statement. The writing in The Star Fox itself seems forced and ground out of some wordmill.

I have two other complaints about the book. The first is the insertion of simple-minded militarism, including a disregard for human life, a glorification of war, and so on. This

type of material grates on my nerves; but I will say no more about it here, except to warn people who think as I do that the militarist attitudes are there all the way through the book, and they do eventually get in the way of enjoying the story.

My second complaint is that Anderson has used too much French in the book. Since I can read French I had no trouble, but The Star Fox will constantly frustrate those who cannot... right up to page 171 where there is a full half-page of it.

There are good points to the book. There are several passages of scientific extrapolation that come very close to what the ideal "hard" science fiction should be. The scene between Gunnar Heim and Danielle as Gunnar struggles to communicate with her in his terrible French is beautifully done. And the bittersweet ending is particularly good. The book is certainly worth reading. Anderson can do better, however (and has, in Brain Wave and The High Crusade); let's hope that his apparent boredom with the field as shown in this book is only a passing phase.

—Creath Thorne



STARWOLF #3: WORLD OF THE STARWOLVES by Edmond Hamilton—Ace G-766, 50¢

Edmond Hamilton holds most of the basic patents for space opera, and he still manufactures actionpacked epics like this series. If you've read the first two books, you know that Morgan Chane is a human orphan raised by the alien Starwolves of Varna, the orneriest critters in the known universe. After getting into a bloodfeud, he had to flee because he was classless, without aid and inevitably doomed. He rejoined humanity as a Mercenary, one of a pack of trouble-shooters-for-hire, and he's been racketting around the galaxy ever since.

In this book, it seems the Starwolves have stolen the Singing Suns (forty wondrous jewels)

from the throne-world of Achernar and have fenced them on Mruun, the paunshop planet. Chane and his buddies decide to recover them and win the reward offered by Achernar. After numerous adventures, they locate all forty of the Suns on the impregnable treasureplanet of the Qajars. Since only Starwolves can successfully assault this world, Chane ventures back to Varna at great risk to make them his paties.

Don't expect subtle characterizations or deep, purposeful symbolism in this yarn. It's action all the way, with a cliff-hanger on every other page and a crowded cast of stalwart heroes and devious villains against PLANET STORIES-type backgrounds. The books packed with thud&blunder, but there's no overt sex to speak of. Hamilton's daring spacemen may booze it up on shore leave, but if they do any wenching, he keeps it carefully concealed. In fact, it's hard to tell if any of this crew of gay blades has gonads, in the literal rather than the figurative sense. Chane did hold hands with a girl once, in an earlier book, and gets a dose of the green-apple sillies every now and then when he remembers it, so maybe he's approaching puberty, but the principal level of these stories is that of a pre-adolescent boy's gang. Except for one mother substitute, the only female in this book is a Starwolf gal who is just the sort of tomboy a gang might grudgingly admit to social intercourse.

Now you know what this book is: a thumping good juvenile of the old-fashioned, or pre-sex-education, school.

—Banks Mebane



HASAN by Piers Anthony (manuscript, approx. 87,000 words)

Like the *Arabian Nights* story from which this book is taken, *Hasan* is a veritable kaleidoscope of adventure, intrigue, humor and sex, ranging from a straightforward adaptation of scenery-stomping adventures to a risqué, very amusing burlesque-spoof that keeps the story from being merely a casual steal from the classic mold. Bouncy, funny, completely irreverent, it's a broad fantasy that really has something for everyone.

The story wastes no time getting underway. A few pages establish that Hasan is a poor merchant in the city of Bassorah, struggling to support himself and his mother. His naive res-



ponse to the seeming kindness of the smooth-talking Bahram of Guebre ("foremost magician of Persia") ends him in a sea of hot water that sweeps him from one outrageous escapade to another. Kidnapped by Bahram, Hasan goes on to: be carried to a mountaintop by a giant roc; meet the seven lovely princess-sisters of Serendip, secluded in an enormous palace in the wilderness; kill the evil Bahram (unintentionally, of course, as our hero is not malicious); fall in love with, capture and marry the royal bird-woman, Sana, who bears him two sons; become a settled (briefly) man of wealth in Baghdad; travel to the Isles of Wak to find his missing family, along the way making acquaintance with various geni and a grizzled, amazon warrior-woman, Shawahi; and, finally, becoming the catalyst to a battle that destroys an entire civilization. Some feat for one poor little Arab, huh?

Each episode is crammed to overflowing with tidbits of simple philosophy, simple romance and simple action, all combined into an arabesque total remarkably true to the feel of the original but easily appreciated as simply a 'fun' thing by those with less-than-scholarly knowledge of the Arabian fables. The author has wisely modernized the descriptive prose and kept the *Nights* flavor intact in the actions and dialogue of the characters. The only weakness the book might possess is inherent from the source, the fact that a story sometimes becomes tangled in its own interconnective passages; but Anthony injects enough detail (sometimes just a bit more than enough) of various landscapes and peoples to keep the reader too busy to notice that the story *per se* is making no progress for the time being. Such passages are fortunately short and are often brightened with pert dialogue.

The characters are appropriately and deliciously outdated — how many books have you read lately with women (and men!) fainting with equal verve at minor as well as major catastrophes? There are too many people here to pick out the best; but I especially enjoyed Rose (youngest of the seven princesses) if for nothing but the fact that she is so *spirited*, Shaw-

ah! for being such a softhearted old crone, and the evil Queen of Wak for being so determinedly, believably sadistic. Humor interplays with the action in lovely regularity, from plot devices such as Hasan's having to follow interminable lists of instructions to find his wife, to the absolutely hilarious dialogue of Uncle Ab and the droll wisecracks of Dahmash. (Anthony includes an 'author's Note' — plus a thoughtful bibliography and map — which explains Dahmash's prominence: "Dahmash the ifrit is a personified background-justification device who speaks only 13 words in the original — yet how else was the modern reader to be entertainingly advised of the extraordinary mythological background supporting the *Nights*?" ) I can't think of any information more entertainingly conveyed; it is a fine job, Mr. Anthony.

If it seems suspicious that I should praise a book after the privilege of reading the as-yet-unpublished manuscript, I can only tell you to hang on until a publisher gets the chance to put it on the market. You're in for a treat!

—Richard Delap



CITY OF THE CHASCH by Jack Vance — Ace G-688, 50¢

SERVANTS OF THE WANKH by Jack Vance — Ace 66900 50¢

This reviewer confesses a liking for the old-fashioned adventure tale, particularly for the sort of adventure that puts the hero at point A and obligates him to get to point B. (Unless, of course, the detours and complications become interminable, as in Moorcock's "Runestaff" series.) And Jack Vance, while not

aspiring to be part of any "old" or "new" Wave, is supremely the craftsman of this type of adventure story in science fiction. The hero, Adam Reith, is shot down on planet Ischai and his exploring vessel is destroyed by a torpedo.

Many features from earlier Vance stories are evident in this "Planet of Adventure" series, of which these books are the first two. Like *Big Planet*, Ischai is full of widely varying cultures through which the hero must find his way. The highly ritualized culture of Cath and the musical language of the Wankh remind the reader of "The Moon Moth." Blacks and Purples avoid each other in Ao Hidis as Grays and Greens did in *The Dying Earth's* Ampridatvir. Non-humans manipulate the heredity and mental outlook of their human slaves as they did in *The Dragon Masters*.

(Other adventure sf is also drawn upon; the fierce, nomadic Green Chasch are nothing but slightly smaller Tharks.)

Yet the "Planet of Adventure" series does not have a patchwork quality. It is a Vance epic of its own, some of whose devices happen to have been used previously by him. Ischai is a marvelously complex world inhabited by its native race, the Pnume, and three sets of stellar imperialists, the cruel Chasch, the aloof Dir, and the Wankh, deluded by the human slaves who are the only creatures through whom they can communicate. All four of these races have imported human slaves from the Earth at some distant time in the past, molding them to their own image and purposes.

There are also free human races on Ischai — the Emblems, who take their names and characters from their totems; the Yao of Cath, a pseudo-Chinese folk with a tortuously complex culture; the technically proficient Lokhars; and the Priestesses of the Female Mystery, a Valerie Solanis fantasy run wild. Reith's adventures with these peoples as he tries to find out who destroyed his ship and how he can return to Earth are compelling, and the rich diversity of Ischai's cultures stimulate further speculations.

—John Boardman

#### AN ALTERNATE OPINION

Vance is here writing the "exotic adventure" (to quote the back cover), the space-opera without the space that he is so famous for. Vance is an excellent writer, but this book is all form without content. Once you've memorized all the weird names he's thought up there's

nothing more to do. For me, reading this book was like watching *Bonanza* on television with Hoss's name changed to Xmieth. Still, I realize many people do like this type of writing.

—Creath Thorne

AN ABC OF SCIENCE FICTION edited by Tom Boardman, Jr.—Avon V2249, 75¢

26 short and short-short stories, by a selection of authors representing each letter of the alphabet, make up this somewhat erratic collection. Had this book had room for inclusion of more substantial works from the authors represented, it could easily have been an outstanding anthology; as it is, several of the authors do not fare well, their stories being little more than regrettable page-fillers of the kind that sf magazines use to plump out issues to the required number of pages.

There are two stories that make classic use of the short form, and wading through the mediocre stuff makes them even more precious when found. "The year was 2081, and everybody was finally equal." — so begins Kurt Vonnegut's classic "Harrison Bergeron," a funny but nonetheless terrifying anti-Utopian study which makes true equality about as appealing as a victim's view of a firing squad. It is, without question, the best story in the book; but running a close second is Fritz Leiber's "X Marks the Pedwalk," a bitter and savage satire of to-the-death street battles between man and automobile (and a brief look at recent traffic statistics makes this one just too real for comfort).

Three more stories rate as much better than average: Carol Emshwiller's "Day at the Beach" pits three people against the post-blast-world values of aggression in a most horrific manner; Damon Knight's "Maid to Measure" is an appallingly ingenious slice of wryness...you want to hate it, but it's just too good; and Robert F. Young's "Thirty Days Had September" tells of a quite sad world in which beauty and art are worthless commodities.

Following these are an even dozen of reasonably readable tales, none of which are bad, all of which are arggably worthy of being anthologized.

The final nine stories (all but one by "top-name" sf writers) are considerably below the standards of the writers involved.

The 'ABC' idea is a tenable premise, and it would be interesting to see how it would come out if space were increased to, say, 500 pages. If you don't mind a half-and-half collection, go ahead and get this, especially if you haven't read the Vonnegut or Leiber stories.

—Richard Delap



THE RING OF RITORNEL by Charles L. Harness

The habit of clothing ordinary characters with Significant Names is spreading far too rapidly amongst science fictions writers. Cicerero found it a comfort some 2000 years ago, but the notion has been generally frowned upon since. Nevertheless a rash of science fiction writers have leapt in, with weak puns abounding. Harness was a particularly bad offender with his previous novel (*The Rose*), but manages to restrain himself a little in this one. However it is still very much a case of vast ideas with a half-vast treatment.

Let's get the sloppy pun out of the way first — the eternal return is a far more serious theme than Harness suggests in this novel. But if we put aside all serious thoughts, dismiss from our minds the idea that Harness imagines himself to be writing something of immense significance — why, then *The Ring of Ritornel* turns out to be a very enjoyable adventure nov-

el, almost as good as The Paradox Men (which Stephen Cook did not finish praising) and far, far better than The Rose. The difference between The Paradox Men and The Ring of Ritornal, as Lee Harding has suggested to me, is possibly that Harness is now much older, and this sort of novel needs the expenditure of a great deal of energy. Harness is perhaps too tired to do as dazzling a job as he did with the first novel, but he has learned a lot since The Rose. This latest book is the nearest one can get to The Paradox Men, so let's be satisfied.

—John Foyster



THE DAY OF THE DINOSAUR by L. Sprague and Catherine de Camp — Doubleday, \$6.95

THE AGE OF THE DINOSAURS by Björn Kurten—World University Library, \$2.45

These books are not only excellent popularizations on the dinosaurs and their contemporaries, but also useful for the science fiction writer or fan who is following a story through the jungles of the Mesozoic. The de Camps' book begins with an evocative account of a typical day in the early Cretaceous, describing not only the dinosaurs who appear on the scene

but also the smaller animals and the flora. Throughout, there are comparisons with modern life, so that the reader can get an idea of how a live dinosaur might look and behave. There is even a discussion of how one would hunt a dinosaur with modern game weapons, enlarging on the subject matter of de Camp's story, "A Gun for Dinosaur."

(More appropriate might be the handicapping of a bout between a tyrannosaurus and a mounted knight, armed cap-a-pie. Your reviewer would put his money on the carnosaur.)

Both books begin, not with the dinosaurs, but with their antecedents in the Paleozoic. The rise and radiation of the reptiles are discussed in detail, with many pictures and "family trees" and maps. Kurten discusses continental drift, a long-scorned geological theory which has just come into its own, as a factor in the world-wide distribution of these gigantic reptiles. He discusses this factor at greater length in an article in the March 1969 SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN.

The de Camps' book is written in the combination of entertainment and erudition which we have come to associate with the senior author's writings, both fiction and non-fiction. The book takes up such topics as the mechanism of evolution, the predator-victim relationship, balanced ecologies, and that most timely of topics in biology, the territorial instinct. It thus is a good elementary introduction to biology, and could be read profitably by the first year college biology student as a supplement to his textbook.

Both Kurten and the de Camps put the dinosaurs into the context of their times, showing them as existing in a world of trees (deciduous trees developed in the latter third of the Age of Dinosaurs), swamps, crocodilians, great sea lizards, flying reptiles, and tiny mammals. For the writer's purpose, Kurten gives a better account of the surroundings in which a time-traveling dinosaur hunter might find himself.

The extinction of the dinosaurs is still a knotty problem, and at present both books do better at refuting the wrong solutions than at finding the right ones. The de Camps end the story before Kurten, who carries the reader forward into the vastly changed fauna of the Eocene.

The de Camps devote four chapters to the impact of the dinosaurs on man. In the early days of fossil-hunting, a century ago, a number



of colorful and contentious personalities dominated the fossil grounds and museums. The rivalry between Othniel Marsh and Edward Cope is as vivid as the rivalries of the railroad czars who were their contemporaries; at one time crews of their diggers came to blows over a particularly good specimen. The image of the scientist as an austere, dedicated, unworldly man never existed among scientists; hopefully the laity will also now be disabused.

—John Boardman



MOONDUST by Thomas Burnett Swann—Ace G-758, 50¢

I can't think of a single good thing to say about this book. The elements in its makeup range from mediocre to plain awful, and Swann doesn't have enough plotting or story-telling ability to write a readable novel with third-rate material.

I finished the book, but only because it's short and written in a style that seems to be designed for speed-readers. But now that I've finished it, almost nothing of the background, plot or characters sticks in my mind — there's simply nothing there worth remembering.

For what it's worth, the book is set in Jericho at the time of Joshua, and has Rahab as its chief character. However, the historical background is non-existent — Swann must have been too lazy to do research and too timid to fake up a lot of details, so neither the Jerichites nor the Israelites really come to life.

The worst thing about this book is that it was sold at all. Each page, and each paragraph is just barely readable and reveals just enough idea content to hold a reader if he's reading fast enough and is the sort of compulsive who devours fantasy like a bum stoking up on Salvation Army beans.

I read a book like this and I start to get pissed off, but I'm not sure who to get mad at. I mean if Swann can sell a book like this, I can't really put him down for writing it—he's better off making bread this way than collecting relief, or mugging old women on the street, for instance. And if the book makes money for the publisher, then I can't blame the editor for accepting it. (I don't know how it sold. Poorly, I hope.) So I guess the blame falls on the reader.

—Earl Evers



THE GREAT RADIO HEROES by Jim Harmon—Ace A-27 75¢

Regretfully I suppose that many of the younger, under-20 readers may pick up this book in hopes of finding something to fit the current definition of "camp" — mooning and swooning for a long-dead naive. Lots of luck, I tell them. We all have our eccentric excesses in some respect, but not all of us have the time and talent (or nerve) to present them to the public as is done in this remarkably nostalgic book. The author's feelings for a now-dead era are presented with a welcome, restrained sentiment that easily avoids the mushiness usually associated with this genre by presenting facts about the once-loved heroes and heroines of radio serials in tight, smoothly-running prose. The ever-present humor is loaded with full-bodied, gutsy belly laughs that do not depend upon trite, sniggering allusions to get a reaction — such as homosexual "in" jokes about the Lone Ranger and Tonto — which is not to say that Mr. Harmon is ignorant of such. He makes occasional passing reference to the questionable sex lives of various radio characters without milking such remarks for a strained or embarrassed laugh, and readers should be thankful for his good taste.





sf

Anyone born as late as the mid- or late-40s is sure to find at least a few references to programs listened to with unfailing devotion. If others feel as I sometimes did, that Mr. Harmon has slighted childhood favorites in favor of less familiar characters, I think we should all realize that Harmon is probably a bit older than many of us, for his references date well back into the 30s. (While I remember Sergeant Preston of the Yukon and Sky King with great fondness, Harmon makes clear his better retrospect by showing how each was merely an extension of a proven format.)

The Lone Ranger, Ma Perkins, Tom Mix, The Green Hornet, Captain Midnight, Stella Dallas, Jack Armstrong, The Shadow, Sherlock Holmes, Inner Sanctum, I Love A Mystery, Gangbusters, Little Orphan Annie, Superman, Helen Trent — if any of these names and titles strike a bell that tolls faintly from the distant past, then you're one of those who will find much to enjoy in The Great Radio Heroes.

Harmon's wanderings strike a resoundingly familiar chord every bit as clearly as Bradbury's fictional ramblings...that essence of childhood is really there. If younger readers can find the correct attitude of approachment, even they may get a glimmering of that "special" feeling that brings an engaging twinkle to the eye of older relatives.

—Richard Delap

THE SUNDIAL by Shirley Jackson—Ace H-96, 60¢

It is not easy to write a book in which the climax, the only climax, moreover, appears precisely at the end, if indeed Shirley Jackson's The Sundial may be said to have a climax. I am not at all sure that the book has not stumbled over this very point.

As some of the most trivial blurbs from some of the most dreary critical journals (PEN-SACOLA NEWS JOURNAL, BRATTLEBORO DAILY REFORMER, MONTGOMERY ADVERTISER ad nauseum) inform us, this is a novel of twelve people in a lonely house awaiting the end of the world. Or it is if you like it to be: I think not. The Haunting (of Hill House) was not about a haunted house, nor was The Turn of the Screw: I do not compare Jackson and James, of course, merely remark upon a similarity.

Shirley Jackson was a writer much loved by the first editors of F&SF, though her short stories and novels seem to have been admired all over science fiction fandom. I may have

read some of her short stories, but if this is so then I have forgotten them completely. So ill-read a person is clearly suitable for reviewing a book in which, I imagine, Shirley Jackson continues and extends a style with



which she has previously worked.

The key figure is Orianna Halloran, a rather cruel middle-aged lady, one of whose toadies Shirley Jackson whimsically calls Essex. The book is about her and probably her grand-daughter, though the grand-daughter scarcely appears. One can tell that Orianna is important because of all the actors in the drama only she seems to become real: many others are ephemeral simply because they take no great place in the book. The whole book is written very flatly, which is, I suppose, an element which appealed to Boucher and McComas.

Whether this lack of undulation is good or not is something that worries me. Certainly it is appropriate to the verbal style, but the plot, I think, needed greater variation. There is the possibility that the author has but one tune, and the feelings we have of her grace and skill with what is, let us admit it, a rather pleasant instrument, are somewhat tempered with the thought that this is merely something she has learned by heart.

—John Foyster

THE SANTAROGA BARRIER by Frank Herbert—Berkley S1615, 75¢

There are some basic points that I want to make about this book. First, the actual writing, as far as technique goes, is pretty bad. This is particularly obtrusive in the first few chapters of the book. If you are a reader sensitive to such things, about all I can suggest

is to read the book rapidly and try to concentrate on the plot and incidents.

Second, if you do concentrate on the incidents, you will undoubtedly note a large number of things never fully explained that build up through the book and tend to worry both the reader and Herbert's protagonist, Gilbert Dasein. That they are so openly brought out makes the reader think they will all be explained in the last chapter, as in any good mystery. They aren't.

The reason doesn't become fully apparent until the end of the book. It's not until then that the reader realizes the trick Herbert has pulled on him. Herbert, you see, is writing about a drug—a mind-expanding-changing drug that has taken over an entire community. Dasein is sent in to find out about it, since the community has withdrawn from the outside world and suppressed knowledge of the existence of the drug. One would expect this, then, to be a standard detective story. The reason it isn't is that Dasein himself becomes affected by the drug through the story so that he gives up his original purpose in coming to the Santaroga community and, one assumes, much of the logic, thought patterns, what-have-you of the outside world. It's a disturbing process for Dasein and a disturbing experience for the reader. Some readers dislike the book because it doesn't answer questions the outside world would pose (see Russ's review in *F&SF*). Other readers, mostly pot and acid heads, find the book to be akin to their own allogical thought processes under drugs, and have liked it for that reason.

Personally, I'm not sure Herbert brings off the effect. Writing about drugs of this type is difficult, and the chance for complete failure is wide open. Still, with its faults, this is an interesting and important book by a Hugo-winning author. The science fiction fan who is interested in new sf directions should read it.

—Creath Thorne

ASSIGNMENT IN NOWHERE by Keith Laumer—Berkley X1596, 60¢

The latest and worst in Laumer's "Worlds of the Imperium" series. Each book of the alleged "series" has been set in a radically different background from the last, and has gone from an alternate universe society, traveled from one Earth-analog to another, to one in which the characters seem to be able to manipulate the

fabric of reality at will within one world.

This particular book is more fantasy than sf — the "true heir" of the Plantagenets and his Magic Sword, etcetera. The fabric of the universe kept changing under me till I got seasick, and I never did manage to suspend disbelief long enough to really enjoy the story.

I really don't recommend this book to anyone — if you like straight action/adventure sf this is too complicated and confusing, and if you like serious, imaginative sf, it's rather thin and implausible.

—Earl Evers

STRANGE BEASTS AND UNNATURAL MONSTERS Edited by Philip Van Doren Stern—Fawcett Crest R1166, 60¢

This book can very quickly be dismissed. It is nothing more than a third-rate collection of old, old horror stories. Most of the stories are poor in quality; the few good ones have been anthologized dozens of times.

Stern contributes an exceptionally asinine introduction. A sample quote from it: "But you must go forward, for you opened the gate when you raised the cover of this book. Its pages lead to strange precincts, to territory that will be dangerous to explore. Watch your footing; take care!"

Very quickly, let's look at the stories: May Sinclair, H.G. Wells, A. Conan Doyle, and Bram Stoker are present with stories that show their age. Stoker's story, "The Judge's House" should be read simply to see how obvious a story can be when the author really tries to telegraph the ending.

Two science fiction writers are present: Will F. Jenkins with "Doomsday Deferred" and Ray Bradbury with "Skeleton." Both stories are good, but as I said, they've been reprinted many times before.

The rest of the stories are distinctly minor or with one major exception: "The Birds" by Daphne du Maurier. "The Birds" is the only real chiller in the book; but is there anyone who hasn't read it? If you have not, you should; but don't pay 60¢ for this mediocre collection, which can be safely ignored.

—Creath Thorne

THE FALL OF THE DREAM MACHINE by Dean R. Koontz  
STAR VENTURERS by Kenneth Bulmer  
Ace Double 22600, 60¢

Dream Machine is a very strange novel. It is what a labeler would call "new wave" in its themes and in its writing, yet it is presented in a simple three part structure that is as old as the hills. Establishment man joins Revolutionaries; he is trained by the Revolutionaries, and he goes out with the Revolutionaries and overthrows the Establishment.

Within that Same Old Plot, several fascinating things are going on. Koontz says he is overextrapolating McLuhanism into a very nasty future. The medium of the day is sensory machines through which the seven hundred million subscribers identify (with 90% empathy) with the two men and the two women Performers in the Show. Seven hundred million people have given up their identities in the Show. And one man,

Anaxemander Cockley, runs the Show. His is the Power.

The problem with this kind of extrapolation is that Society, which even now is evolving into a Village, has by then evolved into a Zombie. People become so immersed in the Show, their—"souls"—leave their bodies and go to limbo. The Performers, with seven hundred entities drawing on them, occasionally fade out through a limbo of thousands of faceless voices. Seven hundred million consciousnesses, flawed though they may be, are combining themselves into a unity consciousness. And what is it, Koontz and his Society persona ask, do we call that unity consciousness made up of all consciousnesses dead, born, and unborn? Is it God?

Like all "new wave" novels, this one comes up with some pretty strong images with mythopoetic power. Take Anaxemander Cockley, Director of the Show. He is an almost immortal old



VIOLENCE AND YML

man in a youthful body. Beneath his thumbnails are inch-long knife blades. Before he calls in an inefficient underling, he reads the man's health status report: "Pancreas in excellent condition / kidney, good condition / bladder, fair to good condition / testicles, good to excellent." After chiding the underling, Cockley leaps over his desk, stalks the man around his office, and tears his throat out. That night, Cockley has the man's testicles transplanted to replace his old pair.

Now that's the kind of power that goes beyond life and death.

And it's even more disturbing to realize that it is entirely possible that someday man may actually hold such power, if not over us, over our children.

Violence plays an important role in fall of the Dream Machine. In novels of this kind, killing is expected: a hero relates, "I killed a nasty," and that's the end of it...all nice and clean and off stage and his mother would be proud. Not so, in Koontz's novel.

The book opens with its only sex scene — an impressionistic sort of thing. Now, we all know that sex is "dirty", "filthy", and "unclean". You can't have much of that in Ace Books! Violence is fine, though, right?

Okay, Mike Jargove goes straight from the sex scene out to the Show's parking lot, where he is picked up by the Revolutionaries. The Show Security tries to stop them:

Frederic (Jargova's escort) fired again, hit again. But the gunman in the helicopter returned the fire, catching Frederic squarely in the temple and ripping his skull apart like a musk-melon. ... The headless corpse lay across the seat, blood gushing from torn veins. ... Death had only been rumor. Here it was reality; and from the driver's lack of shock, it seemed to be a common reality.

A fountain of flames sprung up in front of them. Purple and cinnabar. Pretty, Jargova thought and was immediately shocked he could think of anything beautiful so soon after the corpse without a head had spewed blood over him.

...On his face...

And, of course, there has to come the time, the first time Jargova himself has to kill:

The pellet sank through the great-coat, through the man's shirt, into his chest. ... A realization of death swept across the guard's face. He didn't have time to be startled, just a-fraid. ... Then the blood came spinning out of his chest. Blood and flesh. The gore spattered the sidewalk. The blood twirled lazily, like little marbles of clotted jelly, showering upon them, spattering their faces.

Even the innocent, the bystanders who get caught between the revolution and the establishment are not immune to the violence around them:

The driver fired again, tore the tenant's leg off with a misplaced shot that had been meant for the groin. The limb, from the knee down, came tumbling down the steps, bone jutting out at the top. It was surrealistic and realistic at the same time. The tenant toppled against the wall. His face was a face of ash, white and grey and ready to crumble. His mouth hung open in disbelief. His fingers punched, punched, punched the trigger of his weapon like an automatic plunger. One of the wild beams smashed into the driver's throat, ripped it open, sending a bloodfall of liquid down over his chest. Mike choked, fired his gas pistol and put the tenant out of his misery.

Like, killing is a filthy thing. That other guy was going to do the same to you, and maybe he wouldn't have minded so much, and maybe he has no conscience, maybe he'd reduced you to a stereotypical thing to kill, and his sins weren't as high and weren't going to benefit as many people as yours. But killing is a dirty thing, especially among non-consenting adults, and it leaves you a little bit dirty yourself to have killed.

Maybe Koontz (and Vaughn Bode, who pictorially does the same sort of thing, and was once going to collaborate with Koontz on a series of books — see the lettercolumn of SHAGGY 75) isn't really trying to make people as sick of violence and as instinctively sure of violence's filthiness as they once felt about sex. (Or maybe sex will slowly become sublimated violence as violence, in America, became sublimated sex.) Maybe not, but it's sure as hell a fascinating notion.

—Bill Glass

PAVANE by Keith Roberts—Doubleday, \$4.95

"It's like a...dance somehow, a minuet or a pavane. Something stately and pointless, with all its steps set out. With a beginning, and an end..." (p. 249)

So speaks a character describing her feeling toward life.

The title of this brilliant novel is aptly meaningful; yet in the quoted definition it would be suitable to substitute the word "slow" for "pointless," slow being a truer description of both dance and novel (though by slow I most assuredly do not mean boring...merely an unhurried pace, purposely and stylishly regulated and studied).

The book is divided into six "measures," each a self-contained story that links with its companion-pieces to give one of the most ingeniously convincing pictures of a fantasy-world I've ever seen in print; I simply cannot imagine anyone finishing this book without lingering over the last few pages, unwilling to let it end. Every word, every sentence imparts the feel of a carefully researched, heartfelt historical novel; and considering that the setting is a strange, non-existent Earth, the author's success in creating this mood of a steam-powered, feudal England where the papal Iron Glove of Rome reigns supreme is doubly spectacular.



Finally, there is the Coda, a final, brief flash to the future that comes of the terrible and beautiful progress of change, and a strikingly moving flash of reason that ties this fantastic history together, tightly and inexorably. It is a chronicle of social order, of sex, of religion — in fact, of all the things that make the human race. In avoiding a narrator's monologue and creating from a variety of viewpoints, Mr. Roberts' Pavane is a fiction so convincing that it becomes reality for the reader, as any excellent book must.

I give it an unqualified rave. I loved it; so will you.

—Richard Delap

TURNING ON by Damon Knight—Ace G-677, 50¢

"Rich and chewy, this is a collection of Knight's best science fiction." Thus the FORT WAYNE NEWS-SENTINEL, a journal of immense reputation in the field of criticism.

But the best word to summarize these stories would be "inspired." Adjectives such as enjoyable, exciting, superb or even good are not applicable. In fact, having obtained the one percent inspiration, Knight has forgotten about the 99% sweat.

The result is that the stories here reprinted generally contain one (count 'em, 1) slight idea which has quickly been blown into a short story. Knight's first effort in this direction seems to have been "To Serve Man," and presumably the success of that story has given Knight the idea that it is in this area that his talent lies: maybe it does, for there is little evidence here to suggest that he has other talents.

The title of the book is presumably derived from the first story — "Semper Fi" — which is one of the few stories which are not short-shorts. However, it is short-short on ideas and is intended only to convey a mood. This it does moderately well.

The other longer stories are "Man In The Jar," "A Likely Story" and "Don't Live in the Past." This last is by far the oldest story in the collection (GALAXY, June 1951). I think it attempts to be humorous (all of the creatures (?) which terrorize the world were actually harmless in their own time) but this seems heavy-handed. There is little reason for the hero (Mazurin) to befriend the two lovers in





the past (in fact, what he reveals about his own time suggests that he would not have done so) and the introductory sections which are intended to describe Mazurin's time are very much tacked-on: I don't feel that they succeed. As a whole I found the story unconvincing.

"A Likely Story" is a left-handed juggle, again intended to be humorous. Knight enjoys himself in distorting the names of sf writers (also, I understand, a hobby of fledgling faan writers) with rather uninteresting results. The plot is so slight as to be negligible.

"Man in the Jar" relies on two unlikely occurrences. The plot is concerned simply with whether or not Rocksha is a marack. Vane 'knows' that maracks have certain abilities and disabilities. He is convinced that Rocksha is a marack. In the story we are told (by Vane) that maracks cannot

- 1) drink liquor

- 2) raise arms above shoulders.

When Rocksha drinks brandy, Vane says that the first test is unreliable.

But Rocksha then refuses the second test, when in fact he can raise his arm above his shoulders, and this is how, eventually, the plot is resolved.

This seems to me to be stretching the plot elements a little too far.

There are two stories in the collection which have plots that have also been handled by other authors (two that I know of, that is). Knight's "Backward O Time" (1956) is very similar to Ballard's "Time of Passage" (1960). The contrast is informative. I would suggest that if Ballard read Knight he certainly learned from him. His handling of the theme is gentler, more thoroughly worked out and more complete: perhaps this difference arises partly from the fact that Knight's story appeared in a Gold magazine.

I think Knight's "To The Pure" (date?) appeared after Sturgeon's "Affair With A Green Monkey" (1957). "To The Pure" is credited by Ace to Royal Pubs. 1965. Again Knight suffers

by comparison.

Some of the stories can barely be said to have a point. "Eripav" and "Maid To Measure" have minimal sources — puns. "Auto-Da-Fé" scarcely qualifies from the point of view of plot and "Collector's Item" is an overwritten non-idea.

Three stories remain. Of these "The Big Pat Boom" is the slightest. Again the idea is almost the entire story. The denouement is unclear.

"Night of Lies" shows Knight imitating Bradbury (or perhaps trying to show Bradbury how it should be done). Knight relies on the same sort of conversations as Bradbury to a remarkable extent. The story is very well done.

The best story in the collection, "Mary," is not really science fiction at all. It might read like sf, but those elements making it so could easily be stripped off, leaving a pleasant little story which might have appeared in one of the better women's magazines: has Knight missed his calling?

It is really disappointing, isn't it — if this is really Knight's best science fiction? (To what extent do authors control the blurbs on their books?) ((Hardly ever!—REG)) Perhaps there are some "better" stories which have not been included, but I suspect this to be a representative sample of Knight fiction.

It is also disappointing to realize that Richard Matheson's short stories, so roughly (but justly) handled by Knight, are so much better than Knight's own fiction. Nit, I hope, that any readers of SFR would expect a critic to write better than the writer whose work he damns, but simply that Knight's explaining how bad Matheson's work is only makes his own work look worse.

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By a fortunate circumstance Mr. Knight's anthology of original stories, ORBIT 2 is recently to hand. Besides being an outstanding critic, Knight has also been one of sf's leading editors. ORBIT is Knight's latest venture in this direction, and the first volume was reviewed last year by John Bangsund (in ASFR), who did not adequately praise a story by James Blish in the volume ("How Beautiful With Banners"). Regrettably there are no stories here as good as that one.

Most of the stories in ORBIT 2 are pretty

ordinary magazine fiction. Thomas's "The Doctor" is short on writing, and longish on idea, and followed on a rather nauseating introduction by Mr. Knight.

Kate Wilhelm's "Baby, You Were Great" bears an uncanny resemblance to Asimov's "Dreaming is a Private Thing." As the story had been told before I can't see that this story will add to the credit of either author or anthology.

"Trip, Trap" by Gene Wolfe. Trite Trash.

Latham's "The Dimple in Draco," despite the fact that it lacks everything other than a superficial scientific atmosphere, and an idea, is the sort of story that will always have a place in sf.

Joanna Russ has two unbelievable stories in here. I understand that her next venture is a novel in which the spaceships are kletic rather than phallic.

"The Hole in the Corner" is good R.A. Lafferty. (Readers who know my opinion of Lafferty may guffaw here. For the benefit of others I remark that I find Lafferty about as humorous "comme le tremblement des mains dans l'alcoolisme".)

Kit Reed's "The Food Farm" seemed rather pointless to me, and Brian Aldiss's "Full Sun," though possibly the best story in the collection, is not exactly one of his best.

Richard McKenna's "Fiddler's Green" takes a well-known idea (sailors believe that the virtuous who drown go to Fiddler's Green) and turns it upside down (ie. so that those dying of thirst have a vision of Fiddler's Green). The result is a story which would have been a FAQ STARTLING STORIES novel. However, no matter how well written the story is, I suspect that hoary old plots of this type need a good deal of juice to just keep them at a bearable level. Note: I enjoyed the story.

If this is the best anthology which an editor as skilled as Knight can put together, one must surely enquire into the health of science fiction: a decade ago the question was Who Killed Science Fiction?

May I dare suggest that science fiction is not dead, but merely dying of wounds?

—John Foyster



ORBIT 3 edited by Damon Knight—Berkley \$1.68  
75¢

This book is worth six bits to most sf fans — 9 stories, 224 pages of original sf, most of it as good as the lead stories in the average prozine, and enough diversity so at least a couple of the stories should appeal to your particular taste within the field. There's nothing here I'd nominate for a Hugo, but I would have bought the book if I hadn't received a review copy, and I only buy one or two sf books a month.

"Mother to the World" — Richard Wilson. A highly readable post-atomic Adam and Eve story. Weak on imagination, of course, but this novellette as proof that stereotypes are not bad in themselves, just the refuge of poor writers. The authors of most horrible Adam and Eve stories would produce just as bad a story even if they had a basic theme and idea worthy of a Hugo. Wilson, on the other hand, takes the stereotyped idea and builds a pretty fair idea around it. It's all characterization, of course but the mood and development of ideas are logical and plausible, and the overall tone is extremely optimistic for the human race.

"Bramble Bush" — Richard McKenna. In his introduction, Damon Knight says he didn't understand this story, but that it's worth publishing anyway. I agree with him, but I can't say why. The story concerns the nature of reality as confronted by space explorers facing an

alien race whose thinking and basic nature is so different from ours they can walk through walls. McKenna has his characters waste hundreds and hundreds of words trying to figure out what's going on, and finally get themselves out of their predicament by trial, error and guts. They manage to get off the planet, and it's obvious they still don't understand what happened or how. The characters are plausibly drawn, and their actions make sense, so the reader accepts this resolution of the plot. But it's still obvious that neither author nor reader can understand what's happened. Oh, you can say, "McKenna has described something truly alien, and that's why it isn't possible to understand what's going on," but that's not even true, McKenna being just as human as the rest of us. What he's actually done is to simulate alien thought-patterns through deliberate ambiguity, and done it fairly well. Which is an interesting and legitimate idea as far as I'm concerned, even if I didn't get any real enjoyment from the story.

"The Barbarian" — Joanna Russ. Sword and sorcery with a female protagonist and an emphasis on sorcery. The characters are fairly well-decorated cardboard and the plot moves reasonably smoothly, but the background world wasn't particularly interesting, and the overall mood wasn't strong enough to make the story more than mediocre for its type. I think the blame falls to a lack of original or moving details of description — there's really nothing to separate this from hundreds of other second-rate S&S stories. But if you really want S&S, this is probably better than nothing.

"The Changeling" — Gene Wolfe. At first reading, this is similar in intent to "Bramble Bush", except that Wolf falls where McKenna partially succeeded. I think the author's intent is to describe the mental state of a per-

son whose thinking is radically different from the norm without fitting any recognizable or describable form of insanity, and also to show how the "changeling" fits himself into a small rural community by some sort of psionic manipulation of other people's minds or possibly by changing physical reality itself. But all the descriptions are so fragmentary nothing is strongly implied. McKenna hinted at some things not readily expressible in words; Wolfe merely seems to leave too much unsaid.

"Why They Mobbed the White House" — Ooris Pitkin Buck. This story supposedly says something about computers running our lives, but I found it silly and pointless because there's no real characterization or plot development. I guess it's supposed to be funny, but it's too short to create any real humor — even a joke requires a good deal of buildup, either stated or implied.

"The Planners" — Kate Wilhelm. Something to do with experimenters trying to increase the intelligence of monkeys. Or something. Very little plot development and no resolution at all — guess this is supposed to be a "slice of life" story, meaning that it's not really a story at all. The background and characters generate too little interest.

"Don't Wash the Carats" — Philip Jose Farmer. Another wild, weird, farcical farmer vignette, deriving from those vaudeville skits involving a brain surgeon who operates with mallet and chisel, a dash of satire on various Hollywood Frankenstein epics, and a good deal of profound pseudo-science. Farmer takes a few highly imaginative word-pictures or ideas, all mutually contradictory, and then uses all of his powers of logic to tie them together into a rationale. I really groove on this sort of thing, but I'll admit that a story like this is at most a novelty. In short, a very silly story, but beautifully silly.

"Letter to a Young Poet" — James Sallis. Exactly what the title claims, set in the future, and quite well done. There's something pseudo-literary and effeminate about it, but I still rather enjoyed it. I could quibble and say I'd rather see a letter from a poet like Allen Ginsberg, something rather raw and full of guts, but poets like the one Sallis describes exist too and probably always will. And I can hope Chip Delany or Roger Zelazny sees this and writes his idea of what a poet of the future would put in a letter....



"Here Is Thy Sting" — John Jakes. One of the best ideas in the book, but also a badly flawed story. The idea of recording and playing back the memories of death from a brain of a corpse is not new, but this is the most plausible treatment I've seen, and the only one that handles some of the obvious implications — if you've experienced dying, even vicariously, you'll fear death less when it comes. Or will you? Jakes treats the whole idea rather well. The flaw is in the length — this would have made an excellent short story, but Jakes pads it out to novelette length by inserting a rather dull sub-plot involving a disappearing corpse. The protagonist's brother's body disappears while being shipped home for burial and the protagonist spends half of the story searching for it. The story proper doesn't begin till he finds the corpse, and I felt cheated, because the search itself is quite dull and not at necessary for the advancement of the story. There's no continuous emotional buildup — the beginning of the story implies that the plot will be resolved when the brother's body is found, but that's not what happens. It's like reading two different stories involving the same main character, one lousy and one quite good. The editor should have literally taken a hatchet and cut this story in half.

Well, that's Orbit 3. Nothing to faint with delight over, but a hell of a lot better than any two issues of a prozine I've seen in the last few years.

—Earl Evers

## LITTLE NOTED And/Nor LONG REMEMBERED by the editor

### THE UNFAIR FARE AFFAIR

The Man From Uncle #18 by Peter Leslie—Ace 51701, 50¢

Bluntly, I found this written in an affect-  
ed style I don't care for. I skimmed the book  
and found it overwritten; not nearly as clean  
and lucid as the tv series. But for all that  
it is par for the course of these U.N.C.L.E.  
novels.

THE PLANET WIZARD by John Jakes—Ace 67060, 60¢

"You, Magus Blacklaw, in a skysled provided by the High Governors of Pastora, shall voyage to Lightmark and exorcize the demons, so that the commercial house of Easkod can live again. If you are a true wizard, you will not be afraid!"

So sayeth the blurb quoting the interior. Lightmark is the next planet to Pastora. The book has sf elements, but sword and sorcery permeates it all.

Again, an overwritten book. Florid. It could have been edited to a swifter pace and a few hundred words granted toward some individuality for the stereotyped characters.

See the pretty colored cardboard talk, see it move.

GHOSTS OF THE GOLDEN WEST by Hans Holzer—Ace, 28620, 60¢

For those who believe by one who believes. These stories are very probably accurate as to names, places and events. The dialog is re-creation, but I'm sure essentially verite. Are there ghosts? If true, wouldn't hospitals be crowded with the things?

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"A worn out kip is better than nothing."

—Peggy Swenson

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THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS by Ursula LeGuin—Ace 47800, 95¢

This is one of the year's best science fiction novels. Ursula LeGuin writes unhurriedly, yet the story moves quickly; she easily enfolds you into the world of Winter and into the story of Genli Ai, the first Earth envoy.

He is the mirror and the catalyst by which you experience the almost perpetual cold of the planet, the intrigues of governments, and most intriguing and affecting of all, the strange sex life of the different humans of Winter who periodically go into "kemmer", a form of rut, and can be either male or female, father or mother of children.

This sexual make-up and the hard life on the planet has resulted in complex cultural and social differences from "normal" human worlds, and Ursula LeGuin makes it all real.

CATCH A FALLING STAR by John Brunner—Ace G-761 50¢

In Earth's far future, after dozens of civilizations have risen and fallen, a hobby astronomer discovers a star in a collision course with Earth. He sets out to arouse the culturally fragmented world.

This is a quest story and a damned good one! Brunner is one of the better sf writers we have.

A shorter and different version of this book was published by Ace in 1959.

BROTHER ASSASSIN by Fred Saberhagen—Ballantine 7201B, 75¢

Saberhagen has written three joined novellas about a war in time to keep unaltered a world's past, and thus its present. The Berserkers, intelligent, life-hating machines, attack cleverly, ruthlessly.

This is good, competent, entertaining sf. The hero, for all the author's persistence, seems less alive and individual than the "hinge" characters in time past.

MEETING AT INFINITY by John Brunner—Ace 52400 60¢

This is a reprint of an earlier Brunner novel for Ace (1961), and shows elements of his current high skill in writing. Here are the multiple viewpoints and multiple story elements techniques that have come to maturity in Stand On Zanzibar and The Jagged Orbit.

Meeting At Infinity is engrossing and exciting as it develops but promises much more than it delivers at the end.

THE LONG WINTER by John Christopher—Fawcett Gold Medal R2001, 60¢.

The sun cools a bit and the Earth freezes. Society comes apart and Christopher works through the human equation to show us what happens, except that his characters somehow don't come alive enough to concern us and the time spent dealing with their personal problems thus seems dreary and wasted. The cold, the world disaster, is too much off-stage.

This edition is a reprint or a reissue of the 1962 English novel.

DIMENSION A by L.P. Davies—Doubleday, \$3.95

This is an innocuous juvenile, simply, carefully written, aimed at parents and libraries, for 12-13-14-year-old boys. Trouble is, boys that age, given \$3.95 to spend on a science fiction adventure, probably wouldn't go near this one.

THE OUTLAW OF TORN by Edgar Rice Burroughs—Ace A-25, 75¢

A heavily plotted Revenge and Lost Prince story with classic story structure and thee and thou dialog. It has a certain amount of basic power.

#### MAIL ORDER INFORMATION

ACE BOOKS, (Dept. MM), 1120 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10036. 10¢ handling fee.

SIGNET—New American Library, P.O. Box 2310, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10017. 10¢ fee.

BERKLEY PUBLISHING CORP., 200 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016. 10¢ handling fee.

PAPERBACK LIBRARY, INC., Dept. B, 315 Park Ave. South, New York, N.Y. 10010. 10¢ handling fee.

BELMONT BOOKS, Dept. 785, 1116 First Ave., New York, N.Y. 10021. 10¢ handling fee.

LANCER BOOKS, INC., 1560 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10036. 10¢ handling fee.

BALLANTINE BOOKS, INC., Dept. CS, 101 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10003. 5¢ handling fee.

BRANDON HOUSE and ESSEX HOUSE, 7311 Fulton Ave., North Hollywood, Calif. 91605. No handling fee.

AVON BOOKS, 959 Eighth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019. 10¢ handling fee.

FAWCETT GOLD MEDAL BOOKS, Greenwich, Conn. 10¢ handling fee; no fee on order of five or more books.

HARRIS-WOLFE & CO., 235 No. Main, Jacksonville, Ill. 62650. No fee.

DOUBLEDAY & CO., 277 Park Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017. No fee.



Dr Son of Primer of Heads  
(This is True)

I propose to tell you of a "trip" I went on. On which I went and at the end of six days I'm not back yet.

I'm not much on messing around with stuff. I've had no experience with any of the psychedelic initials but I think I smoked pot once in the army in the days when the Transportation Corps ran ships to Cuba. So, like I have no basis for comparison as to whether this was a good trip or I shoulda stayed home.

I began last Wednesday. Late at night. After the kids were in bed and we wouldn't expect visitors. It took an amazingly short time for the thing to take effect. The first thing I did was keep grasping with my right hand. I don't know. Perhaps if you tried this and you are left-handed it would hit you in your left hand. And I became most extraordinarily thirsty but like not for water or anything else in the house. Dr out of the house. I turned on the TV and watched for a while. Usually I'm rather bland in my reactions to the ubiquitous TV. Suspend all critical judgement. Watch anything. But this Wednesday night the thing annoyed me. Faces came and went on that damn little flicker and they distorted like in a trick mirror. (The TV did this before my drug experience also.) And the whole schmear stabbed, bright and flickering into my eyes and penetrated my head and destroyed my cool. I really HATED most of the commercials. Not all. Just most. I actually snarled and I actually snapped the damned thing off savagely—like they do in those novels.

I began to perspire and my right hand seem-

# I Don't Like My Hand

ed to have a mind of its own. I didn't like my right hand.

The next morning I got up and there was this terrible taste in my mouth. I mean I've had hangovers I'd match with the best of them but this taste was something else something new insofar as experience is concerned but something vastly old and Lovecraftian insofar as taste is concerned. My hand continued to do its thing. And my peripheral vision seemed to have increased as did the range of things I could hear and was aware of. I became the focal point of all sounds and all sights. They sought me out and attempted to burn out my senses. This feeling increased all that day and the next. Impressions flooded my receiving apparatus and my mind refused to follow any one thought to its conclusion or go in any one direction but as the images and sounds poured into me thoughts bubbled green and orange in my cauldron/head and fought to get out half-born, ill-formed. Fetus thoughts. Fetid thoughts. Christmas card thoughts with the three kings on them.

I began to lay on the booze pretty heavy. For me. That is.

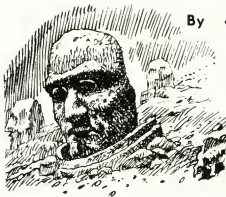
Now my left hand...what day was it?...began to do a thing of its own! I managed to confine my right hand to a pocket where it scratched an itch I didn't have. I didn't itch and I thought that was funny because all my inputs were inputting...my fingertips became sensitive and I could feel my fingerprints.

My sinuses would have been the envy of Doyle, Dane and Bernbach.

By the fourth or fifth day of this I was



## By Jack Gaughan



behind in the drawing that I had to do. I felt like blue Hell but I had to get some work out. But I couldn't gear down. An artist leads a fairly sedentary life. I remember my doctor, a certain Hans Zinsser (Jr.) describing my life as sedentary. It sounded stagnant like muck. Sedentary. You sit at a drawing table or an easel and you sit until you've done this thing you do. Some of it is careful and nit-picking work. Small brushes and little nerve pulses that move the fingers carefully and only so far. Sometimes it's like watch-making or diamond cutting. Sometimes it's like going amok, berserk with a brush and you slash at a panel or a canvas. This time... this job was one of those watchmaker deals. I couldn't gear down to it. For one thing I couldn't sit still (we will not go into the eliminative reactions I had to this thing). I wanted to run and jump. Go play basketball somewhere. DO something. Just DO and MOVE. I shoveled snow (the kind which gently falls from above) and on a whim drove my car at too high speeds over the uncleared back roads and the eight inches of snow and the ice underneath that. I couldn't gear down my physical reaction...I overdid everything from the pressure on the brake pedal to the way I swung the steering wheel. Ghod alone knows how I survived and got home.

And what was worse I KEPT TRYING TO GET MY WIFE TO JOIN ME IN THIS THING I WAS GOING THROUGH. I mean that's ratty. Rotten.

I tried tranquilizers but nothing would cool me down...slow me down. There was no in-between: I either ran at full steam or collapsed. No running DOWN. Just whoosh and splat.

I can't put it all down. I can't tell you about that first cup of coffee in the morning or the horror in the ashtray. And the strange things I began to taste and the smells. THE SMELLS! Or how I wanted to lock myself alone in dark, secluded places and let my hand go free!

But I can tell you how to do it yourself. It's not complicated. All you gotta do, baby is start out with a twenty year habit and then one Wednesday night decide to

stop smoking.

Weird!



P.S. —

*I fell off the tobacco wagon  
— better print that!*

# P.O. Box 3116



HARLAN ELLISON  
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91403

The one thing in common all these Second Foundation old farts share is their lack of humor. As with the dull

fiction they are trying to pull out of a mold-ering grave, they are out-of-date; super-serious; arteriosclerotic. If their fear of looking at the world with some degree of reality was not so naked, it would be humorous. But they truly do think of fiction as fit only to show impeccable heroes without bladders or genitals or psychoses: this, to them, is the "sense of wonder". And that kind of rigidity makes them terribly sober, incapable of laughing at themselves, much less their enemies—as was my stance toward the fool Pierce.

I never threatened to punch Mr. Pierce, though I am sure someone laid that bit of gossip on him, and he swallowed it, like the glib scuttleship he appears to be. Anyone pompous martinet enough to call himself "Liaison Officer, Second Foundation" is a man surfeited with delusion and monomaniacal feelings of inadequacy. He must build a surrogate society in which he holds position and stature. The more Pierce prattles, the more he resembles those twisted white slugs who join neo-Nazi organizations, so they can have titles like Liaison Officer.

If in fact Mr. Pierce had any reality, I could see him sculpted by William Botsler as a granite fundament with the inscription HERE BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD...GOES GORD inscribed on the left buttock. The man's sorry revelations of his own lack of feelings of worthiness emerge in every line. And his silly attempt to prove he is not shocked by sex and its manifestations in fiction, by recourse to D.H. Law-

rence, indicates just how many years in the past Pierce truly lives. If one can call such blindness living. Lawrence always was, and is, a bore. He was a pithecanthropoid in the literature of love. He was totally hung-up on all the anglo-saxonisms of fuck as opposed to fornication, piss as opposed to urination and shit as opposed to defecation. (And I think someone should point out to Pierce, as it was pointed out to Lawrence, that the semantic stilted forms of these common bodily functions was introduced into England by the conquering Normans who knew that one fine way to to subjugate a peoples is to make them ashamed of what they do, and what better method of so doing could were men device than "uplifting" the language in those areas so the common man feels what he does (fuck, as opposed to fornicate) is gross and demeaning.) Pierce's identification with the relatively mild sexuality of a Lawrence is precisely the stand a blue-nosed Puritan would take in the face of such overwhelming changes in modern morality and the legal protection of same. Pierce thinks that by timorously accepting the already-hypocritical morality of 1928, he can strike up some sort of bogus rapport with the morality of 1969. Well, like TV producers who make "Sunset Strip Riot" flicks they think "tell it like it is", he reveals himself to be a hincty, outdated, out-of-touch cro-magnon, no more able to unbiasedly report on what he sees around him than a garbage can could be said to see a true view of its world.

I hope and pray no one shows Mr. Pierce... old Mr. Pierce...a copy of Phil Farmer's Image of the Beast or Piers Anthony's Chthon or Spinrad's Bug Jack Baron. I hope they do show him my story "A Boy and His Dog". It will infuriate him, convince him even more completely that



what the more involved writers are doing these days is filthfilthfilth!

I also hope Norman doesn't get wind of Mr. Pierce's allegation that The Spinrad is an Ellison flunky. Norman is too much his own man to stand still for that one; and I venture to say Mr. Pierce might be more concerned about Norman's flattening the Pierce schnoz than me. I don't want Pierce silenced; I want him to blather all the more. Every time he opens his toothless, gumming mouth he makes the position of the new writers that much stronger. But Norman doesn't like being called a toady, any more than I do, and if he would accept my aid, I would be delighted to hold his coat while he works poor Pierce over. Hey, Norman, how do you like being called a "notorious sidekick"? I know it doesn't have the stature of English Parliament calling you "nameless degenerate", but Pierce is certainly a lot easier to get to than Lord Beaverbrook.

Pierce, Pierce, you intolerant old coot! Have you found it impossible to hear what's coming down around you in the world today? Have you so insulated yourself that you cannot feel gut-reactions to the terrible chill winds blowing across our times? Have you read and not understood that every one of the writers you lump into "New Wave" has denied he is a member of any coterie? Even myself! Ballard and Aldiss and Disch and Spinrad and Anthony and Zelazny and Delany and Sladek and Farmer and Ellison have all, at one time or another, said in the clearest possible tones that they are simply writing their own way, "doing their own thing" if that hackneyed phrase can serve one more time. Do you choose to continue your blind mumbling stumbling on that point? Do you choose to ignore what the men say of their own positions? Or do you conceive of any writer who cares enough to comment on the conditions of the world around him (rather than fleeing in cowardly fashion to the safety of intergalactic shoot-em-ups) as a "litterateur"? How pathetic you seem when you condemn your betters for caring about their literary quality rather more than they do the appeal of their work to adolescent minds.

Were you not semi-literate, your "manifesto" might have more punch. But you are a common garden-variety boob, a mountebank, a man who not only cannot write the fiction you profess to adore, but cannot even comment critically with any degree of lucidity. When fanzine editors start handing you fugghead awards, I suggest it is time you hired a ghost writer.

Because, frankly, if you're going to be any sort of opponent at all, Mr. Dandelion, you'll have to come better armed to the fray. I like a little clout to my encounters, and thus far you are singularly weak-wristed.

In point of fact, in an effort to aid you in your holy war, let me offer you some invective. "New Wavicles" is just pallid, and "Harlan the Mouthless" is terribly obvious. Why not try some of the following:

"Ellison is a frightened little man who is so uncertain about the quality of his writing that he must ballyhoo himself and it like a cheap carnival barker."

Or how about this: "The stinking cesspool depravity of Ellison's conception of what 'good' science fiction should be, only reflects his inner corruption and debasement as a human being."

Or use words for Spinrad and Disch and Delany and myself like "twerp", "upstarts", "imposters", "charlatans". Impugn us on more basic levels. We will squirm. We will die. You'll see. We'll vanish, and Captain future will once more take over the pages of the professional magazines.

And, in closing, I cannot agree with you more. I and my coterie of flunkies have "seriously undermined" the fundamental values of science fiction. That is why the field is healthier than it's ever been, why writers get fifty times the money they got during what ~~you~~ you'd call The Golden Age, why writers are getting recognized in the big arena, and why sf is abruptly coming to be a fiction of content and importance for the world, not just for frightened little assholes such as yourself, who are afraid they'll lose their <sup>one</sup> claim to belonging.



frankly, old Pierce, fuck you and fuck your secret society concept of what sf should be. It's for everyone, not just arrested adolescents such as yourself.

JOHN J. PIERCE  
Liaison Officer  
Second Foundation  
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Since I fully expected the sort of reaction from SFR that I received, I'm afraid you'll have to wait a while longer for me to die of apoplexy.

To satisfy your curiosity, Lester del Rey read my DIFFERENT manifesto before it was published, and Isaac Asimov afterwards. If you don't know where Lester stands, I suppose you simply haven't been to many conventions lately (or read "Art or Artiness?" in the fall, 1968 FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION). As for Isaac, he is too warm-hearted and generous a man to become directly involved in controversy, but I know his sympathies to be with the Second Foundation and against the New Thing.

I'm only opposed to part of what Damon Knight does, though you do report me correctly as being opposed to others on the list, from Merrill to Barth.

For balance, you might, however, mention some of those I am for. Like Roger Zelazny (I voted for both Lord of Light and Damnation Alley last year.) for instance. Among the recent discoveries I also admire are Bob Shaw, Larry Niven, Fred Saberhagen and Ursula LeGuin. Also o/s "hacks" like Wells, Weinbaum, Heinlein, Asimov, Simak, Clarke, del Rey, Schmitz, Wyndham, Pohl, Dickson, Anderson. I hate to dissilusion you, but I even like some of Phil Farmer's stuff. If I see Image of the Beast around, no doubt I'll pick it up, though I gather not everyone thinks it's brilliant. (see SCIENCE FICTION TIMES)

No doubt there are fans who could argue the case against the New Thing better than I can; I wish they would come out of the woodwork and do so. Being a propagandist (I don't make any

bones about it) is a tiresome and time-consuming hobby at best. Were the New Thing itself not being so heavily over-propagandized, I doubt that I would have bothered.

Just to show that I can agree with SFR occasionally, let me applaud your fanzine on its review of Schmitz' The Demon Breed, which I intend nominating for a Hugo. I was also glad to see Isle of the Dead praised; that's certainly a possibility for a Hugo in 1970.

DICK ELLINGTON  
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94609

My memory is very vague about your previous incarceration and in a fit of greed (and hunger) I sold Walter Breen all my old PSY-SFRs a few years ago (at a nice exorbitant price) but it does seem to me you're going through the same changes you did then, only at an accelerated rate of speed. Unfortunately, this will mean an extrapolation of SFR folding about next month if you keep it up so kindly stop with the changes.

The format is very nice and the changes in you in the intervening years have produced a much finer layout and a much more judicious selection of artwork—that much I do remember. I must admit to some tittering at the example of hasty paste-up on some pages—correction lines not cut out and poor line joining in spots but I have never been any great shakes at neatness in a fanzine myself so I guess I'm a poor one to criticize. It's just that the mag now does have a somewhat professional look about it and I must then judge it by my own standards for professional work which are kind of Speerishly nitpicky.

((It seems I am to be haunted for years by this past cycle of PSYCHOTIC/SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW. All I can do, of course, is keep publishing, which I intend to do. I'm a different person, by far, than I was in the mid-fifties. I almost guarantee there will be further changes in the magazine, but short of catastrophic illness...or California sliding into the



sea...SFR will go on.))

As to Warner on puns—I've lived with that all my life. I can always tell when I've met a real slob—he will mull my name over for a minute then ask me, with great originality, if I'm any relation to the Duke, meanwhile going off into gales of laughter at his own cleverness. They really think it's quite original of them. I usually manage to squelch this quite easily by simply quickly replying with a very straight face that yes, he's my cousin. The slob then gets very embarrassed.

NORMAN SPINRAD      There has been a monstrous  
New York              omission of an entire paragraph  
                                 from my NEW WORLD COMING review  
of Stand On Zanzibar in SFR 29.

The missing paragraph should come right after "So, in a way, it's a shame that Stand On Zanzibar is so long because it is not its length which makes it an important book but its form."

The missing paragraph reads as follows:

"In the book itself, Brunner calls Stand On Zanzibar a "non-novel." He has a point. Stand On Zanzibar is a literary construct consisting of one novel, several short stories, a series of essays and a lot of what can only be called schticks intercut and put together like a film. Stand On Zanzibar is not a novel; it is a film in book form."

This paragraph is the essence of the whole review, dammit, and I charitably assume that cutting it from the column was a mechanical error on your part, rather than an attempt at editing, since this is the single most important paragraph in the entire review, and I cannot believe that any editor would cut it as a matter of conscious choice.

Please print this letter in the letter column so I won't seem to have written a completely incomprehensible review.

((This is the kind of letter an editor hat-

es to print: it condemns him for a stupid mistake.

No excuses. My eye, as I typed and looked away for a moment, skipped from the word "form" ending one paragraph to the same word ending the missing paragraph. And I typed on from there, oblivious of the goof.

My public apologies to you and to Brunner.

I have, by the way, started a more stringent system of double checking.))

CHARLES PLATT  
Asst. Editor  
NEW WORLDS  
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ENGLAND

An author writing about his own work is boring enough. When this indulgence is sparked off by the author reading a review of his book and deciding that more needs to be said, the result is not just boring but embarrassing.

Having given this warning, I want to comment on Richard Geis's review of my shit fantasy, Garbage World. He suggests that fan reviewers have been unreceptive to the book because they subconsciously reject the filth and can't identify with the hero. I think it is subtler than that.

Freudians will understand me when I describe collecting mania as an anal obsession. The desire to hoard stamps, coins, matchbox tops and science fiction (I see no basic difference between the categories, even while admitting to be an sf hoarder myself) is thought by some to result from suppression of childhood desire to handle faeces, when the child is in the anal stage. It seemed amusing to use this dubious Freudian theory in Garbage World, where the colonists live all their lives in an ecology of refuse, mud and dung. (There is achingly blatant anal symbolism in the landscape, all the way through.) The people thus exhibit anal obsessions as a way of life. They toil daily through the dunes of filth, digging out baubles to keep, polish, catalogue, hoard and checklist.



AND SO ON

The similarity between them and certain obsessive persons known to frequent distinctive-smelling, dank, dark second-hand book stores, unearthing mint issues of 1930s pulp magazines, was intentional. While I'm not suggesting that fan reviewers saw the derogatory comparison I was making, I'm sure a certain cynical outlook was communicated. The book makes obvious fun not only of clean living but of the uselessness of the garbage worlders' boards of meticulously catalogued junk. In fandom, as in the world of pornography addicts, ((SIR!)) nothing is more upsetting than laughter directed at mores the devotees hold to be important — the *raison d'être* of their obsession. *Garbage World* was not only a belly-laugh (or buttock laugh) at collecting mania; it was a general piss-take of sf adventure novels; hence the corny plot, stereotyped characters and so on. I am sure that fan reviewers who sensed the mood of the book disliked it because of their very sensitivity to its kind of humor..

Of course, where reviewers have criticised the crudity of the symbolism, the very bad writing and the fact it is clearly a padded-out novelet, I am forced to respect their objectivity and admit that I can't help agreeing with them.

JUSTIN ST JOHN  
Editor  
THE GREEN TOWN REVIEW  
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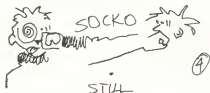
I had looked in vain for a fanzine which did not consider serious discussion and entertaining reading mutually exclusive terms;

whose editorial policy did not require that articles be devoid of conceptual content; whose single literary standard was not that incoherence is the hallmark of profundity.

I have stopped looking.

((That's funny; I haven't.))

I have received—and read with an exalted greed—SFR 28. The search, for a zine interested in dealing with ideas is no longer necessary: SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW is it.



((Now fans know why I saved over your letter till this issue.))

Keep it up, Geis.

Will somebody please instruct me as to how one goes about engaging in 'implicit'—as opposed to 'explicit'—sex? Will someone kindly tell me why the spirit of Queen Victoria refuses, even unto this day, to depart into a well-deserved oblivion? Will someone out of charity for the Elder Statesman, in the spirit of altruism, please direct Isaac Asimov to the nearest sex education class?

The motivation behind statements like—

"Anyway—is it really essential that science fiction novels now contain scenes of sex, 'explicitly' stated?"

—artfully escapes me. I am aware only of a single variety of the phenomenon under discussion: is "implicit" sex—as opposed, of course, to "explicit sex"—a new type of birth control? If so, will the Catholic Church approve? I hope not.

Seriously—though it is difficult to take the blatantly bourgeois seriously—I will address myself to Mr. Asimov's question: "Is Sex Necessary in Science Fiction?"

Omigod.

I quote from my essay, "Basic Principles of Speculative Fiction" (which appears in the current issue of my zine, THE GREEN TOWN REVIEW): "For man, the concept of values is not a floating abstraction: it is, literally, a matter of life and death. A literature that has no relevance to this issue—the issue of ethics—is not relevant to man, is not part of his world, and should be of no interest to him whatsoever.

I do not know the specifics of your life, Mr. Asimov, but sex is—for man—one of the most important issues he has to deal with. I cannot hope to say it better than did novelist-philosopher Ayn Rand: "Show me the woman a man sleeps with, and I will tell you his philosophy of life." (Atlas Shrugged). Sexual choice is the sum total of an individual's value-system: and it is this issue, the issue of good and evil, the realm of morality, that is the central issue of fiction writing.

And don't hand me: "...I would like to say that my sf books, all of them as square as can be imagined, are selling considerably better now than they were when they were first published (ten to twenty years ago)...". What do you

expect from a reading public that was born, bred—and poisoned—with pre-digested pabulum, on one hand, and, on the other, with a drooling, leering neurosis: and which accepts, by default, these as the only alternatives open to them (and as, therefore, opposites in a dichotomy)? Surely you are not saying that the approval of this subdued aggregation is the measure of your virtue...

Mr. Asimov's final point, however, is perhaps the clearest, most accurate commentary on the state of modern speculative fiction that I have yet to encounter:

"Seriously—are you fellows leaving a gap that is being filled by my old books, for default of anything else?

"I have no objection, you understand."

And here, ladies and gentlemen, in center ring, we have the Eldest Elder Statesman of Scientifiction telling us that he has "no objection" to cashing-in on the disintegration of this Genre of genres. That we are faced with "choosing" between the passive boredom of those castrated pulp tales, and the oppressive boredom of "modern" sf, which considers the portrayal of anything other than irrationality and hysteria "unreal"—and worse—that he is boasting, in the smugly complacent tone of the successful black marketeer, of cashing-in on the situation, is grotesquely sickening. I did not think it possible that Asimov the Critic could be worse than Asimov the Writer. I was wrong.

((I get tongue-in-cheek gentle-zing out of that Asimov quote, Justin, not boasting and smugly complacent. You overplay your hand. Gauging a writer's true attitude from written words is risky. Too often it betrays simple projection or prejudice.))

I resent having to choose between Harlan Ellison—who postulates that four-letter words are the badges of an enlightened intellectuality—and Mr. Asimov, who postulates that castration is the badge of nobility; I resent the modern practice of dealing with undefined terms and unstated standards; I resent the ritual—especially prevalent in fandom—of setting up straw-men, and then, with much noise and little logic, knocking them down again. In those flashy little feuds that light up this very letter column, it is inevitably "heads I win, tails you lose": both camps are merely different sides of the same coin...and the coin is rigged, to boot.

This sort of thing has gone on for as long

as it has because no one has dared to challenge that which lies at the root of the real issue. In any controversy, where both sides are only variants on a single theme, the mock battle continue only so long as a barrage of obfuscating verbiage is allowed to cloud the question. When terms are defined, when definitions are clear, when standards are objectively validated, it is then that we will be able to see—and say—that the jig is up, that the emperor has no clothes...not a stitch.

Every last statement on the nature of speculative fiction—every attempt to define the genre—is initiated by stating that no definitions are possible, that nothing is definite, and that this is especially true for sf. What then usually follows is such a cloud of verbal smog that a citizen of Los Angeles would not breath in it or near it.

JOHN BOARDMAN  
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I figured that eventually the "mainstream" notion that a coterie of literary intriguers were trying to dictate our taste, would get itself established in fandom. I have no use for the "New Wave", but to come on like Pierce is a sort of literary Birchery. This sort of argument is nothing new. About 35 years ago a Nazi physicist named Stark claimed that relativity and quantum theory had been foisted on physics by a bunch of intriguers and propagandists, and more recently Huntington Hartford (Art or Anarchy?) has made the same claims on modern art.

PIERS ANTHONY  
Florida

Comment on the comments on my novels: I have no quarrels with those on Omnivore and The Ring, so will skip on to Sos the Rope. Reviewer Koontz, as his own work shows, has particular notions of human biology and motivation, and is young enough to retain the certainty that all



other views must be erroneous. In time I'm sure he will better appreciate the relation of muscular exertion to circulation of the blood (perhaps if he should get drafted and have to stand at attention for any length of time...) and particularly the lymph, and the dichotomous nature of certain masculine urges. For now I'll merely acquaint him with certain publishing realities.

"But one wishes, still," he concludes, "that we could have another Chthon and not some bastard child of sword and sorcery like Sos."

I feel, personally, that there is room in the field for both types, and so I have tried both types and don't regret it. In the process I came up against the problems of writing and marketing, however, and found that despite what readers such as Koontz may prefer (and I'm not debating those preferences; I happen to share them), the editors see it another way.

Take the writing: Chthon was stretched out over seven years, mainly because I was having trouble organizing it properly and I was unwilling to settle for a mishmash. That does not mean I was slaving away all day every day for that period, but I was frustrated that I could not make the thing move, and when I finally saw the key it was a great moment. Sos, on the other hand, was basically written in two weeks for the first draft. It took another two or three weeks to do second and third drafts, but this was no great strain. In fact, the entire novel was done in the course of a hangup in Omnivore. At any rate, assuming that I got paid the same word-rate for each novel, Sos was two to four times as valuable per hour spent as Chthon. That's one thing that makes a writer pause.

Next, marketing. One would expect the better novel to sell more rapidly and for a better price than a "bastard child," or at least hope so. But Chthon bounced three times. The 4th publisher held it five months, and finally, in reply to my query, made me an offer of \$1500 which I hastily accepted. Sos sold first time out, for \$5000. Figure that differential in which the time each novel took me, and Sos is about eight times as valuable per hour as Chthon. Okay, Koontz—you're trying to earn money as an sf writer too. What are you going to try next—a Chthon or a Sos?

But Chthon was my first sale, you may say, in the novel field; today things are different. Maybe so; I object violently to the prevailing

practice of buying and publishing by reputation rather than quality, but at least now I am beginning to benefit a little by it. But I still have more trouble placing my quality work than my cheaper work.

The Chthon/Sos marketing pattern has been repeated in England, Sos actually selling first (and on first submission) while Chthon bounced four times, received one poor offer we had to turn down, and finally landed a reasonable offer. Even after Chthon made its run for Nebula/Hugo (placing somewhere around third in each, I believe) it continued to bounce overseas. The fact is, it was The Ring that opened the way for Chthon, the former selling first and the latter then making it with the same publisher. I haven't had your comment on Ring, but I think you'll agree it is more of the Sos type than the Chthon type. So again we have a pretty clear notion of what the publishers, here and in England, really want.

But that is not the end. I have done one novel I feel is clearly superior to Chthon, and I believe those few who have seen both novels agree with me. With four novels published, I should have no particular trouble marketing it, right? Well, five American publishers bounced it; one made an offer provided I revised my 20,000 climax scene (which would have meant yanking it, because of its complex unity), and I finally got a good offer from AVON, who will publish it this October. In England it has bounced twice and has not, at this writing, yet sold—the only one of my novels to fail to make the crossing.

Maybe in future people will berate me for not writing more Macrosopes, just as you now berate me for not writing more Chthons—but, man, I have to eat, too. Fetch me a new slate of editors; then we'll see. Meanwhile, you will be seeing a run of indifferent novels from me, because it will be some time before I threaten my livelihood again by shooting high. (Well, not entirely true; I do plan one major novel a year, and have Paleo, the sequel to Omnivore, aimed at 1970.)

It is not that I approve of indifferent work; it's that the editors do, if you judge primarily by what they buy and publish, not what they say. I think I've given enough examples here to illustrate my point; if you still aren't satisfied, query some other writers, such as John Brunner, and I think you will have further verification. I name Brunner because he is another who tries both ambitious and non-

ambitious novels; writers who try only one type will not have had properly comparable experiences.

Sorry about the long excursion into my own works; just didn't seem to be much way to make my point without naming titles and figures.

Banks Mebane column: sir, you missed one of those "cryptosericals," ahem. I have had three "Dillingham" dental stories published (and two bounced) and have completed the first draft of the sixth. I plan on one more, whereupon I will fill in the interstices with the female lead and market the whole as (blush) one of those indifferent novels mentioned above. So it seems to me I should have been included in your faint praises. What I am trying to do is match the \$2300 dental bill I ran up for my oral gold; I figure one more story sale followed by a paperback contract should do it.

((What a marvelously expensive smile you must have...))

Poul Anderson's note on his work day interested me, too. I have the same problem—such widely varying work habits that no typical day can be presented. Once I had a steady system, but then my little girl was born, and—chaos. If she sleeps an extra hour in the middle of the day, I may have an extra three hundred words written—but I can't plan on it. And much of my work does not lend itself to such interrupted efforts. But for the present, my system is geared to combat interruptions as far as feasible.

I do my first drafts in pencil on a clipboard, and I carry the works around indoors and out as my baby explores the universe. I type my second drafts when I can fit in the time, usually in the evenings; these, too, are frequently interrupted in mid-sentence. What is my wife doing all this time, you inquire? She is out earning our living as a computer-programmer. (You want another reason why Sos type writing is easier than Chthon type? Try it while watching little Hyperactive....) When I come to the third draft—submission, really—I try to reserve larger chunks of time, and I go through it in a hurry.

So I doubt that my average day will inspire anyone else to do great writing. Yet I feel I have become more professional in recent years, and I attribute this not to any particular schedule or system, but to the fact that with practice I learned to control my inspiration to a considerable extent. When I started, I could write well when in the mood, and wasted my time at other times.

Now, when I sit down to write, chances are I will do so, and it will meet my normal standards. First draft, the creative one, is still subject to variability, of course—but if one project doesn't go, I switch to a second or a third, and almost always I can come up with something that will move. Thus my earlier mention of writing Sos during a hangup in Omnivore. I used to start in on one piece and refuse to quit until it was done, and that in part explains the time Chthon took. Now I keep several notions percolating simultaneously, and I am seldom balked for long.

((I find that if I stop during the writing of a book for more than two or three days, I lose the characterizations...all the small detail...and later must reread what I have done up to that point, several times, in order to set them in my mind and subconscious again. I think I'd lose time and depth if I worked at two or three projects at once.))

If this is any use to anyone: on a normal "full" day of writing I average about 2000 words of first draft, or 4000 words of second draft, or 5000 words of submission draft. On a normal baby-sitting day I am happy if I achieve half that amount, and usually I don't. If I am doing a difficult piece, I may wind up the day with 100 words written and be grudgingly satisfied. Macroscopic, done recently, was of the 100 word per day type; Sos the Rope, done just before my baby was born, averaged 4000 words per day for first draft. The type of material makes all the difference.

I am curious, though, whether many or even any other writers have come back to pencil the way I have. I once typed everything, but when circumstances forced me to be mobile during writing I took up the pencil, and now I use it for all first drafts regardless of the home situation. I find it more malleable, somehow; I'm not afraid to make stupid notes and to cross them out messily, when working in pencil, whereas typing seems too permanent to change that way. And I can scribble transitory thoughts in the margins, with pencil, and that is quite handy, since some of those thoughts are good ones and only strike once. To a certain extent, I might claim that the secret of my success is the discovery of the pencil as a literary instrument, though at the moment there are four working typewriters in the house. Anyone else?

((My writing is so bad I'm lucky I can write my name.))

ETHEL LINDSAY  
Courage House  
6 Langley Ave.  
Surrey, Surrey  
UNITED KINGDOM

I was interested in Al  
Snider's view of L.A. —  
funny...when I think of LA  
I think of Rick and Len,  
two he never even mentioned.  
I know they are 'outlanders'

but they do toddle along to quite a few affairs.  
To me LA fandom is a place where I was made wel-  
come and gathered in and made to feel at home  
and wanted. I know it shifts and changes —  
but there are many fans there who are wonderful  
people. You usually don't hear so much about  
them, of course, the news always concentrating  
upon the new and the controversial. But still  
— imagine doing an article on LA and never  
mentioning that it has produced some of the best  
folk in fandom; even if I were restricted to  
only three names I could still give you Len,  
Rick, and Ronel.

((It is interesting that I have received  
no comment at all on "Push-Pull...Clique-Clique"  
from L.A. fandom, but four or five defenses  
from Outside.))

ROBERT TOOMEY, JR.  
London, ENGLAND

I'm interested in this  
caricature of a human be-  
ing that calls itself J.

J. Pierce. Though relatively new to fannish  
ways and politics, I have heard the stories of  
the fabulous feuds, the incredible dancing man-  
ia, the wild and wonderful knife in the back,  
the man with the gun in his back pocket and all  
the other lovely legends.

((Knife? Gun? Tell me more!))

From what I can see, Pierce stands fore-  
square in favor of everything that is ruining  
science fiction. ... Maybe, with a concerted  
effort, we can all squash Pierce by simply ig-  
noring him. If a tree falls in the woods with  
no one around, it makes no sound. Only noise.  
Let his noise echo in silence and the fury of  
his sound will fade...fade fade away.

((No chance, Bob.))

SATOSH HIROTA  
27-1 Jingumae 5 Chome  
Shibuya-Ku Tokyo 150  
JAPAN

"2001 A Space Ody-  
sey" in Japan was a  
great success, rating  
fourth in attendance,  
sixth in the list of

Best Movies of the Year.

((Satoshi mentions he would appreciate re-

ceiving fanzines from the United States. What  
the hell, gang, add him to the list for an is-  
sue or two.))

GEORGE FERGUS  
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60618

It looks as if you've  
finally succumbed to the  
effects of your own insid-  
ious drug.

((I KEEP TELLING YOU! I AM IMMUNE! I put  
the drug on certain copies of SFR to inflame  
the minds of those who read them, but I AM IM-  
MUNE!))

Of course, it's your prerogative to give  
the SFR Fugghead Award without explanation to  
anyone who arouses your ire, but I feel that  
your editorial blast at John Pierce last issue  
was too shallow, sketchy and offhand to be tak-  
en seriously. ((Exactly how I feel about his  
"Manifesto".)) You apparently feel that your  
continual use of insulting adjectives in refer-  
ence to Mr. Pierce, coupled with the state-  
ment that you're trying to be objective, will  
cause your opinionated slander to pass for leg-  
itimate criticism. ((A good description of his  
writing.))

I think he goes overboard on several points  
but your complaints concerning a trivial item  
like the repetition of a particular catch-  
phrase "about a dozen times" have an unfortun-  
ate resemblance to the scene in Charles Harness'  
The Rose wherein the villain tries to evaluate  
poetry by the tabulation of word-frequencies.  
(The phrase in question actually occurred only  
7 times in a 39 page article, but it's easier  
to denounce someone if you have first exaggerat-  
ed his statements to the edge of absurdity.  
((far beyond absurdity; Pierce himself went  
over the edge. And it was nice of you to go  
to all the trouble to count the occurrences.  
Only seven! Imagine! I didn't have the stom-  
ach for it.)) You misrepresent the gist of  
Pierce's argument so as to imply that his high-  
est literary ideal would be on about the level  
of Action Comics.)) ((I wouldn't go that far.))  
Surely you realize that overuse of the phrase  
was meant to indicate that such "stories about  
frustrates, jerks, homosexuals and commuters  
who are unhappy with their wives" are themselv-  
es appearing in dismaying overabundance. (And,  
of course, keep accumulating the mainstream  
literary awards. You ought to check out the  
latest winner of the National Book Award for  
fiction: Jerzy Kosinski's Steps, which has lots  
of sadistic perversions and other great stuff.)  
((Yeah! Hey, George, thanks for the tip!))



Correct me if I'm wrong, but you appear to make no distinction between "realism" in fiction, which is a matter of style that most good writers try to achieve, and "Realism", which is a Literary Movement espousing the idea that only the most common and predictable people and situations are "real" enough to be fit subjects for literature. (A Literary Realist, for instance, would most probably object, as you did, to Alexei Panshin's characterization of Mia Haverro because she is not a typical teenage girl.) An average Naturalist would go even farther—to him, only the most unappealing and ineffectual characters or depressingly pointless situations are "real". (These are pretty sweeping generalizations, and for good definitions of Realism and Naturalism you should of course see your favorite expert on French Literature.) Sf, as Damon Knight pointed out in A Century of Science Fiction, is practically the last bastion of fiction in which it is assumed that man can try to change and improve himself and his environment. I don't want to see that squashed under the heels of a bunch of self-appointed messiahs who want to see that sf "matures" into the Ballard mold (wherein the hero's major problem is to decide whether to relax into mindlessness or commit suicide.)

((You write vivid fantasy, George, but I suggest your view of the present state of sf is rather distorted. If one must speak of messiahs, it seems to be a state of mind endemic among those who fear change and experiment and honesty in sf and fantasy.))

By passing over the specifics of Mr. Pierce's argument, I notice that you avoided any direct disagreement with the many elements of it that are clearly supported by quotes from reputable editors, critics and writers (such as Campbell and Pohl, Budrys and Miller, del Rey and Heinlein). But then, it would be much harder to dismiss any of them as a "neurotic high school kid" creating an elaborate paranoid "demonology" than a little known fan like Mr. Pierce. Perhaps you will take the opportunity next issue to second Mike Moorcock's denunciation of Heinlein (in SPECULATION 20) as a "trivial" and "meretricious" writer whose work is almost "unreadable" by any decent standards. It's about time we put a stop to all the senseless adulation such people have received in sf circles, and joined divers members of the New Wave in calling Pohl a pimp and Heinlein a prostitute.

Please, Geis, are you sure you don't have an antidote for that drug?

((Please don't put words in my mouth or place me in corners I don't walk into myself.

((If any of the exalted men in sf you mention write and say, "Yes, I endorse all of Pierce's statements and arguments." then I would wonder about their mental stability, because Pierce's words are ridiculous and do reflect too much enthusiasm and too little sense. I had a bit of fun with him and Sam in my editorial. I did not go into a point-by-point analysis of his diatribe because I felt it didn't deserve it. I'm surprised you do.

((I do not look with favor upon drawing lines, borders, setting up walls or fences in sf and fantasy. We do not need people setting up Procrustean beds and saying "This is what sf must fit into!" although the temptation is obviously hard to resist, as Pierce...and you... demonstrate.

((I'm interested in sf and fantasy as writing and as entertainment, as a critic-reviewer-writer-reader.

((The so-called "New Thing" writers are getting their chance at the public. The readers will decide, in the last analysis. And this is all I care to say about the situation at the moment.))

My reaction is mixed to the news that Rite of Passage has won this year's Nebula for best novel. If I were in SFWA I probably would have chosen it myself, considering the other nominees (although I have yet to read Stand on Zanzibar), but why the hell didn't the ballot include Delany's Nova, Anthony's Omnivore, and Schmitz's The Demon Breed? These are works by former Hugo-nominated authors that compare favorably with the best they've ever done. I sincerely hope that these excellent novels turn up on this year's Hugo slate.

On another tack, I must admit to a certain admiration for the SFWA in that for the second year in a row it has cleverly avoided the monotony of the American prozines and the insanity of their British counterpart by awarding the majority of the short fiction Nebulas to stories from an original book anthology—in this case Knight's Orbit 3. I should think that certain editors would sit up and take notice when a single book can compete favorably with an entire year's output of magazines even when it has not been strongly publicized. Or maybe it just proves that few pros have the perseverance to plow through turgid crud like seemingly endless Mack Reynolds serials in ANALOG.

CHARLES PLATT                      Ted White's column is  
271 Portobello Rd.               largely about himself,  
London W.11                       rather than his opinions,  
ENGLAND                           and is thus extremely dull.

His triumphant cockiness  
bodes ill for the magazines he has secured editorship of. As for Norman Spinrad's column on Stand On Zanibar, I was surprised, in that Brunner's book, while to be admired in the same way a cathedral model made of matchsticks is in its way a masterpiece, didn't really strike me as a great breakthrough. This is probably because I found the slick, commercial writing style detracted from the sense of reality which the author was trying to create. It is the sort of style which makes even pieces of original and clever description read as if they are clichés.

((I didn't notice any difference in his style in SoZ, and I've read a lot of Brunner lately, old and new. He has become more smooth and skilled, but I do not believe he deliberately altered his natural style in SoZ..))

As I've said before, your own material is better than most of the rest of the stuff; once again there is more interest packed into your Dialog and of course the John J. Pierce letter, than in the articles you are running. The John J. Pierce business could have been made into a 6-page article written by yourself, and would have been a lot more interesting to me than anything else in this issue of the magazine. However, no doubt your continuing modesty will prevent such self-indulgence.

((I suppose I have an inferiority complex. My stuff, to me, is flat and uninspired, and I have a devil of a time filling up space. I tend to say things very briefly outside of my fiction, and even there one or two people who read a lot of my books tell me I go too fast. Often I think I go too slow. Owell, I'll try. I'll try..))

My own personal outlook on the Pierce attitude is one of amazed silence, since what he says is almost too strange or absurd to comment on. I'll just mention that an old friend of mine in England is starting a magazine of traditional sf, and a series of books, some of them reprints of 20 or 30 years old material. Being saner and more balanced than Mr. Pierce, my friend realizes he is just pursuing his own tastes, alongside the tastes of others (like New Worlds). He never even thought of his project in terms of a resurgence, a counter-blow, or any such revolutionary ideas.

JIM HARMON  
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I note that Richard Delap will review my The Great Radio Heroes in #30. I don't expect it to be very favorable. Almost

universally of late years, I have found fannish opinion running against me (even as the larger "real" or "straight" world becomes more receptive). I thought I might get in a word of simultaneous defense and say that of course, I, the writer, am not responsible for the book having no index and no pictures (a recurring complaint). I opted for both, but the publisher decided "no".

SFR was fascinating as usual; much more interesting than the SFWA letterzine that arrived in the same mail. There is a great deal more valid information for an SF writer in SFR than in the SFWA thing which seems to deal almost exclusively in juvenile character assassinations. SFR has many things besides — although including — juvenile character assassinations.

All this purple ranting between SF people reveals how unimportant virtually all SF figures are. Really important and influential people cannot afford to seriously offend one another. Top businessmen, actors, politicians, the Establishment if you will, talk to each other in the terms a Southerner uses to his most intimate family members. If one goes outside the bounds of polite rivalry, one can get "dead" figuratively by a kind of word-of-mouth "black-listing" and it is not impossible to get dead, literally. Most top figures of the Establishment have some Mafia contacts, the Mafia being an integral part of said Establishment. I honestly wonder at times how a couple of loudmouth SF figures with minor connections with show biz manage to stay alive. A casual drop of three hundred dollars minimum can get anyone without much pull rubbed out. Some people would get pests rubbed out as casually as scratching an itch. "An armed society is a polite society" — which also refers to the economically and politically armed.

I think your disagreement with J.J. Pierce is presented well within acceptable limits, and compares very much favorably to you with Alexei Panshin's attack on a conservative SFWA member in terms of "you goddam shithead" (not an exact quote). Certain formalities must be preserved. The "Equal Time" provision of radio and TV doesn't work very well as it is, but it would work

less wall if the management were allowed to say: "That was the truth from Richard Nixon. Now let's hear the lies of that cowardly traitor, that mother-jumping swishy bastard, Senator Eugene McCarthy..."

However, I agree with some of J.J. Pierce's points as suggested by your editorial and his latters. I have not read his original "essay" which may have been ill-executed. Do you, Richard, seriously defend Harlan Ellison's claimed right to beat up Pierce if Pierca shows up at a convantion to express his tastes in reading matter? I also agree with Pierca and editor Robert W. Lowndes that much of the New Wave sax is an attempt to shock the reader through the author's masturbatory fantasies, which are pretty creepy, crawly littla things. In the (private) words of an SF writer I know who has been fairly well accepted into New Wave ranks, these New Wave enthusiasts reveal themselves as "little jackoff bastards" with their tongues (as well as other bodily profections) ((fingers? toes?)) hanging out. That is, there is not a great deal of personal experience involved in the sex scenes. And finally they really contribute nothing to the understanding of even neurotic sexual impulsas compared to the classic works of great writers like Dostoevski or the really great crackpots like DeSade.

((You have generalized with some specific comments. How about pointing out some books and sex scenes in those books or stories, so that we can judge your judgement?))

((Also, are you implying that unless a book is great it shouldn't be published, because it is inherently superfluous?))

The one big thing about the New Thing that I know is that it just does not interest me. Maybe I am just too much out of "It" today — what is happening today.

The Rock music of today only irritates and annoys me. I like some of the new movies, fashions, and I can dig the drug scene to a minor extent. But the New science fiction I find literally unreadable. I think the trouble is that the new writers have not grown up in the lineal type oriented culture that I was born into, and which was the world of Bradbury, van Vogt, Heinlein, Asimov, Bloch, Kuttner, Campbell, Gold, Boucher, etc. The printed word — the book, the magazine, the newspaper — simply are not very important to the majority of Americans today. The literate are a minority, and even those who wish to claim orientation to the literate minority are often shaped by the non-

print orientated culture to the point of no return. And of course their readers are similarly shaped. If areas of ignorance match, the picture of knowledge seems clear.

For instance, I do not think that Roger Zelazny is a good stylist. I think his use of language shows some native skill and crafted development but it often seems incredibly sophomoric and at times is plain embarrassing in its misuse. He is also rather a poor story-teller who can not maintain my interest. I've read the first half of a hell of a lot of Zelazny stories and books. I would suggest that other critics besides "Larry Tanner" would not have much use for Lord of Light. I don't think anyone with a vary sound grounding in "old hat, Establishment-type" literature could have too high an opinion of Zelazny. He has talent, promise, but such a self-satisfied smugness in some of his posing that I doubt he will develop much further.

Delany is a pretty good stylist, but like Zelazny, he seems to have no storytelling ability and once again, I have never been able to finish reading any Delany book.

I think the trouble of most current writers is that they have little or no regard for the basic desires of most human beings for love, sex, power, wealth, revenge, etc. Possibly this is because the current bedrugged unisex generation has so many of its animal desires satisfied by the affluent society they hate they become weighed down with desires involving vague metaphysical or "psychedelic" values or non-values.

As an analogy, to put it in the terms many of my friends describe as "crass" I find that what many women mind in a mass of metaphysical and ESP junk need is a good screw.

At least, what most normal, functioning human beings need is a good screw, a meaningful job, self respect. It is only the minority of screwed up misfits — writers, artists, priests — who eloquently convince the majority that they need God, LSD, or New Wave science fiction.

SF writers spend too much time today jacking off. They indulge their petty little fantasies — and most of those fantasies are pretty damned patty — and try to appeal to a tiny minority of people who are as screwed up as the writers but lack the writers' talent for expression. I believe science fiction writers should remember that a writer's job is to entertain, enlighten, and if it is within his power, en-

oble. It is not the writer's highest aspiration to indulge himself in describing his latest experience with narcotics or to savor his fondest wish to rape and torture to death his mother.

((Sounds like you got ahold of a copy of my Ravished..))

I would disagree with Piers Anthony that Ring of Ritornel is one of the best five books of last year. I would say Charles L. Harness' novel is the best SF novel of the last five or ten years. If it is not quite a timeless classic, Harness is also being influenced by our non-text oriented age. The act of writing is influenced by feedback to approximately the same extent as the act of sex. (I would say that Anthony's own Chthon was the best SF I had read in recent years before Harness' book.)

I think I was virtually the first person in fandom to criticize the right-wing views of John Campbell. That was around 1959 when many people suddenly began to criticize Heinlein. In the Journal of the PIFCS, the fledgling, unsuccessful SF writers guild, I asked why no writer criticized Campbell who had long published Heinlein's right-wing excursions and had presented even further right-wing views of his own? Was it merely because Campbell signed a lot of paychecks? As I recall, I was dissected inch by inch by virtually every member of that organization, including many so-called liberals and writers who later took on Campbell themselves (as the paperback field began to dominate the market even more than Campbell's magazine.) ... I would disagree with Ted White's retraction. While it is a red-flag-waving term, Campbell certainly does seem to like "ass-licking". Those writers who echo back Campbell's views — even such bizarre ones as psionic machines — are those who succeed most regularly in selling him their work.

((Easy to say. How about some chapter and verse proof?))

RICHARD DELAP  
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Spinrad credits Stand On Zanzibar with being "brilliant" and says "It's all in the editing!" Bullshit. Simply because the book is divided into sections and each chapter has an oh-so-clever title is no reason to suppose the book has been edited. That's akin (good word there) to saying that each frame of a feature-length film, when

set up and marked individually, constitutes a beautifully edited movie. Bullshit (and we've got enough here in Kansas without importing it) ...So? is a sloppy blob of jelly that spreads and spreads but never gains any texture. If anything, it proves that the whole can be far less than the sum of its parts.

((Your chapter=movie frame analogy isn't valid. You would have to compare chapters to movie scenes, and even then...))

((I thought Stand On Zanzibar an excellent book, certainly one of the best of last year. It would have won the Nebula award if Doubleday had sent<sup>3</sup> free copy to each member of the SFWA as Ace and several other publishers send copies of their contenders and potential contenders throughout the year. But a six or seven dollar hardcover can't be broadcast so extensively, for free. Hardcover books are at a definite disadvantage in the running for the major awards.))

I can't entirely agree with Bob Toomey's opinion that the new 'blotter' writers "with their desperate gropings and failures are interesting." Why should the average reader have to wade through the "New Wave" crap to get to whatever ultimate, undisclosed goal is supposedly at the end. Juxtaposition isn't art, it's merely supplies; and the general public, contrary to Toomey's own interest, has little understanding or use for it. (Not to be misunderstood.)

((I really admire people who feel they can speak for the general public and the average reader, especially when they would likely deny they themselves are average...))

stood, I'm not for or against "New Wave"...I'm strictly for good writing. In my opinion writers like Vonnegut have a control over experimental style and make the outre something to catch the mind as well as the eye; writers like William Burroughs and (recently) J.G. Ballard are traveling blind, masking themselves as well as their readers, and their epileptic stumblings are painful to all.

If I suspected that even one reader could justify the likes of Ballard's "Kennedy" and "Reagan" pieces (aside from mouthing that the author must have the right to "do his thing"), I would stop to listen. So far, I've read nothing but variations on the "doing his thing" stand. Big deal! I can do my thing too, but I don't expect or demand the country stand up and hail me master innovator for doing so.

(Actually, I could say (but heavens, no, I won't) that Ballard's "Why I'd Like to Fuck Ronald Reagan" shows definite homosexual leanings — and who's to deny it, except perhaps Ballard himself whom anyone can disbelieve if he wishes.)

HARRY WARNER, Jr.  
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21740

Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if AMAZING and FANTASTIC became smash hits under Ted White's editorship? I'd be happy for

him and even happier for me, if he continues to be unable to do much about the visual appeal aspect of the magazines. This is the only point on which I've ever violently disagreed with Ted White, and in this respect I must be utterly unique in fandom and maybe in the whole universe, since everyone else seems quite able to find a wealth of dissension openings. I still feel that good science fiction is all that's needed to bring the prozines more readers, and I'd love to see Ted succeed in persuading writers to create for him for whatever he can afford to pay, just as Ted is giving his time for less than an editor might earn elsewhere. Of course, I hope that Ted proves wrong in another respect. Over and above the hope that he'll disprove his own theories by making modest-looking magazines into a smash hit, I hope he'll refuse to believe his predictions about dropping most fanac. I've heard that before from people in this very same issue of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, like Bill Temple, who has sworn off long ago writing any more letters of comment.

Although it's a point of interest to nobody else, I might add that I can't get over the Pavlovian reaction to every reference to Harry Harrison in Ted's column. It's incredible, how seldom anyone else in fandom or prodom has been named Harry. When the name appears anywhere in a fanzine, it has meant me so regularly that I automatically take any mentions of it personally, even when it belongs to a Harrison or a Stubbs or a Schwarze. And I wonder how long it's been since anyone wrote the name of Harry Schwarze in a loc, and how much longer since anyone's blood pressure shot up at the thought of him? He may be even before your time.

((That he is.))

At first, I thought I was getting some ego-boo out of Arthur Jean Cox's essay. But I can't

in all honesty find enough in common with Joe to claim it as a thinly disguised biography. Nonetheless, it makes me think hard again about some of my bad habits, the ones that Joe and I have in common, particularly the inclination to go dashing down the hills and dales of the past at the slightest opportunity. I threatened to do it in the first paragraph and ended the second graph by committing the transgression and it'll probably come upon us again before this letter is completed. It's an awful nuisance, because I find myself using up my two pages too rapidly to cover all the present situations when I slip into reminiscing in the early stages of the letter. I tell myself that it's quite useful to bring lessons from the past to the attention of a group of fans who weren't around to learn them, and I explain to myself that I've acquired this bad habit from working so hard on the fan history, and still all that persiflage can't hide the truth from me: it's a sort of status gesture that I can't stop myself from making, a snide way of reminding people how long I've been around and how experience has made me wise in the ways of fans. Obviously, the status gesture doesn't impress most readers as such, because the majority of fans must realize that a sensible person lingers in the active status only a few years, then gaffiates for a long while or forever. So I feel a lot of sympathy for Joe. I may understand him better than Arthur Jean Cox does.

Al Snider's article left me wondering desperately what F. Yowler Laney would create, if he lived now and retained activity in Los Angeles fandom and suddenly decided to write a latter-day "Ah! Sweet Idiocy." We outsiders got two or three alternative ways to look at the Los Angeles fandom of the 1940's, because Laney's creation produced so many rebuttals and confirmations. But it's obvious that the Los Angeles fandom of the 1950's and the 1960's will remain enigmatic, a complex that can be glimpsed by non-residents only in fleeting glimpses like this one which aren't spectacular enough to bring forth endless countering claims and rebuttals. For that matter, nobody has explained the continuity of the group: how it has managed to survive an unbroken chain of existence despite all the low spots and fragmentations. Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia—there's been a break in fandom in all those cities, caused by either feuds or war or epidemic gaffiation somewhere along the line. But only Los Angeles and New York have never disappeared in the organized sense, and New York hardly counts

because the people there have hated one another too vigorously all along to make a gap in fandom thinkable.

There should be some awards that the Westcon could create without competing with either the Hugos or Nebulas. One for sword and sorcery fiction, which has grown into a separate category of story-telling which justifies special recognition. One for best fan—not best fan artist or writer or editor, but just best fan, a sort of popularity-cum-accomplishment recognition. Another for best recording of some kind of interest to fandom, not necessarily science fictional in content, but experimental enough or sufficiently freakish or far out to make fans want to vote for it. An award for the best television series, not individual episodes. There are four, and it would be easy to think of a few more. The worldcon banquets are long enough now to make it unlikely that the number of Hugos will be increased, and introducing new awards at the Westcon might actually create more accurate voting for Hugos: No need for Star Trek fans to decide beforehand which episodes should get votes, no desire to give one fan a vote as best fan publisher because he's better-liked personally than the editor of another fanzine that is just about as good.

TEED WHITE                      I'd appreciate it if you  
339 49th St.                      could slip in a note somewhere,  
Brooklyn, NY                      sometime, to the effect that  
11220                                  although the March AMAZING and  
                                         April FANTASTIC carry my name  
on the mastheads, this is an error; both issues  
were edited (and blurred) by Barry Malzberg,  
whose taste diverges from mine in a number of  
respects, and whose credit I wouldn't want to  
steal anyway. I've almost finished my second  
issues of AMAZING and FANTASTIC, though, and  
I'm pretty pleased with them. Excellent serials  
by Vance and Silverberg (Lee Hoffman coming  
up), good stories by the like of Panshin,  
Carter, Ellison and others, and new fan columns.  
In FANTASTIC it's "Fantasy Fandom," a column  
devoted to reprinting good fan articles of general  
interest, and in AMAZING it's a new "The  
Club House," by Johnny Berry. SFR #28 is re-  
viewed in the first of Johnny's columns, by the  
way (it'll be in the July AMAZING), and I think  
I can safely say that this is the best fanzine  
review column ever published in a prozine, and  
I'm enormously pleased. The letter column is

also back, in AMAZING (I haven't received any  
letters for FANTASTIC yet), and I'd like to see  
fans writing in the way they used to, back in  
the old days of TWS, STARTLING and PLANET.

EARL EVERS  
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Calif. 94117

I can't really answer Kay  
Anderson's question about  
whether psychedelic drugs,  
especially acid, decrease a  
person's ability to communi-  
cate in words. I think there

is such an effect, and observations of lots of  
acid heads "before" and "after" bear me out,  
but my own experience is just the opposite —  
I communicate more and better now than I did  
pre-acid. (A file of TAPS or Cultzines for the  
last five years would give you proof, since I  
wrote a substantial letter every month or two  
all the time I was tripping once or twice a  
week.)

The depth and coherence of my writing shows  
a slow, steady increase, with occasional lapses  
when I tried to write while I was actually high  
on acid.) It isn't possible to write coherently  
while actually on an acid trip any more than  
it's possible to drive a car after drinking a  
quart of hard liquor — LSD interferes with the  
brain centers that control speech and verbal  
thinking just as alcohol interferes with the  
motor nerve control centers. But that effect  
wears off as soon as you come down from the  
trip.

Only the question is much more complex than  
that. On an acid trip you experience a lot of  
things that have nothing to do with words, and  
it's very easy to become a lot less verbally  
oriented than you were before acid — you lose  
some of the desire to communicate in words.  
Once you've seen that a lot of speech and writ-  
ing is just game-playing, with the rules of the  
game determined by habits and conditioned re-  
flexes that acid allows you to see as artificial  
structures, many of them structures of little  
or no real value, then it's very easy to cut  
way down on your talking and writing. You  
have discovered that most human speech contains  
very little real communication, so you just  
don't bother.

But like I said, I didn't react this way  
myself — instead of giving up because verbal  
communication and thinking is based around more  
illusion than reality, I expended a great deal  
of effort trying to put my speech and writing  
on a realistic level. In other words, I saw

the problem and tried to solve it. Why most acid heads see the problem and give up, I don't know.

BILL GLASS

A-7 625 Landfair of the people who have written  
Los Angeles, Cal. of Candy have understood  
90024 what was really going on in  
that picture. It was not  
supposed to be just a dumb superficial film about sex with a lota stars and no depth. What it was supposed to be (perhaps only subconsciously) was a religious experience. It was the revelation of CANDIESM over all other deisms and just plain isms.

It begins with that shimmering pure-mind essence coming to Earth where it rests on the ground and takes material form as CANDY. End prologue.

Now, in comes Richard Burton, who sees Candy standing in white against a white bower filled with roses — looking like a stained glass window. Then Ringo as the Spanish Catholic studying to be a priest whose ruination is revenged by his leather-garbed, whip-wielding, motorcycling sisters (?). Then Walter Mathau's patriotism and love for his men (the finest bunch of boys anywhere) succumbs to Candy, who stretches out Christ-like against the stars beyond the cockpit (Ohmygod! The cockpit! Could Buck Henry have really intended—? Naw.) wearing a halo-like white fur hat. Then James Cagney's Dr. Kronkheit turns from Nurse Bullet to try a little rear-entry fun. Charles Aznavour's hunchback is Dionysian with his music, his tragic hump, and his poetic (a la Cocteau's Blood of the Poet) exit through the mirror. Now Candy is actually taken through the mystic paths toward sainthood by Marlon Brando's Grindl. That he does not believe what he says has no bearing on her belief. She is then taken by the holy men with the holy bird through the depths of the earth (descent into hell) and into the temple where Candy achieves Union with the Father. (Note: this is the first time she uses the word god instead of gosh.)

She appears in the epilogue first in a flowing gown of pure white passing her various encounters again with their symbolic role more clearly spelled out in little bits of business. Burton is the Welsh pagan, playing with his snake and laughing with his black companion. Ringo is dressed as a priest, and starts to get

up to go after Candy, but is pulled back as one of his sisters (?) snaps her whip about his neck. Walter Mathau rides by on a spavined nag, lance at ready, a shaving basin on his head, into the valley of mists. Dr. Kronkheit is injecting people with drugs, turning them into childlike miniatures of themselves. He sees Candy, injects himself, is transformed, and runs off after her with Nurse Bullet in pursuit. The Dionysian Aznavour is torn literally apart by his dancing followers, one of whom carries off his head. Finally, the fake mystic Grindl is trapped in the middle of heavenly ascent and can't get down to get at Candy. In her walk past the converted isms of the world, Candy's white dress has become more and more spotted with flower prints and her head becomes wreathed in flowers. Finally, the shimmering pure-mind essence of Candy ascends outward through the universe as the Byrds sing about her work on Earth being done.

See, Candy was not just a tasteless, heavy-handed, sex-ridden, superficial movie like you thought. No, it was a bad, tasteless, heavy-handed film that was unsuccessful at getting across what redeeming social message it thought it had.

ALVA ROGERS

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94546

Aren't you being a tad rough on J.J. Pierce and Sam Dick? After all, all Pierce is doing is expressing, albeit somewhat vehemently, his opinion of a certain form of science fiction and the similarly vehement advocates of that form. Perhaps he is whipping this particular horse a little vigorously, but what the hell...

You express your doubts that Asimov or del Rey stand by the statements of Pierce made by him in DIFFERENT #30, or even saw the paper prior to publication. I can't speak for Isaac, but the following quotes are from a letter to me from Les last September:

"I saw his article early this spring and was quite impressed with it myself. My only real connection with it was that he is overly impressed with me, and hence wanted my approval..."

"I think Pierce has done more than hit at the 'New Wave'. He has gone further than that, and has hit hard at a whole attitude that has been creeping into sf before Merrill ever figur-

ed up the Wave business — the stuff that has come into our field from the influence of college literary courses where sterility and futility become the hallmarks of quality...

"Personally, of course, I hope he gets the support he wants. When I think of science fiction, I automatically sense an opening outwards and a reaching forward into a future where mankind will average at least somewhat greater than he is; it's a world of high possibilities to me. And I can't understand how visionary fiction can be written by those who view things to come as only an even more narrow tunnel into the muck. Nor can I see that the fads and crazes of today extend far forward to form a basis for extrapolation when I remember the nut-fads of my own youth and what happened to them. Sic transit — gratia plenus."

In general, I agree with Les.

I thoroughly enjoyed Al Snider's pungent commentary on clique-ridden LA fandom and the LASFS. As an active member of the LASFS (and ex-director) during the strife-torn early and mid-forties, all I can say is that things haven't changed much in the LASFS from one generation to the next. If anyone's interested in reading about the cliques in the LASFS in the early forties, and the feudin' and fussin' that went on there with Francis T. Laney as the focal point, I might modestly recommend my own long essay FIL and ASI: A Critique of the Man and the Book (available for 25¢ from Richard Eney, 6500 Ft. Hunt Rd., Alexandria, Va. 22307).

Since writing the letter published in SFR #29 I've re-evaluated my position re Worldcons/Nationalcons/Westercons as expressed in that letter. Ted White mentions in his column being pleased that at the BayCon business meeting the rotation to a foreign sited Worldcon was put on a five yearly basis rather than the four yearly schedule voted in at MyCon3. If we accept the permanence of a foreign Worldcon within the rotation structure, then this is, of course, a right and proper move.

But is putting a foreign Worldcon on a scheduled rotational basis — whether every four years or every five — in and of itself a right and proper move? I don't think so.

For over twenty years the annual Worldcon has been in fact if not in name the annual National Convention for U.S. and Canadian fans, the two LonCons notwithstanding. In recent years regional conventions have sprung up in great profusion, but all defer to the Worldcon

as the one big all-embracing science fiction convention — the Mecca of science fiction fans (and pros).

The mere fact that the annual convention is called a "World" Science Fiction Convention isn't enough of an argument to insist that the con should be held at regular intervals in some other country other than on the North American continent. Muslimism is embraced by millions in every country on Earth; but Muslims still face Mecca, and the devout still make the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, the cradle of the faith, rather than insisting that Mecca be rotated to different countries simply because there are Muslims in those other countries.

The United States has for over fifty years produced 99% of the science fiction read throughout the world, and the best of U.S. science fiction has been the model used by writers in other countries for domestically produced science fiction.

Fandom had its birth in this country, and since its birth in the early thirties has grown steadily and vigorously. Except for British fandom organized fandom elsewhere in the world has been a late development, dating its real beginnings from well after the end of WWII. Fans in this country have quite rightly looked with favor on this spread of fandom to other parts of the world and encouraged its growth. But let's be realistic about it — and even a little selfish.

The Worldcon, Ghoddamniti!, is an American con. It is encrusted with its own peculiar traditions built up over the years. And I submit that whether-or-not we admit it to ourselves, the Worldcon has a much deeper meaning to American fans than it can ever have to anyone else. Chauvinism? Perhaps.

It is all well and good to be idealistic about the Brotherhood of Fandom and its spread across international borders. But rather than giving up, even occasionally, our National Convention, we would do better to encourage the fans of other countries to create their own National or continental conventions which would in time have their own forms and traditions.

The number of active fans in this country far outnumber the total of active fans in all other countries combined. A convention such as the Worldcon should logically be held where the greatest number might benefit from it and/or enjoy it. A Worldcon held in Australia, for instance, would be attended almost exclusively



by Australian fans: a Worldcon held in Japan would be literally a Japanese convention. Does anyone for a moment think any significant number of American fans would be able to attend a Worldcon in Australia or Japan? How many Europeans would be likely to attend? Doesn't it strike you as grossly self-seeking on the part of a small number of fans in those two countries to actively campaign for a Worldcon in that area?

What is the total number of active sf fans in all of Europe, including Britain? I'm referring to active fans, not passive readers. How many of these can be expected to attend a European Worldcon? In 1965 LonCon II had an official attendance figure of 350. We have more than that attending Westercons, and that's just a regional con. And, finally, how many American fans can be expected to attend the MelCon in 1970? I doubt if as many as fifty will make it, including pros. That leaves a helluva lot of American and Convention fans without a National Con to attend over the Labor Day Weekend, doesn't it.

So, let's have a "National" con that year, and five years later, and so on. Fine, but isn't this needlessly complicating things a lot? Who's to determine where the National Con will be, and how will its site be arrived at? Who or what will be in charge? How will it be financed? By what rules will it be run? What of the Hugos? Suggesting that the Westerncon (as I advocated in my last letter), or the Lunacon, or the Ozarkcon, or whatever, be selected as the National con for that year is not the answer.

What is the answer, then? Simple. Return to the previous system of rotation across the North American continent and be done with it. Let the fans of other countries create and develop their own conventions and leave us with ours.

I'm not unaware of the fact that by my taking the above position I am quite likely jeopardizing our bid for the 1972 Worldcon, the voting for which will almost certainly be in Germany. But I'm speaking for myself, not Bill Donaho or Ben Stark, who can speak for themselves.

No matter how much I would like to see us win the Worldcon bid at the Heidelberg con, I believe that the future of the Worldcon and its continuing vigor is more important than any one bid, whether ours or anyone else's. And I firmly believe that the Worldcon should remain an

American con.

I'm not being chauvinistic or anti-foreign fans, nor am I trying to maintain that American fans are in some way superior to foreign fans; but where fandom and its single most tangible manifestation, The Worldcon, is concerned, I must stand with Rick Sneary, who put it most succinctly:

"...we invented it (fandom), and it is still mainly our club."

((I don't think you can have a "Worldcon" limited to one country. Why is that title so important? Why not simply The North American Science Fiction Convention, and as you wish, be done with it?))

CAROL CARR  
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Brooklyn, NY 11201

I want to thank John  
J. Pierce for sending me  
back to the glorious days  
of radio with his "...Mr.

Ellison's notorious sidekick, Norman Spinrad." Why stop at Spinrad? Hasn't he heard of Thomas M. Disch, subtle anti-humanist about town; Brian Aldiss, sophisticated and enigmatic Oxford literateur — not to mention R.A. Lafferty, who leaps tall stories with a single bound. Did you notice (of course you did) that he called the new wave an "entrenched establishment"? This may not make sense to anyone but John J. Pierce himself. Using a secret formula which allows him to cloud men's minds to the meaning of words (i.e., if it's new, how can it be entrenched, much less an establishment?), he is miraculously able to draw an analogy between the new wave and Chicago's Mayor Daley. But wait! Could JJP be trying to ingratiate himself with the Good Guys (me)? Can anyone who puts down Mayor Daley be all bad?

I agree with Toomey when he says (in his letter) that the rebellion against form "shows only what can be done, not what should." There's a depressing tendency lately to assume that the freedom to produce will necessarily result in a quality product (not everyone who sows comes up with a good crop of grass). On the other hand, until this cold revolution, there was a dangerous tendency to equate traditional forms with health, happiness, artistic success, morality, and all the deadly virtues Dylan Thomas talks about in "Lament." I much prefer the former to the latter.

MIKE GILBERT

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West Henrietta, N.Y.  
14586

About art: when

Jack Gaughan said  
that about sf art-  
ists being fans—  
yes, it's true. You

can't make any sort of living at it unless you live in a tent and eat cabbage. The thing about sf art is that it is behind the times (I don't expect to open GALAXY and find McCall's type illustrations but it should have evolved somewhere beyond Frank R. Paul). A good illo should be a piece of art in itself, not just a drawing that says, "Hey, if you can't see what's going on in the story I've made a diagram for you!" This is precisely what Jack is doing and so is John Schoneherr (who does sf because he likes it — he does kids' books and the like—makes money—and has awards—he's damned good).

"If sf wants to be treated like serious literature so should it's illustrations." quote Jack Gaughan. Sf magazines have not had too good covers lately, nuff said.

My own personal feeling is that if a piece of work is good enough for a cover it should be good enough to hang on a wall for it's own merits as a thing of art work.

I have a running battle going on at my art school with my painting "instructor" (ha!).

Him: "What's this symbolize here."

I: "It's how I feel a group of asteroids looks floating around Beta Hydri."

Him: "But...um...are these representing your soul and/or man, or life?"

I: "Those are little machines sitting on the asteroids—just that."

"But—"

"Go away."



"JUST WHAT KIND OF PAINTING IS  
THAT MR. GILBERT?"

This is nothing compared to the looks I get from the other students; my paintings may bug 'em but the fact that I sell them to interior decorators—doctors—and a bunch of weirdos who work at a computer place, etc., bugs hell out of them because they don't sell a damn thing, ever — that academy for box designers is funny.

BARRY N. MALZBERG  
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10024

I've been doing some thinking recently in relation to the Hugos. It does seem a shame — doesn't it? — to delimit the fan award

to "best fan writer". Many of our most important fans are, after all, not writers by profession or taste and there is no reason why this large, increasing, and indispensable group of people should be excluded from the treasured award of our field. Rather, I would like to suggest that the "writer" clause be simply stripped from the conditions of the award and that, instead, the rocket simply be given to the "best fan". Period.

((There are actually four fan awards: best writer, best artist, best fanzine—and Fan Guest of Honor at the convention. The fan GoH seems to fill in for your suggestion.))

Along with that let me say that I am grateful to all the fan who with their notes and phone calls have shown such response to my novelle "Final War", and, in answer to their questions let me take this opportunity to say that yes, of course I shall be happy to come out to St. Louis at my own expense to accept the Hugo.

JOHN BOARDMAN  
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11218

There was a hot argument at one of the LunaCon panels about the "new wave", along the lines of the del Rey —

Pierce attack. Apparently they think there really is a British-based conspiracy to ram New Wave sf down the throats of an unwilling public. Pierce's argument sounds to me like the attacks Stark was making on quantum physics 30 and 40 years ago, pitched in much the same tones. (See Nature, 30 April 1938, p. 770.) ((Not likely.)) The New Wave was defended on the panel by Norman Spinrad; Ted White attacked Pierce's conspiracy theory.

Anent this argument, the paperback edition of Bug Jack Barron showed up on some of the

huster tables and immediately sold out. I was fortunate enough to get a copy which I read yesterday. It's a mind-blower and a cock-blower, which Ghu volente I will enthusiastically review for you Real Soon Now.

By and large I don't particularly care for much of the New Wave; Ballard in particular writes like an idiot. But, while a lot of New Wave stuff leaves me cold, the attacks on it are outright repellent. A lot of us may wind up loving the New Wave for the enemies it has made.

### I Also Got Letters From.....

MIKE DOLZANI who asks: "Is it really true that SFR is written by a mad Greek sorcerer residing in the Bronx, that it is on the Index Expurgatorius, that it can cure warts by contact and increase sexual potency when boiled and eaten?"

Yes, of course.

LEIGH COUCH who compares me to the manager of the Roman Arena.

DAVID T. MALONE thinks I am too soft on JJPierce and for the wrong reasons: "Pierce is a smart cat and does not write like a high school kid. I'm a high school kid and I should know."

Pshaw. I WAS a high school kid, so I should know.

JIM SANDERS who wrote a "short" three and a half page single spaced letter parts of which I am saving over till next ish.

JEFFREY D. SMITH who starts his letter with: "Now for the comedy relief."

Your comments were interesting, Jeff, but that old bugaboo lack of room...

ROY TACKETT who says: "I read Pierce's 'manifesto' in DIFFERENT and my first reaction was 'He's putting us on.' He isn't? He isn't! Ghod!" Roy also comments on the New Wave and sf in general.

BOB STAHL who said Ed Cox's review of the six Tenn books was so good he was compelled to go out and buy them.

Gad, Ed, the power we have....

JEFFREY D. SMITH (again) who asks: "Is Norman Spinrad leaving the country before the publication of Bug Jack Barron? Very interesting."

WELLMAN PIERCE (no relation to JJP) who is glad Yellow Submarine is getting critical attention and think the last episode of The Prisoner was the most beautiful tv program he has ever seen.

JIM REUSS who received SFR 29 and proceeded to give himself a headache by reading 40-50 pages at one sitting.

You've got your eyes in a funny place, Jim.

MIKE MICHIX wrote: "I must admit that I am a bit unexperienced (I have not yet written an sf story (dammit, I'm such a blasted perfectionist, but I'll grind one out if it KILLS me!))..."

The mills of the gods are two blocks down and one block over. You can't miss them.

ED REED who discussed Bergman's Wild Strawberries and reality and ghosts and SFR and sex and asks what kind music I like.

Not much of any kind. I prefer human voices on the radio, being a hermit, natch.

LISA TUTTLE thinks SFR is a prozine!

If that's true how come I pay to edit this thing?

CHIP DELANY was impressed with SFR.

I'm content.

JOHN FOYSTER wrote: "ASFR is a zombie, or at least now seems likely to join the living dead, with a possibility of promotion. But I've heard that tale so often that I don't take too much notice of it."

JDE SICLAPI who took exception to Phil Farmer's Reap in SFR 28 and finishes with: "Yet someone has to do the providing and then everyone would not have all that they wanted because they would have to work; work could be to someone's advantage even in such a society because work would put a man in a position of importance and control where he could bring others into subservience and we are back to totalitarianism or at least a dictatorship."

Yes, at the very least.

M.B. JEPPEP who responded to my mild criticism of his new fanzine WAWATTYA! with: "About staples? Well, the copy I gave you was a complimentary copy, whether it was trade or not. People who actually pay me money get staples."

CORNIE REICH who says: "Dear Dick—how delightfully your name lends itself to obscenities."

Yes, it warped my life. It's all my mother's fault!

And letters from Bob Shaw, Rod Glatfelter and Al Snider and if I missed anyone, I'm sorry....REG.

## *Monolog*

"We must all be  
Number Six!"

