



SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

-31-
JUNE 1969

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Andrews—36; George Foster—28, 37; Ray Nelson—38, 40.

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DIALOG BOTVOD

"Geis...I have an odd feeling...as if...as if we were back to typing on stencils again..." *GASP* "We are on stencil!" (Pregnant pause...)

"Yes, you see—"

"Green Sure-Rite. A new Gestetner in the other room! I thought you said you would never crank another sheet through the clunkety-wunk machine again?"

"So I did. And I have kept my word. The new Gestetner is an *E*¹*C*¹*R*¹*C*¹. A 466 to be exact. It feeds itself ink automatically, too, and jogs the paper to nice neat piles as it emerges from the maw, and it says, "Thank you, secret master!" when I approach it and turn it on."

"Don't get sickening. So we're back to being a low-class 'adult pulp fanzine' again, huh?"

"I afraid so."

"But the photo-offset format was sooo pretty."

"And sooooo expensive."

"A new Gestetner 466 doesn't cost peanuts, Geis!"

"True, but pro-rated over a ten year period—"

"Snirk* "Ah, Geis, you are a wondrous fool."

"Snirk if you will, I still insist on going my insane way. Besides, by using Para-tipe pressure lettering and electronic stencils the layouts stay as professional as in photo-offset, and I have a lot more flexibility."

"That means adding more pages, doesn't it?"

"Well...usually. I get so many good letters, and reviews..."

"Inexorably, Geis, let us face the facts. A fifty page fanzine, using this special micro-elite typer, is the equivalent of the 68 page photo-offset SFR which had narrower columns and a slightly larger ratio of artwork-per-page size, using this typer."

"Uh...agreed."

"So how many pages are you running this issue?"

"I'm not sure yet."

"I figure around sixty."

"Oh. Well...I already have rescheduled one article for next issue. I can't cut anymore! There's too much lined up for number 32 as it is."

"This is not a money-making magazine, Geis! What will the Internal Revenue Service say when you claim all these "business losses"?"

"Listen, don't put that in snirkly quotes. SFR is legit. I have a Santa Monica business license. I have an SFR bank account listing. I have a Post Office mailing permit. I have advertised in nationally circulated magazines. There is a chance I'll break even in 1979..."

"Do you realize you have created a structure? An on-going creature with tentacles and a life of its own? SFR LIVES!"

"Don't get cute, yourself. We're at the bottom of the page."

"So now we're up here. I still think you should stabilize the size of this thing. If only to keep on schedule. You only have time to do about one stencil per day, Geis, and if you run 60 plus pages..."

"I know. I knpw. *sigh* You're right. There is no easy way out."

"The main problem is the book reviews, you realize. That section has grown and grown..."

Groan

"...until it threatens to distort the structure. Maybe if you separated it and published it as a separate—"

"No! I enjoy reviewing books. I feel an obligation to review or have reviewed those books sent me by publishers. Besides, sf readers are beginning to use SFR reviews as a guide."

"So let them. How long would a separate SFR book review supplement run...20 pages? You could sell it to libraries."

"Fat chance."

"I'm only making suggestions."

"A special, separate supplement would only involve more typing, more bookwork... No, we'll keep the magazine as is, and ask the reviewers to not use much space on bad books. 100 to 200 words should be enough."

"Basically, Geis, the problem is that there is simply too much sf being published."

"Too much for one magazine to cover well."

"No, I wouldn't go that far. But you'll have to make the reviewers be more selective about long reviews. Either that or you simply decide to publish only the best reviews you receive."

"No, that's not the way. We'll just wait and see. Let's talk about something else."

"I see you are looking over the Hugo nominations, Geis. You are about to voice comments?"

"To a limited degree, yes."

"Okay, the nominees for Best Novel in 1968 are:

Goblin Reservation - Clifford Simak

Nova - Samuel R. Delany

Past Master - R. A. Lafferty

Rite of Passage - Alexei Panshin

Stand on Zanzibar - John Brunner

"Your choice, Geis, is..."

"I must admit to not yet having read Goblin Reservation or Nova. But as of now, June 18, 1969, I intend to vote for Stand on Zanzibar."

"The Best Novella nominees are:

"Dragon Rider" - Anne McCaffrey

"Hawk Among the Sparrows" - Dean McLaughlin

"Lines of Power" - Samuel R. Delany

"Nightwings" - Robert Silverberg

"And your selection, Geis, is..."

"Uh, well...I haven't had much chance to read..."

"No opinion?"

"Yes, no opinion at this time."

"For the Best Novellette the nominees are:

"Getting Through University" - Piers Anthony

"Mother to the World" - Richard Wilson

"Sharing of Flesh" - Poul Anderson

"Total Environment" - Brian Aldiss

"And which do you... Again?"

"I wasn't reading much magazine sf last year."

"I hope you have some opinions further down the line."

"Oh, I do, I do!"

"Best Short Story nominees are:

"All the Myriad Ways" - Larry Niven

"Beast That Shouted Love at the Heart of the World" - Harlan Ellison

"Dance of the Changer and the Three" - Terry Carr.

"Masks" - Damon Knight

"Steiger Effect" - Betsy Curtis

"I can see by your helpless expression..."

"I DO have a choice for the best Dramatic effort."

"The nominees for the Best Dramatic sf are:

2001

Charly

Fallout (Last episode of the Prisoner)

Rosemary's Baby

Yellow Submarine

"Out with it, Geis!"

"I'm torn between 2001, Fallout and Yellow Submarine."

"I'm waiting..."

"2001."

"How we're getting somewhere. Now, the nominees for

Best Prozin are:

ANALOG

F&SF

GALAXY

IF

NEW WORLDS

"Every year the same lineup, eh, Geis?"

"NEW WORLDS is—"

"Is that your choice?"

"No, not for 1968. It could well be next year, however. I was only saying that NEW WORLDS is an addition to the list. And next year Ted White may have AMAZING improved to the point where it might bump one of the old, established zines, but more likely, unless NEW WORLDS gets distribution in this country, NEW WORLDS will get the heave-ho."

"You still haven't given your Best Prozin Hugo choice."

"Well...they're all bad in different ways. ANALOG, I suppose. My heart belongs to NEW WORLDS, though."

"We come now to Best Professional Artist. The nominees are:

Jack Gaughan

Kelly Freas

Leo and Diane Dillon

Vaughn Bode

"It's a matter of newcomers and traditionalists, in a way."

"Right. For sheer quality and consistency, I have to vote for Kelly Freas. I've always loved his stuff. But the Dillons deserve a Hugo, too...or is it Terry Carr, who sought them out and asked them to do the Ace Specials?"

"We come now, Geis, to the Best Fanzine Hugo nominees."

"I should pass on this."

"I will list them, anyway."

PSYCHOTIC/SFR - Richard Geis

RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY - Leland Sapiro

SHANGRI L'AFFAIRES - Ken Rudolph

TRUMPET - Tom Reamy

WARHOON - Richard Bergeron

"Best Fan Writer is next. The nominees are:

Richard Delap

Banks Hebane

Harry Warner, Jr.

Ted E. White

"You have stated your preference previously, Geis."

"Yep. In a way, as with the Oscar awards, the Hugo is often awarded for long service to fandom and science fiction, and not for simply a brilliant effort in a single year. That is the case now with Harry Warner, Jr. If he doesn't win this year for all the articles and letters of 1968, he will surely win next year for his finally published fan history, All Our Yesterdays."

"Total agreement."

"The same sentiment applies to the Best Fan Artist Hugo. The nominees are:

George Barr

Vaughn Bode

Tim Kirk

Doug Lovenstein

William Rotsler

"You have beaten a drum or two to get Bill Rotsler nominated, Geis. You would like to see him receive the Hugo."

"Yes, for more than a dozen years of funny, sublime, witty, and often thought-provoking cartoon art. He does it all with a few simple lines. He is overdue for a Hugo."

"Okay, let's go eat and finish this stencil later tonight."

"We having another of your home-made tv dinners again?"

"Listen, if you don't like what I feed us..."

"What do we talk about now?"

"The Post Apvlllll Department."

"Hup! Bottom of the page. We'll have to be continued on page 29

INTRODUCTION

BY THE EDITOR

John Foyster, besides being a fine reviewer for AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, and this fanzine, publishes a personalzine which he has called EXPLODING MADONNA. I say 'has' because with the sixth (Apr. '69) issue he announces an intention to change the name: "Six is enough". He says, for one title. I have been lucky enough to have received the last three.

EM is a fine fanzine which contains excellent material; notably his own comments and articles and at least one article by Franz Rottensteiner. In issue #5 there appeared a ten page letter-article by Samuel R. Delany concerning his work, sf in general, criticism and other sf and mainstream writers.

As soon as I had read it I asked for reprint rights for SFR. It was okay with John, and I soon acquired Chip's permission, too.

Why reprint so quickly? Because Samuel R. Delany is one of our finest writers, because what he has to say is important, because he says it interestingly, and because the circulation of EXPLODING MADONNA is around twenty copies. Ten in the United States.

A great many writers, editors, fans and readers would be cheated if someone didn't reprint this piece.

Delany was responding to a series of comments and questions written by Sten Dahlskog in a previous issue of EM. Following is a reprint of that material so that you can better understand Delany's response.

Incidentally, I have John Foyster's permission to reprint his article, "The Budrys Case" which appeared in EM #4. That may appear next issue. Then there is "Mr. Budrys and the Active Life" by Franz Rottensteiner, in EM#6, which calls into question the morality and intelligence of sf and its heroes (and heroines), among other things. To say the least, EM is a goldmine of interesting, thought-provoking material and I intend to share it out, with permission, as much as possible.

John Foyster does not want, I gather, a large circulation; he does not list subscription rates and does not, I surmise, trade with other fanzines.

What follows is the Sten Dahlskog material. On the opposite page Chip Delany begins.

1) Sf is not the same as mainstream and must be criticized in its own way, not exclusively by mainstream rules.

If not, why separate sf as a distinct genre? Can New Orleans jazz be meaningfully criticized by the criteria applied to classical music and by no others?

2) All mainstream demands on good characterization, good grammar and so on are equally valid in sf. They are valid whatever you write. But they are not as all-out important everywhere. There may be other criteria which are more important in other art forms and less important in mainstream.

3) Sf is the one and only form of literature capable of describing the impact of change in a technological society.

Our society is technological, and there is absolutely no sane way out of the mess except making it even more technological. (The science due to make the heaviest impact on our way to live in the next twenty years is not astronautics, nor cybernetics: it is ecology, which is fast becoming very technological indeed.) Mainstream literature seems almost completely unaware of the scientific basis for the society it tries to depict.

4) All literature should first and foremost be criticized according to the manner in which it does the job it tries to do. Does an advertisement sell more of the product? If so, it is a good one, even if its grammar is lousy (and it would have been an even better one had the grammar been better, because then fewer people would have disliked it subconsciously). Does a sf story show some awareness of the scientific method and scientific logic? If not, if it is as completely, deliberately unscientific as Ballards', then it might be a very good fantasy (in my view Ballard is not a good writer of anything) but it is bad sf.

5) The really dismal thing about present sf is not that it is so bad in grammar and characterization but that it is so awfully bad in science. This is a little exaggerated, just to make the discussion clearer.

Now I do not want sf to become popular science. If I want to learn something, I go directly to the scientific publications: I do not want it second-hand. But I do want sf to show some awareness of science, I want it to show how people and societies react to existent or future science, and sf cannot do this if it uses bad scientific logic or none at all. I want sf to do this, because mainstream is (practically by definition) unable to speculate about future changes, and we need to speculate about the mess we are going to do of things: we have to get out of the old rut of just letting the disasters slowly creep upon us.

If we throw the science out of science fiction, as Ballard and some other New Things have done to the loud applause of Judith Merril and others, are we left with anything but gothic fantasy in a new disguise, a little updated by pseudo-deep psychology and experimental stylistics? And what possibilities would this offer to describe us, our culture and our world? Not many.

What I am afraid of is that sf will lose its idea content in the process of acquiring a beautiful literary polish. A sf story without speculative content and without scientific logic should be damned, whatever its mainstream merits. If grammar and characterization, psychology and stylistics are so all-out important, why don't we all give up and start writing little mood pieces for the little magazines?

It is really too much to hope for a literally well-written science fiction about science?

SAMUEL R. DELANY Writes:

REHASHING SOME OF THE THINGS I SAID IN MY FIRST LETTER TO John Bangsund: due to the publishing lag, a year is usually the minimum time between the last page of a manuscript coming from the typewriter and the writer reading a printed reaction.

This means - rave or pan - the emotional effect on the author, save an initial "Gosh, they're talking about me!", is quite small. I can see a current project interrupted for a day because of a particularly bad (or good) review. I can't see the quality being changed by a review of a previous work no matter what was said. If I finished a book one day and saw printed reviews of it the next this might be different. But there is that temporal filter operating to vitiate the effects of emotionalism - which allows the important function of criticism to come to the fore.

I think criticism is vitally important to the growth of any art. As the artist is at all gregarious, an intelligent critical atmosphere is absolutely necessary for his development. Emily Dickinson, the most ivory-tower of artists, thirsted for criticism with a mania in her letters. Her best work comes from a period when she was receiving just the smidgeon completely inadequate to her talent from Turner.

Every epoch that has produced a body of great art has produced a concomitant body of criticism, from the canons of Phidias and Praxiteles through the essays of Pound, Eliot and Auden.

I always read the introduction before I read the book.

I read a good many introductions to books I have no intention of reading.

And I am sure that there are a number of fine books I have missed for want of an introduction.

Is this strange?

To make even a barely coherent statement in the dialogue of modern literature, one must be familiar with the major works of...Joyce, Mann, Proust, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, to pick the most random five. To have any understanding of the selection from our own language, Joyce, one has to understand the point he occupies in the development of the English novel which demands reasonable acquaintance with the works of Richardson, Fielding, Eliot, Austen, Dickens and Hardy (to pick links from a densely packed chain), and I haven't even mentioned Shakespeare or the Bible. Millions of

pages of reading are involved. It is impossible to keep the ideas, the growth in literary techniques and the development of psycho/social worldview in any sort of order without recourse to a good deal of scholarly, informal, internal and comparative criticism.

Who talks of literature and claims himself uninterested in criticism only betrays his ignorance of the subject's breadth.

That's on the grand scale.

More intimately, I enjoy good criticism. As a comparatively cerebral writer who works slowly and re-works often, criticism parallels the process I am going through most of the time I am 'creating'.

A novel for me represents a tremendous effort, to me. Deciding what to write is perhaps ten percent of that effort. The other ninety is spent figuring out how to write it as clearly, economically and resonantly as I can - chapter by chapter, scene by scene, sentence by sentence. The part of my mind that occupies itself with that large fraction of the task is exercised by criticism, needs criticism (of my own and others' work), and would be much the weaker without it.

Talking personally, and in my guise as writer, the only regular critic working professionally meaningful to me is Judith Merrill. A critic is useful to a writer insofar as he (or she) provokes thought, points out things the writer would not have seen himself. Now I am a fairly intelligent reader. I trust myself to see the obvious and a fair amount of the subtle. SF requiring the particular intellectual orientation it does to be appreciated at all, I would assume this is a quality I share with a good number of SF readers.

I think the discomfort/dismay Merrill's reviews/criticisms cause so many people lies in that most people tend to judge a review, after they've read the book, by how closely the critic came to saying what they would have said.

As a writer, it is exactly as a critic predicts my reaction to a book that what he has to say is useless to me. Even more complicated: as a critic says things outside my own reactions that still cause intellectual proliferation within the range of my interests, his criticism is important.

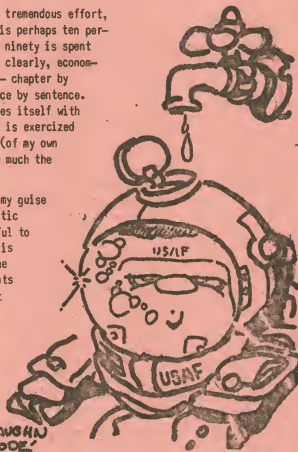
Let me propose: the body of their criticism considered, Knight and Blish have failed as critics. Second proposition: their failure is one of sensibility, not intellect. A good deal of this, of course, is because of the commercial situation that produced most of their criticism: but all of it is directed towards the General Public (of SF), i.e. their critical concern is to express the obvious (usually) and (occasionally) the fairly subtle as simply and as clearly as possible (so that it proliferates as little as possible).

But the General Public is a statistical fiction created by a few exceptional men to make the loneliness of being exceptional a little easier to bear. There are people less intelligent than others, yes. But there is not a doctor, janitor, engineer, student or professor who feels himself thoroughly representative of that General Public. Only politicians feel that way, and they, fortunately, are an infinitesimal percent of the reading populace.

There is a certain tone which a writer uses when he is saying what he feels is obvious to people he feels are incapable of seeing it. This tone is absolutely alienating in direct proportion to the real complexity of the 'obviousness' he is explicating.

At best the reader can step out of the way of the irony and appreciate it as wit. But it is exactly the process of stepping aside that damps the proliferation process in the reader's mind (whether he be writer or no). For this reason, I think the three Merrill articles on Sturgeon, Ballard and Leiber (the Sturgeon and Ballard articles appeared in F&SF, and the Leiber article as an introduction to a British collection of Leiber's stories - and will be printed, in an expanded form, in

a forthcoming F&SF) are worth The Issue At Hand and In Search of Wonder together. In all three articles it is obvious that the criticism is written to a reader for whom she has as much respect as she obviously has for Sturgeon, Ballard and Leiber. I go back and re-read them as I go back to favorite poems and stories. For what it's worth, I agree with practically every statement in the Sturgeon and Leiber articles and disagree with an many in the Ballard piece (and yes, I do think Ballard is the most important British speculative writer today); still, I value Merrill's ability to outrage me by what she finds to like in things I can't abide, as well as the flaws she can find in works that



strike me as near perfect.

The 'failed sensibility' that damps the remaining body of SF criticism, professional and amateur, is the concept of the critic as an arbiter of entertainment with a commercial definition of entertainment that I vehemently maintain is too limited to concern what could possibly entertain anybody.

Re the professional critics: I don't believe they like half of what they say they do. They are so inundated with crap through the exigencies of the job that they aren't exposed to enough of what they might like to spark them into conducting their criticism on a really vital level.

What I want from a critic is a limning of those elements and their relationships that, after close scrutiny, he finds fascinating and intriguing (whether he judges them exemplary or reprehensible), an analysis of those wonderful (or god-awful) things he has never seen before. I'm asking for a sense of wonder in SF criticism! But it's the same thing I want from all writing, fiction, non-fiction or poetry.

Which brings me to the next matter: why I prefer the NEW WAVE!!! to the (old wave). I make the statement in its simplistic blatancy to cut through all the other perfectly true statements I could make as well, such as

- 1) There is no such division.
- 2) It is a waste of time trying to define this non-existent chasm.
- 3) The terms are inadequate critical attempts to fix whole complexes of interrelated literary phenomena that, quite expectedly, wriggle off as soon as the shibboleth is flung.

The preference is purely for one set of sensibilities over another. As sensibilities produce that critical atmosphere necessary for growth, I find the critical atmosphere of the New Wave much more conducive to my own temperament. I have no beef with the intelligence of the Old Wave. Among the forty-odd writers ringing the Anchorage living-room during the last Milford SF writer's Conference (of which perhaps five - myself amongst them - might admit to being New Wave writers if you defined your terms carefully enough) I doubt there was an IQ under a hundred and fifty present. And intelligence is a part of writing good SF. By sensibility I mean what a given writer

er has chosen to turn his talent and intelligence towards.

Sturgeon's Law operates on both sides of the Tide line. And on both there is that remaining five percent that is enough to justify existence. Because, on the professional level, the critical outlet for the New Wave is limited to NEW WORLDS, the NEW WORLDS critical atmosphere is mostly social (ASFR is the closest thing there is to a New Wave fanzine; how do you like that, John Bangsund?) but this is true of any artistic environment, Old or New.

But the manifestations of these respective critical atmospheres are quite real.

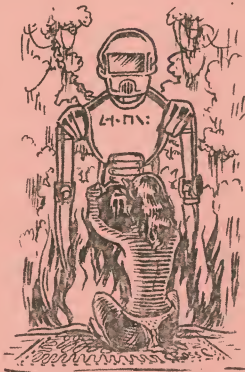
Case in point:

I am notorious for handing in 'difficult' manuscripts. You've gotten my letters, John. As you might imagine, a Delany manuscript can be a copy editor's nightmare. (True, perhaps, but you spoil the point by making this remark on an exceptionally clear page! jmf) As well, all my re-writing occasionally produces its Flaubertian disasters (you recall Madame Bovary's 53 francs counted out in 2 franc notes, or the platform that had four legs on one page and six on the next?) no matter how careful I try to be.

Ed Ferman, at F&SF, is the most gentlemanly of Old Wave editors. But a story for F&SF for me means a trip into the office to correct the copy-edited manuscript for the errors that the copy-editor invariably makes regardless of sets. Then, another trip to correct the proof-read galley's not only for printer's errors, but for those where the proof-reader has misunderstood. I go to all this trouble because when I haven't - as has occasionally been the case out of necessity with some of my IF stories -

the results have near disastrous. Ed is very kind about letting me come in to make these corrections, but I have to do them when it's convenient for him. He can't send galley out to authors because he hasn't got the time: and I understand this.

In August I sold a novella to NEW WORLDS. Within days of acceptance I got a three page list of queries from the copy-editor. Every point, dubious or obvious, was raised - a particularly difficult task because the novella is a first person narrative by an erratically self-educated confidence man and thief. This is NEW WORLDS' policy with any story where there is the least problem of the author's stylistic concern. This sort of editorial/critical concern is one of the hallmarks of the New Wave; I, for one, cannot begin to express how much I appreciate it. Alas, this is not just



British versus American publishing attitudes. A British publisher of mine, bastion of the Old Wave approach to SF publishing, managed to generate a situation concerning corrections that for me approached the nightmarish.

A young American editor who has openly declared himself in sympathy with the New Wave, when I mentioned these same corrections, immediately went to all sorts of trouble to see that they were included in a subsequent edition of the book.

A matter of sensibility: the Old Wave editor, with a good deal of reason, just doesn't see his job as extending this far. The New Wave editor does. From Hemingway: one relates differently to hand-writing, to typescript and to print. Hemingway advises that a story should go through all three stages and (pre-dating Dr. McLuhan a bit) explains, as anybody who has been through the process can testify, each medium highlights a different aspect of a story and a sensitive writer will take advantage of this and make corrections in all three stages because of the mistakes that the media themselves point up...the word that has to be changed because of an unintentional pun, a phrase that's too colloquial, some bridge put in to ape the rhythm of speech that turns out in print to be just a glaring redundancy. To me, it seems that the Old Wave editors basically feel that a story just doesn't have to be that good.

In a story of mine that recently appeared in IF, set on Mars, something that should have happened in a 'Dune' happens in 'June'. That's a typo. As well there is a gross inaccuracy in the estimation of the temperature differential between the Martian night and the Martian day. I should have liked to correct both of those mistakes in

galleys. One would have involved resetting one line of type; the other, about six lines.

Both are in the published version of the story.

I think both are unforgivable - if anything they reinforce one another. I was aware of both mistakes (one was originally mine, one the printer's) well in time to correct them.

As far as the editor was concerned, there was no reason for the story to be that good. And for all the perfectly sound and defensible reasons he would offer I have to go along with him." But because of his particular conception of what the field is, the reader suffers.

In that 'pretentious' editorial of mine in NEW WORLDS at which you took so much umbrage, JF, I asked for a criticism that would examine the verbal texture of SF. As Sartre pointed out in his essay on Faulkner, to determine an author's metaphysic you must examine his textures as well as his structures; and metaphysics does have more to do with physics than merely being the next scroll on the library shelf at Alexandria. But you can't have such an examination until you have editors who will produce works where the author can take full responsibility for his verbal texture.

Does this verbal texture ever make that much critical difference?

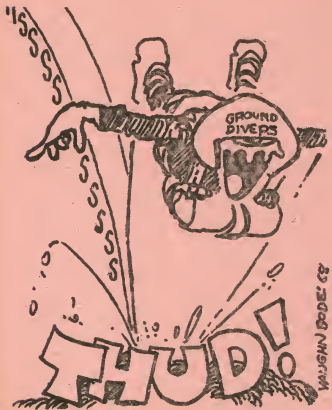
In a 1966 review of my books in NEW WORLDS, in a discussion of The Ballad of Beta-2, J. Cawthorne picked out the phrase "the professor's eyebrows came crashing down" as an example of over-writing, which it is. It is also from a chapter which is almost all interpolation from another writer. In the same article Cawthorne pointed out that the phrase "an invisible copper haze" from The Jewels of Apor was unvisualizable. Directly because of this article, the changing of this phrase was one of the real revisions I did make between the first and 'revised' editions...because I agreed with him. And I do think it is indicative that this acuteness came from J. Cawthorne, a reviewer so closely associated with NEW WORLDS.

Then, acute, printed criticism can have a demonstrable, practical effect. And the intangible effect it has on the field is none the less real nor the less important.

Criticism on a personal level has always been important to me. John Brunner did practically a word by word critique of a middle draft of Aye, and Gomorrah which made the final one much easier to write. He did the same for a forth-coming Tom Disch story The Asian Shore, a tale which in its final version has impressed me incredibly. James Blish, whose work as Atheling Jr. I was so cavalier with a few paragraphs back, offered me several concrete suggestions which WABEL-17. (He offered them three years ago. Ah, that publishing lag!)

But point Two is here blending into point One...these things happen.

Getting back to the focus of point Two, then.



Another matter of sensibility, a la New Wave.

The story is more important than the writer. Practically speaking this means that the author agrees to put himself at the service of the story, no matter what the difficulty involved...re-writing, if it's called for, going to the office to correct galley proofs or copy-editing.

The New Wave has had to bear the general accusation of being more interested in style than in content. For myself, that's a painful misrepresentation. Say rather that I am so concerned with my content that I will go to all sort of commercially infeasible lengths to try and work my language to a tension where the content on all its levels will be as luminous as possible.

No one can deny the amount of crap that has washed up on both beaches. But the crap on this terribly small, new one is a lot more interesting if only in the controversy it generates. And, perhaps it is a lot less populous, the air seems fresher here.

The Third Thing:

It arises from perusing Mr. Dahlskog's points. They strike me as purposed answers to terribly pressing questions. But they also, I humbly suggest (aware that they are a condensation of a larger program), imply a distressing limitation of vision.

The general question these answers generate is: what are the particular critical problems SF poses?

The only way I think this can be answered with any real effectiveness is to undertake the monumentally difficult task of going back and daring all those terribly pretentious questions that frighten us away: What is the Domain of Art in the complex generations of human society, and of literature, fictional and non-fictional, as it represents a Domain of Art? And what is the particular literary domain that SF, as it relates to the story-teller's art of fiction and the non-fictional literature of science, defines with unique excellence?

I think, JF, that as you did this formally, you would find formal answers to the questions you asked about why you read, wrote about, and so-forth science fiction.

This is the way to develop a critical vocabulary adequate to deal with the specific problems SF poses which, at the same time, will give us its resonance with the other art forms, and will be able to place it in relation to the rest of the world. Certainly it is strangling oneself critically to talk of New Orleans jazz only in terms of classical music: but to say anything really-meaningfully about it, one has to be able to relate it to music in general, which means knowing what music produced it, what music affected it that was not specifically jazz - the negro slaves who were trained as house musicians to play Handel and Mozart chamber music, for example, as well as the African influence - and how it influenced not only the jazz, but the serious music and today's pop music, that

have come after it. Otherwise it degenerates (as it has in the US) into a dead end musical cult if it is only discussed in terms of itself. And sometimes I wonder if SF....

One of the things about art, any art, is that any given work of art is meaningful as it represents a cross-section of a process. When the process stops, the art becomes pointless.

I don't think one can make any meaningful statement about the literary merits of SF without a good deal of thinking about literature in general and modern literature in particular.

Similarly, one has to take a good look at modern science before one can comment on the scientific content of modern SF.

Let me forgo the first and concentrate on the second. I agree with points three and four as far as they go.

4 Editorial interpolation: Sten's points 3 and 4 were, in extract,

3) SF is the one and only form of literature capable of describing the impact of change in a technological society. (Sten then suggests that ecology is The Coming Thing.)

4) All literature should first and foremost be criticized according to the manner in which it does the job it tries to do.

- I just like to help you out, you know, JF!

I'd like to point out, however, that ecology as a science





breaks down into a dozen sciences, among which cybernetics (if not astronautics) could have an extremely important place - in that cybernetics facilitates dealing with large quantities of information, and to solve our ecological problems vast amounts of information will have to be processed. Astronautics, which Dahlskog hints at, as it increases our knowledge of meteorology and facilitates meteorological control, has its bearing on ecology.

Actually my point is that we are moving into a position where our information is vast enough that a statement like "The science due to make the heaviest impact on our lives in the next twenty years is not cybernetics or astronautics but ecology" is a product of a scientific Weltanschauung as outmoded as the concept of the planetary electron. It is not the particular choice of sciences, but the semantic form that makes it inapplicable to contemporary scientific thinking.

Equally: "Mainstream literature seems almost completely unaware of the scientific basis for the society it tries to depict."

I might agree with that statement as it relates to literature before 1955. Over the last dozen years, however, this has been a recurrent consideration of 'the mainstream', often outdoing the SF efforts. It is implicit in Heller and Pynchon, explicit in the Barth of Giles Goatboy and Funhouse. It's reflected in the work of a dozen contemporary poets.

Modern science is fragmenting more and more. I think we are due shortly for a scientific revolution the likes of which humanity can't even envision. Somewhere or other I posited the emergence of whole new fields to which I gave the semantic place-holder of 'Integrative and Synthetic

Sciences.'

And if the mainstream was unaware of the "scientific basis" of the society before 1955, just look at SF. Let's look at SF's treatment of the initial development of spaceflight, the pride of the "golden age".

Space-ships were invariably 'invented' by one man, or perhaps one private company. When they were developed by a government, the scientist in charge of the project inevitably got to be pilot or part of the crew. If we were lucky there were three or four test flights, and then off we went to Mars, with a full human crew. Usually we discovered mid-trip that one or two children had stowed away, preferably with a dog, parrot or pet chimpanzee.

Compare these stories with modern Governmental space flight programs. The problems are so complicated that the idea of individual initiative in design or development is practically lost. The major designer is an executive administrator who co-ordinates hundreds of other administrators who co-ordinate the thousands of scientists, engineers, technicians (as well as artists, film makers, interior decorators, janitors and make-up men who all get into the act) involved. He probably couldn't figure out the specific gravity of his telephone without getting a shock. Nor is there any reason why he should be able to. There are thousands of tests involved before one of hundreds of test shots can take place. But to consider stowaways and pet dogs in such a context is to miss the whole point. There's no chance for a miscellaneous mosquito to end up on the first manned flight to Mars. A winning adolescent and his turtle?..... (How about that, J. Blish?) And this is all perfectly inherent in the 'scientific basis' of our society. It was in 1955 as well. But from Zenna Henderson to Robert Heinlein (the Lyle drive, invented and patented by someone named Lyle who just happened to be in the second expedition to Mars is wrong, wrong, wrong with an overall wrongness that dwarfs any dozen inaccurate chemical formulae, incorrect temperature evaluations, or off time/milage ratios), this sort of thing goes on, and I defy you to find an accurate reflection of the ambience around space research as she exists. Nor will you find it in any of the current issues of ANALOG, FS&F or the magazines of the GALAXY combine.

You will find it in the 'condensed novels' of Ballard in NEW WORLDS - You, Me and the Continuum and The Death Module in particular.

The "Technological Machine" is such that, presently, even if it goes on only at its present rate, it will supply us with an endless stream of new information bits about our universe. What is desperately needed are new forms in which to arrange this data, new ways to catalogue and cross-reference it that will produce more efficient systems for its utilization.

Science fiction which takes its inspiration from the solution of a single, or even a finite number of, discrete technological problem(s) is, practically by definition, scientifically behind the times.

That is why all the arts, speculative fiction only one among them, are demanding new forms. If you will, we have a computer to take care of a certain area of our work; now we need creative programmers.

The worst one can do is, when working in old forms, to acknowledge their inadequacy to deal with the information matrix around them. The controlling irony of *Nova* is that it is a novel about a time when there are no novels. It's spaceships are purely poetic symbols of movement between worlds we cannot know, which I tried to inform with as much jewelry as they could bear and still fly in a manner "...that does not clash inordinately without that which is known to be true." The best one can do is to strike out and try to discover those new forms oneself.

But to do less than the worst is not to be even considerable.

The reason modern science fiction 'is so awfully bad in the sciences' is that most SF writers (and hard-core SF fans) don't know what's going on in the world, period - either scientifically, artistically or socially. The most important process that has begun and has already affected all our lives is that the boundaries between scientific, artistic and social action are breaking down. The most serious avant-garde literary magazines regularly take collaborative efforts in poetry today, since Kenneth Koch's LOCUS SOLUS which was devoted to collaborations. Ten years ago two authors signing their names to a lyric poem would have put it beyond any serious artistic consideration. Pop music and film, by many considered our most vital arts today, are collaborative efforts (even when they are headed by one person) in a way that a string quartet never was. As well, they achieve aesthetic excellence on a level that jazz, because of its limiting improvisatory quality, denied itself: at their simplest, both involve amazing amounts of technology. Yet the sensibilities necessary for the increasingly important field of abstract mathematics are far closer to those of the solitary poet than they are to the engineer. But the examples just go on....

It is just as "science fiction is the one and only form of literature capable of describing the impact of change on a technological society" that it must grow, be willing to cross boundaries, artistic as well as technical, so that it can fulfill these demands.

The scientific vision and the aesthetic vision are practically identical. SF began as an attempt to cross the boundary between these two that a few people realized was meaningless. To treat the boundary between SF and mainstream (detestable word!) the same way is to re-affirm, not to deny.

By insisting on remaining in the strictures of a decade or two in the past, SF only prohibits itself from doing exactly what Dahlskog demands of it, and foredooms itself to the extinction of the inefficient; and that will leave

Dahlskog's very important job undone.

Change is better than stasis. As a changing field (even if you don't approve of the direction a particular bud is pointing) it admits of more change, and can attract the authors who will want to change it, perhaps in the direction needed to fulfill what Sten Dahlskog (and I think probably the rest of us as well) sees as its potential.

As a static field it will attract only those writers who want a fixed income from doing exactly what has been done already by rules and regulations that no longer apply because the situation that made them relevant has shifted.

Energetically yours,

Chip Delany.

FOYSTER HERE: Chip's letter/article requires a far better answer than I shall give here. But I insist on writing direct onto stencil (one benefit of which is that I don't mind putting out two issues in one week), so this will have to do, scrappy as it is.

Amongst the many points he made Chip touched on a few things that I'm in slight disagreement about, and he also managed to push one of my buttons.

I cannot see how anyone could be enlightened in any way by Some of Miss Merrill's reviews of, to pick one out of a hat, your work. Her Nov. '65 and Dec. '66 F&SF comments are space-fillers at best, for the actual critical content of them is almost zero. Of course, in the second, she is very enthusiastic about your books, but that is only ego-boosting, after all. In general, this seems to me to be Miss Merrill's major failing: a tendency to seize upon some protege and puff and puff and puff - she generally blows the house down, of course, for the poor author isn't nearly as good as she says. Otherwise her failings extend into the realms of 'mainstream' when she drags in anything that she



feels can be described as fantasy just to show how mature SF is (which is a sign of adolescence, at best). I am occasionally tempted to send a copy of Edmund Wilson's AX-EL'S CASTLE to her and wait for the review. (Subtitle of AC is 'a study of the imaginative literature of 1870-1930')

The attitude of the New Wave towards manuscripts is commendable, and I am glad that you can now see why I'm not particularly interested in the 'verbal texture' of SF writers: even those who may have it suffer as they pass through the grindstone of the printers. But all you are asking for is a careful editor: what would happen if you found an Old Wave one who was just as careful? JWC Jr., I am given to understand, is not too bad.

Again, comparing Old and New, you introduce the Critics, using Jim Cawthorne as an example. But again, what you are really asking for is a good editor, not someone with fancy sensibility. I'm unimpressed with Cawthorne's specific criticisms, by the way, since anything invisible is of necessity 'unvisualizable' and I have seen eyebrows of the kind described.

But consider the critical performance of NEW WORLDS this-year. Sladek's review of Barthelme failed to get much across to me. Sallis' review of HUMP is an example of the worst kind of one-upmanship (the sort of thing to which NEW WORLDS is much given, in fact). Sallis reviewing (?) poetry (181) is simply laughable, while Shackleton/Aldiss does a fair job on Hillegas. Notice that it is clapped-out, nearly orthodox Aldiss who does most nearly approach a decent job. The rest can be wiped, with no loss at all.

There is so much in both literature and science that it isn't really possible for any one person to get a good hold on the lot. I don't know that I entirely approve of your approach to literature (dig the critics), but in science things are really tough. I suppose that a full-time reader could keep a broad grasp of the situation, but scarcely enough to claim genuine familiarity.

When you write about the invention of a spaceship (as an example) you forget that science fiction is written as wish-fulfillment material for juveniles. This was then and will remain for some time the basic selling-point of science fiction: it is simply unfortunate for older readers that they happen to like it too. Whether they have failed to grow up, or do have Broad Mental Horizons is something on which I'm not prepared to cast judgement. But that's why I find it hard to take seriously the claims of SF as literature - it's basically written as adventure stories, and people like yourself who try to make SF 'mature' are voices crying in the wilderness. I also find it hard to forget Mike Moorcock's origins as an editor, for example.

But you really rile me when you talk about collaborative art, as any Australian readers will already know. You refer, I gather, to LOCUS SOLUS 11 (pubbed just on seven years ago) in which such noted recent writers as

Sei Shonagon, Shakespeare and John Donne appeared. Collaborative writing is so nearly impossible (as art) that it is hardly worth worrying about. You imply that the standards of art change (critical point of view) but I don't think this is so at all. Art is essentially a singular product. There are no cases that I know of to which you can point as examples of the collaborative product - the Goncourts, Conrad and Ford, or off to Beaumont and Fletcher? - with pride. In a word, bullshit.

I do not consider film or pop music to be arts, so the vitality or otherwise of them does not interest me. So George Martin can throw a tune together? That doesn't make the Beatles great artists. Nor have I heard any other pop music that impresses me more than the most dismal Dick Clark material. As for films - the auteur theory would hardly have achieved such prominence unless the french critics realised that there had to be one guy responsible. Cocteau's films, because of his complete control, become near-art, but few others have done serious work.

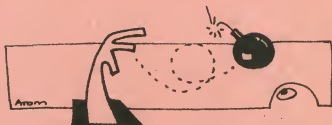
I am so completely confused by what you say about jazz (you seem to contradict yourself partway through in suggesting that original creation ('improvisation') is the thing that prevented jazz from developing. You must have meant something else.

But I am in general agreement with what you say, and on-ly have these minor quibbles. Maybe I'll remember something else later on.



THE TRENCHANT BLUDGEON

A Column By **Ted White**



EDITOR'S NOTE: SFR #29 was supposed to be the last issue for a long while in which Ted White's column would appear. And it was.

But Ted sent along a letter of comment on #29 which was both an editorial despair and delight. It arrived too late and it was too long. I was locked into a 68 page format; it was possible to add or cut pages only in 16 page leaps.

So I asked Ted if it would be okay to run the bulk of the letter this issue as a column.

He said yes.

J.J. Pierce presents me with a complex puzzle. Because, you see, on the gut-level I agree with his premises, even with a lot of the things he says. (Discounting his methods of saying things, there's a lot of truth in what he says, Dick. This may be more obvious on the East Coast; I dunno.) And I find myself quoted by him as a 'good guy' in his neverending fight against the New Wave. But I don't like Pierce, I don't like being used by him in his holy crusade, and I certainly don't care for his reactionary blindness. I think he's a pipsqueak setting himself up for fame and notoriety with this mammoth essay of his (who ever heard of him before?), and—worse—I think he's letting himself be exploited by Moskowitz, the echo of whose words I keep hearing from Pierce. So call my reaction Mixed Emotions. Maybe he's really in the hire of Mike Moorcock, and doing his best to discredit the anti-New Wave faction.

In any case, I hereby bow out of the whole dispute. I point to my editorial in

the May AMAZING (which just came out as I write this) for my present views on the whole scene. My private opinion is that some writers write stuff I like and some don't. Most wouldn't care to have me categorize them as Old or New Wave. (By the bye, I wonder how much of all this action-and-reaction is based on fiction, and how much is based on the non-fiction pronouncements of the various pro- and antagonists?) (Another paranthetical thought: doesn't it all really break down into a dispute between the conservative and the liberal, between heads and non-heads, between McLuhan-types and linear thinkers? Ah, "sigh")

*

The reviews of Star Well and Thurb Revolution: Gilliland is closer to the mark than you, Dick. As I understand the series, it is inspired by the Georgette Heyer series of English historical romances—although heavily filtered through Alex's own creative mind. When I first read Star Well (I read both books in manuscript), I found myself admiring it, but not entirely liking it. When I read Thurb Revolution I realized why. The first book is set entirely within the confines of a space ship and a hollowed-out asteroid, and this spirit of confinement, of closed places, hovers over the entire book. The second book is its direct antithesis, set for the most part out in the open, even in primitive wilderness. But, more importantly, each book is like a chapter in a larger (but finite) work, and (for me) the effect is cumulative. By way of parallel example, consider the "Parker" mystery series by Richard Stark (Don Westlake). It has always seemed to me, much as I enjoyed those books, that any single one of them taken alone would be, somehow, a little incomplete. Like a series of templates which, when lined up, delineated a three-dimensional object. In each book Alex is templating a segment of Villiers' life. Much is hinted at and alluded to, and left unexplained. (Torve, the Trogg, is not explained; Villiers' previous encounter with the Inn Keeper is not explained; the little cloud that thinks it's God is not explained.) In this lies much of the charm of the

books, particularly when coupled with Alex's delightfully straight-faced tongue-in-cheek lectures on various aspects of the universe.

Face it: These books are New Wave. But they are New Wave only in the sense that they have introduced something wholly new into sf. (Alex will hate me for saying they're New Wave at all.) They break all precedent. They must be approached on their own level, within their own context (this becomes progressively easier in each book, of course) in order to be understood. They are not hackwork; far from it. They are a tour-de-force. They are, I think, possibly the most brilliant achievement recently presented in the field.

What bothers me is that so many people have made no attempt to understand them. These people (Piers Anthony tops the list; he all but called Alex a prostitute for writing them) have categorized and pigeon-holed these two books without—it appears—making the slightest effort to get into them or to understand them. "Hackwork," they say. I will say this: I don't think any hack could have written those books. And this: I know that they represented a more valid achievement for Alex than his *Rite of Passage*. And this: Because they are, at heart, frivolous, people are ignoring these books in favor of books of three times the length and one tenth the content. I wonder if these critics realize how much harder it is to bring off books as charming, as literate, as amusing, or as well-written as these two Villiers books?

Why in hell, Geis, are you asking for a "serious" book again, when Alex has given you two sparkling gems like these? Is there something intrinsically better in a "serious" (by which I gather you mean uncharming, un-sophisticated, un-funny) book? Why this instant dismissal of two of the best books published in 1968 (a good year for sf) because they aren't "serious"?

((I'm afraid I must answer here, reluctantly, in your sort-of-a-column. Ted, I liked the books. My review said so. But I still think I'm right in saying that, no matter how well written they are, their type of charm and humor do not engage gut-level involvements. They are, in a sense, almost misplaced. As you say, they are something new and most fans are not intellectually or emotionally inclined to appreciate a frivolous sf novel.

((You know better than to "gather" my definition of a "serious" book as un-charming, un-sophisticated, un-funny. I don't mind you pressing an argument, but don't put words in my mouth.

((Alex has seven of these Anthony Villiers adventures planned. I hope he takes time between them to do other novels, because seven straight frivolous books....

((And, finally, a question that will likely infuriate you and possibly Alex: we have had *Rite of Passage*, a "Heinlein" book, and now we are getting a series of "Georgette Heyer" books. Is Alex ever going to write an Alex Panshin book?))

The rest of the reviews impressed me, on the whole, as quite good. I was intrigued by the reactions to *Image of the Beast*, which I reviewed for *SCIENCE FICTION TIMES* at some length (March issue) and for *AMAZING* at considerable less length—and which Fritz Leiber reviewed (along with *Season of the Witch* and your own *Endless Orgy*) in the August *FANTASY*. Generally speaking, I agree much more with Toomey's review than with yours, and for roughly the same reasons. After all, Dick, the number or incidence of four-letter words and sex scenes in Farmer's book is neither its justification nor its downfall. Basically, it's just not a well-written book, and I suspect if the sex was removed it would flat-out stink as a book. Saying things like "Ma book with real guts", or "dares to tell it like it really is", etc. (no, I know you didn't say that), is simply begging the point. Oh well. I've said it all already.

((If taking the sex from *Image of the Beast* would harm the book, then the sex would appear to be necessary.))

Al Snider's article really turned me off. What was his point in writing this piece? If he wanted to attack specific people or institutions, ((in Los Angeles fandom)) he failed, because he was afraid to approach them directly, openly, with his criticisms. This is weaseling invective; it squirms out from under your thumb when you try to pin down what it means, who it's attacking. (Take it from me: I have both used and experienced enough invective of varying types to recognize this brand when I see it.) The tone is whining. He seems to be saying, "They wouldn't let me play their game, so I hate their game", but he isn't really being that honest about it with himself.

I'm reminded of an article which appeared eleven or twelve years ago in *INNUENDO*, attacking the Washington, D.C. fan group—of which I was then part—by holding everything we said and did while the author visited us up to ridicule. It hurt, and the way in which it hurt most was that it left no room for reply; no way to say, "No, that's not the way it was at all" without sounding awfully plinking and self-justifying. Of course that article was much better than Snider's—it went into graphic detail, indulged in specifics (some of them wrong), and was written in a vastly better-handled tone of smug superiority. Al should take lessons. He has a long way to go yet.

Letters:

Here we are again with J.J. Pierce, and to take an example of what I was saying earlier, I think I have to agree with him, at least in part, about sex in sf. Geeze, but a lot of "daring" sf writers have a cheap, porno-influenced attitude toward sex. It seems to me that if we are to integrate sex into our sf, it has got to be on a deeper level than the lubricious porno clichés I've seen thus far (Farmer is a strong offender here; I haven't read Stine yet). There is no depth, no insight, no broadening of characterization, in the lascivious descriptions of mechanical acts which seems to pass for sex these days.

Pierce (getting back to him) cites "the explicit sex scenes in Ted White's science fantasy" in what I guess to be approving tones. I think that the sex in my stuff has been (for the most part) the reflection of a love relationship, or was there because I felt the situation logically demanded it (making it implicit to the story). I don't think I handled it as well as I should have, particularly in my first attempts, which verged on porno clichés themselves. I was, originally, obsessed with "erotic realism" and explicit description. But the more I've written the less need I feel to be explicit in all my descriptions of physical acts. I think the emotional acts, the implications to the characters, are what count.

Trouble is, J.J., given the choice of Barbarella or the Black Flame as bed companions, I'd probably pick Barbarella. As I recall the Black Flame, she was a bitch, a castrator, and a type in romantic fiction for whom I have no affection whatsoever as a character. But then, I read that book seventeen years ago and didn't think it was worth the shouting even then. (Speaking of Romantic Ideals, let me refer you—and Harlan, if he's missed it; he's mentioned in it—to my article in the current NIEKAS, in the Meyer section. It's all about sex, love and manners—and as I recall, that's also the title of it.)

I agree with Alva: I think the ((world-con)) masquerade could easily be dispensed with, since it provides such a headache to the con committee. But then, I speak as one who has never (no, never) dolled himself up in costume for one of those affairs. It's my impression that a lot of other people think differently, and would be quite vocally unhappy about it if the tradition was shelved. Some people really live for this costuming jass. And since it does provide a lot of color (to say nothing of acres of bare female flesh) to the con, I suppose even I might miss it. The only way to find out for sure, of course, is to try dropping it. (But then, based on the 1964 Pacificon, I decided business sessions were a bore and a waste of time. You do recall what happened when we tried to dispense with that, don't you?)

I think I shall agree again with Norman Spinrad: in my experience with the editors I've met, I have ultimately been convinced that something like 80% of them were officious clods, totally lacking in any knowledge of writing or ("sigh") editing. This surprised me, because, you see, I grew up in this ghetto of ours, science fiction, where most of the editors are intelligent, have been writers themselves, and, whatever the failings of their taste or judgement, are genuine professionals. But most of these

men edit magazines or paperback lines. Meeting hardcover editors was quite a shock. For instance, I have not yet met one editor at Doubleday (in or out of the sf department) for whom I had much respect. One editor (in the juvenile section) doubletalked me for weeks about a book he couldn't make up his mind about, despite assurances that if I'd just do this or that a decision would come easily. (Last I heard, after some two years he had not yet made up his mind; but I've long since given up on him.) An editor-publisher of a paperback line rejected and refused to pay for a painting (by Jeff Jones) which had gone through the whole art-department approval business previously, and had been commissioned. This same individual has pulled some other capricious stunts on friends of mine; sufficiently annoying to me that I decided that I would never again submit works there. An editor at Crown books messed with a book of mine (No Time Like Tomorrow) for nine months,

totally screwing up both it and me. Following this, she suggested I do an anthology—I thought it was her intention to make up the hardship she'd caused me. So I put together one along the lines she suggested. Then she decided to drop the idea. She still "looks forward to working with you on our next project" but I'll be damned if I'll have anything further to do with her—and my agent feels the same way. Etc.

A lot of the female editors in the hardcover field seem to be ex-librarians. I've met a number of librarians in the last few years (my mother-in-law runs a branch library in New York City), and while most are well-meaning, they have absolutely no idea how books are created before they arrive between hard covers (or paper covers, for that matter). For this reason, many when they become editors are presumed to "know books," but in truth know next to nothing about the process of writing books.

Another type of editor prevalent in the hardcover field is the college English or journalism major who joins a big company after graduation, works his way up from junior assistant copyeditor and finally is given a minor editorship of his own—often in the sf department. This fellow is sometimes well-meaning, often a jerk, always convinced of his own importance, and—unfortunately—no wiser in the ways of writing than his ex-librarian counterpart, from whom he probably learned his job anyway. Thus the big companies compound ignorance and it is pure luck—repeat: luck—when one of these editors turns out to be intelligent, responsive and worth dealing with. The system works against him, and we should prize every good editor we encounter. They are rare.

I might add that we in sf are damned lucky, because we seem to have much more than out just share of good editors.

Alex Kirs: You say I'm "rather practiced at point-miss-



ing," but if you've sorted out any of the points I made, you don't show it.

To begin with, I was talking (in the original article) about sf magazines, and sf magazines solely. I wasn't talking about TIME, LIFE, LOOK, PLAYBOY, ESQUIRE or even REEL & CREEL, to use your examples. Therefore, your entire play with those examples is beside the point. If there are any parallels, they are with the few remaining mystery magazines and the paperback-original mystery phenomenon. Don't try to over-generalize my remarks into absurdity, you nit.

I also stated originally that a competition of sorts exists between the paperback and the sf magazine, and that one of the factors was the preferential display and sales treatment received by the paperback. Both cost roughly the same (60¢ now), and both average the same wordage (60-80,000 words). Many of the same writers and artists are used by both. But a book is allowed to sell until it is sold out, while a magazine is arbitrarily removed from sale after a one- or two-month period. (Magazines also receive inferior distribution and display.)

Now a book has a one-shot readership. That is, if a publisher sells a book, he's sold that book. His next book will not depend (nearly so directly) for its sales on the sales and quality of the book which preceded it. However, a magazine depends for the bulk of its sales on a repeat purchaser: someone who comes back for the next issue regularly. This is the only way a magazine can compete in sales (or in profits) with a line of books.

Unfortunately, the repeat-readership of a magazine is rarely more than 50% of the total sales of the magazine, and the turnover in this repeat-readership is said to be complete within a three- to five-year period. Got that? This is all previously stated background which you, Alex Kirs, ignored the first time around.

Obviously there are several ways to improve the situation for the magazines. One is to accent their differences from books—thus making the competition less direct, giving the reader something he can't get from books. Right? The other is to make the magazines more like

books so that they can enjoy the same advantages of distribution and display. Right? I have dealt with both in articles in fanzines; only your god-like conceit would assure you that I never thought of the latter approach (but I'll come back to that in a bit).

Going back to the first approach—accenting a magazine's differences from a book—this can also be done in such a way that it (hopefully) increases the repeat-readership and (maybe) creates a period of longer turnover, thus accumulating more regular readers for each issue. The means I proposed was to involve the reader more directly in the personality of the magazine, give him a sense of anticipation for each coming issue, and keep him a reader long after he might otherwise

have grown bored with the magazine.

I now have a chance to put these ideas into effect, and I have been doing it. My first AMAZING is the May issue, just out as I write this. It is a tentative groping toward my ideals. The July issue is much better. The August FANTASTIC is the first issue of that magazine in which I began attempting to create this involvement. In each case I am up against my own limitations. It is not enough for me to say "create an engaging personality for the magazine"—I have to try to find ways in which to do it. Maybe my own personality is not sufficiently engaging; I don't know yet. I won't know for sure for better than six months after I put an issue together. I may be wrong in either my goals or my means to those goals. But I will, by damn, have a try at it. And if I'm right in any respect, the benefits will be there for everyone.

(If I controlled the magazines' packages, I'd have a better chance; visually they leave much to be desired.)

((Late news: beginning this Fall, Ted will have control of the magazines' art and layout.))

As for the second approach—the magazine masquerading as a book—I first proposed it in a fanzine article in 1959 (in YANDRO). My idea then pretty much covers yours: numbered, undated issues which could be returned to sale regularly until the print order was exhausted—an extension of the Pohl/Ballantine STAR SF series. I would have added an editorial, story introductions (or "blurbs" as we used to call



them), and a feature or two (book reviews, letters, etc.) because it is my firm conviction that the temporal sense involved in a magazine is in many ways superior to the one-shot qualities of a line of unrelated books.

Two years ago I decided to try a new marketing idea with STELLAR. STELLAR was undercapitalized and never got off the ground, but the idea was to create a magazine (the same physical dimensions of SFR 29) with a quality package (the first issue had a lovely painting by Jack Gaughan, an abstraction which, in combination with the layout and type, made a striking cover), numbered but undated (on the cover), priced at \$1.00 a copy, and sold only through book stores, via book distributors. The contributors (both writers and artists) would have earned royalties on actual sales, with (in the future) a standard minimum advance payment. Copies would be sold of each issue until it was out of print. If demand was great enough, it would go into additional printings. If I could have sold ten thousand copies, I would have been able to top the best magazine rates in the field.

But we ran out of money too quickly. It was a dumb thing for me to do without better backing. But the people I know who have money weren't interested in spending it in that fashion—or they would have wanted more control than I'd been willing to give them.

I still think the idea would work, which is why I've spelled it out here. I hope somebody will take it and make it work.

Most of your other suggestions, Kirs, are asinine. Like putting the issues in cellophane. Sexbook stores do that; no one else would. The average newsstand has no control, and, as you pointed out, it would be terribly expensive. Why bother? Most newsstand copies of magazines aren't much-thumbed.

Kirs finally says that "mags die, more than anything, because of rising production costs and the circulation/advertising revenue feedback." He then accuses me of "over-generalizing." *Sigh*. THE SATURDAY EVENING POST, yes. Sf magazines, no. You don't know what the hell you're talking about, Kirs; you really don't. Most sf magazines sell so little advertising it doesn't pay to worry about it. Most sf magazines have died because of a change in the policies of the parent company (most of the pulps perished when publishers decided to abandon pulps wholesale, irrespective of individual sales—and advertising there was a greater factor because it was sold on

the combined circulation of the line as a whole), or because of distribution problems. All digest-sized sf mags of much significance died because of distributor dishonesty or hostility. SATELLITE, INFINITY, the second SF ADVENTURES, FANTASTIC UNIVERSE, WORLDS OF TOMORROW—each of these died directly or indirectly as a result of bad distribution. Several were ordered out of existence by the distributor in question. Since 1958, distributors have had a stranglehold on sf magazines, and the magazines survive at these distributors' whims.

How many copies need be sold to show a profit? I don't know about other magazines, but Sol Cohen has told me that AMAZING and FANTASTIC can "get by" on 30,000 copies an issue, and his all-reprint titles on 25,000 or maybe even less. And that's a lousy-low sales figure. Sol would be very happy if he could get AMAZING and FANTASTIC back up to 50,000 copies sold each issue. Of course, Sol has a very low overhead, but so what? The magazines can be made profitable if you aren't expecting to get rich from them.

Kirs says I'm "dragging" my "feet" in the face of progress. If "progress" is simply the elimination of fandom and sf magazines (which he implies it is), then he's right. I don't agree, however.

I think the sf magazines are viable and can be more so.

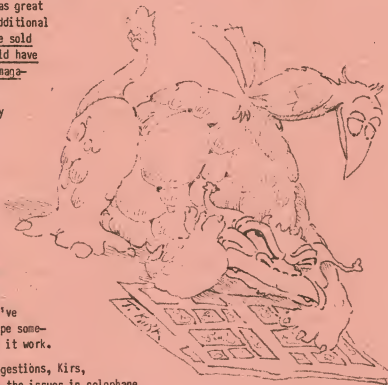
And I prefer my view of progress to his.



NEWS

The wildest things have been happening to me since I started writing Without making a decision By catcalls and screams It was pretty bad, I'm glad members of the High-powered lenses Artillery attacks were elgined Some sort of common ground Is still plugging away.

—Richard E. Geis



THE INCREDIBLE EMPTY PAGE DEPT.

As sometimes happens, the dummy turned out to be wrong, and here I am with a page to fill. But, aha, in the mail is a letter which cries out to be printed in this issue.

CHARLES PLATT

271 Portobello Road
London W.11.
ENGLAND

Saw Norman Spinrad's copy of the latest SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW today. You're trying hard to keep things moving, I feel, but the controversy is a bit sparse, as if there

isn't all that much for it to focus on. The JJPierce thing is too ludicrous to be argued over too much, and anyway, the Pierce supporters write dully. So rather than give you a letter of comment, I thought I would give you some news.

Norman Spinrad and his girl Terry Champagne (yes, that is her real name) have been in London for about two months now. They stayed at my place for a while before finding an apartment ten or twelve blocks away, in this rather cosmopolitan area of overpopulated London. They seem interested by Britain, sometimes amused, mostly rather quiet. I think some people who read Bug Jack Barron expected Norman to be a polemic character shouting 'Fuck' and 'no shit' all the time in a kind of perpetual rage. They have been disappointed.

The future of NEW WORLDS is once more dubious. The magazine has new distributors over here, who are good, but are not increasing the sales of the magazine the way we had hoped. I myself feel that people have strong buying habits, and that they buy magazines for quick, intermittent reading of short features and maybe a couple of short stories; I think anyone who actually wants to read, to be entertained as opposed to informed and kept occupied for a short while, buys a book rather than a magazine. NEW WORLDS is a bookish kind of magazine: it demands uninterrupted concentration and attention rather than browsing, and it demands thought. When we changed to our new distributors, we sold a lot more copies at first because a lot of people saw it for the first time, and bought it because it looked interesting. But once they'd found out what it was really like, not many went on buying it. I know this is not because the material we run lacks audience appeal (though most fans assume this is so). A paperback series, The Best of New Worlds, featuring the same kind of material as we are publishing now, sells out each printing, and appears every three months. This is, understandably, upsetting to us. When NEW WORLDS itself was book-size, it used to reach almost 20,000, which for Britain, is good. It also made money in those days, whereas at present it is costing us quite a lot per issue, and the person who eventually pays will be Michael Moorcock. On the bright side of things, there are rumours of US distribution (which would make us profitable) and/or people in the USA and in Britain who are interested in buying the magazine. So, whereas we can't afford to go on much longer as at present, it is possible there

will be some kind of assistance in future. I myself would like to see NEW WORLDS return to the format of a paperback book appearing once a month. I think it is better suited to the content.

OTHER NEWS. J.G. Ballard is talking of writing a non-condensed, linear novel of the old-fashioned variety, just to keep people happy.

Brian Aldiss has managed to sell his new non-sf book The Hand Reared Boy (all about masturbation) both here and USA, for a good sum. He has just completed a non-fiction book titled The Shape of Future Things, a very English, diary-form, meditative speculation on Science and Society, with references to most people in the English sf scene.

Today's news is that Norman Spinrad has sold two of his American books, one of them being Bug Jack Barron, to a well-known English sf publisher. Contracts are yet to be signed but it looks like a definite deal.

I myself am working on a cynically conceived novel to please the people who liked Garbage World. This one is the ultimate phallic fantasy, and in essence is Men vs Women, the men fighting to rid adventure fiction of the corrupting female influence. Of course, they win. I am doing it under a pseudonym.

I recently read Image of the Beast and A Feast Unknown, and will review them at length in SPECULATION. Whatever the faults in the prose, I thought both books had really deep, brilliantly vivid images and ideas — something lacking in most science fiction. This by way of a footnote to the article I wrote for your fanzine. ((New Worlds and After which will appear next issue.))

Lastly, I shall be in the USA this summer and hope to meet a few fans and writers, my main purpose being to absorb as much of the USA as possible. Mike Moorcock is also crossing the Atlantic soon, but is unlikely to stray far from Milford, where James Sallis, still associated editorially with NEW WORLDS, is occupying the Damon Knight mansion.



GEIS AGAIN.

For those who are curious, the print run for this issue is 700 copies. The magazine seems to go up 100 copies per issue. After the GALAXY and IF ads stop (soon) the increase should slow. On the other hand, the good reviews in AMAZING have resulted in at least a couple dozen sample subs and single orders.

I finally finished my sf-sex novel for Essex House. The title...so far...is The Perverts. But the perverts are twisted in a rather strange way...

Finally, Peggy Swenson wants to know how to repair a broken kip. Ted?

Diligently

So, first of all, let's have some understanding about the sort of situation it was. For one thing, it was nauseating, but that is personal opinion and has no place here, really. Instead, let's start with a bit of background and then move on to an incident that will lend credibility to the events I will describe later.

It's a small town, though it is near the fairly large

Corrupting

minor city of Harrisburg. It is the home of a large military establishment which is one of the biggest employers in the area and for which better than half the town works (either in uniform or in civilian capacity). You expect it to be somewhat conservative. You

Young

aren't disappointed.

Within a month of my assuming a teaching position there in the local high school, I heard the story of Mr. Froth (all names changed to protect me) the principal and George Orwell's ANIMAL FARM. It seems that the head of the English department, Mr. Klonk, had been



Minds

"....do you realize that this Heenleen is expousing communist principles."

teaching the Orwellian satire-allegory to his twelfth grade students, academic sections. One afternoon, during that nebulous time slot known in the Education Biz as "free period", the principal, Mr. Froth, summoned Mr. Klonk to his office. There followed a beat-around-the-bush sort of interview which reached its climax when Mr. Froth said quite pointedly to Mr. Klonk, and with unconcealed disgust, "Why are you teaching a children's book to academic seniors?"

"Children's book?" Mr. Klonk asked. He had taught for twenty-one years and was known among the students for his slave-driving qualities.

"Children's book," Mr. Froth said relentlessly.

By Dean R. Koontz

"I'm afraid I don't understand."

"We've had parents calling in," Mr. Froth said. "Two of them. They say your seniors are reading some book about talking pigs."

"Oh, that's ANIMAL FARM."

"That's what I mean," Mr. Froth said, leaping viciously to the evidence.

There followed a three week running argument before Mr. Froth would read the book and let it be explained to him. After that, ANIMAL FARM was an approved book.

After all, it was sort of anti-communist.

At the beginning of my second year in this thriving nest of intellectual abundance, I was sitting at home one evening after a hard day at the blackboard, diligently working over a list.

"What's that list you're so diligently working over?" my wife asked, working on her collage of fruits which she had cut from the food advertisements in her woman's magazines.

"A recommended reading list. Four hundred books they can use for reports. A hundred of them, heh heh, are going to be science fiction."

Some days later, I stand before one of my alert classes of bright young men and women as they hide hot rod magazines in their notebooks, pick their noses, doodle, scrawl obscenities on the desks, and gaze vacantly at me like so many stuffed sausages with human faces painted on them.

"Aside from the six regular reports the school requires," I said, "we will read any three books on this list you wish. The majority has to agree. The minority will not be forced. They can work on something else I will plan for them. Any suggestions for books to be read?"

Now it is December, months after. We are reading, as a group, Robert Heinlein's STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND. It is going well. Very good class discussion on the religious allegory of it, much cerebral work going on in essays and panels. Looking good.

While I am eating lunch, I am approached by Mr. Froth. I see him coming across the cafeteria toward my table, and I get a sinking feeling in my stomach that reaches down and gives me acute diarrhea. Mr. Froth was a winning football coach for twenty-one years. When he got too old to keep up the routine, when the smell of sweaty gym socks finally got to him, the school board made him principal in reward for his service to the higher things in education: like teaching young rookies the value of a jock strap, instilling a chauvinistic pride for school in the students, and studiously threatening teachers to make sure the football players always had adequate grades. He walks like a football coach, hunches, arms swinging, large strides.

He comes up to the table and gives me a flinty gaze.

For a moment, I wonder what I will do with a flinty

gaze (the market for flinty gazes having dropped a long time ago), when he replaces it with a smile (a much more marketable item). "Could I see you during next period, Mr. Koonitz?" he asks all sugary. There is still the smell of sweaty gym socks.

"I'm free. Sure."

"I knew you were free."

"I'll be there."

"My office."

"I'll be there."

"Will you be there?"

"I will."

"Good."

He walks off.

I have lost my appetite.

Later. His office.

"Sit down, Mr. Koonitz."

I take a chair.

"How are things going?"

"Pretty good."

"Any complaints?"

"None right now. Except the heater still doesn't work right in my room. But I've said about that before."

"We'll have someone look into it."

"You've said that before." This is at a time when I was just beginning to realize my writing earnings would allow me to quit teaching. Somehow, the job didn't seem as necessary, the principal as frightening.

"Do you give your students reading lists?" he asked abruptly. It was the chilling, cleverness in him, the suave, cool manner in which he thrust the knife right into my heart.

"Yes," I said, trying to think ahead.

"Do you happen to have one with you?"

Yes, I always carry my reading lists with me. I couldn't really feel safe without them. I fold them and put them just over my heart to protect me from bullets. I said, "No."

"Well, we've had this complaint about one of your books."

"On the reading list."

"Yes."

"Which one."

"Well, this will be doubly embarrassing for you," he said. "It's your book."

"My book."

"The one you wrote."

"Oh. What about it."

"Well, I wouldn't have taken a parent's side like this, Mr. Koonitz, unless I had been given evidence to prove that parent's point." He shifted uneasily. "We would appreciate it if you took the book off your list."

"Why?"

"Why? Why, Mr. Koonitz, that book is obscene!"

"Obscene?"

"Look. Look, I'll read you this one part." He draws out a folded paper from his pocket in which he has scribbled something. "Here. Page 77 of STAR QUEST. I quote: 'Her leotard suit was pulled down to her waist. Her breasts were

naked, and Seer, nestled in her lap like a child, was drawing upon one. The breasts were longer than they were wide, and were mostly fleshy nipple like an animal's teat."

"So?" I said.

"The parent was right. Obscene, Mr. Koontz. Definitely obscene. I have to take the responsibility some myself. I should have seen your list."

"It is not obscene."

"I just quoted to you a passage that is obscene."

"You quoted it out of context. That was an old man in her lap, someone beyond the stage of sexual interests or abilities. And she was nursing him. Feeding him. Not anything erotic."

"Seemed erotic to me."

"It wasn't."

"What will you do?"

"About what?"

"Taking the book off the list."

"I won't."

"Mr. Koontz."

"Until you read the whole thing."

"I see."

"You're judging a book by its cover, Mr. Froth."

"Sometimes a good indication."

That was Monday.

Tuesday.

My third class troops out. Time for a free period. Correct some papers, make up a quiz, finish the guide for tomorrow's lecture. Free period as they call it in the Ed Biz.

At the door: Mr. Sooper, the curriculum coordinator.

"Could I speak to you, Mr. Koontz?"

"Sure. Free period, you know."

"I know."

"What's it all about?" But I know.

"This book list of yours, Mr. Koontz."

"Hmmm?"

"There aren't many classics."

"About a hundred," I said.

"Out of four hundred."

"I think students should be introduced to contemporary literature too, Mr. Sooper."

"Admirable."

"Thank you."

"If it just wasn't dirty."

"Dirty?"

"Modern literature."

"Most of it isn't dirty."

"Oh, I hear, Mr. Koontz. I hear."

"Do you read, Mr. Sooper?"

"I have so little time. You know what this curriculum coordinator job requires. Day and night. Day and night, Mr. Koontz."

"What particularly did you have in mind?"

"STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND."

"You haven't had a complaint?"

"We have."

"From the same parent?"

"As a matter of fact—"

Tuesday night.

Sitting at home deeply absorbed by and in NOVA, racing on through the last thirty pages, knowing I'll have to put the book aside and read it again in a few months.

The phone rings.

I answer, unsuspectingly.

"Mr. Dean Koontz?"

"Yes?"

"The writer?"

Wary. "Uh, yes?"

"You teach at — High School?"

"Yes."

"I'm reading my son's assignment."

"Oh?"

"STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND. I don't think I'm going to let him finish it."

"Why not?"

"Why not?" Agitated surprise.

"Why not?"

"I don't mind the suggestive parts. A boy has to grow up. I understand that. It's— Well, Mr. Koontz, do you realize that this Heenleen (sic.) is expousing communist principles."

"I didn't, no."

"Well, these naked temples. All these peoples running around with each other, no real marriages. That's not American, I can tell you. And then he doesn't have much nice to say about the church."

"It's critical of organized religion, not of the tenets of those religions."

"What?"

"It isn't completely against religion."

"Well, it is some." Pause. "I just wanted to let you know my son won't be reading it. You better not fail him. I don't think I like you."

Click!

WEDNESDAY.

Free period.

In the principal's office. At, of course, his request. Mr. Sooper, curriculum coordinator extraordinary, is waiting with a paper shopping bag.

"Sit down, Mr. Koontz."

I sit.

"You remember you gave Mr. Sooper your reading list yesterday morning?"

"I remember."

"Well, he went that afternoon and checked the titles out at the News Center West." They have about 25,000 titles here, so he could find most of them, I knew. "Mr. Sooper had to put in three hours of his own time."

Mr. Sooper looked forlorn, waiting for consolation. When

I didn't give him any, he opened the bag and dumped about eighteen books on the desk. "We found these," he said.

"These?"

"Obscene books that were on your list."

"You bought them."

"Borrowed them. The proprietor was cooperative. We told him we were thinking of buying them and wanted to show them to the English teachers before we took any quantity."

I picked up the first book within reach. It was the Pyramid edition of L. Sprague de Camp's THE INCOMPLETE ENCHANTER. "I assure you," I said, "that this is not obscene."

"Please, Mr. Koontz," Mr. Froth said painfully. "We can see it is obscene. Look at the cover."

It was a Jones cover. A good one. "What about it?"

"That girl is naked!"

"So?"

"Good God, Mr. Koontz, naked! Can you see what the parents would do to us if their kid bought this book and said his English teacher told him to?"

"Well, you can hardly see anything particularly arousing. I mean, it isn't a frank, dirty picture."

"I can see her buttocks," Mr. Sooper said. "And the side of her breast."

I picked up another book. SYNTHAJAY by D.G. Compton. It had a decent cover, an Ace Special, nothing erotic. "This?"

"ON the back. Here." Mr. Sooper took it and pointed to the offending blurb from the TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT. I read aloud. "Complex and interesting...the vulgarity of eavesdropping on and exploiting other people's emotions, whether during sexual intercourse or while dying, is treated in a steady, liberal way."

"Good God, sexual intercourse!" Mr. Froth roared.

"Sexual intercourse," I said glumly. "But if you'd read the book..."

"I teach Sunday school, Mr. Koontz," Mr. Froth said.

"I don't understand what—"

"I go to church. There are some things that I wouldn't allow in my house."

"Like this book."

"Yes, like this book."

"And this one," Sooper said.

"What the devil could be wrong with THE CATCHER IN THE RYE?"

"You're teaching it to tenth and eleventh graders."

"Only the bright tenth."

"There is a rotten word in it, Mr. Koontz."

"You mean—fuck?"

"Yes."

"Well—"

We go through the rest of the eighteen books. Six science fiction. Mostly judged by the cover. Never by more than the blurbs. Except in the case of THIS IMMORTAL, which Mr. Sooper had read a page or two of and had deemed obscene because it began in a bedroom, in bed, with a scene between a man and a woman.

I went home and had three whiskey sours before supper. I am not a drinking man.

Thursday.

Principal's office.

I am getting used to old gym socks.

"We think, the Superintendent and I, that you ought not to finish teaching this STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND, Mr. Koontz."

"But I can't stop in the middle."

"Let them finish it on their own. No credit, though. Just extra credit."

"That's undermining my authority."

"No, it isn't, because I'm not ordering you to stop teaching it. It is just a good suggestion."

In other words, no merit raises if you teach it. But, then, I was going to quit anyhow.

I decided to teach the rest of the Heinlein book.

Through half of the classes for the next week, I have a visitor in the back of the room. Sometimes, it is the principal. Sometimes, the curriculum coordinator. Sometimes the superintendent. Sometimes the assistant principal. All waiting for me to teach a dirty word or phrase or idea.

That same week, one of the girls has to leave school. P.G. She got pregnant because she didn't have the emotional resources to keep from getting p.g.. Perhaps a book like STRANGERS...or like THE CATCHER IN THE RYE would help her gain insight, help her learn enough about herself to keep from getting knocked up. But she mustn't read those. No, no. They're dirty books.

Thursday, one week later, I handed in my resignation. Everyone looked relieved.

BOARDMAN continued from page 20

mainly a training school for spies. (To prevent wars and riots, the intelligence-gathering services are beginning to enter the communications media, trying to modify public opinion. The intelligence-gathering services have been trying to save us from chaos, while you wrinkle your nose at spies.)

"Kendy's World" is horrifyingly believable, much more so than Winston Smith's. We are much closer to it now than we were to Smith's when 1984 was written. Salient features of Kendy's World are now being advocated by men high in government, and on Howard's schedule the "National Emergency" is due to break out next year.

HARLAN ELEPHANT DEFENDS THE FAITH



John Boardman

Kendy's World, Winston Smith's, And Ours

Hayden Howard, in the February 1969 GALAXY has recovered much of the ground he lost with his "Eskimo Invasion" series.

"Kendy's World," clearly a fragment of a larger work in progress, is a tremendously evocative story of a very near future which could also become very real. It is a low-key, modern version of 1984 — and, in fact, of all caotopias.

George Orwell's 1984, itself derivative from Zamyatin's *We*, was written in 1949, at a time when the world was apparently polarized between two gigantic opposing forces, and Orwell was a tired, cynical old man. Orwell, whose previous venture into social satire had been the establishment of the equation that worker is to capitalist as animal is to farmer, saw in Soviet Communism and in English Socialism the utter ruin of the ideals he had championed in his younger days and fought for in Spain. Extrapolating from the latest and most paranoid phase of Stalinism, he saw the future as "a boot stamping on a human face forever."

Orwell's protagonist Winston Smith is the lens through whom we see the world of 1984. Smith's vital statistics were carefully chosen to make the focus as sharp as possible. He is 39 in 1984, so he was born in 1945 — the year of the electoral triumph of the Labour Party, whose "English Socialism" becomes "Ingsoc," the dominant ideology of 1984. And, since Winston Smith's middle initial is "C", he is presumably named after Winston Churchill, the last pre-Socialist leader. Orwell, clearly, was of the same mind as the anonymous Tory who sang satirically of the election win of the Labour Party and the Trade Unions Council:

"In Nineteen Hundred Forty-Five
From John o' Groats to Dover,
The people voted Socialist,
And Atlee was in clover.
That's when the T.U.C.
Joined the aristocracy,
Three cheers for democracy,
And one for Joseph Stalin!"

So Smith's tragedy and the tragedy of his country is pointed up. Born in the year of Ingsoc triumph, named after the last leader who opposed Ingsoc, he suffers under its tyranny until his last vestige of personal independence is crushed out.

Kendy Olson is not as harshly drawn as Winston Smith,

and the difference is the difference between the late '40's and the late '60's. To the sharp dichotomy of the crushing tyranny which Orwell saw has succeeded a more polymorphous world (polymorphous-perverse," a Freudian might say) where the danger is not a nuclear war, but a succession of little runnignore wars accompanied by a general and gradual diminution of individual liberty.

"Kendy's World" takes place sometime around 1980. Kendy was named for President Kennedy, with the clear implication that that President's death marked the same sort of transition as 1945 did for Orwell. His parents were U.C.I.A. "hippies" — the portrait of Kendy's mother as an aging and resentful hippy is a masterpiece of characterization. His birth and naming reflect the sanguine hopes of the early 1960's that human problems were solvable if enough men and women of good will tackled them with sufficient resources.

Then came the National Emergency. The circumstances under which it was declared, and the precise character of its regulations, are left undefined. Apparently it was a response to large-scale urban rioting (in the course of which Kendy's father was accidentally killed) and seems to be a general extra-constitutional suppression of civil liberties. It is not the Fascist dictatorship which many people currently feel may be the response to urban unrest, but a theoretically temporary set of restrictions which have little effect on the lives of non-political people willing to go along with whatever powers may be. It apparently was a result of a government policy on urban rioting such as that advocated by the Nixon aide who said, "Maybe we'll just have to go in and cream them some... place." Other anticipations of the National Emergency can be seen in Thomas F. Dewey's call for a repeal of the Fifth Amendment, and in the increased use of wire-tapping planned by the Department of Justice.

The National Emergency is declared when Kendy is seven, and he grows up in the conformist and anti-intellectual atmosphere which it generates. The direction of the "Cold War" seems to have been transferred from the Pentagon to a more efficient C.I.A. And the U.S. government has apparently taken up a suggestion made by William F. Buckley in a column attacking academic opposition to military research: "What do the gentlemen want? The government to start its own colleges and universities? Would we really be better off breeding a class of government scientists unexposed to the leavening influences of the humanities, such of them as survive in the nation's colleges and universities? Do they really believe we would then be better off? Because that is exactly what is going to happen if the militants have their way."

The result is National University, carefully laid out so that student demonstrations are almost impossible, and populated by clean-shaven, short-haired eager beavers selected for intelligence, dedication and patriotism. Furthermore, its students are exempt from both the draft and a Universal National Service which sweeps up everybody, and which has already been seriously advocated in Washington. In short, National University is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

OFF THE DEEP END.....

WALKER MAKES A MAJOR INNOVATION IN SCIENCE FICTION PUBLISHING, the publisher's flyer claims. To wit: the republication in hardcover of novels previously only available in paperback. My first reaction was "Ridiculous! Who's going to pay four and five dollars for material originally selling for six bits or less?" Then I learned that one of my own paperbacks was under consideration for this program, provided the initial package of reprints proved successful. About that time I began to experience an insidious change of heart.

Let's face it: probably more good original science fiction starts between paper than board. This is partly because editors like Maxwell Perkins are men of the past, while editors like Terry Carr and George Emmsberger are men of the present. It is also partly because more new science fiction is published in paper, making a larger pail for the cream to rise in. There are other factors, but the point is that while most good hardcover sf filters down to paper eventually, very little good paperback sf filters up to cloth. Since libraries and reviewers tend to be partial to hardcover, a sizeable audience is thus alienated.

Walker's innovation isn't really that original; some paperbacks, such as Farmer's *Flesh* (Beacon, 1960; Doubleday, 1968) have gone the soft-hard route (pun intentional, if you know the novel), and Ballantine started out as a simultaneous hard-soft publisher. But no one recently has made any big thing of this, so such steps up have been rare. I suppose one reason is that hardcover publishers are greedy; they like to claim 50% of resale income, and of course there is none to claim when the soft edition is already in print. (*Flesh*, again, excepted; I'd like to know Farmer's secret...)

But look at it this way: suppose you are a publisher just entering the science fiction field, and you want to establish a top-flight line and do it instantly. What better way than by skimming that paperback cream? Once you are established in the field you can shift increasingly to originals and get the same kind of gravy the other publishers are enjoying. The writers will appreciate it, the paperback publishers will appreciate it, the libraries will appreciate it, and, since the material is better than the average hardcover offering, many readers will appreciate it too.

In short, Walker is being very smart.

But a great deal depends on the actual novels selected. They do have to be good. And it is with this in mind that I approach *A Case of Conscience*, a reprint from Ballantine a decade past.

Back in 1952 I had my eighteenth birthday and entered

college. This meant many things, of course, but chief among them was the increased solvency and personal freedom that enabled me to buy all the science fiction I wanted. Prior to that I had read only ASTOUNDING regularly, though I panted for more. Now everything was within my sweaty adolescent grasp, and although I went without shoes for three semesters (I mean this literally; I attended classes barefoot, and my feet did not, despite what some may claim, stink) I was never without science fiction. First things first, after all; serious sf readers will understand. And I was just in time for the crest of the biggest magazine boom ever.

One of these boom-time magazines was IF: *WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION*, presented by Quinn Publishing Company, Inc., edited by Paul W. Fairman. The first issue, dated March 1952, had 160 pages with a leadoff adventure by Howard Browne, the editor of *AMAZING* and *FANTASTIC*. On the cover was a fine-bosomed femme, a tiger, and a hero with a gun. The price, unfortunately, was high: 35¢ for the issue. But there were good features, such as "Science Briefs" and an article on Bob Tucker, "...a very personable young man" who published a fanzine with a paid circulation of 450 copies.

The second issue was much the same, and the third, wherein one Terry Carr was awarded an original manuscript for sending in one of the best letters of comment. And the fourth, with a lovely one-eyed, one-breasted damsel rising out of a metal cube...ah, yes.

Then came the fifth issue. The price was the same, but editor Fairman was gone and the pages had been cut to 120. The fine taste in bosoms was gone, too; IF was now a magazine that could be shown to relatives.

I reacted as any sensitive reader would. I dropped IF from my reading list and bought no more copies. I sealed over its memory in the dungeon of my sorrow and spoke of it no more.

a column

By PIERS ANTHONY

But about a year later there came a time when I was out of reading matter—a fate worse than extinction. Only a copy of IF on the newsstand taunted me, unread. Finally I capitulated and bought it, hardly pleased.

That September 1953 issue featured "A Case of Conscience," by James Blish. I read it—and put IF permanently back on my list. Later I would look back and be appalled at those early issues I had thought so great, for they were not great, they were the kind of junk a teenager goes for. But I have never regretted the Blish novelette, and I'm thankful now that I had the taste then to appreciate it for what it was: one of the outstanding novelettes of our time. And it is with that memory, too, that I approach the book-version of that story.

That issue was, incidentally, no fluke. Later issues had Evan Hunter's "Alice in Wonderland" that the turned-out set would do well to read today; Phil Dick's "The Golden Man," to my mind one of the finest stories of all time, and Blish's own "The Thing in the Attic" — poor title but powerful story. IF had cut the pages and boosted the quality, and this was good. Later Damon Knight would edit the magazine; unfortunately he disappeared just as he was about to buy a story of mine, and both the magazine and I settled into a longtime funk. But that is wandering too far afield, even for me.

I met James Blish in person at the Milford Conference of 1966. People treated him with awe, and indeed he was the most knowledgeable critic. But the story he put into the pot for discussion was appallingly bad. I thought he was putting us on, but apparently he really thought he had made the great discovery of the age: how to do successful hack writing. I told him that if I had done a story like that, I would have had a terrible case of conscience, and I believe the man began to get just a trifle hot under the collar. Harlan Ellison recommended a plot improve-

ment; I agreed, and pressed the point further. Blish, I discovered, was also a mite sensitive to criticism from that quarter, for reasons that may be appreciated in fandom.

Well, Blish is not the only writer of repute to tumble. Look at the monstrosity Algis Budrys came out with in IF in 1967, The Iron Thorn. Critics do lose their perspective, unfortunately. But it is with this memory, too, that I approach A Case of Conscience.

So how does it look, the second time over? I never read the Ballantine edition, so nothing came between me and my fifteen-year-old initial impression. Well, I was annoyed by certain crudities I would not have expected in Blish, such as the pleonasm "still remained" on page 52 of the Walker edition, or "Now-you-listen-to-me," Agronski said, all in one breath." (page 67.) Really, wouldn't it sound pretty funny if he did take a new breath in the middle of that utterance? But such lapses are few, and I must admit that Blish strikes me as one of the finer craftsmen of the day. The novel is also written in omniscient viewpoint, which reminds me of playing a bridge hand in no-trump: looks easy, but you're wisest to stick to a suit unless you're very good. I did not find Blish's use of the form all that impressive.

I won't try to summarize the content here; it should be obvious that my commentaries are intended for people already familiar with the work at hand. The novel consists of the original IF novelette, verbatim, I believe, plus a slightly longer second story. The main character is father Ramon Ruiz-Sanchez, a Jesuit. The first section takes place on the planet Lithia, the second on Earth. The theme is essentially religious. Of the two sections, the first has what counts; the second reads too much like padding to fill out the required length. Time is wasted at a fancy party, yet, and the denouement is unsatisfactory. Viewed as a unit, this is indifferently structured—yet in detail it is interesting, and I think writers like Silverberg, Brunner, and Delany must have studied this novel carefully before undertaking their several new directions.

I understand this is part of a trilogy, of which Black Easter is another part. Though this is science fiction and that is magic, I can see the connection, for both novels come to grips with the problem of evil in its spiritual sense. I would have appreciated something better than Egtverchi—the Lithian hatched from an egg brought to Earth, in part two—and his undisciplined genius, for his fomenting of rebellion on Earth is pretty standard fare. Well done certainly—but the interest is more in the action than the theology, and that is not the type of novel this started out to be. The Earth Blish describes pretty well deserves what Egtverchi arranges for it—and so nothing really is gained by foiling the plot.

In fact, about the only thing that really distinguishes this novel is the religious thesis—which I violently reject. Not because I am an agnostic (though I am), but because it is narrow and valid only in a minority framework. It is claimed that because an ideal society is on Lithia,



this must be a set-up, a trap. It will suggest to the unwary that evolution is valid; that God is not required for the genesis of Man. Ergo, the work of the Adversary, and the planet must be proscribed for all human contact forever. Finally the entire benign planet is exorcised or exploded, depending on whose viewpoint you take; this has saved mankind.

OK—so I'm supposed to rave and rant; I still do. I say it's a pretty corrupt religion that saves souls of man-creatures by committing planetary genocide, and the fact that the Lithians are in every discernable respect far more worthy than Man only intensifies this wrong. But make no mistake: the best writing is not necessarily that which brings the warmest agreement, and the novel is true to its theme. In fact, it is for this very reason an excellent job. As I watch the Catholic Pope today piously holding out against the evils of contraception, despite a population problem he knows will surely destroy us all, and the Catholic apologists offering creuistry in lieu of reason in this matter—oh yes, Blish knows whereof he speaks, and the positions the Jesuit and his Pope take in this ugly future are entirely credible. They are not bad men, and they are not stupid, and the Catholic Church is not the evil monolith this outburst of mine implies—but Lord, what mischief can be wreaked by men too certain of their own particular Truth!

In summary: A Case of Conscience has serious flaws, but it was worth reprinting. Better for Blish to improve upon this type of thing, than to seek too ardently the money paid for mediocrity, much as I understand the temptation. When he wrote this novel he was a top-flight innovator, and perhaps he will be again.



DIALOG continued from page 5

"Where were we?"

"The Post Office."

"Yeah. It is a sad fact that the New York Post Office is providing lousy service. In the mid-fifties I used to mail PSYCHOTIC in Portland, Oregon and it was delivered in New York in about seven or eight days. Even Florida mail was delivered in ten days."

"And now..."

"Now a fanzine dies in a special corner of the New York Post Office. By single piece third class SFR now takes three weeks to be delivered. By bulk mailing, which should be faster, it takes a copy up to forty-five days to reach its addressee. Faugh!"

"I noticed that you sent all New York state copies of SFR by single copy third class last issue."

"Yes. It cost double the postage, but they were delivered within a month. You may imagine my feelings when I find Ted Pauls' KIPPLE reaching me from Baltimore at airmail speed—one and two days—for six cents postage!"

"You do not live right, Geis."

"I have toyed with the idea of going to a thin, first class mailed fanzine. Twenty pages would cost 12¢ postage and would get airmail speed most of the time. But it would entail recasting the magazine and altering the price."

"You're not seriously..."

"No. I'm just moaning for sympathy."

"There, there..."

MONOLOG

== I forgot to mention, while talking to myself about the Hugos, that next year I will invite the SFR reviewing staff to submit their Hugo choices along with me. Should be interesting.

== I have some fine material lined up and in my hot hands for upcoming issues.

NEXT ISSUE will lead off with "The Ace Science Fiction Specials" by Terry Carr. Then two controversial articles: "NEW WORLDS and After" by Charles Platt and "Paper Tiger, Burning Bright" by Andrew J. Offutt. Plus, I should imagine, a couple columns and the regular features.

== John D. Berry has decided to drop his column, "Stuff and Fanc!" because of lack of response in SFR from fans.

There goes nearly the last vestige of fannishness in the magazine. Is fannishness dying in fandom?

== SFR #33 will lead off with a heavy article by Samuel R. Delany titled "About Five Thousand Seven Hundred and Fifty Words." Guess how long it is.

== SFR #34 is loaded with a long, wide-ranging interview with Michael Moorcock by Robert E. Toomey, Jr., taped in London recently. AND in this issue I'll be using another reprint from John Foyster's EXPLODING MADONNA—his article "The Budrys Case".

== Of course, I'll have to declare a bonus issue if ever a jackpot time comes when ALL the SFR columnists send their columns for the same issue...Harlan Ellison, Poul Anderson, Piers Anthony, Banks Mebane...and maybe even Ted White.

"What would you do, Geis, run gibbering into the sea?"

"Get out of the MONOLOG!"

== KAY ANDERSON has moved to 4530 Hamilton Ave., Oxnard, Calif. 93030

== Greg Benford has moved to 1458 Entrada Verde Alamo, Calif. 94507

== Richard Delap^{SFR} reviewed Piers Anthony's ms Hasan interested Ted White who requested a look-see, liked it, and bought it for FANTASTIC.

== Elaine Landis in a letter says the Science Fiction Book Club selections for October are The Left Hand of Darkness by Ursula K. Le Guin and Orbit 5 edited by Damon Knight. Both at \$1.49. == See you all in #32 in August. —REG

delusions

e l u s i o n s

By

RICHARD DELAP
TED PAULS
JOHN BOARDMAN
ROBERT E. TOOMEY, JR.
ED COX
EARL EVERS
PIERS ANTHONY
RICHARD E. GEIS
ALEXIS GILLILAND

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS By Harry Warner, Jr.—Advent, \$7.50.

Subheaded "an informal history of science fiction fandom in the forties," Warner's book is crammed with those little extras that make this type of volume a collector's item within a very short time, including an introduction by Wilson Tucker, a 32 page index, a liberal sprinkling of photographs (several of which, I suspect, the subjects would like to see burned), and a glossary of fannish terms.

The author states: "This history is intended to entertain, inform, and infuriate its readers, but not to exhaust them ... Completely absent are footnotes, reference listings...bibliographies..."—and he has fulfilled all these goals but one. The book is certainly exhausting, not because it is too long or poorly done but because there is simply so much in it. Covering an entire decade in 300+ pages is too much for steady reading and the reader is advised to stretch it over a period of weeks to gain full benefit.

It isn't likely the libraries will stock this volume as it has no interest for the general reader, and its appeal, even in fandom, seems limited to those with a very strong interest in fannish history (there is a tentative promise for volumes covering the 50s and 60s as well).

With Warner's intentions in mind, then, it is obvious he has done a great service to fandom in as entertaining a manner as possible, and those truly interested in the subject will find the book indispensable.

Warner traces: "prerecorded fandom" before the organized boom of the 30s, from Lewis Carroll through the dime novel to the H.P. Lovecraft Circle; fan-slang, including Tucker's coining of the words "space opera," de Camp and Pratt's "Yngvi is a louse," the now-forgotten rallying cry "Rosebud!" and a variety of hoaxes that once roused much controversy; pro authors using fandom and Biffs in various stories, most notably Boucher's *Rocket to the Morgue* and Tucker's *The Chinese Doll*; fans-into-pros, recounting the touchy editorial policies of such as Ray Palmer and Donald A. Wollheim (and slipping into a dry, clipped style to describe British-er Ted Carnell); the evil perversion of bibliomania, the reasons for the sad fate of Shasta Publishers, and a once-over-lightly of fan-into-pro artists; a fascinating rundown of fans and fights during the 40s, from Forrest J. Ackerman (The Ackerman influence on fandom should outlive him!) to Claude Degler ("a living legend"); fandom during the war years, with much info. on British, Canadian, Australian and European fandom during this time; a history of NSF, the notorious Shaver mystery, and the confusions associated with the Cosmic Circle; the "Amateur Press Associations" and "Fans Around the Nation," two chapters that were the least interesting to me personally (too many long lists of unfamiliar names, names); and, finally, a good description of early conventions, a rundown of the top fanzines of the decade, and an odd concluding chapter titled "Postwar fandom Abroad."

Warner brings up lots of old controversies yet seldom takes a strong stand or definite "side," relying instead on many facts (and not a few rumors) to present a clear-as-possible viewpoint. Sex, when mentioned, is usually concerned with the fuss stirred up by Francis T. Laney over homosexuals in fandom (which today would probably fail to instigate even a mild discussion?); apparently the "normal" sexual habits of fans just didn't have enough oomph to garnish much fanzine discussion in those days.

The author is occasionally prone to slipping in almost unnoticeable bits of dry wit (such as Laney's four marriages), sometimes enough to help alleviate some of the windier passages that loom overheavy with names and dates. Some of these are worded with very sly implications (nasty, nasty, Warner!).

I'm sure the author had enough details to fill many, many extra pages, but he boils them down to essentials so that, rich and full as his history is, it seldom goes sprawling with niggling little asides. Enormous as the subject is (and has become), it is remarkable that anyone had the ability to tie it together with any cohesion at all; and if the book lacks a wide appeal, well, that will only intensify its appeal to the specialized audience for which this book is a must.

—Richard Delap

An ordinary writer tells his readers about the world that exists in his novel; a good writer shows it to them, allows them to see it naturally in the course of developing his story.

By this criterion, the John Brunner of The Jagged Orbit is a very good writer indeed. There are all manner of details about the world of 2014 which he introduces subtly, casually, in the course of this long (nearly 400 page) book, when other, lesser writers would have told us all about them in a couple of pages of dry narrative or through some common device (like: "It was, George thought, the kind of world in which..." etc.). The reader of Brunner's story is still learning about life and society in 2014 right up to the end, and this makes reading The Jagged Orbit a dynamic process.

This method of portraying background lends itself very easily to misuse. There is always the temptation for the author to fall back on the deus ex machina syndrome, introducing new elements out of the blue as needed to move the plot along, extricate the characters from a predicament or explain apparent inconsistencies in prior chapters.

Brunner studiously avoids this device of weak writers. None of the background elements revealed in later chapters give the impression of having been invented for the occasion. One has the feeling that the author conceived of his fictional world as one integrated, consistent whole before the first word of The Jagged Orbit was put on paper.

The dichotomy with which this review opened is in actuality a trichotomy: An ordinary writer tells his readers about the world that exists in his novel; a good writer shows it to them; a great writer impells them to feel it. John Brunner falls short of greatness in this novel by failing at the latter.

The society of 2014 about which he writes is one in which some present-day trends have been amplified to the extreme. Most people are armed, there are steel shutters to cover the windows, deadfalls over the doors, locks that blow up if tampered with, minefields and barbed wire in the gardens, police machinegun nests on street corners, an armaments race between the black enclaves and the white areas of the United States.

Brunner shows us all of this in the course of unfolding the story, but he does not manage to make us feel it. The paranoid, oppressive feeling of such a society is never adequately conveyed. Brunner lets us see that this is a world in which a substantial percentage of the population feels compelled to escape reality through the use of psychedelics. We know this, intellectually, but he fails to

evoke the feeling of such a world. We are not made to feel the pressure of this thoroughly sick society on the major characters on whom the book focuses.

This, however, is the only significant failing of The Jagged Orbit. It is one that in a lesser book would not be very important. But this is such an excellent novel that the reader feels the result of any failing with particular intensity.

I have deliberately refrained from any attempt at a plot summary or description because it is impossible in a few sentences or paragraphs to satisfactorily encompass all that happens in The Jagged Orbit. There are a number of threads running through the novel, each a sub-plot of its own, separate from but complimentary to—and complemented by—the others, and there is such a profusion of ideas that Brunner could easily have written three books out of the material contained in this one. A forty-page graduate thesis could be written on the chapter titles alone. There are an even one hundred chapters, and in some the titles are longer than the text. Some are puns, some are entertaining aphorisms ("It's A Common Platitude That Knowledge Is Neutral But Every Now And Then It Would Be Useful If It Were On Your Side Rather Than Theirs"), some are epigrams so fascinating in themselves that one must restrain the urge to wander off into prolonged thought ("A Riddle Is A Kind Of Sieve").

The plotting is superlative. One acquaintance who read The Jagged Orbit remarked to me that Brunner's interweaving of elements like excerpts from the Manchester Guardian and out-of-chronology chapters of explanation that could destroy the pacing of most novels was "inspired".

I may be wrong, but I don't attribute the author's brilliant construction to anything so ephemeral as inspiration; I think, rather, that it was a lot of damned hard work. This book is put together with the painstaking care of a piece of jewelry fashioned by the hands of an artisan. If I ever meet John Brunner, my first question to him would be: "How long did it take you to write The Jagged Orbit, and was it as difficult as I think it was?"

The writing itself is superb. I cannot recall ever being especially impressed with any previous work of Brunner's. Oh, I've read some of his things, and enjoyed them, but nothing that was very memorable or that made me think of the author as anything more than one of three or four dozen able science fiction writers. With this book, however, he has moved into another and more exclusive chamber in my mental pantheon of sf writers.

All of the writing is excellent, but Chapter 76 deserves particular mention. It involves a sadistic orgy which turns into a bloody fight, seen from the perspective of Lyla, a low-level telepath/medium, who is under the influence of a hallucinogen and



whose mind is receiving scenes of combat in the past. Thus, we are shown the on going fight through a double prism of unreality, with changing scenes of ancient single combat (gladiators in the Roman arena, knights on the jousting green, etc.) corresponding to what is transpiring in the room where Lyla is. Brunner also provides additional description in parenthetical narrative stretches outside the thread of Lyla's experience. If this gives you the idea that this chapter is complex, it is. The whole book is complex, and Brunner makes it work tremendously well.

This is not a book designed for the average reader of westerns or comic books. Brunner assumes a degree of intelligence on the part of his readers and leaves a lot unexplained (at least explicitly—the explanations are there, but you have to look for them). There is a good deal of symbolism, there are chapters out of chronology, there are chapters in counterpoint to one another, not on a simple A-to-A basis as in, e.g., Sturgeon's *Venus Plus X*, but counterpoint on several levels at once, and there are ideas like a super-computer that exists in two different time tracks (or, rather, it exists twice in the same time track, once as its present existence and once as its future existence returned to alter the present).

The *Jagged Orbit*, in short, is one hell of a good book, and one which you should not miss.

—Ted Pauls

 ((And now Richard Delap follows with his dissenting opinion.))

ONE A MESSAGE FROM YOUR HATCHET-WAH

"Chapter One: I—
 Chapter Two: -solationism
 . . .
 Chapter Ninety-nine: You—
 Chapter One Hundred: -nification."

And there, simply put, is the entire content of this book. Chapters Three to Ninety-eight consist of nearly four hundred pages of detail of how to get from one to the other. But why did Brunner go to the trouble of writing out his treatise with such exhausting concern when he has also gone on to succinctly condense each chapter into ingeniously urbane chapter titles? I suggest the interested reader zip through chapter titles alone and put the book away with a smile (however puzzled) on his face. Those who wish to peruse the obese moralizing word by word are by the final chapters likely to be screaming — You mean I ploughed through all that for THIS???

TWO A ROSE IS A ROSE IS A ROSE (ALSO A TURD)



It is the world of 2014, and the Earth is just in a terrible mess; such a mess that all the contemporary problems — apathy, insane political/economical war, race relations, alienation, etc. — of today seem so much clearer (oh, yes!) after seeing them in a fictional element. The cover

quotes Thomas Disch as saying "The styling is Now," and he is so right. If Brunner is so interested in Now problems, I honestly failed to see why he bothered giving the book a science-fictional setting. He should instead have written a mainstream novel and let it go at that...though I suppose Brunner can say that these problems are eternal rather than momentary, which would completely wipe out any usefulness the novel might possess because the book is too momentarily scaled. I haven't the room to list all the major elements (not to mention the minor) of this bizarre picture of the future. Suffice to say that the population is trapped in its own technological indifferences: communication is principally limited to "vuset" pictures in both business and pleasure; one wears protective garments and carries the best weapons he/she can afford to walk down a city street; and, each is conditioned by environment to accept an existence of violence and everyday danger as a matter of course or be committed, often permanently, to a mental institution. Behind all this elaborate terrorism lies the Mafia-like Gotschalk cartel, a family-owned and -operated combine that makes enormous profits from its manufacture of a wide range of always better and yearly updated weapons (like today's automobiles?). The problems in envisioning this social climate come with Brunner's desperate attempt to relate to his Now audience with disappointingly traditional and tiresomely contrived satire. Worst of all, the incessant hammering at every nail that pokes its head out of the biard draws no lines at discretion, and the steady beat develops into a rhythmless drone that is, simply, dull. After the first 150 pages of sheer confusion, one begins to see that a plot is developing (snail's pace, but developing) though I kept wondering if the interminable detail was really all that necessary. I came to the conclusion after the next hundred pages that it wasn't, and if I'd been smart I'd have quit right there.

THREE I CAN'T SEE YOUR DISTINGUISHING MARK IN A CROWD

The characters swinging along this orbit are very neatly tied together despite their erratic courses, and it is only their spice and variety that sometimes holds the attention throughout the confusing surroundings. Most interesting are Dr. James Reedeth of the Ginsberg Memorial Hospital for the Mentally Maladjusted, who has a great passion for his co-worker Ariadne Spoelstra — she sadly disappears after building up good reader interest early in the book — and worries over one particular patient, Harry Madison, a pivotal character who ends up being a mere stage prop; a pythoness, Lyla, who has a special talent for performing with oth-

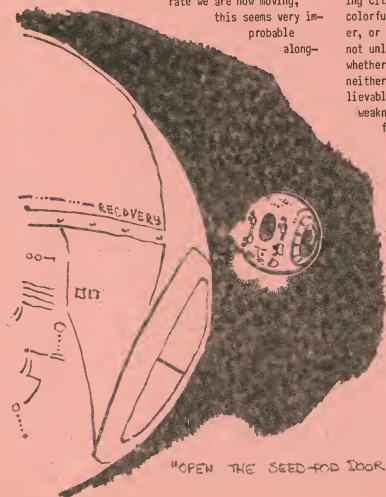


er people's minds, and who remains rather believable until at the climax she is forced by the author to deliver an insipid sermon about the real meaning of communication (there's been too much confusion and utter insanity beforehand for Lyla to tie up things so neatly, and I don't believe a word of it!); Mathew Flamen, world-famous personality (a spoolpigeon, if you must know) whose tv/expose program is being sabotaged by unknown sources; Pedro Di-Jolo, Morton Lenigo, and literally dozens more. Is it mere apathy on my part that most of them are so unsympathetic, or simply that their environment is so patently unconvincing that I cannot be worried about their fate. It might also be that there are just too many of them darting in and out of the story to capture any sustained interest.

FOUR IF ONE WRITES A BOOK SAYING THE SUN WILL RISE TOMORROW, WILL THAT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE?

Brunner spends far too much time double-checking the reader's intelligence by dropping such inanities as quotes from present-day newspapers and striving for direct connections (such as peanut butter in which oil still separates from the spread) with today... I'm surprised he didn't include a picture of his typewriter, a list of meals consumed while writing, and, hell, an appendix consisting of the entire series of original drafts, including errors! And with so much space to work in, it seems strange that sexual enlightenment in 2014, when mentioned at all, has

advanced not an inch — at the rate we are now moving, this seems very improbable along—



side Brunner's other suppositions. Finally, I feel that even the less discriminating readers who are not overly annoyed by the book's blatant sermonizing are going to be disappointed in the gradual emergence of "natural order" in the climactic tie-up that has all the finesse of a clumsy novitiate mystery. Don't be misled by the lovely Dillon(s) cover and the fact that this is included in Ace's "Special" series. The Jagged Orbit is tracking an erratic but weary path around a dead planet.



THE GOBLIN TOWER by L. Sprague de Camp—Pyramid I-1927, 75¢

The "classical" sword-and-sorcery novel introduces its hero in humble surroundings as a runaway slave, mercenary soldier, or disinherited princeling, and by degrees advances him until — if the book is true to form — he ends asking.

With his usual wry satire L. Sprague de Camp has reversed the process.

Jorian of Kortoli begins as a king, escapes a ritual beheading, and after numerous adventures with foes from this or other worlds, winds up as a humble but well-qualified marketplace story-teller.

A number of familiar de Camp ideas crop up as Jorian wanders through the Twelve Cities — a collection of squabbling city-states of late-medieval technology, ruled by such colorful dignitaries as a Grand Bastard, a Hereditary Usurper, or the Faceless Five. These are the gods of large but not unlimited power, who flourish or decline according to whether they are worshipped or ignored. There is a hero, neither a Kin Kinnison or a Cugel the Clever, but a real, believable human being with the usual quota of strengths and weaknesses. There are archaisms in the language, a careful attention to technological detail, and wry parallels with the people and issues of our own time. For example, a magician tells Jorian of an event in the history of one of the city-states:

"As soon as Charens got power, he began to effect his reforms. This so enraged the rich that they hired a gang of bravos to slay Charens as he walked home from the marketplace. Since, under the then constitution, the man having the second largest number of votes became vice-archon, the candidate of the rich became archon and rescinded all of Charens' reforms.

"The oligarch's, however, had not reckoned on Charens' younger brother, Charenzo..."

Jorian is rescued from the beheading by the spells of the wizard Karadur of Mulvan — Mulvan being a large jungle realm to the South, resembling India much as Howard's Vendhya does. (The inhabitants of Mulvan are, of course,



Mulvanians, bringing to mind certain Indian tales of the late R. Kipling.) This is on condition that Jorian help Karadur steal a chest full of old spells, so that Karadur's faction can out-magic another for control of the Forces of Progress, a magicians' union.

The chest-quest leads them on a long and far from merry chase, wherein Jorian hears and tells a number of tales with little morals about how everything is good in moderation and nothing in excess, or how men of the best intentions can bring on disaster. Finally, after the delivery of the chest has the usual results, Jorian decides that he is more cut out to be a story-teller than either a king or an adventurer.

Science fiction fans will particularly enjoy the description of the Forces of Progress convention in the Goblin Tower. It is a combination of a learned society meeting (like the magicians of *The Incomplete Enchanter*) and a Worldcon. There is even a masquerade and costume judging, with a certain Aello performing the role usually taken by George Scithers. At first glance your reviewer had the impression that the characters of Vanora and Boso were savage satires of a couple of California fans, but apparently every man past the age of, say, 25 has known at least one Vanora — as well as a Maggie Money-Eyes, two or three Earth Mothers, and a Belit or so.

—John Boardman



THE SILKIE by A.E. Van Vogt—Ace, 60¢

I don't know.

Today, like Plato, I went to the oracle and I asked her on behalf of myself: What's with you, boy? What ever happened to that wonderful brown-eyed innocence of yours? Where's that lovely sense of wonder you used to have? How come, these days, you can't so effortlessly achieve that willing suspension of disbelief Sam Moskowitz and the rest are continually prattling about?

And, like Plato, I made answer to the oracle and to myself: Boy, you're getting old and mean and your judgment's been impaired by quality. It's not easy for you to accept the crap any more. In a word, you've become selective. And that selectivity is a filter for thinking, man.

I left the oracle with her tarnished baubles in her storefront Delphi with the cracked plate glass window and the forty-nine cent crystal ball that snows inside when you upend it and the fading psychedelic posters stuck to

the peeling walls with thrice-used friction tape and I walked for a while through foggy streets and pondered distances and change.

A.E. Van Vogt. A name to conjure with. Wave the magic wand over the exposed animal entrails and whisper the magic word — (any one of a collection of magic words that Forrest J. Ackerman has thoughtfully listed on an "About the Author" page at the front of *The Silkie* in a paragraph that I'm powerless to prevent myself from quoting: "Van Vogt always is years ahead with his concepts. Semantics, "totipotency," Batesian vision restoration, hypnosis, "similarization," dianetics, and "flexialism," have all been grist for his mill!" How Ackerman managed to miss the marvelous in-gravity parachute, I'll never know — but I've often wondered where these people come from and who it is that allows them to say the asinine things that they say without clubbing them over the head with a giant blue pencil) — whisper the magic word and !ZAP! the animal entrails change instantly to a heaping Luke-warm plate of spaghetti comprised of nothing but loose ends.

Shit, I grew up with Van Vogt. I read *Slan* in grammar school and the nun (of the teaching order, the Sisters of St. Joseph, bless them all) gave me five stinging swats ... across the palm of each hand with a wooden ruler right in front of the whole class for reading that silly science fiction when I should have been paying attention to my lessons. I was mortified, but I didn't give up on sf or Van Vogt.

Years later, when I was in high school, my father (a staunch Roman Catholic of Irish descent) kicked my young ass halfway around the block for reading a Van Vogt novel entitled *The Mating Urge* — one of the mutilated offspring of an unlikely mixed marriage between GALAXY and Beacon Books, a school paperback sex-book publisher. The book, if I remember well, had a gaudy cover painting that depicted a man ripping a big-boobed woman's blouse from her very body. It was pretty hot stuff and, without bothering to delve any deeper into the novel's contents than that dirty, rotten, filthy cover, my old man assumed the book was unfit for my adolescent eyes and (in the mistaken belief that he could save my soul and keep me from masturbating) destroyed it and drove the lesson home with his foot.

In spite of all this, I didn't lose faith with Van Vogt. I voyaged with him aboard the *Space Beagle*, battling a fright of incredible horrors along the way; I played strange, galaxy shaking games with Gilbert Gosseyn and didn't care half a whit whether they made any sense or not; I shuddered over the superintelligent cosmic vampires of *Asylum* and was moved by *The House That Stood Still*.

Then came the hiatus.

Van Vogt stopped writing sf and reprints of reprints and cannibal anthologies and omnibus volumes came and went and a mainstream novel that I found unreadable that librarians stuck on the science fiction shelves, not because of what it was about but because of who had written it; and I went into the service of my country and learned the public relations trade and came out and found myself making my living writing for various media and got married and became a father and—

Well—

I don't know.

Van Vogt's stuff had always been crap. I know that. But it was crap I could believe in because he seemed somehow to believe in it himself, and I STILL think Mexialism is a hell of a fine idea. Belief has weight; it takes up space. No matter how wrongheaded it is, it still has force, commands attention and respect — if not agreement. (Which is one of the reasons I've never been able to really relate to the writings of, for example, L. Sprague de Camp who, for all his cleverness and scholarship and surface sheen, has never been able to convince me that he believes in anything.)

Now, that very fragile thing has shattered. I don't think Van Vogt believes any longer. And neither do I.

Pigs is pigs, maybe, but crap isn't just crap. The Silkie is CRAP. It is faithless, senseless, faceless, terrible, pitiful and bad clear through. It's a horrid, lousy book without a single redeeming feature that I can find and more faults, flaws and foolishnesses than I care to enumerate.

I refuse to analyze it, dissect it, synopsise it. Reading the book was a traumatic experience of sorts for me. Van Vogt is no longer years ahead, if he ever was. He appears to have lost the way completely. I sincerely hope he hasn't, but that's how it appears. I hope he tries again, this time with his eyes straight ahead and his brain fully engaged. I hope The Silkie is ignored rather than disdained and that it dies a natural death instead of being viciously murdered at the hands of people like me who feel, perhaps unreasonably, a sense of betrayal.

I mean, what the hell, Mr. Van Vogt, fans are slans or wish they were, and it's a bitch to be busted for stupidity at this late date. But don't insult my intelligence so blatantly, sir. Page after page of cretinous pseudo-scientific double-talk is an affront, as is sententious oversentimentality in characters who have no character. The clumsy sentences I'll abide as I always have, and the false clues and misdirections that sometimes amount to outright lies, and the ridiculous, grating dialogue where one character tells another at great length something he already knows, must know, in order to clue the reader in. I'll abide these things without liking them. But, damnit, if you push me too far I'll fall by the wayside and take root there.

Sorry, Mr. Van Vogt. You won't get respect if you won't give it.

Sorry.

—Robert E. Toomey, Jr.

SMALL CHANGES by Hal Clement—Doubleday, \$4.95

It would be a safe guess that most of the science fiction fans queried today would confirm the fact that Hal Clement happened with the publication of Needle. Since then, his name has become synonymous with excellent, science fiction novels. It is no surprise, however, that he has been writing shorter stories ever since his first, which appeared, in ASTOUNDING of course, in June 1942. Most of them are of the same "problem" type as the nine which comprise this volume.

In general, they are the "hard science" type. The scientific problem/solution exercise which still reigns supreme in the ANALOG of today...and which has boosted its circulation to over 100,000 in the area to which it is carefully directed.

That this book is likewise directed toward that same readership is evident. That it is also staying studiously within the bounds of easily extrapolated futures, except for one or two instances, acceptable also to the book-store browser is equally apparent.

Altogether, this is a representative example of the range of shorter stories Harry Clement Stubbs produces.

Finally, it is not "an exciting collection." It becomes obvious that Clement's shorter stories, even a bookful, can not stack up against any of his excellent novels. A sedate book, this is probably grist for the Clement fan and possibly the hard science advocates in our midst.

—Ed Cox

A VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS by David Lindsay—Ballantine, 95¢

This is a beautiful book, in the sense of an acid-head picking up a smooth stone from the street, running his fingers over it, and saying, "beautiful."

Somebody once said, "Cats are stoned people," and it's true, without any wild conjecture about felines secreting hallucinogens as a natural metabolic product or similar clap-trap. Any average, happy tabbycat moves and acts like people do when they're stoned on good pot. I won't speculate how the cat feels, I only know how it looks.

Arcturus gives me the same impression. It's a book-length stoned rap in the best sense, full of both obvious and subtle mysticism, contrived and natural symbolism, and more than a little real truth. (I don't know what truth is, I only know that very few books contain any, and this is one of the few.) I assume the power of Lind-



say's vision derives from madness rather than from drugs, but it doesn't matter — his genius loci, whatever it is, can also dwell in some of the acid-reclaimed territory of my own mind. And that's quite enough for me.

That's my view of *A Voyage to Arcturus* speaking as an acid-freak and mystic. Speaking as a fantasy reader and critic, I really don't know what to say.

The book has some very good elements and some unbelievably awful ones. The introduction makes excuses for the author's lack of writing and plotting skill, saying that the "power of his vision" makes up for his clumsiness of style and occasional crudity and sloppiness of visions in making up details. As a mystic, reading the book and grooving on it, the excuse is so obvious as to be unnecessary. Reading critically, no excuse could justify the roughness of a lot of Lindsay's writing and thinking.

The book was written in a fever, and probably in some sort of possessed trance as well. When Lindsay's "demon" (though it's obvious if any supernatural agency is involved, it's a benign one) was on him, his vision is painfully clear and rips right into the reader's mind. It often goes way beyond his power to communicate it in words, and all he can do is use the strongest terms he knows, pointing to goals he knows he can't reach. Other times, the vision seems to have failed him at a crucial point, where he was building up to some revelation, then has to stop and, intellectually and rather self-consciously, fake up something to keep the story moving.

A Voyage to Arcturus is actually the unrevised first draft of one of the greatest pieces of mystical writing in the English language. Oh, it might represent some re-writing, but not nearly enough or skillful enough. I don't know why Lindsay didn't rewrite it — I know he'd be young; he might have already been fighting death or madness when he wrote *Arcturus*. Or he may not have had much critical sense. Or maybe he, like a lot of modern psychedellic artists and writers, felt it was more "natural" and "honest" to leave the book as originally written, rough, but with the "inspired" writing presented in its purest form. (I don't agree with such an opinion, but I understand why someone would think that way.) In any case, *A Voyage to Arcturus* doesn't deserve the same sort of classic status as Tolkien's work even though the imagination and complexity and clarity of vision is similar. Tolkien knew exactly what he was doing; Lindsay was doing first and trying to learn how as he went along.

I'm deliberately refraining from giving a plot summary or a description of the background elements or style — if there's enough of the mystic in you to really groove on this book, you won't get anything from an analytical description. If there isn't, such a description would probably keep you from starting the book. And that would be a mistake.

I think every writer and true fan of fantasy or sf should read this book clear through even if he doesn't enjoy it, or get anything of value from it.

I'm not going to presume to tell you what Lindsay's symbolism "means" but I'm morally certain there's real meaning there. This is a religious book in the same deep sense that *The Lord of the Rings* is. "Inspired" or "visionary" writing is one very important part of the essence of fantasy, (note — I said "very important" not "essential") and *A Voyage to Arcturus* is close to being an archetype of that particular approach, as much for its faults as for its virtues.

—Earl Evers



ENCOUNTERS WITH ALIENS Edited by George W. Early—Sherbourne Press, \$4.95

This is an anthology of a dozen pieces, with an editor's preface and an introduction by Ivan T. Sanderson. It is subtitled UFO's and Alien Beings in Science Fiction, and that's a good description.

As entertainment the book is satisfactory. The eleven stories are by generally skilled writers, some quite well-known in the field. If no entries are outstanding, at least none are dull. The casual reader should find this to his taste, particularly if he is intrigued by reports of UFO's — Unidentified Flying Objects, or simply "flying saucers" — and his credibility will not be unduly strained. In these stories visitors arrive from other planets and make contact with individuals of Earth; some are friendly, some watchful, some merely off-course. None are really inimical.

The thoughtful reader will be struck by the single essay: "The Four-faced Visitors of Ezekiel," by Arthur Orton. This suggests persuasively that when Ezekiel saw the Wheel he was not imagining things; that in fact this was a visitation by humanoid aliens from another star system. Verse by verse this thesis is documented, right from the text of the Bible. This is worth reading, by believers and skeptics alike; to my mind it is the most effective argument for alien visita-



"Beware, mortals,
I am the angel
of death!"

tion presented in the past several thousand years.

The Editor's Preface and Sanderson's introduction are another matter, and unfortunately they lead off the book. They constitute less a preamble to the stories than an unfair attack on science fiction writers, and as one of them I feel compelled to reply.

Why do sf writers tend to avoid Saucer literature? Perhaps because those of us who make a business of fiction based on science can have little respect for those who don't distinguish between fiction and science. We are not afraid to consider the possibilities of alien contact; we merely feel that the Saucerites are poor storytellers, if not deluded publicity-seekers. No objective evidence has been produced that any recent visitation from space has occurred; until that situation changes, saucers are mainly for believers.

—Piers Anthony

((Thanks to the St. Petersburg Times, Florida, for permission to reprint the above review.))



A SPECTER IS HAUNTING TEXAS by Fritz Leiber—Walker & Co., 34.95

Really good writers such as Fritz Leiber, John Brunner and Philip K. Dick, whose books I have read one-two-three in the last two weeks, write so well that their fiction is intrinsically interesting—each sentence, paragraph, scene holds you by itself even if a particular novel or story is on the whole badly structured or simply formula #262.

Thus on one level a good writer entertains you, gives you your money and time's worth, even if he fails partially or wholly on another, higher level.

Fritz Leiber's Specter has no heavy symbolism, no complicated plot structure, and as satire is too obvious, too topical and too stereotyped in its targets: Only Texas survived World War Three relatively free of destruction; it became a nation and expanded north and south in the heartland of what was formerly the United States and Canada, added Mexico and parts of Central and South America, and acquired an overseas empire. Wealthy Texans are grown eight feet tall by hormone treatments and run their elitist country with all the political sophistication of a banana republic. Their "Mex" slaves are horned into four foot "dwarf" size as further ego proof of the Texans' superiority. The Texans have also altered their history for self-glorification.

They are caricatures of everything we dislike about ourselves as Americans today.

In fact, everyone in the book is a caricature, an easy, distorted stereotype, except the protagonist, Christopher Crockett La Cruz, an actor from the Sack, a satellite cluster which circles the Moon.

Christopher, nicknamed "Scully" by the Texans because his head resembles a skull and he is so weak in Earth gravity that he must wear a powered, body-hugging exoskeleton, has come down to Texas to press an ancient family mining claim.

Scully becomes involved in a bumbling revolution by the Mexes by way of ignorance, vanity and his gonads. He comes alive by way of humorous human frailty. He survives close calls, capture, escape and an interrogation by Russians who by genetic changes have become human bears to better live in their Siberian lands.

Poor Scully is a very unlikely hero. But he is very real; we see ourselves in him often, and in spite of the papier-mache background and unbelievable action, he carries us through the book.

Fritz had fun with the story and put in some hard work in the convincing detail of Scully's 'thin' body and his remarkable titanium exoskeleton.

As you read this book you can sense Fritz peeking out at you, smiling, charming, gentle, even in his not-so-subtle satire of national characteristics.

Specter is an entertaining book which has lost some bite with the passing of Lyndon Johnson from the Presidency, and will lose more as time fades the Johnson years from our memories.

The book is more candid in word and deed than the GALAXY magazine serial version, which was edited to protect GALAXY and the morals of GALAXY's younger readers.

—Richard E. Geis



THE FAR-OUT WORLDS OF A.E. VAN VOGT—Ace H-92, 60¢

Several years ago Ace issued The Twisted Men, a collection of three long novelettes by van Vogt, which makes at least half of the cover blurb "...his first new collection in 15 years" an obvious misstatement. The other half "The most imaginative science-fiction master of them all..." is perhaps open to individual interpretation, but I for one would not publicly agree with such sentiment.

Considering the large number of pages, the almost too reasonable cover price, and the gushing cover blurbs, I approached with a sneaking suspicion that Ace was offering a terrific bargain or the book's contents warranted no more than 60¢.

Out of twelve stories less than half are passable and only one better than that. Draw your own conclusions.

The best, "The First Martian," has some of the choicest characterizations of the author's career, a runaway train on the Martian desert, and an interesting pivot of ecological adaptation. It's simple, slick, suspenseful and a good bit of fun.

But all in all, there are just too many stories here

that are desperately overwritten, while the author seems to assume the reader will take for granted anything dished out sans explanation or relevance. At best, he can gallop a story past a reader before the holes can be spotted; at worst, he never gets off the starting line.

—Richard Delap

NO TIME LIKE TOMORROW by Ted White—Crown, \$3.95

Normally I am prejudiced against Juveniles. "Simplistic junk," I mutter. "Sexless pablum for young minds." "Innocuous action stories for the Children's Room in libraries."

And I suppose most Juveniles are that.

But this one, by Ted White, is not bad and, except for one bit of plot incredibility that painfully sticks in the mind like a sliver in a finger, has a great deal of inner integrity.

The story idea is basically old hat and uncomplicated: A youth is snatched 500 years into the future by an experiment/accident of future scientists. After desperate adventures in the future he is returned to his home time, a better, more mature young man.

The plot "sliver" that bothers me occurs when Frank Marshall and Dorian, a pretty, innocent heiress of a giant cartell corporation, are kidnapped by a rival corporation. Transystems had wanted only Frank, but by mistake underlings took the girl, too. Her father controls Syncom, the most powerful corporation on Earth and colonies.

Transystems dared not admit to the crime, so its head decided to kill both Frank and the girl. They are tied up and dumped from a helicopter into the ocean to drown.

A fishing boat just happens to be within yards of where they hit the water and the skipper and his disturbed son fish them both out in time.

From then on the action is credible, unless a quibble is quibbed at the way the two meet perhaps the one woman in megopolis Los Angeles who can and will help them on their way to return to Syncom protection. She, of course, happens to know a man who can and will take them further along.

The kids are both strangers in a strange land: Frank as a time traveler who is 500 years out of his depth, and Dorian who has lived an extremely sheltered upper-upper class Princess-like life.

Ted developed the economy and culture and technology of this future very well, and it comes alive and solid. Corporation empires rule Earth; formal government is mostly facade; nationalism is dead. This is adult-level material.

He also takes the time and trouble to weave in a history of the 500 years Frank has jumped.

But Ted's skill in this form shows in the boy-girl relationship. Frank's thoughts and behavior toward Dorian are real, life-like and believably honorable. He shows Frank and Dorian developing an emotional involvement with each other and does so in a way that is right—it is honest enough to convince...and yet not so candid as to disturb a parent.

I imagine Ted could write successful Juveniles the rest of his life. He has the knack and skill. Perhaps it is more discipline and/or talent. Whatever, No Time Like Tomorrow is a good one, if marred by the plot flaw mentioned.

There are small anti-establishment bombs in the text. The amoral behavior of the giant corporations in running roughshod over people is pointed up, and the inevitable results of air-water pollution is underlined, and the consequences of overpopulation....all inherently criticisms of the status-quo forces of today. These points are made in passing as more and more of the culture and technology of this future is shown as the young people encounter it in their attempts to reach safety.

Transystems wants them dead in the worst way.

Ted's bittersweet non-copout ending is handled well, and is inevitable given the world of Syncom and its people.

—Richard E. Geis

"I'm just doing my thing."

A KILLING FOR CHRIST by Jete Hamill—World Pub., \$5.50

If political extrapolations and "what-ifs" can be regarded as science fiction, A Killing for Christ qualifies. Many prominent political figures have been victims of as-

sassination in recent years — so, suppose there were a plot to assassinate the Pope?

Hamill's novel takes place in a very contemporary Rome, full of *la dolce vita* and *angioramento*. The Pope is clearly Paul VI, and the Cardinal at the heart of the plot is clearly Ottaviani, the man who allegedly wished he could die before the end of Vatican II so he could still die a good Catholic. The triggerman also has a real-life avatar, the late Dan Burros, a member of the American Nazi Party who committed suicide when a reporter revealed his Jewish background.

Previously confined to a newspaper column, Hamill emerges with this novel as a major literary talent. Of established writers he may be compared most closely with William Saroyan — such epithets as "the Irish Saroyan" or "the Saroyan of the seventies" come to mind. His heroes, the men and women who discover the plot and try to foreshadow it, are all losers — a washed-up priest, a washed-up reporter, a washed-up actress, and a washed-up Cuban abortionist set out to save the Pope from a shrewd Cardinal and a shrewder Count straight out of a Fellini film. And, as with Saroyan, the safe, official, established people are all bastards, and humanity and nobility reside only with the outcasts.

—John Boardman

SF: AUTHOR'S CHOICE, edited by Harry Harrison—Berkley SF567, 75¢

If you're willing to pay sixty cents for any old issue of *GALAXY* or *ANALOG*, you'll probably think Author's Choice is worth seventy five cents. Most of the 14 stories in the collection are "dangerous visions" type stories, meaning they question some fundamental premise of human belief or thinking. Several of the shorts are attempts to explain the workings of the universe or the human mind, several more are imitation myths of one sort or another, and the rest are comments on human customs or beliefs or social systems. Most of the stories have a forward or afterward or both by the author which serves to belabor his point, just in case you need help in understanding the Deep Significance of what you've just read. Yes, all these are intended to be "Significant" sf. And yes, I think, although I'm not really sure, the whole format of this book was influenced by Dangerous Visions. All told, I found the book worth reading, although none of the authors is represented by a story I consider his best.

—Earl Evers

BUG JACK BARRON by Norman Spinrad—Avon #206, 95¢

Science fiction's answer to Valley of the Dolls has

now made the scene, with all the pseudo-values of its mainstream counterpart unrevised and intact in a transposal to pseudo-sf. Spinrad has used sensationalism to expose sensationalism, which is not unlike using good to fight good — the battle doesn't make much sense and the result is negligible. If *BJB* wasn't so long I'd say it was merely written in a fit of pique against tradition, with a sharp eye on the cash value of present liberal literary attitudes in 'mainstream'; and, in spite of the length, it still reads as if it were written that way. Spinrad hasn't found a new way to deliver the thematic content (power politics); he's simply uncovered a new audience for it, an audience who is likely to buy it out of curiosity and for its wide publicity but is unlikely to buy the trend which may ridiculously follow.

In a setting 20 years hence, "Bug Jack Barron" is a television show on which people from all over America are invited to call in on their vidphones and "bug" the host with their gripes and questions (though the public is not informed of the careful screening callers receive). The episodes concerning the show itself are strongly relevant to techniques that seem to be gaining momentum in society today, and their strength gives intermittent credence to the book's intentions.

Jack is "the outsider's insider" finding himself embroiled in a political struggle involving the incredibly wealthy Benedict Howards who is trying to retain a monopoly on freezing human beings for revival at some unspecified future date. The cost of this pipedream of immortality is \$50,000, a price out of reach of less affluent citizens yet popular enough among the well-to-do to make Howards fight the encroaching free Public Freezer Policy with every underhanded tactic money can buy, including murder. The reader is soon made aware of how bugged Jack is becoming with these tangled threads of manipulation...he turns down a blow-job from his secretary-girlfriend! It is at this point that the reader may also begin to suspect that Spinrad's motivations are as shallow and suspect as his characters'.

Howards wields his power to reunite Jack with his ex-wife, Sara, knowing full-well that the two are still deeply in love and using that love in an attempt by trickery to legally put them under his control. As we all know, Love is an unreliable and unruly force, and just because Jack accepts the next blow-job with unbridled glee doesn't mean that Howards' plans are lubricated well enough to slide right into home base. (Oooh, I think this book has affected my writing style!) Jack ties in three murders with Howards and draws some simple conclusions — well, Spinrad had to keep them simple so as not to destroy a characterization he'd so carefully (?) built — then goes on to discover that



Howards has achieved immortality with a remarkable new technique...so new that Barre Lyndon used it years ago in The Man in Half Moon Street. Poor Sara gets cast in the 'best friend' role at this point — you know, the old self-sacrifice bit so that the hero can survive for a final triumphant battle with Evil — but even she gets the shaft as she hasn't got the courage to do it without an LSD prod. Everything ends groovy: Barron finds the courage that Sara lost, old Howards ends up in the loony bin, and that secretary-girlfriend we met at the beginning gets another crack at Jack Barron who is now immortal and has "all the time in the world."

Now I ask, does this sound like a story you'd want to read?

Spinrad creates his characters like he was using an instruction sheet, creating habits and actions that, even at the time of set-up, are obvious plays for later story use. His women especially are unappealing and unconvincing, and his style encompasses what seems to be distaste for (or mindlessly ignorant use of) females. But even in the dress, the author sometimes comes up with a line that imparts a real feel of realism — "Barron strained his mind trying to remember just exactly how his body had always felt, not something you're really aware of unless you're real tired or sick." (p. 254) — not because it is a particularly fine point of characterization (or even good English!) but because it imparts an attitude with which any person will be familiar. Added together, however, these moments form such a small percentage of the total wordage that one is irresistibly tempted to consider the book per se as too close to worthless to make fine distinctions. Barron himself is an ineptly-created and ludicrously inconsistent character; simple and obvious facts confuse him (such as when he discovers the means of gaining immortality) yet he is supposedly perceptive, especially to the personalities of others, and makes clever remarks about the triteness of others' conversations (often a seeming attempt to make the reader disregard some very weary dialogue). When the dialogue remains short and simple, it is often followed by incredibly long and even more incredibly pretentious internal monologues crammed in with spit and grease and very little else.

As for the much-publicized sexual episodes, I've read cheap hackwork porno novels which make cunnilingus and fellatio (and just plain, ordinary fucking) far more exciting with simple straightforward prose than all Spinrad's "asymptotic rhythm" can do.

I'm not impressed with Spinrad's attempt to bridge the gap between sf and mainstream, especially as he's so determined to keep a foot on each shore even when he's lost his balance and has wet his crotch in the waters between. Silverberg's much closer to traveling both lands (see The Masks of Time), but of course he's had more years to perfect his technique. Give Spinrad another ten years and maybe he can do it — place your bets at the second window to your left — if he can ever live down this attempt, that is.

—Richard Delap

((And now an alternate opinion...))

As science fiction, this novel comes under the heading of technological and socio-political extrapolation in the Pohl-Kornbluth tradition. Like the novels of the Gravy Planet variety, it recognizes that these two aspects of the future are closely linked to each other. The natural and social sciences do not exist in vacuo; advances in one have consequences in the other which a science fiction writer ignores at his peril.

In Bug Jack Barron both sorts of extrapolation are relatively minor. On the technological side, it is assumed that a workable system of freezing the living human body indefinitely has been developed. The process is monstrously expensive, and is controlled by an AI&I type monopoly controlled in turn by the villain, one Benedict Howards. Beside this, vision telephones are fairly general...giving rise to a nation-wide TV "talk show" which combines today's radio "talk shows" with the Joe Pyne type of TV show.

Social extrapolations also do not go far beyond the '60's. Marijuana is legal — a step obviously not far away for our tax hungry governments. A Social Justice Coalition has arisen to the left of a Johnson-type "consensus" Democratic Party and an unreconstructed Goldwater remnant of the Republicans. The S.J.C. is an alliance of Negroes, Latin-Americans, New Leftists, politicized hippies, and Socialists, active enough politically to control a couple of southern states and swing the urban balance of power. (Your reviewer hopes that the time is not already past when such a coalition could be assembled.) An S.J.C. governor named Lukas Greene has already advanced Mississippi from its 1969 level to that of an Afro-American banana republic. And the Democratic nomination is being eagerly sought by a man identified only as "Teddy the Pretender".

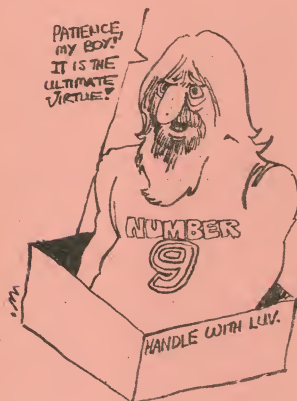
"Bug Jack Barron" is a TV "talk show" starring the hero, a sort of left-wing Joe Pyne. He had, with Greene and with Barron's ex-wife Sarah, been a founder of the S.J.C., but has decided to abandon politics and get into a good thing as a semi-official Gadget to the State on his TV show.

Into this melange comes Benedict Howards, whose desperate fear of death is the finest job of characterization in a book whose strongest point is convincing characterization. And here Bug Jack Barron becomes a sort of science fiction that seemingly vanished years ago — the science fiction in which a popular hero leads a revolt of the oppressed against a bloated tyrant. This sort of fiction is too easy to do, and in unskilled hands leads to a Gordon vs Ming plot. But, beneath the pulpy banality, there lies a very real and gripping story — the ancient, never-completed story of oppressed men fighting for their freedom and their right to their own lives and souls. Not all the trite prose of an Alex Raymond, the sneers of a John W. Campbell, or the pessimism of a Zamiatin or an Aldous Huxley, can disguise the fact that there are literally or metaphorically bloated tyrants, that there are downtrodden masses, that there are justified revolts.

And so, after years of selling out (or, as Paul Krass-

ner calls it, "buying in") Jack Barron recovers his youthful enthusiasm and his youthful Sarah, finds out just how Howards is manipulating the human desire for immortality — and what the price is. Wasp-Barron and Tarantula-Howards spar at each other, using the whole population of the United States as playing pieces, to a climax which is to the reader's mind as an orgasm is to the body — exhausting and satisfying.

There has been much comment in the science fiction press about the explicit sexual scenes in Bug Jack Barron. Yet there is nothing here that is not in abysmally worse novels such as The Carpetbangers or Deer Park. This damn-it is the way human beings behave. TV actors really do pick up starry-eyed girls in eastside bars after the show, and when other sexual organs give out people really do use oral methods. The sexual episodes, and such sexual expressions as "mind-fuck", are as much a part of Bug Jack Barron's milieu as is the asexuality of John Carter's Mars.



Jack Barron would no more casually shake Carrie Donaldson's hand after a show, than John Carter would ball Dejah Thoris on the top of the highest tower of Helium.

Presumably, the New Undertow (that is, the backlash to the "New Wave") will also have something to say about Bug Jack Barron, even after they have finished complaining about the sex and the politics. But John J. Pierce, who has recently appointed Lester del Rey, God, and himself, Pope, will have to work hard to find in this novel a rejection of science and rationality. As the New Left is now beginning to realize, the technology which makes a

powerful Establishment possible can also provide us with the means to bug that Establishment. If Bug Jack Barron gives us Tarantula-Howards manipulating things from his cozy nest, it also gives us Wasp-Barron cutting through his machinations and using this technology in the interests of human freedom. And if Bug Jack Barron is "non-linear", it is "non-linear" only as every novel written by the "hollow skull" technique has been. Human actions and words are linear, but thoughts and motivations are not.

—John Boardman

THE NULL-FREQUENCY IMPULSER by James Nelson Coleman—Berkley XI660, 60¢

This starts out with a chase. It seems that Capitalism has conglomerated itself into five companies, and they dominate space. (The jacket blurb says they employ the most ruthless practices, including intimidation, bribery and political blackmail.) They have...croggle, ghasp!...Secret Police! The good guys, a secret underground society called the Inventors — have hidden every new discovery in the last five years, and one man has the key. There he is, dying in the heroine's livingroom while the bloodhounds come baying up the trail. Chase chase. Run-run. Catch (the cover illo) catch.

Then it turns out that Inspector Beckett, chief of the five companies (consolidated?) secret police is possessed by a Triskelion named Trabyon. The heroine is being aided by a female Triskelion named Tisya. Trabyon is a bad, bad entity who eats the souls of men. Tisya deplores his base appetites. Trabyon rapes Tisya, who produces forthwith 100,000 (or was it 100,000,000?) baby Triskelions. The evil Trabyon has them eating away at every human in sight.

Needless to say, we never to get back to the five companies.

A novel twist takes place when Tisya declares those little monsters are her babies, and she loves every one of them and you shouldn't kill them with that jury-rigged whatzis.

This is a routine space opera, reasonably well plotted and sub-routinely characterized. It has within it the potential to achieve mediocrity, but unfortunately the writing is...well, hack implies a kind of facile competence...let us say bad. The pedestrian prose tramples all the fun underfoot.

This book is for juveniles, maybe.

—Alexis Gilliland

NOTE TO REVIEWERS: fellahs, we'll have to be more discriminating. Save the long reviews for important (your opinion) books. The Book Review section will stay about 13 pages in the future, so to cover the ground we'll have to be succinct, more succinct, and just plain snoot. —REG

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

NONE BUT MAN By Gordon R. Dickson—Doubleday, \$4.95

Competently written far-future formula space adventure. The hero, Culihan O'Rourke When, from the frontier Worlds, escapes an Earth prison and after much derring-do prevents a war between the alien Moldaug and Mankind.

Once you've said that you've said it all. The book is fast-paced but simple action couldn't hold me. The skeleton is there, but there's no meat on the bones.

RETIFF: AMBASSADOR TO SPACE by Keith Laumer—Doubleday, \$4.95

Seven stories, juvenile, in which even the stereotypes are stereotyped. Fluff, requiring no thought, an uncritical mind and a few hours to waste. There are, apparently, many young readers who like Retief and his adventures. Laumer fills a need.

ODESSEY TO EARTHDEATH by Leo P. Kelley—Belmont B60-085, 60¢.

Kelley borrowed heavily from Orwell's 1984 and turned out a piece of grotesque shit.

'Flawed' is too weak a word to describe the plot. The techniques are badly used and the style is full of silly similes and bad sentence structure. The dialog is stilted and the characterizations incredible.

I charitably assume this is a book from the trunk—perhaps Kelley's first effort. I would hate to think it his latest.

And a bestowing of the SFR Fughead Award to the editors of Belmont for buying and publishing this illogical, implausible crap. 'Belmont Select Science Fiction!' Ye Gods!

PERRY RHODAN: #1 - Enterprise Stardust by K.H. Scheer & Walter Ernsing—Ace 65970, 60¢.

Drek. Sophomoric and pulpish sf is alive and well in West Germany.

THE MOON OF GOMRATH by Alan Garner—Ace G-753, 50¢

Some books, in their blurbs, claim to be "a modern classic." Here is one, by God, which I believe lives up to its claim.

It seems initially to be a children's story of wizards and witches, elves, dwarfs, magic old and new, spells, enchantments...in which two youngsters play the major roles. But soon the importance of the kids fades as the ancient forces of Evil and Good gather and clash.

The children are on stage all the time, but they are used as pivots and as a focus to weld powerful struggles and stage-absorbing scenes.

Garner makes classical magic credible through masterful use of locale, legend, history and arcane lore. A fine job.

MAIL ORDER INFORMATION

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

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CROWN PUBLISHERS, INC., 419 Park Ave., South, New York, N.Y. 10016. No fee.

ADVENT: PUBLISHERS, INC., P.O. Box 9228, Chicago, Ill. 60690. No fee.

The Banks Deposit

Prozine Commentary



Anne McCaffrey's first story appeared in SCIENCE FICTION PLUS in 1953, her second in F&SF in '59. By the end of '66 her total in the magazines was only five. Since then, as everyone knows, she's become one of the more prolific writers in the genre and won a Hugo and a Nebula.

So far this year she's appeared in four different magazines with four novelets and a novella. These five show she's at home in a variety of story-types.

The first one, "A Meeting of Minds" (Jan. F&SF), strikes me as the weakest. A sequel to her '59 story, it's about a galaxy-ranging telepathic battle between humans and an invading alien, set in a sort of picturesque-poetic background. The characters do have some emotional intensity, but the story as a whole didn't ring my chimes. Bits of stilted prose and wooden dialog lead me to suspect that this yarn (or a large chunk of it) is early work dug up and revised somewhat; maybe not, but certainly this one is not up to her current standard.

"A Womanly Talent" (Feb. ANALOG) is far better. It shows that Anne McCaffrey can be individual while working to tight specs. The formal requirement here is that of the ANALOG psi-propaganda yarn, which must show the success of "talented" characters and the dunderheadedness of their opponents.

This story is set in the next century when psi-talents are coming into general use under the direction of a private foundation, with emphasis on "pre-cogs" foreseeing and diverting disasters. The well-built plot covers inci-

dents on two levels — one the effort by Daffyd op Owen, psi-project director, and his friend Senator Andres to get enabling legislation through Congress, the other the personal problems of ambiguously-talented Ruth Horvath, her pre-cog husband Lajos, and their telepathic infant daughter. The two plot-threads are woven together with a sure hand, and the double denouement wraps the story up as a satisfying whole.

Most of the characters are convincing, particularly the Horvath family. Daffyd op Owen may be given just a few too many flamboyant mannerisms, but he does manage to be more than a funny hat. Senator Zeusman, the villain of the piece, remains only a caricature of fanatic fuggheadedness.

In this story Anne McCaffrey makes psi real. Although Ruth's talents eventually become too all-embracing, for most of the time I felt that, if psi did exist, this is the way it would be and this is how it would affect people.

In "The Weather on Welladay" (March GALAXY) Anne McCaffrey works within another confining form — the action-adventure formula — with the added chore of writing around Chaffee's cover. She turns out an intricately plotted charade with pirates, secret agents, and innocent bystanders all confused about who is who.

The action happens on an ocean planet in a galactic future. Men milk whalelike animals for radioactive iodine, and pirates do the same illegally. This background is made solid enough (even Chaffee's unlikely boats).

The plot is beautifully handled, with shifts from one narrative thread to another at just the right points to heighten the suspense; this technique is at least as old as Homer, but it still works.

All the cliff-hanging leaves little room for characterization, but the people are more than the named chessmen we usually get in such a yarn.

"The Weather on Welladay" is a commercial product but one done with sure craftsmanship.

The remaining two stories belong to the "Ship Who..." series that Anne McCaffrey started in 1961. She posits a galactic future with cyborg-spaceships controlled by "shell people". These are humans who were born with severe physical handicaps; they are sealed into titanium shells and installed in their ships with neural connections to controls and sensors. Each of these "Brains" works with one normal crewman called a "Brawn".

The Brain-Brawn partnership is usually a permanent thing, lasting for years, but Helva (the brainship who is the heroine and continuing character in this series) for one reason or another has had to put up with a succession of temporary partners. The relation between Brain and Brawn is pre-

A Column By

Banks Mebane

sented as a strong tie, rather like marriage: "(Helva) was conditioned for a partner, for someone to take care of, to do for, to live with."

Helva's search for a permanent Brawn is the linking thread between the stories in this series that will enable them to be collected together as an episodic novel. However they remain individual stories with few of the earmarks of the "cryptoserial", or novel deliberately chopped into shorter stories.

"The Ship Who Disappeared" (March IF) is superficially an action-gimmick yarn. Helva is highjacked by pirates, and her shell is removed from her ship. The gimmick is how, helpless as she is, she defeats the baddies.

This situational cliché is only the peg on which hangs the real story, the relationship between Helva and her Brawn. "She had signed up for what she hoped would be a permanent partnership with a man named Ieron. By the beginning of this story she has realized that they are incompatible, and at the end she boots him out.

Ieron is the main flaw in this story. He's such an unsympathetic blockhead that it's hard to believe Helva could ever have signed up with him in the first place. Still, unlikely marriages do happen every day.

"The Ship Who Disappeared" is not a major story in the series and has more resemblance to a cryptoserial-link than the others, which are more self-contained. Perhaps an eventual book is taking shape, and this is evidence of it.

"Dramatic Mission" (June ANALOG), a novella starring Helva, attempts much more than "The Ship Who Disappeared", and I think it succeeds. This story happens earlier in Helva's career, before she contracted with Ieron, at a time when she was temporarily without a Brawn. The plot is triggered by a first-contact crisis.

Intelligent life has been found on a methane-ammonia planet of the star Beta Corvi, and stageplays are what the aliens want in exchange for scientific information. Human interpersonal relationships dramatically presented are what interest the Corviki.

Helva, in partnership with a temporary Brawn, heads for Beta Corvi carrying a troupe of actors to stage "Romeo and Juliet".

The story is a very human drama about the interpersonal relationships of the actors, with Helva involved up to her drive tubes.

The principal players are: Prane Liston, a great actor at the height of his career but dying from the side-effects of a memory-stimulating drug; Ansra Colmer, his leading lady, former lover, and present enemy; Davo Fillanaser, Prane's second lead and best friend; Kuria Ster, Prane's medical attendant and sweetheart; and Helva herself.

These characters tend toward stereotyping but do come

alive, none more than Helva, who seems completely human because of the pains Anne McCaffrey has taken to make her seem so.

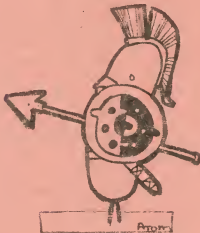
The plot solution of "Dramatic Mission" is the best kind of science fiction: human problems successfully resolved by the sfnal situation of the story.

In all her stories, Anne McCaffrey seems most interested in people and how they relate to one another. Even in the DocSmithlike galactic romp of "A Meeting of Minds" she throws a spotlight on the developing love story that goes with the brouhaha, and in the straight action of "The Weather on Welladay" she still indicates, by skillful use of nuances, how the characters react to each other. In the other three stories, the human drama takes center stage. The larger political scene in "A Womanly Talent" forms a setting for the story of Ruth Morvath's adjustment to the psi-talents of herself, her husband and her child. The Helva stories, too, are people stories. "The Ship Who Disappeared" is about Helva and Ieron, but it is in "Dramatic Mission" that Anne McCaffrey increases her scope. This novella extends beyond a simple family grouping or boy-girl situation to more complex human problems of love, hate, and achievement among a wider assemblage of characters.

Anne McCaffrey's plots are another strong point in her writing. "The Weather on Welladay" amply shows her technical ability. She takes the classical gimmick of mistaken identity, followed by reversal and discovery, and multiplies it unmercifully; this story is almost all plot, with just enough character and background to form a solid frame for the web. "A Womanly Talent" is strongly but more subtly plotted: the separate public and private lines of the story are closely intertwined (through the character of op Owen and the psi effects) and reach resolution together, one through the other. The plot of "Dramatic Mission" is just as sure but less showy — the human problems mount to a climax that can only be resolved within the sfnal situation, but the resolution is complete and satisfying.

Anne McCaffrey is a strong writer — she can put real people into a good story.

—Banks Mebane
May 1969



P.O. BOX 3116



TEDDY PAULS
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Baltimore, Md.
21212

You do not know me but my name is
Teddy Pauls and I am a 13-year-old
junior highschool student and I
have been reading your magazine Sci-
ence FictionReview for 9 months, I
like it very much. It is very articulad and interesting
and weel-written.

Any way, my ambition is to ~~be~~ appear in your pages
with an article, i notice that you run/lot of reviewsof
different things like books and movies and thiggs, so I
have written a book tebiaw for youf. I hope you will
accept my review of 'A Totrent of feces' for you r publi-
cation Science Fiction Review.

Thanking you,

Ps—I know you don&t pay ds much as Agazine Stories or
Galaxy, but that is o.k.

((I've already published a review of A Torment of feces
Teddy, but if you could come up with a review of The Anus-
es Among Us I could use it.))

JIM SANDERS
1730 Harrison Av.
The Bronx, N.Y.
10453

The two major reasons for this
letter: (I know I promised a short
letter. For a fanzine of SFR's qual-
ity, this IS a short letter.) the
Pierce-Elison dichotomy and Norman

Spinrad's comments on characterization. And they tie innice-
ly, very nicely indeed.

Reading Pierce's letter, I was struck by a lot of defen-
sive name-calling, a lot of blather, and one damn good point.
This is the question of sex in science fiction. Pierce is
right when he says that most of the sexy science fiction,
Silverberg as an immediate example, is more puritanical than
the Captain Futures. I can, because I've known such people,
and so have you, believe in the sexless hero, the person for
whom work and other aspects of his life are more important
than the pursuit or conquest of the nearest available chick.
But, while I've again known such people, too damn many of
them, I get annoyed at the "hero" whose only sex contacts
are mindless, impersonal, and to his mind, dirty. I can ap-
preciate a good orgy, but most science fiction writers seem
to consider orgies, and any sex that they show, as unhappy
and unenjoyable as most pornography writers do. (There are
exceptions on both sides, of course, such as Ted White and
Paul Anderson (inexplicit, but the sex is there) in our
field.)

((You exaggerate to make a point. The "sexless hero"
you describe is the normally sexed person. Who but a Don
Juan type puts sex ahead of work and other aspects of his
life? As to the "hero" whose only sex contacts are mindless,
impersonal and dirty...chapter and verse, please. I get
tired of vague assertions like this.

Re pornography: I read a lot of porno and I would say
that 90% at least of the sex in the field is enjoyed very
highly by the characters involved.

You are wrong in these respects, but do go on....))

I find that the organized factions on both sides of the

Second Foundation/New Wave argument are making massive asses of themselves.

((Sigh. Got to interrupt again. 'Organized' factions you said? Organized? With whom is JJPierce organized, except in his imagination? And what is the New Wave organization to which you refer?))

I can understand the Heinlein quote and sympathize with it, simply because most "realistic" characters in fiction, science-, speculative-, or straight-, are so much duller than the characters I meet. Can anyone imagine a novel in which the main character, think of him what you will, and I am by no means his greatest admirer, was Ted White. Or Harlan Ellison. Or Chester Anderson. Or even Sam Moskowitz. Like or dislike them, these characters are a lot fuller than any pictured in the New Wave and Disaster schools. To pick my old bete noir, Tom Disch's characters constantly annoy me because I know of nobody whose life is that constantly gray.

At the same time I do not want characters who can serve as "inspirations." God no! Science fiction is not hortatory by nature. I've been inspired by a few characters in sf, "Harrison of 'The Man Who Sold the Moon,'" the various characters in Gunn's Station in Space, McLaughlin's The Man Who Wanted Stars (and now you see what my major drive is) but none of these would be the pure heroes that Pierce/Moskowitz seem to want.

Which leads us into Spinrad. And Norman seems to be making a valid point, and then running away from it. Let me ask a few questions and make a few points that might help clear some things up.

Are "characters" and "universe" as separate as Spinrad seems to think. It has always struck me, reading and in my recent writing, that these two things are completely connected. If you have a given universe for a story (and every writer, even for the LADIES HOME JOURNAL, creates a universe for every story he writes, though it may look like the one we are in) doesn't this universe imply the sort of characters you will find in it?

If you've got a Universe in which, say, telepathy is common and public, this fact must determine the psychology of your characters. If you don't use this fact, if your characters react in the way that your next door neighbor does, they are badly done, no matter how detailed. If you have aliens on Earth, every character on Earth has been affected by that fact, if they know and are aware of it, or even if they are not but they have been affected by people who do know and are aware. If you don't use these facts, if you don't take this into consideration, you wind up with a Fred Pohl story.

Contrariwise, don't the characters created imply the Universe that the story takes place in?

I am currently working on a novel (should be ready for my agent to submit it in about a month) in which, for a number of reasons, I decided to have a large number of humanoid aliens on Earth, most of whom are lawyers. Now

these aliens had no plans for conquest. They were essentially immigrants, and consider themselves as Terran as most immigrants consider themselves American.

Okay, so I realized I had to create a complete universe, a fairly parochial, monochromatic universe, and a space drive which takes about two months to get anywhere, no matter what the distance, just to make this fact realistic and believable. And this fact has given me other facts about the Terran characters I am using, and also solved the major conflict in the book for me. But if you don't do this, if you leave this sort of loose end, it shows. And no matter how well the character is built, no matter how well you have given him motivations, eating habits, psychological backgrounds, and clothes sense, if he doesn't fit the universe you are working in, he is a badly done character.

In rapping with a friend about a book he is working on, I used an analogy which might prove helpful. I complained that the cliches he was using didn't fit the universe he had. It was like having an Australian bushman describe something as being "white as snow."

Difficult? Norman seems to think it is. I'd give him a suggestion, and anyone else who wants to weigh and judge the suggestion, and maybe find it useful is welcome to it. Don't build your universes. Try experiencing them. Try being your characters. Somewhere inside your skull is the character you are writing about, or you couldn't write him. While you are writing the book, become this character, feel things from his viewpoint, not your own. One way you can know if you are doing this is to have a few friends around and have them and yourself read and act out the book. If the words sound silly coming from their mouths, they probably sound silly on paper.

((I tried that method with my books, but I soon ran out of female friends.))

ANDREW J. OFFUTT
Drawer P
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Morehead, Ky. 40351

I'll say this Dick Geis: Thanks for their reviews. When one lives in a teeny-tiny town such as Morehead (it's in a valley; laid out in the Green Giant's footprint. Yes, singular.), one doesn't see books or magazines. I went down to the drugstore (yes, singular) to sort of look around and point to the February IF with my story in it. I got there at 11:30; at 10:00 they'd received their monthly supply of IF, the only SF magazine sold in Morehead. All three were already sold. Damn! Wonder who bought 'em? Anyhow, for this reason, I must appreciate short, nonsesquipedalian reviews, and of "off beat" material, too. For your information, your reviews caused me to order two books from Brandon/Essex and three from Ace...

Oh—I love the center-spread. Wonder where Gilbert met the first two girls I ever dated?

ETHEL LINDSAY I've just got back from our Easter
Courage House con and found the usual stack of mail
6 Langley Ave. and mags and books waiting for me.
Surbiton, Surrey
United Kingdom

I think you would have enjoyed this con. Apart from the fact that it was a very friendly one...there were quite a few speakers who are really outside the SF field...makes a change from hearing the same old authors! We have so few here that after a few years you know exactly what they are liable to say on any subject. Well, almost exactly! I missed some of the items...fell asleep one vital afternoon. I did stagger down (oh those late room parties!) in-time to hear the panel that was supposed to be discussing the 'new' NEW WORLDS. Found it being chaired by Ted Carroll and on the panel were Dan Morgan, John Brunner, Charles Platt, and Edward Lucie-Smith. When I arrived they had got bogged down in the argument about the use of 'obscene' language and it seemed they couldn't discuss B.Barron without wasting time over that old what is obscene language argument. Once they got out of that - Smith said that NW was exploring new methods of narrative. I asked just what new methods they were using and said they could hardly call 'stream of consciousness' type as new. Platt answered this question but rambled a bit and ended up by confessing that nothing was really new...although it was new to SF. Later Smith was describing an old SF story and was scoffing at it—asking how we could believe such stuff. Again I put my oar in and said that I'd lately read the beginning of Moorcock's serial in NW...the one that opens with a scene in a store roof-garden. I was carried along with this obvious parody till near the end of the chapter when Mike went too far and lost me. I asked how could one believe in that? Brunner said in an offhand fashion—"You don't recognize a parallel world." I wasn't at all satisfied with that answer...but you have to give other people a chance! Later I was talking with Platt—and he freely admitted that NW has not inaugurated any new style of writing—that it had all been done before in the mainstream. I think that Smith made the most sensible remark of that panel when he said that NW writing was probably an over-reaction to what had gone before. Smith had earlier given a sample of poems that he had been collecting for an anthology of SF poetry which is supposed to be just out...although I have not seen it around so far. This, unfortunately, was a part I missed. I'm madly curious to see what SFR has to say about NW. So far I have only seen one zine which has reviewed it properly and that was an Australian one.

(I have the copies you sent me on the bookcase next to my sofa...waiting. Next week I'll get to them.)

MIKE GILBERT
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To paraphrase Jack Gaughan's speech at Boskone, "How come nobody criticizes artwork the way they do writers?"

Nobody's afraid to tear into Norman Spinrad or Harlan

or Ted White, but when it comes to artwork it's: "Gee, ah! Well, I like this stuff." or "Gee, I just don't like that."

Anybody, as an artist or writer, likes to know why you like or dislike his material. It's important to us; if it wasn't we wouldn't paint or write.

There's nothing sacred about art. You don't have to know a few thousand art terms.

And the reason why you see so many miserable SF covers is because you as fans and writers don't say anything if you dislike the covers (and it does reflect in sales somewhat, too). But publishers would like to know what you care for and certainly a new writer (or even an established one) can feel plenty bad if a rotten cover kills the sales on his book. He hurts and a good writer can be shot down because some publisher thinks SF won't sell unless it has a 1935 AMAZING cover.

If you like the Dillons' style say so, don't just say it's neat. Write somebody a letter! If you don't like cartoon covers, yell!

Gods, I've been preaching.

((In an issue of PSYCHOTIC I asked for more comment on the artwork. There was a small surge of mentions, but it fell off, and more than one fan said, in excusing his lack of comment: "I don't feel qualified." Readers feel qualified to comment on writing, but art is different somehow.

I would now throw the ball back to you, Mike. Why don't YOU comment on art in fanzines that come your way? You, and Jack Gaughan, Tim Kirk, Doug Lovenstein, Bill Rotsler, Steve Fabian, John Berry, Jay Kinney, Vaughn Bode, George Foster, Arthur Thompson, Gabe Eisenstein, Alexis Gilliland, Connie Reich, Cynthia Goldstone...on and on... When did any of you write a letter of comment that included a solid critique or appreciation of art in a fanzine...or a prozine? You are qualified, so show the way, show how it is done, give us "print oriented" fans an example or two.))

RICK HORWOOD
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Franklin, La.
70538

I trust Ted White will turn AMAZING and FANTASTIC into magazines worth reading. The trouble with most SF zines is that the only thing worth reading is the serial and the serial is so abridged it isn't worth reading. (That's a Polish joke.) I am enjoying the current serials in both AMAZING and FANTASTIC, but can I have Ted's assurances that the paperback version will not be much more complete?

In the letter column, John J. Pierce and Charles Platt write letters that sound very much alike, though they represent opposing points of view. Both blithely blather on never bothering to analyze or justify their own opinions and paying absolutely no attention or consideration to anyone who disagrees with them. Or are they coolly calculating, pushing buttons to see the funny people jump? They do make me mad, I'm ashamed to admit, but I'll be damned before I get in an



argument with either of them. The results would be too much like a conversation from Alice In Wonderland. It is a shame that such letters draw more comment and attention than reasoned and reasonable opinions.

((I believe that strong opinion impels a reader to agree or disagree, and to think why he feels one way or another. The reasoned letters follow the outrageous ones. Out of heat there often comes light. Let a thousand opinions clash—not for the sake of the violence (though that is often interesting in itself)—but for the information and insights it provides. An example is the Ted White/ Norman Spinrad row; we reaped a harvest of information about writing, editing, publishing, and background about Bug Jack Barron, among other things.))

Can Alva Rogers seriously believe that Baycon would have avoided criticism by eliminating the costume ball? One of the most popular things about the Baycon was the extensive fancy dress, not only at the ball but throughout the con. This is a feature we hope to incorporate into the New Orleans convention, in '73, since New Orleans is a carnival town.

Alex Kirs has some interesting ideas. Numbering magazines instead of dating them might work. British magazines are numbered and London newsstands do carry back numbers. On the other hand the plastic bag idea would not work, nor will any other idea that causes the news-dealer any extra trouble. Often a retailer will fail to display a magazine at all if he decides that the few cents profit he might make is not worth the trouble.

In SFR #50...Earl Evers and Justin St. John both make statements that I totally disagree with. But I react very differently to Earl's statement than I do to Justin's. There is a quote, I forget who said it, "Don't turn on your mouth unless you have put your brain in gear." Earl's attack on Moondust is total and vicious, but it is a reasoned attack and so one I can answer. I enjoyed Moondust. It gave me great pleasure. I am told by those who should know that the historical background of the book is detailed and accurate. Earl did not like the book because his taste in fiction is different from mine. It is as simple as that.

((Sometimes. But there are objective writing yardsticks that can be applied to fiction.))

My dispute with Justin cannot be answered so easily because Justin's mind is not in gear...his letter bears so little relationship to reality that there is no handle for me to grip, no starting point we have in common. Further, I am convinced that anything I write Justin will totally misunderstand. For the same reasons that Justin's letter is so difficult to answer, it is not worth answering. ((Beautiful!))

So, to get back to Earl, perhaps our different reactions to Moondust were caused by differences in what we find sexually stimulating, since erotic incident and symbolism play such a large part in all of Swann's fiction, a

fact I'm surprised he did not note in his review. In any case, Earl's review made me think, and Justin's letter made me mad, so perhaps both writers accomplished their various purposes.

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Every time a new ish of SFR plunks into the old box, I think, Hoo Boy—best get off a LOC else even so noble and patient a soul as Geis is going to blot my name from the mailing roster with camel dung or other strategem equally suitable for non-commenting characters. No excuses for past poor performances but please to note I am finally responding by pactsard, if by nothing else. Your cover was fab'lous; goshwot!

Tim Kirk's f/p illo on p.5 is likewise fine, reminding me of the unforgettable Kellogg, whose presence I continue to miss, particularly in the injun-summer Psy/SFR since his style seemed so well suited. Ellison is the one immutable monolith amid the shifting sands of this kaleidoscopic planet; I especially dug the portrait of him on page 10!

Notwithstanding Ellison's comments on censorship, Jackett's review of SPACE THING makes one moved to cry, "Put it back on!"

This certainly is an excellent 'zine, old frobbet. All hail & ka-powie.

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Hmm, I get busted for commenting on Barbarella too strongly, yet Harlan Ellison can take a real live person, club him to death publicly, and you, Geis, interject not a single comment. (Is J. J. Pierce a real live person?) ((Not anymore.)) I found Ellison's letter to be a bit silly, but Katy (my mistress with whom I live in sin and degradation and enjoy every minute of it) thought it was the funniest thing she's read this year (which doesn't mean it is...she'd say that anyway because she has this "thing" for Ellison and threatens to leave me cold if she can ever sink her claws into him).

As to Platt's defense of Garbage World, his statement that "I am sure that fan reviewers...disliked it because of their very sensitivity to this kind of humor" is all shit; he gives the real reason for the general dislike when he mentions "the corny plot, the stereotyped characters and so on," a fact he tries but fails to excuse.

If 'Old' and 'New' Wave "are merely different sides of the same coin," as Justin St. John states, let's put that coin on edge, walk around it, look at both sides, then simply go home and draw our own conclusions. If the coin is ours to spend, NO ONE has the right to TELL us (does anyone ever suggest anymore?) where or on what to spend it, right? Most

readers are aware of the content of NEW WORLDS by now. No one will break your arm if you don't buy it, or any other magazine or book for that matter; as long as we have a freedom of choice, and both types of fiction are made available to the reading public (and both are available, make no mistake), let's stop this bitching over what's good. I feel rather sorry for those who can only appreciate one type of writing to the detriment of the other. Why, I've even read filthy/smitty/degrading porno books (yeah, Geis, just like yours) that had maybe a scene or a chapter worth going over...there was this one with three girls fighting over a sausage in a supermarket...

((Yes, I wrote it. It was titled Feny, Meeny, Miney, More. If I may brag, I thought the symbolism of the missing links was well done. It's usually rare in a sex novel of that short length...))

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It's only been in the last six months or so that I've managed to shuck the shackles of an overtly literary style (big words, big thoughts, small content) and speak in what I consider to be my natural voice. Originally I'd planned to be a poet, but it comes rather too easily to me and lacks any real depth. And it doesn't pay any to fucking well, either, you know. What I try to do is produce a prose that's both metrical (not to be confused with dietary) and colloquial at one and the same time. Zelazny does it pretty well sometimes, but too often he confuses scholarship with storytelling and deludes himself with ellusive illusionary allusions (SICI). Delany too often goes another way, floundering in a sea (very sic!) of subordinate clauses and modifiers. With Vossarian in Catch-22, we should yell "Death to the modifiers!" and I spend a lot of time cutting them out of my work with a bloody ask (should this one go? how about this?). Too many still crap up, however. Simeon hates adverbs, I hear. I don't like Simeon very much though. He coasts too much.

To put my ((previously published in SFR)) thesis in terms Richard Delap can understand more clearly: you've got to crawl before you can walk, walk before you can run. You stumble. You try. You watch what's going on. Try learning a language and its rules simply by listening to people speaking it. Eclecticism isn't always enough, but it's a start. Inbreeding produces morons and freaks if it goes on long enough. Science fiction has reached that point. It's fed on itself too long. Now it's shitting itself out. Go to your nearest bookstore and sniff at the sf racks. Experimentation for its own sake isn't always viable - seldom is, in fact - but it's not by definition bad. Not as good as discipline and insight, maybe, but give it a chance. Consider it the awkwardness of puberty. It's about time science fiction's gonads dropped. And consider too; the first man to eat an oyster

probably spit out the first couple of mouthfuls before actually getting down to the business of chewing. If he'd thrown the oyster away in immediate disgust he'd never have known. If you don't dig New Wave, don't read it; I can hardly stand it myself. But for Christ's sake, don't condemn it out of hand before you see where it's going. Out of the bitterest seeds the loveliest flowers sometimes grow. And now that I've coined my cliché for the day, I'll quit.

THE CANDY-COATED-ELECTRIC-TANGERINE-WORLDCON by Jon Stopa

The Worldcon, as it is now organized, is not and cannot be an International Science Fiction Convention. Many idealist fans have fought long and hard to internationalize the Worldcon. It is an unhappy paradox that they have in fact created a stunted monster that is basically incapable of being an international institution.

The reason is quite simple. The Worldcon functionally and organizationally is a continental convention. Never mind what the name says it is. Grafting another arm onto it makes it a Frankenstein's Monster, not an international con.

To internationalize the Worldcon successfully, we must first reorganize it so that it no longer functions as an annual North American con. It is this function of the Worldcon that has been ignored thus far. And it cannot be. A brief examination will show why.

As the rules now stand the Worldcon goes overseas once every five years. Why? Why not once every four years? The Baycon, of course, answered this. A four year cycle interferes with the North American rotation cycle. It forces one of the American zones to always bid for its convention while the Worldcon is overseas.

The Baycon change meant that overseas fans lost 20% of their potential worldcons. This change certainly was unfair to them. Could this step backward been avoided? Certainly. We could have changed the rotational cycle to a three year period. Then the con would go overseas every third year. Funny thing is, absolutely no one made a suggestion like this.

Odd.

A three year overseas rotational cycle would certainly overcome the objection previously mentioned. It would also have given overseas fans more cons instead of fewer cons. What a fine way to solve the problem. Everybody would then be happy. Strange that nobody suggested it.

The problem would also have been solved if the Baycon had created a two-year overseas cycle. But nobody made this suggestion either.

Plainly, the more often the Worldcon is held off the North American continent, the more international in character it will be. Let us suppose for a moment that the Worldcon were to be held, in succession, in Europe, the Soviet Union, Australia, Japan and the United States. This would

reverse the current state of affairs. The Worldcon would then be held overseas four times for every one time it was held in North America.

But then what would have happened to the North American con system? The answer is—Pffft!

It would seem that the more international in character the present Worldcon becomes, the more the North American con system must be dismembered. At one time North American fandom was hard pressed each year to find a city in which there was a group both willing and able to put on a con. This is no longer true. At the present moment there are four to six cities in the central zone who are battling to host a con in 1973. They must look forward to an increasingly frustrating future, for as the Worldcon is internationalized, there will be fewer and fewer cons available to them.

As long as the North American con system is tied to the Worldcon in the particular way that it is, internationalization will be fought with increasing bitterness every step of the way. This relationship forces them to work at cross purposes. The trick is to make the two systems supportive, rather than destructive of each other. As long as one system must shrink that the other may grow, we are in for trouble.

Basically then, each must recognize the right of the other to exist. This is the flaw in the present thrust toward internationalization. It is based on the false premise that the American convention system does not exist. Or, if it does exist, that it is of trivial importance.

There are several ways in which this flaw in the thrust towards internationalization can be corrected. All of them revolve around the premise that the North American con system should be preserved.

Under the proposal I will discuss here we would return the Worldcon to its old three zone North American rotation cycle. We would strip it of its bloated pretension, and rename it the North American Science Fiction Convention, but it would essentially remain the old Worldcon that we knew.

Next we would ask other continental regions, like Europe, to form a similar convention system. Hopefully they would form their own zone system similar to ours and hold their own yearly continental con.

The new internationalized Worldcon would rotate between each continental Region on a regular basis. It would automatically go to the city that was to receive the local continental con. This solves the problem caused when fans must weigh the merits of various contending cities that are an ocean away.

Plainly, Europeans know more about their own cities than we do. They should be able to choose which city of theirs is to receive the Worldcon. And so should we.

There are parts of the world where the number of fans is not great. These will be called non-organized fan Areas. Cities in these areas would be able to ask for a Worldcon once during a rotation cycle. A lot of flexibility is possible here. An out of sequence bid could be entertained either at a specific point during the rotation cycle, or at any time that a specific bid seemed to be worthy of consideration.

#

From the abuse heaped upon the North American Convention proposal, one would think that the existing Worldcon system is indeed the very model of a fair international con system. If this be so, why is the Worldcon now under vitriolic attack by a number of overseas fans? The hard reason is that there is no open and honest basis for the present rotation system. This system, because of the inversely proportional relationship between the de facto American con system and the present Worldcon, must by human nature short-change overseas fans. That is, it will as long as American fans are able to maintain their control over the machinery of the Worldcon.

The proposal being considered here, because it recognizes the right of the American con system to exist, is able to adopt a fair basis for a rotation system.

A look at fan history will be helpful. In order to give each part of North America a crack at the Worldcon, a three zone system was created. Each zone was roughly equal to the other. However, the various continents are not even roughly equal to each other, either in size or in fan population. I see three formulas to solve this problem.

Formula A: Here we would use a proportional basis, similar to that of the U.S. House of Representatives. This would encourage each Continental Region to be as big as possible and discourage the formation of splinter groups. The proportion would be computed on the basis of the largest continental con held during any three year period.

This would seem to be the fairest. With it we could handle both large and small continents. For example, let us consider the relationship between North America, Europe and Japan. Using totally imaginary figures, let us say that the largest con each held drew respectively, 2,000 in North America; 1,000 in Europe; and 500 in Japan. Our proportion would then be 4:2:1. North America would get 4 out of the 7 Worldcons during a rotation cycle. Suppose Zanzibar, weighing in at ten fans, would demand to be considered a continent. The proportion would then be 200:100:50:1. Fandom would make its stand on Zanzibar once every 351 years.

Formula B: In this case, going off on an entirely different tack, we would use a unit basis, similar to the U.S. Senate. Each continent would get one Worldcon during a cycle. This system, I am afraid, would be very bad. How would you judge what was a legitimate continent? Is Europe a continent or a subcontinent? What about Japan? This formula would tend to cause fragmentation. Smaller and smaller areas would claim to be continents.

Formula C. This last formula is a compromise between the first two. It would use a proportional basis, but limit the number of cons a continent could have during any one rotation cycle at some arbitrary figure, say three or four.

This would seem to have the same flaw as formula B. It would tend to cause fragmentation. It would especially tend to break up the North American Continental Region.

It seems to me that an international Worldcon must use some sort of zone system, otherwise we shall constantly be plagued with the problem of fairness in the rotation cycle.

I think that Europe has a right to a certain number of cons. Unless it organizes itself as a Region, I see no easy way for it to get them. With the present system, this is impossible, since it is a no-no to have a "local" continental con system. Structureless democracy should always be suspect, because the big guy usually can hide the fact that he controls everything behind the guise of equality, when in reality there is no equality. Earlier, I argued that the present Worldcon system was de facto a North American con system. If one accepts that this is true, one can then see why Europe must play the mendicant when it asks for a Worldcon.

Take the present bidding situation. Why are there no other European bids but that of Heidelberg? The answer is quite plain: If all the cities of Europe that might want the con were bidding, it would so splinter the vote that Zanzibar could conceivably win.

You do not see this on North America. You don't see all fans in the Eastern zone banding together behind one city in order to keep a city on the west coast from getting the Worldcon. There is a definite difference in the life-style between those who are powerful and those who are not. They don't have to crawl.

If American fandom, some three decades ago, had kept its grandiose pretensions in check we would not have these problems and we would also probably be much further along the way towards a true International Science Fiction Con. Sam Moskowitz records in *The Immortal Storm* that there was a National Science Fiction Con held in Newark in 1938. The purpose of it, he says, was to gain a platform from which to launch the Worldcon. It is too bad that he didn't stay with the National Con. It would have made things a lot simpler now.

I believe that the new Worldcon system I have outlined in this article will work. There are a number of others that would also work. I urgently ask you to send me your thoughts and I will send them on to other members of the North American Science Fiction Con Study Committee. My address: Jon Stopa
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Your cover was beautiful. How come fanzines (in general) have better covers than prozines (in general)? I suppose your male readers liked your interior "foldout" by the same guy (Steve Fabian)) but pix of human beings with wings never cease to annoy me because the wings are so obviously nonfunctional. One exception: a Jack Gaughan (I think) illo for "To Jorslem" in GALAXY (I think). The girl was very slim and the wings were great big huge ones. She looked like she might really be able to fly (without mechanical or chemical aid).

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There is an essential, and almost horrifying joke in all the ((New Wave)) SFR blamey - how many of the crusaders, defenders, and poor-man's-squires have actually read NEW WORLDS? In Australia, the magazine's circulation is precisely six. John Bangsund and I get copies and read them, and Leigh Edmonds and Lee Harding get copies and look at them. Probably they have the best of the bargain. Now, just what sort of circulation does NW have in America, presuming it gets past the censors at all? If it is not read at all, then there is no battle to join.

Unless I miss the point myself of all those four-letter words in your letter column...American fans are still as naive about sex in sf as they ever were. At this point we can also welcome the authors. I had always thought that an author wrote because he had something of importance to himself that he wanted to communicate, and he wanted to communicate it as persuasively, entertainingly and luminously as possible. I don't mean simply that he has a New Testament in one hand and a telescope in the other. Most authors don't have a point of view to which they want to convert us. Rather they have a world-view, a world-experience, into which they want us to enter. In early sf, this welten-schaung was the excitement of twentieth century scientific discovery and technological development. It didn't much matter that neither the authors nor the readers knew much about the subject. What they did know, and the consequent emotional excitement, could, however, be effectively communicated. The relationships between the sexes, as a subject in itself, did not offer much at that time to the writers. "Sex", "love", or whatever you want to call it, was an encumbrance, because it did not fit into the naive, adolescent, but very entertaining world-views of those sf writers.

((Bunk. If the freedom to treat of sexual themes in sf had existed then, the stories would have been written. Sex was a taboo. Tell me, Bruce, if Norman Spinrad wrote Bug Jack Barron in Australia...could he have gotten it published there?))

One would like to say that sf writing has "grown up", i.e. quite literally matured, so that all forms of human experience may be measured against all forms of scientific thought. Alas, it ain't so. It wouldn't matter so much if the best literature (with which we insist on comparing ourselves) had not leapt so far ahead of us in the last thirty years, as to make 1926 AMAZINGS look eighteenth century. Even that would not matter so much if the best of popular writing had not also assimilated Freudian theory and Joycean technique. I mean, sf is now behind everybody!

And there is some basic failure of understanding between the sf pushers, and everybody else. One only needs to read in your letter column the awkward, blushing attempts to talk about sex in sf, to see what I mean. Piers Anthony talks about "putting in sex scenes", Asimov measures his novels' sexlessness by his bank account, and someone else drops as many four-letter words as possible, hoping one of them will convey whatever point it was he was trying to put over. ((How do you know his motivation, Bruce? Your emotional prejudice is showing.)) The only remotely sensible word on the whole subject that I have seen in a fanzine has been Ted White's "Manners, Sex and Love" in NIEKAS 20. Ted suggests that the relationship of sexual endeavor to fiction may have something to do with the whole of man's endeavors. In other words, current sf (Spinrad included, despite my praise in ASFR 19, where I called BJB the best hack sf novel of the decade) simply has not caught up with the twentieth century man, let alone making any guesses about the twenty-first century man. I know publishers of sf have a nice little box for their incoming manuscripts jointly market SF and sexless. That is, sf remains nearly alone (with pornography?) as the one exclusively adolescent category of fiction. Or, following on my point just above, it is the one truly nineteenth century literature left. If one could prove that sf fans and writers are only a bunch of nineteenth century Transcendentalists mysteriously and mistakenly visited upon the Cynical Sixties, then I wouldn't be surprised. I may even be included.

ALFRED BESTER I've been meaning for some time to New York, NY write and thank you for sending me your SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW. I want to compliment you on the crisp, attractive style with which you put it out. The graphics, layout and editorial content are splendid.

However, I'm saddened by one aspect; the vein of controversy in your magazine. Perhaps I should say the color of the controversy. I do enjoy conflicts of opinion in our profession, but so many of your contributors seem to stoop to personal abuse which weakens their arguments and, to be brutally frank, makes for boring reading. It's always a delight to discover how writers disagree about writing, but it becomes tedious when they start slanging

each other.

((I suppose you mean, mainly, the Ted White-Norman Spinrad exchanges. But as a result of their letters we learned much about editing, writing, publishing, the background of Bug Jack Barron, etc. that would never have been written if anger and conviction had not been roused. And revealed personality and character is often more interesting than revealed knowledge.))

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First, I liked Glass' review of fall of the Dream Machine. His remarks on violence in the book were quite perceptive. I do like to use violence in fiction

as a release (I am basically so nonviolent that I have never been able to tolerate even hunting or fishing and am intellectually outraged by Boxing and Football), and I do mean, especially in fall of..., for the violence to take the place of sex and thus show that it is inherently dirtier than any erotic act can ever hope to be.

As a sidelight: I was recently amused by a friend of mine who took me to task for making the revolutionaries in the book so violent. He said that modern American revolutionaries were not violent and would bring about the revolution nonviolently. Do some of our hip revolutionaries really believe this? Look what our nonviolent revolutionaries have accomplished: weak legislation purposefully designed to be without enforcement clauses. No, if these modern revolutionaries really want the large scale change they talk, they are going to have to steel themselves to murder, mayhem, and other forms of violent action. That's one reason why I don't see a revolution in America's future. Some of SDS has begun to talk and act violence ("Kill the pigs" & "Death to the Establishment" and so on) but in so doing, they have alienated a good percentage of the revolutionary cult. In fall of... the point was made that these revolutionaries had one thing going for them: their leaders fought alongside them and, therefore, did not order any violence except that which was absolutely inevitable. Imagine if Lyndon Johnson or Richard Nixon had had to pick up a gun and move into the field...

Now on to Piers Anthony. Many good points, most of which I agree to. Indeed, it is true that most of my novels have been more like SDS than anything else. And I do it because it sells faster and will help me get on my feet as a freelancer, thus enabling me to do better things. And to back up what Piers said, I would recount a short experience or two of my own. I have this intricate little novel called The Dark Symphony which is the best sf I have written. My agent seems to be having one helluva time marketing it. So far, from what various editors have said, I gather the only objections are to the moribundness of the novel and the basic negativity of it (though any book that confronts the idea of Death and sets out to show that it might not be so bad,

should not be looked at as completely negative). Also, I have this mainstream novel called All Other Men which Larry Ashmead (of Doubleday) called an "absolutely brilliant book that left me completely drained." But he couldn't publish it because it was basically too concerned with sex for Doubleday to handle. It is having a rough go-around because of its explicitness (in this day of everything-goes, you can gather that it is more than a little explicit!) But both are good novels, especially the mainstream piece. No one, thus far, will take them. One is too "morbid" and one is too "sexually detailed".

In frustration, I cranked out a novel called The Mystery of His Flesh. It started as a basically good short story which I expanded into a chase novel. It's really rather poorly done, friends. The agent sent it to Ace, which rejected it (and Don Willheim wrote a letter to me, rather friendly chastisement that I would write such a thing). It was not meant for Ace, which really does have integrity, despite what some fans think, but for one of the lesser houses, which will very likely take it sooner or later. And thus I will pay the rent.

So Piers is right. You can sell the lesser stuff faster than the good stuff. But that does not mean a novel such as SOS (or such as The Mystery of His Flesh) should be reviewed with any less critical an eye than Chthon.

Oh, yes, Bill Glass mentions that Bode and I were once going to do a series of books together. We still are. Hopefully, the first will be finished by the end of this summer. And it's going to be, friends, something quite different, not just an artist and writer working together, but a MacLuhanesque multi-media package.

Finally, I like Banks Mebane's column. I was surprised that he didn't point out Sheckley's "The Petrified World" written around Bode's cover on the February 1968 issue of IF. The cover pictured a wildly improbable cement flying machine with a smokestack and none of the principles of aeronautics in it (though, damnit, it did look like it could fly). Sheckley's resulting story was a great example of a writer copping out on his duty to represent the cover. A single line, part of the protagonists dream, says: "He beamed at something like a steamboat with yellow stacks that went by in the sky." No further mention. That's a real sell-out!

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I do note one item of low-controversial nature this gentle soul may safely comment upon. In Piers Anthony's letter in SFR 30 he says he sometimes does only 100 words per day. I'm relieved to learn that! The prolific bastard just about had me convinced he did between 6,000 and 10,000 words every day. I knew this

was nonsense, of course, but past experience with Piers' writing seemed to confirm it.

Aha, but then Piers claims Macroscopic was of the 100 words per day type. Can't be; not average. The briefest calculation shows he'd have taken three years writing the book, and I've his own statement that it was more like one year; besides, I know he wrote other things during that time.

So much for catching Piers in a mistaken fact. (Don't bother to thank me, Piers. Glad to do it. Any time.) How how does my rate compare? Much more favorably, I'm glad to note, than I had feared. While first-drafting The Ring I managed to do 3500 words per day for a number of days, but this is far from my "typical" writing speed. At present I'm working on a short-short that I've been reworking for a couple weeks; I'd hate to say what my average words into hours ratio would be. For the most part I'm happy if I can just get things right at any speed. For the future? Well, I envy those who get things right in one draft and also those who write both fast enough and well enough to earn a living. I know I'm never going to be complacent about either my writing speed or my writings quality—the competition is too damned great!

PIERS ANTHONY
Florida

I can answer George Fergus' query why Nova, Omnivore and The Demon Breed did not appear on the recent Nebula ballot. Nova is more conventional than Delany's recent novels, so had less support among confirmed new wavists than is normal for him. Witness Judith Merrill's public struggle to decide that she did, after all, like it. In addition, it was published hardcover, and that is a strike against any book in the award arena. So it lost out to the same machine that brought Delany awards in prior years. Omnivore and The Demon Breed are both paperbacks and reasonably consistent with public expectations for the authors, so should normally have had their shot at the ballot—but happened to be published in the month of December. The SFMA president declared novels published in that month to be ineligible for the 1968 ballot; instead they become eligible for the 1969 ballot. I don't know how Mr. Schmitz feels about this, but I, as the author of Omnivore, wrote a lengthy protest to SFMA. Let's just say, in due fairness, that the problems of the Nebula balloting are not simple ones, and I do not feel that there was any malice in the decision to shift the years of eligibility for these novels. Both of them will now have a far better chance to make the final ballot than they would have had otherwise, even though it puts me in an awkward spot that may force me to remove my novel from consideration for the Nebula. Meanwhile, one novel that I feel did belong on that 1968 ballot, Harness' Ring of Pit-omei, was published in November but distributed to SFMA so late that it never had a chance. I hope it does better

for the Hugo. The problems of distribution play far too great a part in the Nebula balloting, and are among several factors that tend to make the award invalid as a guide to the best work of any given year.

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It has never been my practice to question the right of reviewers to their opinion of the books they report upon. However, since Mr. Boardman does by inference question my research in the current issue of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, I feel I am at liberty to reply to that.

In the first place I never stated in the book (Operation Time Search) that the Atlantis-Mu legend (one of the most enduring of our speculative imaginings) was true—the hero in the story is projected—as is clearly stated—into the past of our present world, but into that of a possible alternate—following the acceptable "If" history theory which a good many writers of fiction have enjoyed mining from time to time.

Secondly—almost all of the legends of Atlantis unite on the fact that the Atlanteans did bring an end to themselves by deliberately choosing to follow a path of "dark knowledge"—in some cases this is cited as occult, in others as forbidden experimentation in some scientific discovery which got out of hand.

Thirdly—the Atlanteans are again, in the vast amount of legendary material which has been developed over the years, anything but "deplorably democratic". They are in fact credited with a line of evil rulers growing more and more autocratic, or else a dark priesthood.

Operation Time Search was indeed researched for the Atlantean-Murian material. I do not believe in the legend any more than Mr. Boardman does, and the introduction of the tale states the modern point of view concerning this build-up of ancient imagining. Perhaps one should not be prickly over any questions concerning a work of adventure fiction, but I do believe that the reviewer should not infer a situation which does not actually exist.

JOHN BOARDMAN
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Poul Anderson ((in SFR 30)) classifies "a readiness to live with tragedy" as a virtue appropriated by Fascists, though valid anyhow, and carefully to be distinguished from the "Communist virtues". Here is a dichotomy which I, on the other side of the fence, will accept. If you accepted the Fascists on their own terms, there was a Wagnerian tragic grandeur about them — reminiscent of an old Germanic hero going out to fight a battle that the Norns told him he

would lose.

But the Communist virtues — which I hope are not the exclusive privilege of the Communists — include a flat refusal to live with racism, colonialism, war exploitation, or injustice. These hopes and ideals have been frequently betrayed by opportunists or power-hungry men, but they still remain part of the appeal of Communism. I once knew a man who said that his greatest objection to Communism is that it forces you to take account of the problems of other people. This I find its greatest appeal.

I'll conclude these off-the-top remarks with a quotation which may interest the "Second Foundation". It comes from Fancylopedia II:

"CCF The Crusade to Clean Up Fandom. A campaign for fanzine censorship launched by Russ Watkins in 1951. Its targets were anti-religious and pro-sex fan writings. Most fans agreed with Art Rapp that the name should be changed to Organization for Getting Pornography Unpublished, so that the initials would agree with the character of the group..."

JOHN FOYSSTER
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SFR 30 is a brilliant piece of work and this shows out best in the very first article you print — Harlan Ellison's cri de coeur accompanied by Jack Gaughan's wry illustrations. Gaughan's work tells its own tale, but I'm not sure that this is so with the text.

As I remarked to you in my letter a couple days ago, I'm very mildly involved in a bit of student protest at the moment (the mildness may depart if a particular statute is passed) and one of the major problems facing students in this situation has been to distinguish between those who are standing up and speaking because they honestly believe there are wrongs to be righted and those who stand up so that they can be clearly seen by all around. I believe that Ellison falls into the first group: but it isn't always clear from his writing that this is so. Furthermore, Harlan Ellison makes a statement rather like those of the most extreme and irrational of these people (it's an isolated one, thank God!). He writes:

"They are unwilling to let 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."

As it stands, this reads rather like a long-winded way of saying "They will not let dissenters have their way". But this is a different kettle of fish altogether. I personally don't think that every minority group in society should have their demands acted upon, and I don't think Mr. Ellison does either, but that's about the way he reads. Indeed, the Birchers and the generals are two groups who have their demands acted upon and are condemned in this same para-

graph by Mr. Ellison. I'm almost inclined to the belief that there are people who should not even be heard (the political bosses in South Africa and Spain and Greece, for example) but I think if it came to the pinch I'd let them have their say (and I'd act on them, though not quite in the way Mr. Ellison is suggesting).

The second problem here is that there are madmen as well as mad geniuses. Not everyone who is irrational is incredibly creative: some of them might be sick. (Not many of the sick ones get around to writing books or painting, if any, so this doesn't really pose a problem in the present context.)

But I am not convinced that everyone who is 'different' is automatically a genius: I am equally unconvinced that every unorthodox story is the product of a brilliant mind (in or not in a suffering body). That Harlan Ellison is sincere in this matter is obvious and I hope he develops the subject in a subsequent piece for you.

I'm not so sure about Poul Anderson's sincerity: that title ("Beer Mutterings", a column in SFR 30) seems to give him away, particularly on the last page of his otherwise very readable column. For example, his suggestion that "The society of Starship Troopers turns out on examination to be more free than our own today." is a little hard to swallow, but no more difficult than the proposition that a Sears-Roebuck catalogue is of more cultural value than Joyce's Ulysses. It really depends on what Anderson means by "free" or perhaps on who is doing the examining. As an off-the-cuff remark intended to spark off discussion this isn't too bad, but it pales into insignificance beside the later ones.

Anderson declares that his writings (and those of Heinlein and Kipling) emphasise certain virtues which he believes to be underemphasised in our society - discipline, courage, devotion to the community above self and a readiness to live with tragedy. Anderson pretends that he is talking about real virtues, and then goes on to explain that he only means that these are necessary conditions, not sufficient. But are these 'virtues' admirable things in themselves? It is hard to say, unless we look at what Anderson points at when he mentions them by name. Even then, the fact that he later disagrees with his own authorities makes the reader's task much more difficult.

Anderson says that these virtues were formulated or accepted by the authors of the U.S. Constitution, Sparta, and Plato's Republic. The first of these seems to be blatant flag-waving, and it is scarcely my place to talk in a U.S. fanzine about the U.S. Constitution, but the most recent book I read on the subject seems to convey a rather different impression about the U.S. Constitution than I'd have expected from reading Anderson's paragraph.

Parrington writes (Book III, Part 1, chapter II)

"Then one considers the bulk of commentary that has grown up about the Constitution, it is surprising how little abstract political speculation accompanied its making and adoption. It

was the first response to the current liberal demand for written constitutions as a safeguard against tyranny, but it was aimed at the encroachments of agrarian minorities rather than at Tory minorities. It was the work of able lawyers and men of affairs confronting a definite situation, rather than of political philosophers; and it was accompanied by none of that searching examination of fundamental rights and principles which made the earlier Puritan and later French debate over constitutional principles so rich in creative speculation. Not a single political thinker comparable to the great English and French philosophers emerged from the struggle." (Hain Currents in American Thought Vol. 1)

A little later he adds: "We are too prone to forget the wide popular disfavor with which the new Constitution was received."

And: "The villagers and small men were afraid of the new instrument; they asserted that it had been prepared by aristocrats and moneyed men..."

I think I can understand the sort of 'devotion to community above self' that these 'aristocrats and moneyed men' would have. But Anderson's phrasing is terribly loose, and I may be reading the wrong books: though I do recall the Birchers making the point that the U.S. was a republic, not a democracy.

Again, when it comes to Sparta, Anderson is vague: what is his exact intent in referring to a city here as opposed to persons in the other cases? I do not know, so once again I am simply forced to simply turn to the first two books I pick up to find out something about Spartan society.

Cyril E. Robinson, in A History of Greece (Methuen, p. 55) is rather general: "For the Spartan was different from other Greeks. Uneducated, inartistic and intellectually dull, though displaying on occasion a terse sardonic wit, he presented the strongest possible contrast to the nimble-minded versatile Athenian. ... From the first to the last, as we shall see, the policy of Sparta was abnormally self-centered and short-sighted."

(At least that seems to explain what Anderson means by 'the Spartan virtues are necessary for the long-term survival of this institution'.)

On the other hand, Rostovtzeff (page 78 of a well-known paperback) is rather more specific: "Deformed and sickly infants, boys and girls, were exposed by the government, when they either died or were picked up by some charitable Helot. ... In order to develop independence, ingenuity and dexterity, they were encouraged to steal and especially to steal food. But the unsuccessful thief was mercilessly beaten, not for stealing but for being found out."

Ah, so that's what Anderson means by courage: free lunch for Spartan Children.

Anderson's third source is specific: Plato's Republic. It would be pointless for me to deny having used Popper's The Open City and its Enemies in stringing together the few quotes which follow. In all cases the translations

are those of Shorey (Loeb Classical Library).

Plato believed in a society that was rigid and, in fact, a caste-system (how this would be done will be described later):

"...When I fancy one who is by nature an artisan or some kind of money-maker tempted and incited by wealth or command of votes or bodily strength or some similar advantage tries to enter into the class of counsellors and guardians, for which he is not fitted*, and they interchange their tools and their honors or when the same man undertakes all these functions at once, then, I take it, you too believe that this kind of substitution and meddlingness is the ruin of the state."

"By all means."

"The interference with one's business, then, of the three existent classes and the substitution of the one for the other is the greatest injury to a state and would most rightly be designated as the thing which chiefly works it harm."

"Precisely so."

"And the thing that works the greatest harm to one's own state, will you not pronounce to be injustice?"

"Of course."

"This, then, is injustice." (434 B&C)

Plato then goes on to show that keeping one's appointed place in society is 'justice'. The * is to allow me to interject that citizens are fitted for their tasks by blood. Indeed Plato is a racialist:

"The offspring of the good, I suppose, they will take to the pen or creche, to certain nurses who live apart in a quarter of the city, but the offspring of the inferior, and any of those of the other sort who are born defective, they will properly dispose of in secret, so that no one will know what has become of them."

"That is the condition," he said, "of preserving the purity of the guardians' breed." (460 C)

Whether or not Plato actually believed this, he intended to use it to control the citizens. Anticipating a certain Dr. Goebbels, he wrote:

"The rulers then of the city may, if anybody, lie on account of enemies or citizens for the benefit of the state." (398 B)

And he continues:

"How then," said I "might we contrive one of the opportune falsehoods of which we were just now speaking, so as to persuade if possible the rulers themselves, but failing that the rest of the city?" (414).

".....we will say in our tale, God in fashioning those of you who are fitted to hold rule mingled gold in their generation, for which reason they are the most precious - but in the helpers silver, and iron and brass in the farmers and other craftsmen."

"... Do you see any way of getting them to believe this tale?"

"No, not these themselves," he said. "But I do, their sons and successors and the rest of mankind who come after." (415)

And how did Plato propose to keep the race pure?

"Certain ingenious lots, then, I suppose, must be devised so that the inferior man at each conjunction may blame chance and not the rulers."

"... And on the young man, surely, who excel in war and other pursuits we must bestow honors and prizes and in particular, the opportunity of more frequent intercourse with the women, which will be at the same time a plausible pretext for having them beget as many of the children as possible." (460)

I have underlined 'war' because it is a tendency for Plato to refer to, say, 'warlike and other virtues', never specifying any other: see below, in fact.

Plato proposed that this program should be assisted by a policy which the translator described as 'almost the only passage in Plato that one would wish to blot'. The word 'kiss' is a euphemism.

"But I presume you wouldn't go as far as this?"

"What?"

"That he should kiss and be kissed by everyone?"

"By all means," he said "and I add to the law the provision that during that campaign none whom he wishes to kiss be allowed to refuse, so that if one is in love with anyone, male or female, he may be the more eager to win the prize." (468 B&C)

Thus Plato favours the Big Lie, and sexual license for those on military service

Plato thought of four (or five) kinds of government: in order these were aristocracy, oligarchy, democracy and tyranny. This is descending order of course. (544 C) It is descending because Plato believed in the Fall of Man, and in particular that governments always got worse:

"That which destroys and corrupts in every case is the evil; that which preserves and benefits is the good." (608C)

Notice that Plato uses destroy and preserve as opposites: change corrupts, is his meaning. Now Plato believed that Athens had descended through the ranks to tyranny. But the problem with starting with aristocracy (the perfect state) is that it could hardly allow corruption and remain perfect: he therefore proposed an earthly equivalent, timocracy. What kind of man is the perfect man in this (practically) perfect society?

"He will have to be somewhat self-willed and lacking in culture, yet a lover of music and fond of listening to talk and speeches, though by no means himself a rhetorician; and to slaves such a one would be harsh*, not scorning them as the really educated do, but he would be gentle with the freeborn and very submissive to officials, a lover of office and of honor, not basing his claims to office on ability to speak or anything of that sort but on his exploits in war or preparation for war, and he would be a devotee of gymnastics and hunting." 548 E)

It is easy to see why Heinlein and Anderson might like this kind of philosophy, and it is also distressingly easy to see what might be meant by 'courage', 'discipline', 'devotion to the community above self' and 'readiness to live with tragedy' by such a person. Plato, by the way, was

called a fascist before WWII (by C. E.M. Joad) so the suggestion is by no means new.

Oh yes, that second asterisk: I've clean forgotten to mention that Plato favored slavery — after considering the rest, does it really matter?

Anderson only refers to the Republic, but a glance at the Laws, even though I'm straining any reader's patience (especially yours, Geis), will provide us with one final glimpse of this heaven which Plato (and apparently Anderson) espouses. I won't quote stuff about forbidding private travel overseas (950) or keeping the bloody niggers down (particularly in courts of law (756); but just this:

"The main principle is this — that nobody, male or female, should ever be left without control, nor should anyone, whether at work or in play, grow habituated in mind to acting alone or on his own initiative, but he should live always, both in war and peace, with his eyes fixed constantly on his commander" and following his lead, and he should be guided by him in the smallest detail of his actions ..."

"This task of ruling, and being ruled by, others must be practised in peace from the earliest childhood." (942)

My underlinings, of course. This time the asterisk is to remind me to say that the Greek word apparently means 'commander' in the sense of 'leader'.

I'm not impressed by the claim that because Plato, Sparta and the authors of the U.S. Constitution praised certain things that they are virtuous. I've tried to show that indeed as viewed in the Platonic sense these words acquire entirely different meanings.

Nevertheless I challenge two of them as they stand. 'Devotion to the community above self' means turning on the gas when asked to by the SS officer, killing one's friends and brothers because the generals say that the country is in danger, denying one's moral convictions and ending up amoral. It can be a noble thing, but it needs to be described fully.

'A readiness to live with tragedy' (and I assume Anderson is using 'tragedy' in a sloppy way) appears to be a refusal to try to improve the lot of those who are suffering: to me this is no virtue.

It is hard to believe that Anderson advanced his remarks seriously unless he intends to counterpunch: I've no doubt that many others will try him out, but I am also willing. It is rather insulting to have such a shoddy piece of thinking put over in a semi-serious think piece ... but is shoddy thinking the trademark of the sf writer? Hell, I think I could work up a better argument for Heinlein and Anderson than this one.

Piers Anthony should do well in the next set of awards — he works hard enough at it in the fanzines.

The latest lot of police cars in Queensland were sabotaged by the Traffic Dept.: They were issued plates with

the letters PIG.

ISAAC ASIMOV

What an interesting letter Mr. Just-45 Greenough St. in St. John writes. He must be very West Newton young.
Mass. 02165

I am not often made the object of the rudeness that passed for wit among the immature and I find that I don't mind very much. After all, one may presume that Mr. St. John will grow up one of these days and learn to be a gentleman.

I ask whether it is really essential to have explicit sex scenes in science fiction and he responds by questioning my masculinity.

What can I do? Hand him references? Ask around, Mr. St. John.

I wrote a letter in which I deplored the unnecessary use of four-letter words (of the usual variety) as cheapening not only the passage in which they occur but the words themselves. In the letter, I followed my principles by making no use of such words. In his letter, Mr. St. John supports four-letter words as "the badges of an enlightened intellectuality" (he quotes good old Harlan) but he doesn't use them either. I have the courage of my convictions; has he the courage of his?

If Mr. Justin thinks that a certain fastidiousness concerning language is a sign of castration—he is a most easily castrated man, and perhaps that is just as well for by the shrillness of his tone I suspect that castration becomes him.

Finally, if Mr. St. John thinks that I am a boastful, smug, complacent man, I can only say that he has never met me. He may consult those who have met me.

((The key word is 'unnecessary' use... St. John, and you, did not feel it necessary. I'm sure St. John is capable of using them when he feels four-letter words are apt. But I get the feeling, Mr. Asimov, that you don't really feel they are ever apt.

I imagine you will read the following letter with mixed emotions.))

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Well, I finally tracked down a copy of Philip Jose Farmer's Image of the Beast, and since you insisted on giving your readers the impression I would faint dead away from reading it, I now feel obligated to comment publicly on this so-called science fiction novel.

I say, "so-called" purposely, because if Image of the

Beast is sf, you can't prove it by me. I'd place it more in the category of weird fiction, which I don't like now and never have liked. The "science fictional" explanation for the vampires and werewolves is pure horseshit — even on its own terms. If they are incarnations of human superstitions, one would expect that there'd be some gods and goddesses instead of merely vampires and werewolves. Why not an Aphrodite? Plenty of opportunity for funsex there — I can conclude only that Farmer was more interested in sicksex.

((*sigh* Where did you read in SFR that Image of the Beast is science fiction? Not in the reviews. And not on or in the book itself. Your conclusion about Farmer's intent tells more about you than about Farmer.))

Tell me, Mr. Geis, do you really believe it's "liberated sex" to fill a book full of pages and pages of descriptions of a man having his dick chomped off by a woman with iron teeth, another man having his dick chomped off by a werewolf, another man having a "cone" stuck up his ass so he's forced to fuck an ugly woman and then jack off all the time for the rest of the book?

((Have you stopped poisoning your mother, Pierce? And do you really think that kind of loaded, distorted, exaggeration is going to score any points or bring any fans over to "your" side? Do you think at all? Are you even consciously aware of how slanted and warped your writing is?)

I see you are proving your manhood by using four-letter words. Or am I misinterpreting your intent?))

And even paragraphs of silly commentary on the origin of a turd lying on someone's rug? One thing I'll grant: Image of the Beast is NOT pornographic — because it's anti-pornography of the worst sort. Kind of makes one nostalgic for John Cleland.

The writing is abominably bad. I noticed that Farmer used the same "poetic image" of a woman having a "hand inside her cunt" three times, with two women and two pages apart in one case. And that Mickey Mouse of "only his ~~psych~~ therapist would ever know," and similar shit was laughable. Farmer must have written the thing in a hurry, because I KNOW he can do better than that.

Farmer even flubbed his better opportunities. That "wonderful" invention that so impressed Sturgeon — the woman with the creature up her cunt — was spoiled by making it a part of "dominance" type sex, straight out of Monique VonCleeff's House of Torture (note that he handled a similar idea tastefully in "Open to Me My Sister" — I suggest that you go back and reread that story).

((I suggest you read my review of it in SFR 28.))

Dolores del Oso-rojo had promise — in fact, she was the only really intriguing (as opposed to merely horrid) character in the whole book. But Farmer couldn't leave well enough alone, and to add insult to injury he has to

kill her off and turn her into one of those balloons. Yeecccchhh!

Now, as it happens, I have also just read the paperback reprint of Farmer's Flesh — and by George, that's a GOOD book. It shows off Farmer at his best, enriching the traditional forms of science fiction with his own spectacular imagination. There, he had a well-worked out story-line to justify his "fertility religion" and its rites; the satire was entertaining; the characters were portrayed sympathetically and the plot was adventurous enough for anyone. If I'd been involved in Fandom when it first came out, I might well have nominated Flesh for a Hugo. Why can't Farmer write that well all the time? Because Image of the Beast represents not an advance, but a retreat. It represents the collapse of a great talent.

Well, your SFR30, with Ellison's commentary, finally arrived: and quite a commentary it is, too.

I hate to have to say it, but I guess Mr. Ellison didn't notice that my first letter in that previous issue was intended to be sort of a parody of his own Messianic style — the pristine-pure form of which he displays on pages 48-50. Well, let him look up "parody" in Webster's Dictionary; I'm sure he'll be illuminated.

Now: I've actually become a "twisted white slug," a "neo-Nazi," a "blue-nosed Puritan," etc., etc. I wonder if he applies these same labels to Mr. del Rey — who is, after all, still first Speaker of the movement (if you don't believe me, just ask him).

((ARE you still first Speaker of the movement, Mr. del Rey?))

Mr. Ellison's strangest obsession seems to be the psychological significance of my calling myself a "liaison officer." Actually, I did not invent the label; it was bestowed on me a couple of years back by Colin Wilson, a British author-critic I met after having read his pseudo-Lovecraftian sf novel, The Mind Parasites. He has an interest in sf, and we corresponded briefly (by the way, he doesn't like Mr. Ellison's writing, either).

((The point was not who invented the label, but that you love it so well...and that has significance.))

"New vavicles" was coined by Groff Conklin in an introduction to one of his anthologies — as a matter of fact, he was using this whimsical term in reference to Mr. Ellison. But Mr. Conklin too, I suppose, was one of those "frightened little assholes." (Colorful language that).

I have read Image of the Beast, Chthon and Bug Jack Barron and I thought they were pretty dull; see also my previous letter on the first-mentioned. I don't know how one can take such Mickey Mouse seriously, compared with the work of real originators like Zelazny and Cordwainer Smith (yes — I know Mr. Ellison will be shocked, but I admire much of Cordwainer Smith's work, though perhaps not for the

same reasons Mr. Ellison does.)

I already called Spinrad a twerp once, so why do it again? But I see no reason to follow Mr. Ellison's other suggestions. I would suggest, however, that before he was indignant about libel, etc., he settle the suit Judith Pier-
ril reportedly has pending against him.



TED PAULS

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A few comments on SFR #30, which arrived May 22nd (it would have been here sooner, my postman told me, but the ox died just this side of Kansas City) and which is, as always, superb.

The first item in this issue that made my fingers start trembling with the urge to pound out a reply was Paul Anderson's gratuitous slam at Students for a Democratic Society in "Beer Mutterings." "We are assumed," he says, "to have no more background of elementary information or ability to reason than the average member of Students for a Democratic Society." What grates particularly is the casual irrelevance of the remark, which has absolutely nothing to do with the subject of that section of his column (which, incidentally, I greatly enjoyed). Even if it were justified, I would find its gratuitous insertion rather annoying.

But of course it isn't justified. I myself have some rather broad areas of disagreement with most SDS people, though I suspect that my position on nearly all issues is closer to theirs by far than it is to Paul Anderson's. One can criticize them for a good deal, however. But, goddamnit, it is simply a petty absurdity to toss off a blanket insult aimed at their intelligence. The average SDS member (if there is such a thing) may sometimes be wrongheaded, naive, overzealous, perhaps even selfish and vindictive, but the one thing he or she is not is stupid. Like student activists in general, SDS members are almost invariably drawn from the upper-2% in-intellect of the student (and total) population. Indeed, just about the only generalization one can safely make about the "average SDS member" is that, like the average fan, he will tend to be a person of higher than average intelligence and will tend to have a fairly wide range of interests.

Harlan Ellison's "Essay on Creativity" was magnificent. I read it through twice, the second time just to savor the quality of the prose. If most of Ellison's fiction was half that good, he'd be almost as great a writer as he thinks he is.

Despite Alva Rogers' protestations in re his Worldcon comments that he wasn't being chauvinistic or anti-foreign fan or "trying to maintain that American fans are in some way superior to foreign fans", he comes across doing exactly that. Nationalism crops up in the damndest places. Is it really so terrible that once in every five years the Worldcon will be held abroad?

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This is a letter for fans under 18 yrs of age. I'm sounding the bugle cry for a new fan club. This isn't just any new fan club; we correspond by mail! Our thing is this: we are discussing, debating, enhancing and sometimes embattling science fiction and related subjects. There is nothing formal about our group; we write letters to whomever we wish, snub whomever we want (which is exactly nobody).

We publish a monthly magazine called EARTHLIGHT, written by members of our club and containing fiction, fact, reviews, poems, and anything else we wish to contribute. It's free to all members and to anybody who asks for a copy.



JERRY LAPIDUS

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Why is it that only Piers Anthony (in his NIEKAS review) has mentioned the similarity in style between Stand on Zanzibar and John dos Passos' U.S.A.? From even a quick reading of Brunner's book, it's obvious that he liked the dos Passos style and merely (although very well) adapted it for a "precedent breaking" novel.

I'm surprised there haven't been more comments about Steve Fabian's artwork recently. Along with Kirk and of course Mike Gilbert (who SHOULD have been at least nominated for the Best Fan Artist Hugo), Fabian's certainly produced some of the better art in the last year or so. Not that his work is particularly unique (he reminds me very much of Barr, among others) but it's damn good. His cover and centerspread in SFR 30 are particularly outstanding.



MIKE GILBERT

On practicing what I preach: Why the Dillons should not get the Best Pro Artist Hugo: Making this plain from the start - the Dillons are excellent artists, (for those of you who like facts not opinions they have awards from the Society of American Illustrators) I would refer you to a vast number of TIME-LIFE Science-Nature series which are chock full of some of the most fantastic work I have ever seen.

My opinion is that the Dillons are not, I suspect, of people. I have heard that they are friends of Ellison and did the excellent work in Dangerous Visions as a favor. I also suspect that Jerry Carr has solicited them as the fine artists they are.

My point is that they probably don't care about sf. And if the Dillons are at least going to be allowed a chance at a Hugo they might not even care about, I should demand that Robert McCall, who did the 2001 paintings and is an aerospace painter...and Paul Calle, who has done fantastic paintings of planets for the TIME-LIFE book Planets and was

commissioned by NASA to document the Gemini program should also be nominated along with numerous aero-space artists.

An artist who is nominated for a Hugo should be one who does so because he likes it, not because it's an assignment.

All this is really being clannish as all hell but if you're going to allow (look at this word) "outsiders" in you should let 'em in and show no favorites.

Bill Rotsler for fan Artist Hugo for his wit and cartooning style.

((You can demand those other artists be nominated, Mike, but unless fans write their names on a nominating ballot... Apparently enough fans nominated the Dillons for them to make the final ballot. Your only recourse is to stump for one of the "insider" artists.))

BARRY GILLAM
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I really must disagree with Earl Evers' review of Brian Aldiss' Earthworks in #28. He is mistaking the basic intent of Aldiss' writing.

Another overpopulation novel might not be totally futile: good writing is always good to read, but it would really just be another one. As frontis to Non-Stop (Starship) Aldiss quotes L. P. Hartley: "It is safer for a novelist to choose as his subject something he feels about than something he knows about." And Aldiss' chief concern is with ideas. In Earthworks the background isn't oppressive because Knowle Noland, the first person narrator, is subject to hallucinations and is basically unfit for a social world. Indeed this loneliness and aloneness only stress the overcrowded world: how odd Noland should be alone in such a place. He and the crew are not quite superfluous on the automated ship, touching ports now and again, begging for cargo. He emphasizes how lucky he is to have even this unengaging job in a world where most people exist but to consume; where work is a rare boon.

A "computer poem" prefaces the book: "While life reached evilly through empty faces/While space flowed slowly over idle bodies/And stars flowed evilly upon vast men/No passion smiled..." Noland lives in a world of infinite leisure — where governments leave their populations illiterate. He, early run through the mill, and through a stroke of luck set free, can read and finds love (?) letters on a corpse that sails over the ocean (with an anti-gravity pack strapped on): "The dead man drifted along in the breeze ... With the dead I'm on fair terms." Only after his ship crashes and he is thrust into political intrigue in Africa does he become aware and conscious of what goes on about him; in Africa where he meets the woman of the letters, whom he had idealized (idolized) from not much more than the knowledge of her name.

But to get back to Earl Evers' review: the theme here is not the overcrowded world, it is the problem of a

thinking man in such a world (the overcrowding of which is one, maybe the most, but not the only important factor). In a book where illusion is one of the important thematic elements, "stifling masses" are properly "somewhere in the background". The wasteland between people is more relevant in the discussion of Earthworks than the device and details of the background mechanism. "A book of this type", says Evers: that's the point: Aldiss may use stock types of worlds but very few of his books succumb to being tossed aside as "just another overpop. novel". This is what makes him such a superior writer. Earthworks may not be a top 5 of the year lister, but it is one of the best novels of the last few years and one of Aldiss' best.

I ALSO GOT LETTERS FROM:

JEFFREY D. SMITH who mightily liked Bug Jack Barron, thought ERB was putting his readers on when he wrote in The Outlaw of Torn: "Stop!" cried the girl. "Stop, father, hast forgot but for Roger de Conde ye might have seen your daughter a corpse ere now, or, worse, herself be-fouled and dishonored?", and who reports that in his book store the Stine and Farmer Essex house books have sold out, also my Endless Orgy.

JERRY KAUFMAN suggests that someone nominate Jack Gaughan for Best Fan Writer soon, since "He's getting better, and funnier, all the time."

M. PAUL GANLEY who discusses the JJPierce situation and calls for tolerance of others' tastes.

JIM YOUNG who is pushing Minneapolis in '73. He was looking forward to meeting me at the Baycon but I wasn't there so he didn't...meet me.

D.M. GORMAN who excoriates JJPierce and suggests, "Come on, John, grow up. Burn your copies of ANALOG, let your hair down, find some nice underground-FM-rock station, and try to pay a compliment to Mormen Spinrad."

SANDY ... I've misplaced his last name. Anyway, Sandy was most impressed by Harlan's Black/Thoughts. Maybe sometime we'll have Harlan's I Am Curious—Yellow thoughts.

NEAL GOLDFARB recounted a tale about an ancient fandom where a tribe of weirdos had feuds and threw mud all the time. Then feces. Then...

PAULEA BULWER wrote a nice letter of comment on #29 and took issue with John Christopher's article in an earlier issue of PSYCHOTIC.

PSYCHOTIC? That's a vaguely familiar name....

GUY E. PLATZ ordered a copy of SFR by sending three dimes and twenty pennies all taped to a sheet of paper. Cost me 12¢ postage due. Gnungggung!

AND: Andy Offutt, D.M. Gorman, Mitchell J. Svado, Jr., Lon Jones, and Ronald Hoeflin. THANK YOU ALL..... And a last-last minute apology-note: I goofed (again) and forgot to list Banks Mebane's column on the content's page. Forgive, Banks, for the love of Bloch, for



THAT'S NOT THE
REAL ME - I'M
MUCH MORE
SUBSTANTIAL

YUP
YOU
BET