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THE ALIEN CRITIC

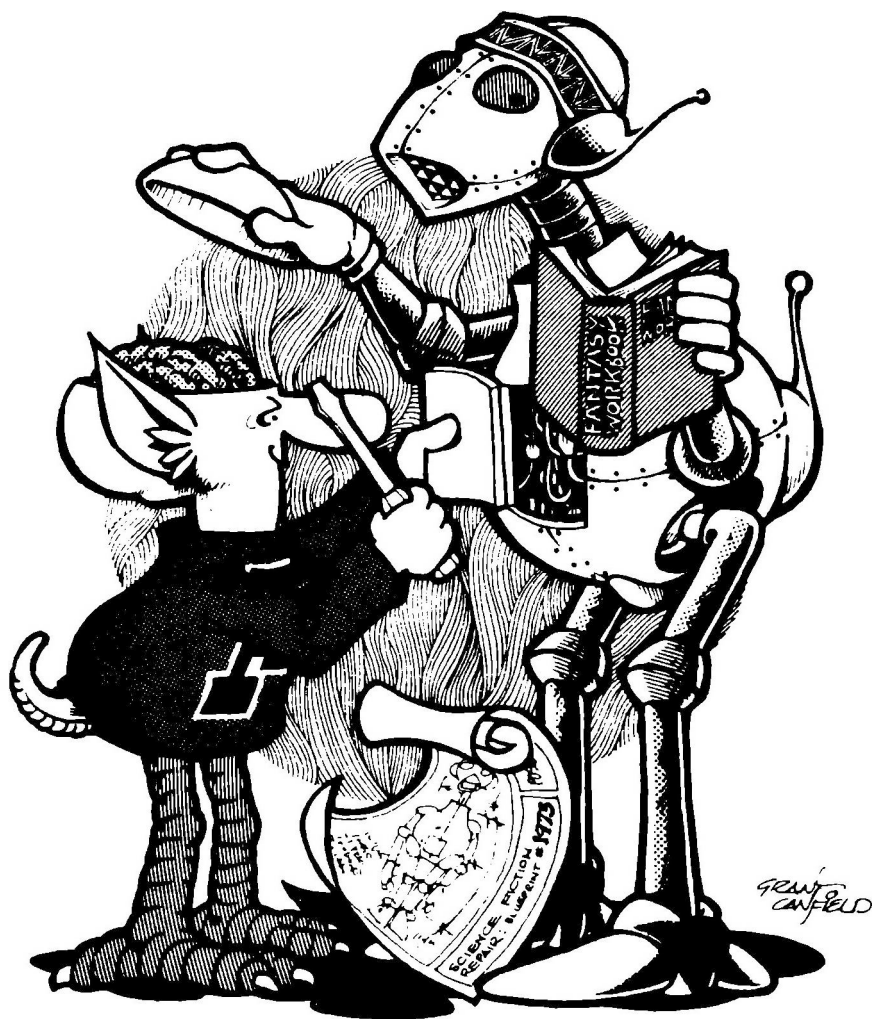
an informal science fiction
& fantasy journal

THE TRENCHANT BLUDGEON
BY TED WHITE

AN INTERVIEW WITH R. A. LAFFERTY
BY PAUL WALKER

TRANSLATIONS FROM THE EDITORIAL
BY MARION Z. BRADLEY

Number Six



THE ALIEN CRITIC

BOX 11408 PORTLAND, OR 97211

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Editor & Publisher

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AUGUST, 1973—Whole Number Six—Vol.2, No.3

SUBSCRIPTIONS

In the United States:
\$4. One Year
\$7. Two Years

From Canada:
US\$4.50 One Year
US\$8.00 Two Years

All other Foreign:
US\$4.50 One Year
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not of a nature to require extreme sacrifice during a critical period when possibly millions of dollars are on the line.

Priority-wise, TAC is down at the bottom of that umpteenth pile of work—the pile that just toppled off the edge of his large desk. I don't blame him too much for postponing work on the article. Not really...not much...“Grump”

I expect that in good time the article will arrive and when that happy day comes I shall instantly schedule it in the earliest possible issue—and promptly advertise it again.

+++

I was placidly sitting at my “working



ALIEN THOUGHTS

An unfunny thing happened on the way to the deadline for this issue: Harlan Ellison's promised article (re-written speech), “Cop-Out, Sell-Out and Self-Rape—The Exploitation of Speculative Fiction by Its Writers, Its Fans and Its Apologists,” didn't arrive.

I had sworn to myself (and to Ed Ferman in a note) that I wouldn't advertise material I didn't have in hand.

But I took Harlan's word (“...I'm at work on the speech, and you'll have it for #6, so feel secure in advertising it. No fockups this time, my pledge on it.”) and I went ahead with my fingers crossed and advertised it in R&SF, in GALAXY and IF....

I am now faced with a large number of disappointed and darkly muttering subscribers and sample-copy buyers who paid and will pay money in anticipation of reading that article in this issue. Harlan writes and speaks dynamic prose. He's exciting and fascinating.

Fortunately, I've been able to fill in the hole reserved for Harlan with other material (including a lot of my own—I've read an awful lot recently!) and put together a damned good issue. Ted White fortunately decided to resume his “Trenchant Bludgeon” column for me, and Paul Walker sent along a very good interview with R.A. Lafferty. I had already planned on using the Marion Z. Bradley article in this issue.

Harlan is in a difficult position. He is by nature hyper-active—a dynamo—but there are limits to even his incredible drive and energy...and he's inevitably slowing down as age creeps its withering claw up his leg...or into his pituitary...or....

Anyway, here he is up to his eyebrows in two TV shows; in a make-break position to assure his financial future, on the crumbly brink of becoming a rich man if.... And his commitment to me is necessarily of concern to him, but

desk” (not to be confused with this Olympia pica dominated “typing” desk or the smaller “finish copy” desk whereon sits the Olympia micro-elite where this will later be retyped without mistakes on nice white paper, or the “tax records” desk in the other room) the other day, pasting up the bulk of this issue on graph paper in nice neat columns, listening to Bill Alexander's talk show on KKEY here in Portland, when he signed off his show with a shouted epigram that blew me off my swivel chair.

“REMEMBER,” he bellowed out onto the carrier wave, “TEN YEARS OF REJECTION SLIPS IS NATURE'S WAY OF TELLING YOU TO STOP WRITING!”

That line is in TAC #5: an interlinea-

tion of mine on page 30.

I instantly realized I had made a terrible mistake! I'd sent Bill a complimentary copy of TAC #5 because he had let slip on the air several weeks previous that he read ANALOG.

Naturally, as my duty as a good citizen of Sci-Fi, I had felt it obligatory to show him the Glory that is Geis. I owed that to a fellow sf reader who is struggling in the Wilderness of Ignorance.

So—he blared my precious words into the ether without so much as a credit line. Now hundreds of thousands of Oregonians think he's keen-minded and halfway intelligent—because he steals other men's pearls. The swine. (And he hasn't even had the good sense and common decency to subscribe!)

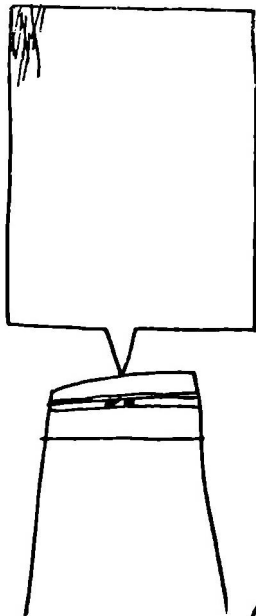
I'll punish him. One of these mornings I'll call KKEY, lie in ambush on line 3, and then when he flips me on and says, "You're on the air!" I'll pounce.

Whoever heard of discussing science-fiction and fantasy on a talk show at 10 A. M.? He'll be ruined!

+++

This issue has an expanded (and reduced) Archives. This more complete coverage of sf and fantasy has been made possible by a satisfactory amount of advertising and because the lists didn't gobble up as many pages as I had feared, and because the additional photo-reduction gives more space.

I haven't seen yet how small the type will be. I may decide a 46 space line is Too Much—resulting in terminal squint for readers and researchers. We shall see...or not see.



MY THINKING ON THE
SUBJECT IS COMPLETED.

3

Subscriptions have been coming in at a consistent two and three per day, and as the advertising and reviews and newsstand-bookstore sales mount, I expect that rate to double. It takes a couple years to get a magazine going, to build up the momentum and to simply spread word of its existence to those who might be interested.

I have a Third Class bulk mailing permit now, which cuts the United States mailing costs by approximately 60% per copy, and in due time (1974) I'll apply for a Second Class mailing permit (TAC should be qualified by then) which will if granted cut postage costs an additional 30% per copy...which will also help pay for the more complete Archives.

Eighty pages this issue. That's got to be the page limit for a while.

I'm having 3000 copies printed of this issue because I will be sending samples to a host of bookstores and some distributors and to some people I think have a special interest in Ted White's column.

Also, I'll need a lot of copies to fill orders from those bookstores. Yesterday, for instance, A Change Of Hobbit in Los Angeles doubled its order, and Cinemabilia in New York ordered 25 copies per issue.

Things look promising.

Canadian subscribers will not be happy with my having to sock-it-to-'em for an extra 50¢ for subs. That's necessary to bring them in line with other foreign subs and to compensate for the extra postage required for mailing a copy out of the United States (and the U.S. Postal Service is going to boost special fourth class rates to 16¢ as soon as Phase Four allows).

Cy Chauvin sent along an article for possible publication in TAC, and in a self-effacing note in his accompanying letter said he expected that I was only interested in Big Names for TAC and would not be interested in his effort.

I surprised him, I think, by accepting his piece. It is titled, "How Theodore Sturgeon Learned To Love Relevance and Ruined His Science Fiction." It is chock full of good argument, examples, viewpoint and is written in an informal, highly readable style.

Of course Big Names are most welcome, even sought after. Most readers are more interested in Big Name thoughts on sf and fantasy and writing and etc. than in No Name thoughts. I know I am. I will read most attentively anything Jim Blish, Damon Knight, RAW Lowndes, Brian Aldiss, etc. have to say on those subjects. They have proved their intelligence and expertise.

BUT—Big Names are not often inclined to write the "nuts-and-bolts" articles I want, especially those involving other Big Name writers who may be personal friends, and of whom something critical might have to be said.

So the close observer, the aficionado, is the one who must provide us with the emperor-has-no-clothes-and-in-fact-has-feet-of-clay articles. We then must ourselves view the emperor's body, and feet, and decide if what is said is true.

Sometimes I wonder if emperor inspection is fit work for grown men. It's fun, though.

LETTER FROM JAY CORNELL, JR.

"The main reason for this letter... is to clear up a misunderstanding in The Literary Dreamers seemingly held by Weston La Barre and cited (and also held?) by James Blish.

"Neither Jung's collective unconscious nor Freud's id, ego and super-ego (no caps) are things that can be 'localized' in the physical brain: they are paradigms, models created by psychologists to explain the workings of the mind which don't have physical existence. It would be pretty futile for chemists to look for a natural physical incarnation of the periodic table, which they invented, but this does not detract from its validity as a way to understand the properties of the elements."

TIME ENOUGH (AND THEN SOME!) FOR HEINLEIN'S LOVE

That sound you hear in the background is a horde of reviewers sharpening their knives and licking their chops. The Great Carving will begin soon—if it hasn't already by the time you read this—and Robert A. Heinlein's latest novel, TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE, will be a rack of bloody bones on the table.

A glimpse of that scene comes from Alexei Panshin. As is my occasional cowardly wont, I asked Alexei and his wife to do a review of the new Heinlein for THE ALIEN CRITIC. (I'm lazy...lazy....)

He replied, "As it happens, I got a copy of TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE last weekend and read it in two days. (Cory is starting it tonight.) It is, quite frankly, awful—though not nearly as unbearable as I WILL FEAR NO EVIL. I can't do a review of it for you because we did a long 'pre-review' of it and the two pieces would clash."

Somebody had got to them before me. I have to work at it myself. (Oh, I could ask another professional to review it...but I like a challenge now and then. But enough about me. On to RAH & RAH & RAH & RAH...a long cheer for a man who....)

Robert A. Heinlein's continuing message—the strong, firm oaken stakes he keeps driving into the hearts of unthinking self-indulgence, stupid greed and irresponsibility—is self-reliance, rationality, foresight, and (as with Ayn Rand) love-with-respect.

He stays true to these values. But of late I feel he has become self-indulgent, himself, in his story-telling.

Time out now to give the storyline.

The form of the novel is of a publication by Justin Foote the 45th, Chief Archivist Emeritus, a far-far future historian of the Howard Foundation, over two thousand years after the Great Diaspora of the Human Race.

Homo Sap has spread through the galaxy and he is beginning to reach for other galaxies.

Justin Foote #45 has compiled this book from records of a time (4272AD) when Woodrow Wilson Smith, alias Lazarus Long, alias Aaron Sheffield, alias Ernest Gibbons, alias Ted Bronson...and known to the virtually immortal Howard Families as "the Senior"... arrived at Secundus (the "new" capital of the human race—old Earth having worn out and sunk into socialist barbarism) to die.

Lazarus is tired. He wants to let the string end. He is the oldest human, the only living man who was born (1912 AD on Earth) in the beginnings of the Howard Foundation's breeding experiment for human longevity. He has had uncouneted rejuvenations.

But his presence on Secundus is discovered and he is "saved" from death by the Chairman of the Howard Families who initiates another rejuvenation for Lazarus and makes a deal: if something interesting and different can be found for Lazarus to do, Laz agrees to be wholly rejuvenated and continue living, but if the computers and staff cannot come up with a challenge, then Lazarus is free to flip the suicide switch by his bed.

At the same time, the Chairman and staff are dedicated to extracting and recording all of Lazarus's accumulated wisdom and know-how. (Any man who has managed to stay alive through dozens of adventurous lifetimes as colonist, dictator, religious leader, soldier, starship captain, etc., etc., etc. has to have been doing a lot of things right!)

(But for Christ's sake, haven't the psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists and etc. by then had time and opportunity enough to discover EVERYTHING about man and his psyche? And why should the Chairman and his staff hang on Lazarus's words as if they had never heard such "common-sense" dictums before?)

And so the reminiscences begin and the homilies flow...and flow...and flow....

Of course, in due time a new challenge is found—time travel. And Lazarus decides to return alone to the time of his childhood...where he meets himself as a brat and falls in love with his mother.

Mr. Heinlein can write effectively, and in sections, does. The long remembrance of Lazarus's time as a pioneer on a new colony planet, as he and his short-life wife trek over a range of mountains into the unknown, is gripping and very well told (as are the Ted Bronson 1917 chapters), especially the periods of danger. The trek, the realistic dragon problem, the encounter with the three human marauders...and Heinlein's mutant, intelligent, talking mules are real. Very good.

But—alas—throughout the book there is a garrulousness that made me curse and skim. And worse—the chatter is too often cloying and cute as adoring and worshipping humans and "humanized" super-computers hang on every word of Lazarus, and fall in line with him and agree with him... Oh, it is sickening at times how they and he get along so well.

The girls scheme to get pregnant by him, and the computers pop their diodes with their desire to have their minds poured into a lovely female human body so that they, too, can go to bed with their beloved Lazarus and bear his genetically perfect children.

Mr. Heinlein is much into genetics and cloning and he is actively considering the possibilities.

One of the challenges devised to interest Lazarus is the creation of twin girls from his genes—himself in twin female form. [Eventually when they reach the proper age, the twins (naturally!) want to have children by Laz. They prevail, of course.

The major technique flaw is the single Voice of all the dialog; it is all Heinlein speaking through paper-thin characters. Only Lazarus is fleshed out and half-way solid, and even he is a stylized personality.

I have the feeling that Mr. Heinlein is less and less interested in illustrating his convictions and beliefs in novel form, and more inclined, with each passing book, in long-winded lectures in dialog form.

In addition to the story of Lazarus as compiled by Justin Foote the 45th, there are two Intermissions devoted to excerpts from the notebooks of Lazarus. These are short observations on man and nature such as:

'Freedom begins when you tell Mrs. Grundy to go fly a kite.'

'Natural laws have no pity.'

'Yield to temptation; it may not pass your way again.'

'Secrecy is the beginning of tyranny.'

'The greatest productive force is human selfishness.'

'A whore should be judged by the same criteria as other professionals offering services for pay—such as dentists, lawyers, hairdressers, physi-

cians, plumbers, etc. Is she professionally competent? Does she give good measure? Is she honest with her clients?

It is possible that the percentage of honest and competent whores is higher than that of plumbers and much higher than that of lawyers. And enormously higher than that of professors.'

I found these aphorisms more interesting than the rest of the book's solipsist mirror-games.

The solipsist element cries out for comment because it is also strikingly present in I WILL FEAR NO EVIL. In that book the brain of a dying old billionaire is transplanted into the body of a young woman—and her persona somehow is still present, and they talk and talk and talk...and other personas join the "mind" somehow...and death is avoided as (my interpretation of the ambiguous ending) the group transfer to the brain of the child their dying body is delivering.

In TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE the entire human race is seemingly descended from Lazarus Long and every major character dances around him and his precious life and "wisdom". Laz is treated like a god (and like a god he is both propitiated and used).

In the end, after lying mortally wounded—stitched with machine-gun bullets—in a shell crater on a World War I battlefield, he is rescued by his loyal, loving computer, Dora, and his "twins" who have tracked him through time.

It is irresistibly tempting to speculate that Heinlein has unconsciously structured these solipsist-immortality novels out of fear of death...while at the same time making of them a legacy, the repository of his deepest truths for the benefit of his millions of readers.

These are deadly serious books.

As with many other men, Robert Heinlein has come to know that love, especially love-with-respect for and from worthy men and women, is the key to a full, happy life. (But keep your powder dry and think rationally!)

"One must have stupid writings that men can understand."

—Eugene O'Neill

NOSTALGIA LIVES IN FANTASY HOUSE

Ken Krueger, editor of Fantasy House, sent along two of their Fantasy Classics: #1 is THE TERROR by Arthur Machen (originally published in 1917), and #3 is THE OBSCURE APE by Robert Neal Leath (originally published in 1938 in All-American Fiction Magazine).

These are handsome books in the 8 1/2 x 11 saddle-stitch format, professionally printed on heavy slick paper and with appropriate full-color heavy slick covers. Number 1 is 52 pages, number 3 is 48 pages. Well illustrated, with some interior color work.

(Inside ads tell of #2 in the series: WEREWOLF by Clemence Houseman. Scheduled are ANCIENT SORCERIES by Algernon Blackwood (#4), and THE JEWEL OF SEVEN STARS by Bram Stoker (#5).)

The price is hefty—\$1.95 per book in bookstores, \$2.25 by mail. The company plans one classic reprint a month. \$20. will bring all 12 issues of the first year.

Fantasy House is also beginning a line of classic reprints in paperback books at \$1.50 each.

LETTER FROM SAM MERWIN, JR.

"Thanks for THE ALIEN CRITIC and the somewhat startling essay on you, me and THE TIME SHIFTERS. It never entered my nine-ball head that I had stuck in your craw to such an extent, but both in honest personal reaction as well as ego-boo, I am, I suppose, grateful.

"I shall reply to your sweet-sour but wincingly appreciated sketch from the top, as honestly as I can (and that is God awfully honest)...

"First—not dead. My 63rd birthday was April 28th of this year. Currently, after three years of thoughtful rather than anguished dieting, I weigh in between 175 and 180 pounds—about 60 of same below my average adult tonnage. I can still fill my lungs to the bottom, still smoke and enjoy a drink (though never, never while working, and that's the truth). At last report, my blood pressure remains 130/80, and I take no pills. The last time I smoked pot was in August, 1944 (while trying to write a couple of songs with Fud Livingston), the time before that in April, 1939, with the late Billie Holliday.

"My first wife died after 35 1/2 years of marriage in August, 1939, a progressively more hopeless alcoholic. After a two-and-a-half year personality disaster with a very fine female, who dumped me in favor of her daughter and grandchildren for Montana ranching, I am currently wed to the most all-around beautiful person I have ever met—of all things a former great Argentine actress who was directed by both Pirandello and Rhinehart, was adored by both Walter Pidgeon and Iturbide in bygone years (she found Walter too stuffy and Jose's jealous temperament unbearable). What in hell she is doing married to me, I am still trying to figure out, but am in no mood to look such a packaged filly in the eyeteeth or bicuspid. We live modestly in West Hollywood with my ten-year cat and two stepdogs—also a stepson nearby.

"I am busy as usual—some crud, some not, which is enough about the status quo...

"As for THE TIME SHIFTERS, it came as a totally unexpected and roundabout assignment from Bob Hoskins, who was also a Readers Speak spook. Over some years I had assembled what I thought was an impossible set of stf gimmicks to try to put together—namely, the recent coinage in the ancient treasure, plus the idea of an ambush with modern armament awaiting His Majesty's 17th Light Dragoons (circa 1780) along a rural New Jersey (altered to New York) byway, singing John Brown's Body.

"So, when Hoskins came along, I tossed the weirdo his way. He went for it and I was stuck with working it out. In the circumstances, I was almost bound to make it a spoof, which I did with gusto in about a month. I drew on George Plimpton for a protagonist, crossed Fletcher Pratt and Bucky Fuller, the geodesic dome genius for the uncle and waded in, letting the chips fall wherever.

"Hence, I'm glad you found it 'competent'—which, in some remarkable fashion, it was. Nothing deeper involved and I had rather a good time writing it. The two grand advance (less agent's fee) was welcome and, if the writing ranged somewhere between the baroque and rococo, what of it? I love both periods and the language and have come to the conclusion I must be that sort of person—foliated if not folioed.

"Now, as to the Brandon House bit (incidentally, it was Sam Mines who took over from me after seven years at THRILLING WONDER and STARTLING STORIES rather than the other way around).

"I proved a tough editor for you, not because of the smoking bit or because I didn't think you could write (we both know better) but because of a built-in whine in your stories that I found and still find hard to accept. You see, I feel self pity to be the least acceptable of all human vices. However, if only to judge by the pop music of the last fifteen years, you were far closer to the core of much of the current youth than I.

"In short, you were right and I was wrong and I'm sorry I was so tough titabout it.

"I guess it's hard for a veteran gallows humorist to sympathize with tears. Christ, I still prefer a belly laugh. Again, thanks for thinking of me, even if your not-too-far-off-the-mark-in-many-ways SMJR analysis made me curl at the edges like a raw oyster in straight alcohol."

((You inadvertently referred to your novel as THE SCENE SHIFTERS in your letter, Sam, and I corrected it for the readers; but I wonder...was THE SCENE SHIFTERS your original title?

((Someone once wrote that self-pity is

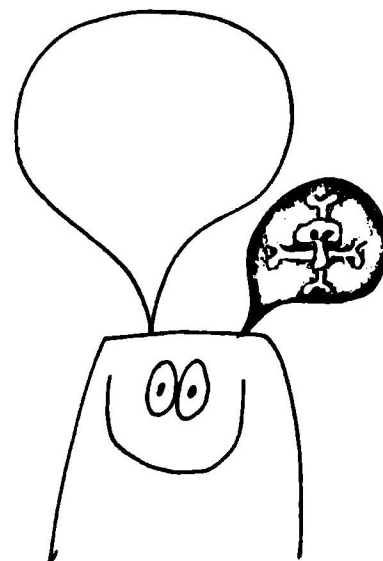
the best kind. I find when I write from the feminine viewpoint as Peggy Swenson, and sometimes as REG, I do whine a bit—like a twanging country & western song. Mayhap I'm a natural confessions writer when I put on my skirt.

((Our Brandon problem illustrates a usually unmentioned pitfall for writers and editors—basic (often unnoticed, unrecognized) character and personality incompatibility.

((Your letter was very welcome, Sam, because it corrected some misunderstandings and misapprehensions between us, it provided valuable and interesting information about you and THE TIME SHIFTERS, and inspires me to ask you....))

"Maughan says: 'the four greatest novelists the world has ever known, Balzac, Dickens, Tolstoi and Dostoevski, wrote their respective languages very indifferently.' It proves that if you can tell stories, create character, devise incidents, it doesn't matter a damn how you write."

—Harriet Cannon in the WRITER'S DIGEST



GEE, THAT WOULD BE LOADS OF FUN!
WKE

THE TRENCHANT BLUDGEON
a column by Ted White

RESURRECTION DAY: I've always had a sense of timebinding and I'm going to operate here on the assumption that at least some of you do, too.

This column began life eleven years ago in the pages of Seattle Fandom's CRY OF THE NAMELESS, lasted only a few installments there (we had a tiff about one installment which was, I felt, arbitrarily cut to end

evenly at the end of a page) and hibernated until Geis revived PSYCHOTIC in 1967.

The Bludgeon was a regular feature in PSY and its successor, SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, until I was tapped to edit AMAZING and FANTASTIC. Its appearance in the pages of SFR after that point was sporadic and most of those later columns were in fact cobbled together by editor Geis from letters I wrote him.

After SFR folded Arnie Katz suggested I continue the column in FOCAL POINT, and one installment appeared there. Another was written, but it quickly became dated while I waited for the first to be printed and soon thereafter FOCAL POINT folded, so that second column never saw the light of day.

Curiously enough, the topic of that column was not dissimilar to the main topic I intend to pursue in this one—which simply proves, I guess, that like the weather there are certain institutions in the sf field which everyone talks about but no one does anything about.

When Geis suggested I revive the Bludgeon for the new ALIEN CRITIC my first response was enthusiastic, but this was followed immediately by the dampening suspicion that topics might no longer come so easily to me.

The point and tone of this column was always intended to follow the title: the sort of column Izzie Stone might write if he had been a sf fan.

It came naturally to me at one time; I saw much around me in the sf world that called, I felt, for trenchant criticism and occasional bludgeoning about the head and shoulders.

For example, I was easily exercised by the moral laxitude exhibited by Harry Harrison in his pseudonymous attacks on his betters as "Leroy Tanner", and my column on that subject touched off a bitter feud between not only Harrison and myself but with his back-patting alter-ego, Brian Aldiss as well. No doubt this enlivened the pages of SFR a good deal, but when, a month after my column had touched off a minor brushfire in the letter column of SFR, I was asked to follow Harry by only six months into the editorial chairs of AMAZING and FANTASTIC, things turned a bit nasty. Harry presumed upon his position as Vice President of the SFWA to threaten a new boycott, and talk of legal action hung threateningly in the air.

The thought occurs to me that this could easily happen again should I tread the wrong toes.

Then too, I am now obliged to write the equivalent of one of these columns (in wordage, if not in style or topic) every month for my prozines, while still finding a topic worthy of "My Column" which appears in every issue of ALGOL like clockwork. Could I continue to do these and still revive the

Bludgeon? Such were the thoughts which pursued themselves through my mind when Geis suggested reviving the column here.

Nonetheless, I have a topic for this column, and with any kind of luck the next three months will provide a topic for the next column, and so, I trust, it will go. The topic:

WHY I QUIT THE SFWA: I joined the Science Fiction Writers of America very shortly after its formation—soon enough, in any case, to receive the first publications of the organization, although perhaps a little too late to call myself a charter member.

In its early days I found both the prospect and the realization of the SFWA exciting, interesting, and well worth my own participation. I point this out so that what follows will not be construed as sour grapes. I might add that I have contributed my share to the SFWA's success. I mimeographed a number of the early SFWA FORUMS, I did the layout and pasteup on a year's worth of SFWA BULLETINS (those edited by Alexei Panshin), and, as Co-Chairman of the NYCon3 in 1967, I made a cash donation from the Worldcon to the SFWA to help the organization's fragile finances.

I did all these things because I felt at the time that the SFWA was a worthwhile and useful organization and one of not only some immediate value to me as a young sf writer, but enormous potential for the field as a whole.

I no longer feel this way.

And this year, when queried about my dues, I simply let my membership lapse.

Why?

There's no one big reason. There is no one thing which I can consider wrong with the SFWA—no one thing which, if rectified, might encourage me to reconsider my resignation. But there are a lot of small things which add up, to me, to an organization in which I no longer see any promise and for which I see no interest, much less enthusiasm.

I might say that I am not alone in this. A number of other early members—like Alexei Panshin—have also dropped out, and others, including one recent officer) have told me that they have been seriously considering dropping out.

What led to my dissatisfaction? A lot of things, some small, others less so. Here are some of them, in no special order.

The publications. The original SFWA BULLETIN was a single newsletter-type job, photo-offset, but not elaborate. Damon Knight produced it himself, and it had an honest quality to it. It spoke of early

organizational problems and presented these problems, with both pro and con viewpoints, to the membership (of that time) for discussion and settlement.

The Bulletin included a good deal of shoptalk—discussions of contractual clauses, problems with agents, market news, etc.—which was of immediate value to the membership. But the keynote of those early Bulletins was their immediacy—Damon typed them up, had them printed, and mailed them out promptly to the membership. They were the lifeblood of the SFWA.

When Knight passed on the presidency to Silverberg, Bob turned to Terry Carr to produce the Bulletins. They grew larger and less frequent, but generally followed the tone of the earlier Bulletins. And Terry innovated: he started up the SFWA FORUM, a mimeographed publication devoted mostly (but not exclusively) to letters from the membership. The idea was to keep this publication entirely within "the family"—the immediate membership. Here members could blow off steam about unfair practices encountered from agents, editors, publishers, et al, without their gripes going beyond the closed circle of the SFWA, and without reprisal from outsiders (agents, editors, publishers, et al). In many ways the FORUM was intended as a successor to Ted Cogswell's PITFCS of the previous decade.

Terry opened a Pandora's Box. The problem was not that members did not have legitimate gripes. The problem was that they had all too many—and that a number of members also wore several hats. They were themselves agents, editors and publishers.

But I felt the discussions in those early FORUMS, if somewhat acrimonious at times, was honest and led to an airing which had been at times much needed. (Then too, when certain Big Name Writers wrote fugg-headed letters, was this not better than allowing the illusion to fester that these were intelligent, sensible men?)

By the time Terry had passed the publications on to Alexei Panshin, they were well behind schedule, but they had built a life and personality of their own. Panshin restored the Bulletin to bi-monthly frequency (catching up on back issues in the process) but found the Forum a bit much (he couldn't disassociate himself from the brickbats members were throwing at each other) and he gave the Forum back to Terry Carr.

By this time the membership had grown considerably, owing to the efforts of Anne McCaffrey to turn the SFWA into something along the lines of The Would-Be Pro's Own WBF. At least half the members were now one-story authors. (At least one member has to this day never published a science fiction story professionally, and has built his 'reputation' as an agent for equally

unheard-of writers.)

Few of these few members were or had been fans or involved in sf fandom. And thus in their ignorance they were doomed to recapitulate many of fandom's worst mistakes—unfortunately, in the name of SFWA.

The Bulletin passed on into the hands of Barry Malzberg, whose anti-space program editorial in one issue mortified a considerable portion of the membership (who protested, with some justice, that inasmuch as the Bulletin was now the SFWA's public image, with a wide circulation outside the SFWA, this was improper), and who resigned when an article he'd asked me to write for the Bulletin was summarily killed by McCaffrey. (I wasn't too happy about that myself; the piece was about the changes in AMAZING and FANTASTIC, and our abandonment of a mostly-reprint policy. It was killed because the SFWA has always needed a scapegoat, and Sol Cohen was felt to best fill this role.)

Thereafter the Bulletin went to George Zebrowsky, who has put it out every now and then (sometimes as often as several times in one year) ever since. The Bulletin is now largely worthless, usually long out of date, and no candle to LOCUS when it comes to news or market reports. The discussion of SFWA problems, votes, etc., is no longer a part of the Bulletin.

That stuff all found a home in the Forum. The Forum has also been through a number of changes. It briefly found a home with Ted Cogswell, who did what he could to give it the flavor of the old PITFCS (even "combining" the two), but then it passed on to the Coulsons, and then from them to George Scithers. George Scithers castrated it, effectively turning the Forum into just another issue of the Cult's FANTASY ROTATOR.

Let me give you an example:

A year or two ago, Roger Ellwood began amassing contracts from every publisher who had ever put out hardcover or softcover books for a series of anthologies under his editorship. At last count these contracts numbered over fifty.

As a direct correlative, Ellwood began calling and writing to writers throughout the field, asking them for stories. And, in the case of any number of well-known writers (including myself), he specifically commissioned stories. He would call up and say, for example, "I'm doing a book on titles of the future, Ted, and what I'd like is about 3,000 words on the theme of prostitution. Now, I'll pay \$120.00 for it, and I need it within two weeks." (He really did say just that to me.)

Well, a number of people (including me) responded to these requests and sold him stories.

But every so often, when someone did a story for Roger, at his request, to his specified wordage, with his specified theme,

he would reject the story. He did this to me (with the story he requested for his titles of the future book—I wrote it the same day he called and mailed it directly and his objection was that I hadn't "taken my time" with it—although I had given it the same time and effort I'd given to two earlier commissioned stories he'd bought; the only difference was I hadn't mailed them off immediately) and he did it to Terry Carr, Bob Silverberg, Alexei Panshin and Jack Vance, that I personally know of. I'm sure he also did it to others. Only Silverberg was paid for the rejected story—because Ellwood needed to remain in Bob's good graces for several projects in which they were jointly involved.

Well, Alexei Panshin regarded this as a raw deal, and he wrote a letter to the Forum spelling out his objections to Ellwood's practices.

The letter was never published. Instead Panshin received a letter from Scithers (by then the Forum editor) saying, in so many words, "You must be wrong, because I have consulted with Sprague de Camp and he agrees with me that there is no such thing as a 'commissioned story'. Take your sour grapes elsewhere, my lad, and learn to be a Real Pro like me."

However, Scithers also ran, in the next Forum, a letter from Ellwood in which Ellwood obliquely apologized for such practices and blew his own horn for a page or two. Scithers later had the gall to pat himself on the back, publicly, in the Forum, for having properly dealt with a few hotheads and having averted trouble.

Sure he did. And Panshin resigned from the SFWA in disgust.

In other words, the Forum, designed to be a place where members could, in private, air their gripes, has become a place where editors are toadied to in obsequious terms—and quite obviously the circulation is no longer restricted to the membership.

The policies. The SFWA has, as nearly as I can tell, no outstanding policies except to continue to exist and to award Nebulas. By no coincidence, the Nebulas (and the fat-plum job of editing the Nebula anthologies) have enriched the entrenched power-structure of the SFWA considerably.

Last year I conceived of a program which would give the SFWA a real boost and give it some meaning. I suggested, first to then-president Poul Anderson, that the SFWA launch a hardcover publishing program, and initiate the use of the Damon Knight-designed Model Contract.

It was a very ambitious idea, but by no means unworkable. And if it was successful, it would encourage the use of the contract (a far fairer contract than most publishers like to consider) throughout the publishing

industry. (I cannot think of any other means than competition that would be likely to encourage widespread use of such a contract.)

There were obvious problems to be overcome, but the idea is the only one I am aware of which has been suggested to give the SFWA not only purpose but financial security.

I got back a nice letter from Poul, suggesting that I put my ideas into effect and let him know how it all worked out. In other words, as president he wasn't interested.

I then went to New York and corralled Ben Bova, Gordon Dickson and James Gunn (the latter two ex-presidents of SFWA) and put the idea to them. All thought it bore looking into. Gunn suggested affiliation with a university press rather than a commercial publisher (my original idea) which I thought a good idea. Dickson began suggesting books of his which the SFWA could publish. Dollar signs began flashing in the air.

As far as I know, nothing more came of this.

In desperation, I published the idea in ALGOL, which is circulated to the majority of the SFWA membership (I knew I couldn't get it into the SFWA publications). Andy Porter (editor of ALGOL) solicited responses from the SFWA leaders. To date, he tells me, the response has been underwhelmingly meagre.

The SFWA officership has no serious plans to do anything for or about the SFWA's lack of policies or direction.

The officership. The SFWA started out with an energetic set of officers, headed up by Damon Knight, who wanted to pioneer a valid, workable science fiction writer's organization. They had behind them the examples of both the Mystery Writers of America and the Western Writers of America—largely social organizations—and an abortive attempt to start a sf writers organization in the mid-fifties. They knew what they did not want the SFWA to be.

And that is precisely what the SFWA is today—just what they didn't want.

A basic problem is that the officership has been drawn from two groups—the Big Names whose prestige would enhance the office; and the lesser-knowns who lust after power and prestige which they believe would devolve upon them from the office. One inept Secretary-Treasurer actually said in her platform that she felt the office would help her career. (And it did. Whenever she was asked by newspapers for big name pros in her area to interview, she always recommended herself.) Neither of these groups has included very many competent people. One president ran up huge phone bills in the

SFWA's name; another Secretary-Treasurer launched Committees by the score, and staffed them with everyone in sight. Few of these Committees have done a blessed thing. One unsuccessful campaigner for President based his platform on the idea that the SFWA should drive the Mafia out of the drug business. Etc., ad nauseum.

Last year Norman Spinrad was elected Vice President. It will not come as a surprise to readers of the SFR incarnation of this column that Norman and I, although we manage to enjoy each other's company on social occasions, do not otherwise see eye to eye too often.

One of Norman's first acts as Veep of the SFWA was to call up my publisher and suggest that I be fired (largely because of his dissatisfaction with aspects of the magazines not under my control). He followed this up with a threatening letter to me to "get your shit together" or he would have me replaced. (He has not yet been able to have me replaced.) His list of complaints betrayed a frightening naivete about the realities of publishing a professional magazine. But then, the SFWA hasn't been a professional's organization in years now.

I could go on, but why bother? Surely I've made my point with sufficient clarity. The SFWA as it presently exists is a shadow-fandom, structured in parallel to the less appealing aspects of sf fandom, filled with petty power-seekers, rife with organizational structures and committees, and seeking only to perpetuate itself to the advantage of those who control (or lust to control) it. Professionalism is largely absent, and all meaning and purpose have fled.

But then, Damon Knight was responsible for the National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F) too....

POSTSCRIPT: The last line above was too poetically appropriate to leave out, but it does Damon a serious disservice. Damon was the prime mover behind the N3F, in long-ago 1941, but his association with that infamous collection of losers ceased soon thereafter. His vision of the SFWA was, I think, a good one and a true one, as far as it went, and if it had any failing it was that it did not go far enough. These days he has little if anything to do with the SFWA as well. Perhaps that's another reason for the organization's current doldrums.

PARDON ME WHILE I SHOOT DOWN AN IDEALIST. *KA-BOOOM!* *

A friend sent along a copy of THE POLITICS OF EXPERIENCE by R. D. Laing recently, and dutifully I began to read it, because said friend had said it was an important book and had taken the trouble to acquire a

copy and post it to me.

So I entered into it with an open mind which quickly snapped shut.

Laing is a young British psychiatrist, metaphysical by bent and messianic to boot. My mind clenched when he asserted that modern man is hopelessly alienated from himself and that mental illness is built into our civilization.

The trouble is, he didn't offer any proof that this is so. To him it is self-evident, I suppose. He didn't bother to offer proof or argument concerning any of his key assertions or his view of man's psychic superstructure.

Laing is what I am pleased, smugly, to call a "born yesterdayer". For him and his ilk (how's that for a loaded word?) there is no past or perspective, only now with now's supposed soluble crises and problems.

But I'm sure alienation was observed and decried under one term or another in all ages of the past—even Socrates lamented the sickness of city living, and I am sure the ancient Sumerians had a word for it.

And when a nomadic tribe of Cro-Magnons first began to stay in one place and farm—wasn't there an observer who noted "alienation"?

Are the only "pure" and "sane" humans untutored wild children and uncontaminated stone-age tribes in Borneo?

The basic (and I think false) assumption of these anti-civilisationists and anti-materialists and anti-establishmentists and anti-technologists) premise of Laing and his type is that our machine-materialist society has warped and changed us for the worse—blinkered us, deadened us, schizophrened us—and that to be free and whole we must either rise above this clutter or sluff it off.

Me, I have great faith in human nature and our DNA: I don't think we could have or would have developed the particular technological civilisation we have unless it was compatible with our basic instinctual makeup.

Further, I think Laing and cohorts are examining the wrong end of the stick; I think our inner is shaping the machine culture and not the machine culture shaping us.

Why do we accept one kind of machine and not another? Why do we build bigger and "better" versions of ancient towns? What are the automobile and jet but super horses and buggies (or oxen and carts)? What is the printing press, TV, radio, the phonograph, etc. but analogues of the court jester, the local singers, dancers, the traveling man with news from afar, the bard?

It's all relative.

There are superficial differences, of course, but underneath our instinctual needs and built-in cultural-societal structures and behavior patterns operate with what is available.

We cluster, we work, we fight, we mate, we talk—one way or another.

And we will always be imperfect...and "alienation" will forever plague us.

That's the nature of the beast.

(Ballantine 01641, 95¢)

"Dive," she said.

SF NOTES

The July '73 FANTASTIC is outstanding for four items.

1. Ted White's editorial on the vagaries of the Australian Ballot as used in the Hugo voting (or how ANALOG went from first place to second in five easy stages and lost the Hugo).

2. The second part of Alexei and Cory Panshin's serial, THE SON OF BLACK MORCA. I have the feeling when reading their work that each word is considered, each scene has been tested and is absolutely necessary and that the whole novel is a thoroughly carpentered structure. I feel as a reader I'm in the hands of professionals who care and who are artists.

3. The Panshins' column, "SF in Dimension". This one is subtitled The Search for Renewal, which is the last part of their critical overview of sf and fantasy, THE WORLD BEYOND THE HILL, which they have been serializing in abridged form in FANTASTIC for over a year.

This last section has been the most interesting for me since it deals with current 'speculative fantasy' and its authors.

4. The new Conan adventure by L. Sprague de Camp and Lin Carter...the only one I got captured by and wanted to finish. I'm either entering my third childhood or this is a superior collaboration.

There is one hideous monstrosity in the issue I must point to with quivering finger dripping mockery—that full-page abomination of an illustration Billy Graham did for "Black Sphinx of Nebthu," the Conan adventure. Oh, arrrrrghh! Oh, that hilarious grim visage! Oh, those incredible muscles! Oh, that fifty pound sword! Oh, that pure essence of all that is BAD and overdone in comic book super heroes.

Ted, why are you saddled with Billy Graham?

I note, too, (being a confirmed TW watcher) that Ted has rightly dropped the rather mechanistic Mike Hinge department heading illustrations and inserted drawings with grace and style which are more in tune with

the magazine. No credit line, unfortunately.

+++

The May ANALOG, with the exception of the Good Sense editorial, is lousy.

The prime item of drek is the "Bat Durston" serial by Jerry Pourmelle titled SWORD AND SCEPTER. It is an obvious translation: a crack mercenary army and its Highly Competent Commander do their thing on a planet that might as well be a country in Europe in the 1700's or so, and other elements are futurized to fit. It is ANALOG's special kind of dogma-fiction.

"Naked to the Invisible Eye" is a too-long novelet about a future baseball pitching phenom who can telepathically control opposing batters and fielders. It goes through its obligatory scenes while the reader waits impatiently fifty yards ahead of the writer, who happens to be George Alec Effinger.

Two things killed William Tuning's "Survivability":

1. He named the animals 'Yeeps', which is half funny and distracting each time read.
2. He used phony commercial fiction emotion cliches. The reader knows instantly he's in for a piece of hackwork and standard formula ANALOG-problem plot. In this case: why are the Yeeps dying? Why are the alien natives so difficult and obtuse? After all, Superior White Earthman only trying to help!

I don't feel up to commenting on the stories in detail. Cuties, gimmicks, "clever" twists.

I always enjoy P. Schuyler Miller's book reviews.

'Folks Need Strokes. According to Berne, people transact to exchange "strokes." A stroke is a unit of recognition; the term reminds us that the infant derives his primary vital recognition through physical handling and stroking.

'Once past infancy, we symbolize. We register strokes from smiles, frowns, voice quality and, finally, from words. Eventually we "store" strokes and replay them for ourselves at future times. This is an advantage in times of stress or scarcity but not when a person depends on stored strokes in preference to genuine, live strokes that come from honest interchange with others. Such a person remains emotionally withdrawn and comes to depend on contrived strokes.'

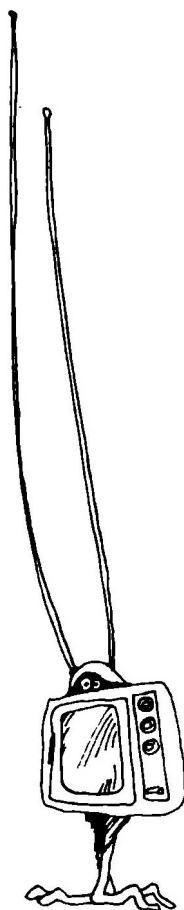
...

"Positive strokes can be physical caresses, smiles or words of acceptance. Blows, frowns or verbal criticisms give us "negative" strokes. A person might also send "crooked" strokes, which convey con-

tradictory messages: one from his Parent Ego-State and an opposite one from his Child Ego-State. For example, a suffocating hug might be thought to convey parental love to a baby, but the covert Child message that accompanies the "love" is: "Lose your breath!" "Die!" "Don't be!"

'Young children need many strokes for sheer survival. They lap up whatever kinds they get—positive, negative or crooked—and they become conditioned to that mix. Their Child Ego-State concludes that the particular diet of strokes they were raised on is the only kind worth getting. Thus, people who grow up on a diet consisting mainly of negative strokes continue to crave them. Often they become delinquent or addicted to drugs in order to keep receiving the negative strokes they mistakenly believe they need.'

—Janita English, "TA'S Disney World"
PSYCHOLOGY TODAY, April 1973



"Vampires can't travel on airplanes. Why not? Because the shape of the wings and fuselage forms the figure of a cross."

—Bruce D. Arthurs

A JAUNDICED (BUT FAIR!) REVIEW OF NEW DIMENSIONS II

I was lying on my bed sipping hot lemon tea (my latest lust in life), picking my nose enjoyably, and reading the introduction Bob Silverberg had written for his NEW DIMENSIONS II, when I came upon this:

"The policy of NEW DIMENSIONS is a straightforward one. We believe that science fiction's special themes and images and concepts offer a valid mode for serious writers and we intend to provide a sympathetic haven for such writers. We think that science fiction can not only be entertaining and amusing but also profoundly stimulating and illuminating, capable of examining timeless human problems with unique intensity and vividness."

Fair enough. Sounds great, doesn't it? But...isn't writing of 'timeless human problems' in an sf milieu essentially translation—the old business of substituting a spaceship for a horse, a raygun for a .44, an alien planet for 1870 Texas—only on a more intellectual "serious" plane?

The cowboys/spacemen of the sneered-at pulps dealt with timeless human problems, too. Simplistically, more with action than characterisation and subtlety, but Good and Evil were examined, family relationships, greed, power, revenge, jealousy...all the basic human problems.

The criticism of the pulps-type translations was that this action stuff wasn't true science fiction unless an sf element was crucial to the story, as illustrated now in Bob Shaw's slow glass stories, for instance.

Shouldn't that same basic test be applied to these latter-day 'basic human problems' sf stories, too? How does this NEW DIMENSIONS policy differ, at base, from the unwritten policy of PLANET STORIES?

Let's look at the stories here and apply the test.

• •

In "Nobody's Home" Joanna Russ shows how myriads of things change and how nothing changes; it's all relative as long as the human animal stays basically the same.

She portrays a future Earth civilisation which is the product of genetic selection for intelligence and beauty and talent—complicated combinations of family and marriage, of matter transmitters which make the planet a richly contrasted neighborhood, of a vast domesticated linkage of computers, of great personal tolerance and social acceptance and support.

And she presents the unhappy young Leslie Smith who is not quite smart enough to function in this all-embracing world society. In today's world Leslie would be a

superior intellect. In this future she's ...stupid.

What to do with her? How to help her? In the end the multitudinous, multifaceted Komarov family is embarrassed and bored with her visit and Jannina, the nominal head of the family, eventually decides (even though it's sad) to tactfully get rid of her.

"Nobody's Home" is acutely written. But for all its excellent extrapolation and style it is still a translation: having to play Scrabble with a moron; misguided kindness.

+++

James Iptree, Jr.'s story, "Filomena & Greg & Rikki-Tikki & Barlow & the Alien" provokes a question in my mind that has been forming, growing, pseudopoding, seething, bubbling for a while. Now it's mature.

Not a helluva big, Important Question, but it fits this story in a way and applies to many more.

"F&G&R-T&B&TA" (Isn't shorthand marvelous?) is a kind of flip s-f; clever, bright, too-too impossible. It is for broadminded aficionados, fun-loving s-f freaks, for jaded readers, for the sophisticated, the superior ones who bore easily. It is for those who are too hip and intelligent to be caught DEAD taking s-f seriously...a cute story of an alien who comes to this planet to give birth, becomes involved with a few ultra-cool young people who instantly dig its scene, problems, alienness. (After all, it's no big thing relating to a shape-changing alien whose birthing process involves the destruction of Earth, and convincing same alien to split, at the last instant.)

It is, this story, deliciously written, the product of a keen mind and great skills. It is, frankly, a superior performance and congratulations, Jim.

I enjoyed reading it but I didn't believe a word of it, a sentiment I find myself experiencing more and more often.

I have always felt that in writing, and especially in s-f and fantasy, it was a Good Thing to strive for plausibility, to make the background and foreground and characterisation so verisimilitudinous that the reader believed and hence enjoyed the story muchly.

But lately, it appears, some new sf writers appear to shrink from that benchmark. I get the impression they'd be ashamed to be real in a story. Somehow it isn't chic to write straight anymore. Plausibility is old hat now? (And maybe a bit difficult?)

This grotch will be taken, alas, I suspect, as the flailings of a die-hard pulp-lover, an old-guardist defending a crumpled bridge. Hoot at me! *sniff, snuffle* I don't care! I may not know Art but I know what I like.

I do not necessarily blast at Jim Iptree, Jr. with this accusatory yowl of complaint. He doesn't often write this kind. Fact is, I don't specify any one or two or three or more writers. I'm only reading a lot of this smart-aleck s-f lately (excuse me while I loosen my Celluloid collar) and I wonder at it. I enjoy it when it's well-written, but I can't believe it. It requires not only a suspension of disbelief of a high order, but a kind of intellectual conspiracy—the reader joins with the writer in a wink and a grin—and a disengaging of emotion. Emotionless fiction is thin gruel, even when flavored with s-f dingpots and thingummies.

Anyway, does this clever story deal with basic human problems? Moo-haw.

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Interesting introduction Silverberg wrote for Barry Malzberg's "Out From Ganymede." It pertains to what I've said about Barry's BEYOND APOLLO, and it bears reprinting here.

"The themes of science fiction are made to order for surrealism; but in the days when s-f writers directed all their creative energies toward producing as realistic and literal-minded a picture of the future as they could, the notion of heightening the focus until the vision was nudged into the surreal never occurred. In the early 1950s Philip K. Dick showed the way out of the trap of realism, and today Barry Malzberg is one of the most successful exponents of the technique of using a distorting lens to gain greater clarity."

But Philip K. Dick uses a realistic style to examine reality; his writing is not surrealistic in technique.

I have no visceral hatred of surrealist s-f, only a puzzled irritation with writers who seem to use distortion to make their ideas unclear.

That is my grotch with Barry Malzberg's warped fictions about spaceflight, the space program, manipulation, isolation, madness. For all their intrinsic interest (insanity and inexplicable event are always captivating...up to a point) he seems to deliberately obscure his meanings.

I dislike hitting this nail on the head so often (if only because I'm liable to hit my thumb), but I begin to suspect that obscure s-f is obscure to serve the writer and not the reader.

I'm willing to be thought an obtuse dunce (Gene Wolfe knows I'm obtuse) to make the point that if I find this murky message s-f difficult, then a hell of a lot of other s-f readers are in the same boat—and are bailing like mad.

To give a short review of the actual story I'm apparently discussing: "Out From Ganymede" is about a lone astronaut in a survey ship circling that planetoid. The pressures have built up, resentments have

boiled down to bitterness, and he rebels against being used by the space agency, against the disintegrating society behind it, and against the insufficiency and inferiority of his life. Also, he is apparently insane. He hallucinates aliens from Ganymede who demand he get the hell out of their sky. He is frustrated, pressured, and finally makes a deal with them. He is aborted (the mission, by mission control) and heads Earthward with his fingers on the triggers of his ship's armaments, intent on taking Earth and his bitch wife with him.

Message: our society is sick and no damn good and everyone deserves to die. Also, Man doesn't belong Out There.

Obviously a timeless human problem.

+++

Someday someone will write a title longer than its story, but that's an unkind remark, forget it.

"NO. 2 PLAIN TANK Auxiliary Fill Structural Limit 17,605 lbs. Fuel — PMA Spec. 522 Revised" is Edward Bryant's short about a young, underground, fugitive ecology fanatic aboard a Concorde jet with a bomb in a hollow book. He (and everyone on the plane) has only moments to live.

This suicide bomber is matter-of-fact about it, unafraid, uninvolved, actually. You got to be cool, man, when the end justifies the means.

And that is a timeless human problem.

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I think I am beginning to enjoy R. A. Lafferty's tales again. They are like fudge. I got sick of him a year ago and had to stop gobbling.

He writes somewhat macabre morality tales, I suppose. The joy is in the word-by-word reading. He's a benign madman.

"Eurema's Dam" is about the last of the dolts, a boy/youth/man who was too dumb to get along in the world easily so he had to invest machines to help. And even his machines derided him.

Lafferty says pointy things about conformity and dependency and the other sides of coins. It has all been said before, of course; there's no end to writers intoning uncomfortable truths. It comes down to how entertaining a given scrivener can make his precious statements.

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GRIM, GRIM, REPENT! "King's Harvest" by Gardner R. Dozois is a really good, realistic look at the end of the world courtesy of Pollution. We follow an old man through the streets of a ruined, looted, abandoned city as the foul, ever-poisonous air slowly claims him. The oxygen-creating processes of the oceans have been polluted to death. Civilization has strangled it—

self.

This graphic, beautifully written warning won't do a damn bit of good, either. Pass me another cigaret. "Hack" "Spit"

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What is this doing here? "Take A Match"—an old-fashioned science fiction story by an old-fashioned writer, Isaac Asimov.

A space-warping spaceship gets into possibly fatal trouble. Through the use of intelligence the problem is solved and the passengers and crew are saved.

Asimov plonks along without a single stylistic flourish and tells a good, solid story. Beginning, middle, end.

+++

You're putting me on, Robert Silverberg, aren't you? when you speak of "f(x)=(11/15/67) x=her, f(x)=0" by Geo. Alec Effinger as 'science fiction in its most literal and antique sense: fiction about science, a graphic demonstration of the workings of the scientific method.'

If I told you it was a Kierkegaardian analogy of science and society, would you believe me?

I can but quote the final quotation of the story. It explains it beautifully.

"The love of life and the love of science are nearly indistinguishable, as science is the willing pupil of life. Thus, the science of life, which is after all the purpose of all learning, and the science of love, the latter only just less than equal to the former, follow in their courses as the night and day." —Robert W. Hanson.

+++

Gordon Eklund makes you see what it's like to be an android, lower than a black, an escaped android with a mark on your forehead and a superior mind and a superior body, with a terrible schizophrenia—an inflicted self-hate and a compulsive hatred for humans who don't share your hatred of yourself.

You're a killer android on the loose, too smart to be caught, too insane to stop—a dreadful creation of man inevitably inflicting itself upon man.

A helluva story. "White Summer in Memphis."

+++

"Lazarus II" by Miriam Allen De Ford—a short-short, puzzlingly dishonest, as a murderer is executed and then secretly brought to a coma-like semblance of life by a secret team of government experimentors.

After a time the team decides the experiment is a failure—the human vegetable

shows no signs of consciousness, no peaks or dips in the encephalogram—and the leader administers a fatal injection—as the thing suddenly, too late, cries out, "I died once! Let me live!"

Shaken, the team will prepare a report asserting the thing died without ever having consciousness.

Was the revived criminal faking all these months? Could he fool an encephalograph? It's a puzzlement.

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The last story in this collection is "The Men Inside" by, again, Barry Malzberg, who has the power to cloud men's minds.

But seriously... It's about a man who is a Messenger, a man trained to cut out cancers, fix this valve, alter that gland...when reduced to seven six-hundredths of an inch. It hurts to be reduced, and there is a time limit before automatic return to normal size.

The Messenger who records his thoughts about his profession is in the usual Malzberg fugue of desperate madness, spitted on conflicts and anxieties like a barbecued pig.

Malzberg's worlds and characters always seem to exist on one or more levels of Dante's Purgatory.

This story for me lost its plausibility (although I suspect that element is the last thing Barry cares about) when he ignored the matter of mass and weight. Granted a Hula process that can reduce a man—but not granted a loss of body weight unless it is explained away somehow.

Can you imagine the mess a man seven six-hundredths of an inch tall with that weight would make as he tried to walk through your bowels? He'd sink like a stone in water and could make progress only on bones—splintering them in the process.

It's probably impolite to mention this, but I question if this story deals with timeless human problems by using s-f themes, images, concepts. Call it 'fantasy and like it or dislike it in that light.

As a summing up: contrary to the impression I may have given during the weeks-long business of reading and reviewing this book, I enjoyed it and look forward to reading subsequent volumes of NEW DIMENSIONS. The stories are different! (Only a few were translations.) They are often frustrating, angering, wearying, but also well-written, marvelous, memorable. (Doubleday, \$5.95)

"It is inconceivable that anyone would be so cruel as to write a book so complicated that it couldn't be read while listening to the election returns on the radio or watching a wrestling match on TV."

—Sapho Henderson Britt

MARKET NEWS NOTE

THE LITERARY MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & TERROR

"I don't note any market news in TAC, but if it's no sun burn on your nose, you might tell the world F&T pays ½¢ per word for first acceptances and ¼¢ a word thereafter, unless I have to critique and return for revisions, in which case the blundering author still gets ½ cent.

"And I want fantasy stories, damnit, not science fiction. Why don't you submit something, Richard? I haven't printed up any rejection slips, but I've got this really swell big rubber stamp that leaves an inky foot print on the title page. (I better mention that I don't really have such a rubber stamp, otherwise paranoid authors might withhold submissions on the off chance that I wasn't jesting.)"

Amos Salmonson

Box 89517,

Zenith, WA 98188

((I usually get around 2¢ per word for my fiction.

((I have a special-made rubber stamp in the shape of a coffee cup ring. Used with brown ink, in an artful fashion, it will ruin the first page of any ms. I got the idea from editors when I was writing short stories; they always had one for use on my ass.))

ME, MYSELF AND I

Call it the Time Travel Challenge. Every up and coming writer (and some down and going) have to write a time travel novel or story a little different from all others.

And b'God, the good writers always seem to find a variation, an angle, a snapper overlooked by the thousands of sf writers who have written in that theme before.

And here is David Gerrold with his THE MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF (Random House, \$4.95; SF Book Club) doing his individual thing in time.

It is a convoluted, Klein bottle of a time travel story; it is self-contained. It is the story of Daniel Eakins, 19 years old, who inherits a time-travel belt from his mysterious uncle Jim. A walk-on lawyer delivers the belt in a sealed package.

From then on—it's all Daniel and his other time-selves who inhabit the book. It's a one-man multitude. Well—er—there is the female version of himself that Daniel discovers in time and falls in love with (naturally) and has a few years' affair with. In fact, he fathers himself by her and....

You can see this is, so far, THE solipsist novel. It's a man looking into a mirror at himself looking into a mirror at himself looking....

It is, also, inevitably, a man falling in love with himself and making physical love to other of his selves.

David is clever, and he has fun wrestling with time travel paradoxes and such by asserting that actual time travel cannot exist; instead, every "time jump" is an instant alternate world, and there are an infinite number of alternate worlds—as an infinite number of Daniel Eakins bring about an infinite variety of possibilities each time the infinite number of time belts are used.

And, of course, each Daniel Eakins believes he is the core, the Daniel Eakins Prime.

This novel is more than just a romp in the logical absurdities of time travel and alternate worlds. It is incidentally philosophical and very human. For Daniel Eakins is trapped in his wonderful worlds of time travel, all alone with himself.

At least one of himself went totally paranoid psychotic and had to be isolated (sans belt) by other Dons. At least one other Dan rejected homosexuality (or is it actually an exotic form of masturbation?).

And there is a time when the physical effort of making a time jump kills an aged Daniel...and other, younger duns are there, waiting, to care for the body, see it properly buried in the proper time-slot, and make sure the cycle begins/continues....

It's a book to make your head ache. I liked it very much. Now, where is that bottle of Excedrin?

POSTCARD FROM ROBERT BLOCH

"THE ALIEN CRITIC is here and eyetracked, though a bit more hastily than usual.

"As you may know, we're still in the midst of a Writers' Guild strike and are doing picket duty—that is, some of us are: Sturgeon, Matheson, George Clayton Johnson are all at Burbank Studios, as am I. Anyway, this cuts into reading time, and writing time, too. I did finish one novel, but must turn in another by July 1st."

"Every publisher in New York told Burroughs he didn't know how to write anything. That's how he came to publish himself. If he had let editors doctor him up before presenting him to the public he'd have become a no-good jerk. They would have chased him from the American scene as they did H. P. Lovecraft.

"Lovecraft is shaping up all over the world, now that he has been dead for only a few years, as the greatest writer of bizarre stories since Poe. Every American magazine editor rejected him systematically, indefatigably and utterly until he starved to death selling his stuff to WEIRD TALES magazine

at six dollars a story. That is what American magazine editors do about the business of discovering new genius. The story of Lovecraft will ring out in the hall of records of American editorial stupidity and shame for hundreds of years."

—Jack Woodford, THE LOUD LITERARY LAMAS OF NEW YORK (1950)

WHAT IS THAT THING SLICING AT MY PROFESSIONAL CRITIC'S SOUL? MY GOD---IT'S A SCALPEL!

A Letter From Mark Mumper

"I have read BEYOND APOLLO, and, ignoring the fact that it exists in a rut that Malzberg has trouble breaking out of, I found it well written and interesting. I can't say it was enjoyable, as that's not its purpose, but it came as close to being so as does any such 'downer' book. I think Malzberg has some valid things to say regarding contemporary, straight, middle-class Intelligent Man, and he also pokes a few well-earned jabs at the space program.

"He has his characterization of the schizoid astronaut down perfectly, to the point where it becomes annoying.

"And that, of course, leads me to his style, which has to be read as a vital component of the nightmare he tries to create. An insane man's ramblings will likely be complicated, repetitive, plotless, and with no conclusive ending.

"Almost by necessity, a book of the sort Malzberg has written will raise questions that cannot be answered in their own context. You complain, Dick, that Malzberg does not answer his questions, and that he even leads the reader into believing they will be answered.

"I don't believe the purpose of the book is to answer those questions regarding Evans' explanations or his sanity; I believe the purpose is to merely pose them—the reader should be confused as to what is real and what is fantasy, and should come away from the book wondering about Evans' well-grounded illusions.

"The book is about the destruction of a man's spirit, and a destroyed spirit does not usually have definite conclusions to cling to. I think BEYOND APOLLO is designed, consciously or otherwise, to be frustrating, because the situation Evans finds himself in is frustrating.

"Now you are perfectly justified in calling this a 'fuck-the-Reader' attitude, but I have to disagree with you.

"Art has its own purposes, and Barry Malzberg's work must be judged as an attempt at art; whether or not he succeeds is really irrelevant to the argument. If a writer wants to portray a subjective state of madness, and if the reader wants to understand the end-product, they both must bring a sincere desire to appreciate the

task to their efforts.

"The reader is not necessarily present to be entertained, and for a writer to believe that strikes me as asking him to be a prostitute."

((Well, I happen to believe prostitution a valuable and respectable profession. And if a reader is supposed to work hard to understand a writer's meanings, then how come he has to pay the money? And how come the artistic writer accepts that money?

((There are actually ways to be heavy with symbol and meanings and so on and at the same time give story values and entertainment. Art and entertainment are not mutually exclusive. The greatest fiction is that which gives the reader pleasure on every level.

((I submit that BEYOND APOLLO is as deficient and shallow in its way as the simplest one-level action sf adventure in its fashion. Chew on that.))

"You characterize the 'pure' writer (rather sneeringly, it seems) as disdaining to use 'formula' or 'common narrative devices' to 'hook' the reader's interest; plot, to the 'pure' writer, must be an unwanted intrusion into the realm of his art.

"That is so much bullshit, Dick. Should a writer need to 'hook' the reader's attention I should say he has failed before he begins. The substance of his story should be sufficient to interest the reader; a decent writer needn't paste on 'devices' or resort to 'formula.'

"He uses what comes naturally for him to use; granted there are writing tools and general rules for usage, but to break these down to a set of numbered devices, as on a shelf, degrades the craft of composition."

((Agreed; I abhor the too-mechanically structured story, too, because it almost always lacks decent characterization.

((And look again at the first paragraph of BEYOND APOLLO:

I loved the Captain in my own way, although I knew that he was insane, the poor bastard. This was only partly his fault: one must consider the conditions. The conditions were intolerable. This will never work out.

((That's a pretty damn good hook. It provoked my interest when I started the novel.

((It's all very well to say the substance of a story should be sufficient to interest a reader, but he reads from ignorance of that substance, usually, and thus the first words are crucial.

((A writer must actually manipulate the reader (to turn the angle of view a bit, if you dislike the prostitute image) because there's no law that say a reader has to read any further than he wants. Not yet, anyway, in fiction. The reader doesn't owe the writer a damned thing...not one second of time the writer hasn't earned on paper.))

"Let me quote a passage from E. B.

White; White is himself anything but a writer who despises his readers. From THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE, 2nd Edition:

If one is to write, one must believe—in the truth and the worth of the scrawl, in the ability of the reader to receive and decode the message. No one can write decently who is distrustful of the reader's intelligence, or whose attitude is patronizing.

It is...necessary to warn the writer that his concern for the reader must be pure: he must sympathize with the reader's plight (most readers are in trouble about half the time) but never ask to know his wants. The whole duty of a writer is to please and satisfy himself, and the true writer always plays to an audience of one.

"I believe this is a necessary attitude for a writer, and while Barry Malzberg may hate his readers and may want them to suffer, it cannot be said that stories like BEYOND APOLLO are written only to confuse and to be obscure."

((I admire and respect Barry. My diatribe last issue was only partially aimed at him. I felt he was unnecessarily obscure and demanding and inconsiderate in BEYOND APOLLO.

((As for E. B. White and his dictum to not patronize readers—did you not bite your lip when he mentioned the 'reader's plight' and disparage their intelligence?

((I do not play to an audience of one. I already know the story. My concern is to write out that story, using the tools of the narrative craft, to the best of my ability, for the pleasure (in all its aspects) of the reader. I will not knowingly cheat him nor will I trick him. He has a right to a resolution to a story or compensation in some way en route to the end of the words; there has to be a balance, a quid-pro-quo. I do not believe a reader should be expected to 'decode' an author's message. If an author cannot make his message clear on all levels of his narrative (more subtle and deep for those of greater insight) then he is at fault and no one else; he has failed in skill or intent and I will not forgive him.

((To attempt to make of such failure a virtue is an elitist's snob game.))

"Of course you know all this leads to a conclusion about yourself. (Ah, you were afraid of this, weren't you? snicker) I see you, as a reader, as being entertainment oriented: you like to have most of your work done for you, and while you're not averse to intellectual stimulation, you don't like to work too hard for it.

"As a writer, I see you willing to please, to provide vicarious experience for your readers. I find nothing wrong with this, because you have a value as an entertainer, but I think you fail to understand

the reasons for books like Malzberg's. It may not be your loss, but it remains, to me, a sad and unnecessary misunderstanding."

"Writing from 12 to 15 books a year presents no problem in itself. It is simply playing on my old theme: work. Looked at dispassionately, what does 12 books a year mean in daily stint?

"At 65,000 words a book, it is 780,000 words — or 2,145 words a day. The real secret is in the ability to concentrate.

"My method is to write 10,000 words a day for six or seven days in a row. This gives me a rough but full-length novel in a week. I then have two editorial readers tear it to bits.

"I study their reports and about three months after first writing the book I revise it thoroughly. I then have it retyped. I revise it again, and I send it to my publishers. I often do another heavy revision for the U.S.A."

—John Creasy, author of 550 books. Died June 9, 1973 at age 65.

DISCHING IT OUT

Normally, I hate poetry. This comes from decades of occasional contact with awful stuff called poetry written by awful people who call themselves poets.

I am not alone in this hatred; my name is Joe Legion. Which is why poetry has been in decline for a thousand years or so.

BUT. Once in forty-six blue moons a good poet comes down the yellow brick road and we happen to collide. When this happens I perk up and smile and read his poetry with a strange intellectual greed.

I am here writing that this is the time of a forty-sixth azure orb and I have bumped noses with Thomas M. Disch and have gobbled his 50 poem (1962-67) collection titled THE RIGHT WAY TO FIGURE PLUMBING, published last year by The Basilisk Press (\$1.95).

His poems are places for truth. They are surprising and often terrifying. Often funny in a wry, mocking, spectre-ish way. Yea.

There are a hundred lines I could quote. But these I liked especially:

Here in the heart of metropolitan Carthage,
With so many elephants everywhere,
What is there to fear? I only wish
My bed would stop burning. ...

And: (a complete poem I cannot resist)

MEMENTO MORI

There is no getting away from it, my friends—
You are all probably going to die!

The usual response to this fact is to find
Something else to do.
But everywhere you turn there are reminders
Of death: statues of famous men
Who are dead now, the big cemeteries
On the outskirts of London, and the corpses of
People you used to love
Who are dead now. Even
Living people can make you think
Of death, for their laughter and flesh
Will turn to ashes
Just the same as anybody else's.
Therefore, unless you are very rich
And can afford not to die,
We recommend a firm and unshakeable belief
In an afterlife.

Tom Disch is concerned with death, with the impermanence of things, mostly himself, and the irretrievable loss of each second of time. And another striation of his psyche is a strong self-mockery that (like an exploding cigar) leaves the reader the butt of the joke, too. In many ways, Tom Disch is a Polish Poet. (Dare I say he often climbs out on a Lem and saws it off? No.)

This edition of THE RIGHT WAY TO FIGURE PLUMBING is only 600 copies, 200 of which are numbered and signed by the author.

"No poems can please long, nor live,
which are written by water drinkers."
—Horace

DON'T LEARN RUSSIAN, LEARN SWAHILI

I closed the novel and thought for a minute, and said to myself, sotto voce, "Interesting. Probably the best structure he could have used, given the low-key narrative style."

At first I was breathing fire and belching smoke as Christopher Priest began telling his story of an England rent and sundered by a complex of conflicting civil war forces in the near future—because he had apparently written his novel in a straight-line manner, then gone about chopping it up into bits and pieces and rearranging them into a mosaic...or (from the reader's point of view) a jigsaw puzzle.

I was reminded a bit of William Burroughs' confusing "sf" paste-ups of a few years ago.

But Chris's pieces maintain suspense and tension and interest, and a picture (with gaping holes at first) emerges from the first-person flashbacks to various periods during the mass Afrim immigration (unauthorized), the arming of the africans, the repression by the racist, nationalist English government and the schisms of the

government forces (and the public) along secessionist, Afro-sympathizers lines, the civil war, the uprooting of large numbers of the civilian population, the intervention by the UK and the United States....

It is the story of Alan, a young University lecturer with a bad marriage, his wife, Isobel, and their daughter, Sally. He loses his job, they lose their house to encroaching Afrims, they become refugees trapped in a vast, fluid no-man's-land of fortress villages, armed bands, shifting lines of power and occupation forces....

Gradually, the picture becomes clear, with only missing detail to be filled in. And the narrative continues as Alan loses Isobel and Sally to a rapacious contingent of Afrims.

He tries to find them again, joins a band of other men whose wives and daughters have been similarly taken.

Chris was afraid I wouldn't like this, his second book. Yet he asked his Harper & Row editor, M.S. Wyeth, Jr. to send me a copy. The title here is DARKENING ISLAND and costs \$4.95 in hardback. In England, last year, it was published as FUGUE FOR A DARKENING PLAIN, and was judged (as noted in JAC #5) the Best British SF Novel for 1972 by the John W. Campbell Memorial Award judges.

I liked the book. I won't give away the ending.

Chris writes very well. He is obviously in control all the way. He does seem to me to maintain too great a distance from his story and characters, however, so that Alan and Isobel (Sally is very dim, only a stock Child), while human and alive, somehow don't create much sympathy for their plight. Alan is a quiet, reserved, introspective type (like Chris?) and an adulterer, while Isobel is a frigid, soured wife and mother. They don't cope with their predicament very well.

Alan is a good reporter: objective, accurate. But he tells the story of what happened as a semi-documentary, as if it were about someone else.

Is that a reflection of Chris Priest's unconscious British reluctance to show emotion and preference for avoiding "scenes", or is it an integral part of Alan's character as a character and the way he would naturally write of these events?

.....

LETTER FROM SCOTT MEREDITH

"I was interested in your coverage via a letter from Piers Anthony of l'affaire Stride Publications—Robert Moore Williams, but it's always been my impression that a reliable reporter gets statements from both sides in covering a controversy. Your coverage omits completely the following important factors:

"1. Mr. Anthony mentions that our agency does not represent Robert Moore Williams, giving the impression that we picked up his books in a wastebasket somewhere and sold them. The fact of the matter, however, is that we did indeed represent Williams until the account was closed as unprofitable, and made the original sales of the properties subsequently offered to Stride. And there's nothing unusual about an agency keeping on the 'active' list properties it originally sold, even when it no longer represents the author, and hoping to sell further rights to the properties.

"2. Stride's offer was very low because of its plan of publishing very small and cheap editions, and we went along with it after long consideration, and then only because (a) they agreed to our condition that we were only giving them the rights on very short lease, and (b) because it seemed to us an opportunity to get back into print certain books which had lain fallow for a long time and showed no signs whatever of being picked up by anyone else. Even so, we told every author involved, when forwarding the checks, that our acceptance was subject strictly to their own approval as well, and that all they had to do to disapprove was return their checks by reply mail. Few people, as it happens, disapproved; in fact, when we subsequently sent out a bulletin asking clients if they had old books they wanted to lease to Stride at the small price, we received 500 more books than Stride had requested. Mr. Williams, however, disapproved the deal, but also failed to return the checks despite two requests on our part, which is why we stopped payment on the checks and replaced his books with others.

"3. The 'over-ride' is something we use on rare occasions when a deal, though acceptable, is very small, and we don't want to reduce the author's income further by deducting a commission, so we try to get the publisher to pay the commission instead. I suppose it is possible, as Mr. Anthony says, for an unscrupulous agency to take a check and consider the bulk of it its over-ride, and the remainder the author's share, if it can find an author lunatic enough to go along with this. Our own agency, however, has never deviated in all our years of business from taking only those commissions set down as standard in the literary agency field more than eighty years ago: 10% on domestic sales, 15% on Canadian sales, 20% on all other foreign sales. When, therefore, we ask for an over-ride, we ask for an amount approximating the appropriate percentage of the payment made by the publisher for the author.

"I would appreciate publication of this letter. Best wishes."

.....

"The penny paper that may be bought anywhere, that is allowed on every table,

prints seven or eight columns of filth; for no reason except that the public likes to read filth; the poet and novelist must emasculate and destroy their work because...who shall come forward and make answer?"

—George Moore

S-F & FANTASY MAGAZINE NOTES

Two or three fan publishers have said in letters that they hesitate to send their magazines for fear the dear things will perish bloodily under my notorious fang and claw.

I'm not reviewing true fanzines anymore, so most of you can rest easier and trade with me with less apprehension.

However, I do feel it is mah duteh to review on occasion those semi-prozines that sneak into the box under cover of night and hide under copies of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Volume 1, Number 1 of THE LITERARY MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND TERROR is one such semi-prozine.

It is edited by Amos Salmonson, Box 89517, Zenith, WA 98188, and sells for \$6. per six issues, \$11. for twelve issues. Sample for 50¢.

It is published (photo-offset, professional typography) in the 8½ x 11 three-hole looseleaf format (34 pages). (But you provide the binder.)

It is not worth the money. The fiction is of that slush-pile material that always is returned by the well-known sf and fantasy magazines; the prose is sprinkled with amateurisms and malaprops and simple mistakes:

"My name is Isabel Steggler," she finally devulged. (sic)

She smiled, displaying a full set of jagged roots which would bring a dentist screaming out of slumber.

A long, unkept black beard decorated his filthy face. (sic)

The haggard Peter, the shadow of that angular man he had been, climbed down from his brown mare.

Salmonson's very short ten-page (six chapters!) excerpt from his (I estimate) very short novel has a good idea—a quest to find the secret to longer life by a youth cursed by family genes to a terribly short span of years—but it is written in an awful variety of Sword & Sorcery Archaic.

The askew dialog comes across as speeches and declamations:

"Nay," the aged youth calmly asserted. "I mean no disrespect. Your magic is mighty. But in my case it has proven less potent than watered mead. I am sorry, great, great, great uncle, I must leave, and I must ask

you to tell my father whom I distress in telling myself."

The cover drawings are by Salmonson and betray stunningly bad editorial judgement... as well as lack of artistic talent. The front cover especially—a crude, pencil-drawn exotic fish in halftone reproduction on a dark background—seemingly has no relationship with the magazine.

Yet this magazine pays money for its material...and to that extent it is a pro-zine...and so I list it in The Archives and note its appearance. It will likely improve if it continues to be published. It can't get worse.

Amos Salmonson, when he sent the second issue of THE LITERARY MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & TERROR, wrote "Just review the magazine and don't use any swear words when you describe it."

I hear and obey. My belly is full of salted peanuts, summer sausage sangridges and hot coffee, and I purr with the squish of an acid stomach on my mind. Situation normal.

But enough of the state of my mind/body. I am happy to report that TLMoF&T has indeed improved, art-wise, fiction-wise and conception-wise. Wise moves.

The publishers have opted for a standard 32-page 7½ x 11 saddle-stitch magazine and have given up the loose-leaf 3-hole format of the first issue—in order to save postage, facilitate bookstore sales and make it easier on themselves in production and storage of back issues.

Fair enough. Who am I to snap at their heels? We all learn from experience...if we are not hag-ridden by deep Needs and Compulsions.

The best two items in this second issue are "The Winged Demon" by Gordon Linzner, a fairly good old-Hero-comes-out-of-retirement-to-slay-a-village-bedeviling-Demon story, and the fascinating impressionistic-surrealistic self-portrait of Cam Broze on the back cover, which I would have put on the front cover.

...

ALGOL #20 from Andy Porter (P.O. Box 4175, New York, NY 10017; 80¢, six issues \$4.) shows a curious split personality: a lovely nude on the cover by Fabian, a center-spread bare-breasted costume photo of Astrid Anderson (a very healthy girl) who is billed as "Play-Alien of the Month" (the magazine is a twice-yearly!) a Finley-like Alan Hunter nude, a Jack Gaughan cartoon nude—contrasted with the erudite tributes to Cordwainer Smith (Paul Linebarger) by John Bangsund, Sandra Miesel, Arthur Burns and John Foyster, plus "Science Fiction as Empire" by Brian Aldiss, and material by Dick Lupoff, Ted White, and an excellent letter section.

Andy may feel he has to use sex to nab the attention of marginal newsstand and bookstore browsers, since he is attempting to up his retail outlet sales. It's a commercial slant and may very well help his circulation.

...

Of special interest to science fiction fandom is Alpajpuri's "The Wind She Does Fly Wild" in the August '73 AMAZING. I do believe this is his first pro appearance.

In this story his sensitivity (a word I am chary of using) and talent brings into being some marvelous and monstrous metaphor and simile. The story is overloaded with them (but discipline and discrimination will come with time), and they are vivid:

his mouth trembles like a broken moth for flight.

...Donovan, intensely distant across the sahara of his bed...

His mouth works like a salted slug.

I consume hot chicken pre-embryos and gulp cold blood of oranges...

He tugs at his brown shirt and shrugs, his shoulders straining like a caged bird for open sky.

...and his words were carefully jotted down in slim white books and left there to die.

The new day kisses with wet jewels in the shrubbery...

...his eyes twin skies from which shine twin suns, the ceiling light behind me.

His pale face writhes with passion like a tongue's secret movements behind a cheek.

Paj writes well of madness (with perhaps a working self-knowledge) with a clever if not original twist at the end of the story. And he legitimately (but infuriatingly) leaves the reader not quite sure—is she really a robot inmate? or is Donovan truly paranoid?

...

OF SPECIAL NOTE

The July, 1973 PLAYBOY because of: An Interview with Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. which shows a sharp, individual mind at work, and a man who isn't ashamed (now, at least) of admittedly writing some sections of his books as science fiction.

And the full-page Gahan Wilson cartoon on page 178.

+++

The 16th issue of OUTWORLDS because of: The long trashing of Ted White's honesty and character by Harlan Ellison (with a compliment on the side).

And the long letter from Piers Anthony detailing inside information about the ethical problems of some sf publishers and writers.

From Bill Bowers, POB 148, Wadsworth, OH 44281. 75¢.



AN INTERVIEW WITH --

R.A. LAFFERTY

By Paul Walker

Walker: Sf is said to be a "literature of ideas." Do you agree? If so, is it a good source of ideas as compared to other forms of fiction and non-fiction? What is the quality of ideas in sf? And how do you personally respond to them?

Lafferty: Yes, I certainly agree that Sf is a "literature of ideas." Comparing it to other forms of fiction or non-fiction requires that we state its peculiar position, however. Sf takes as its province all phenomena, and that includes all other forms of fiction and non-fiction. Thus Sf is not merely a source of ideas as much as it is a processor and product of them.

The only way it can be a source of ideas as is by the process of feed-back: but even with this limitation it is probably a superior source to any other form of writing. The quality of ideas handled by Sf, whether as source or processor or product, is quite superior: Sf is an excellent selector and winnow of ideas. I personally respond to them gratefully and readily; i.e., I partake in the feedback.

Walker: Do you consider your work to be within the sf tradition?

Lafferty: I don't believe there is any single SF tradition or any type of writing that may be called genuine SF to the exclusion of other sorts. The genesis of "genuine" is "begotten," "natural-born," "native".

SF has a clear paternity, I believe, in the old Wonder Story which is natural-born or native everywhere. But this exuberant thing went adventuring after strange wives and mistresses, so now there are a great number of half-brothers and half-sisters with an equal claim to the name of SF. Each one has its own definition.

To me a Science Fiction Story should be a story (not a vignette): it should contain science as an essential, and it should contain true fiction (fabrication, speculation) as an essential.

I don't agree that one of the three elements is sufficient.

I have been challenged for having no science in my SF stories, and I deny the challenge. I claim the soft sciences (psychology, sociology, cosmography, anthropology) are as much science as the hard sciences such as physics. Yes, I consider my work as falling within the genuine, multiple, diffuse SF tradition.

Walker: Who are your favorite sf writers? And why?

Lafferty: I don't know who my favorite science fiction writers are, outside of the old ones, H.G. Wells, C.S. Lewis. Of those still writing, my favorites are probably Arthur C. Clarke, Sturgeon, Leinster, Zelazny in spots, Panshin in spots, myself in spots (caught you there; you didn't ask who I considered the best, but who were my favorites; if I weren't one of own favorites I'd have to stop writing).

The thing about science fiction (and I don't believe it applies to other writing and writers) is that those who write the best stories are also those who write the worst: there seems to be some sort of compensation here. It is a wholesome thing that it is their best stories that get printed, but when you get to know the fellows, you get glimpses of the really bad ones, and I know my own cases.

Another thing about the SF boys is that some of the finest minds and best personalities in it can't really write worth a damn, and some of the stumble-bums with twisted lives really do the better, sometimes the best work.

Walker: You say you are your own favorite sf writer "in spots". What "spots" are those and what makes them special?

What "spots" in general make sf worth reading?

Lafferty: There are spots and spots. "The spots that in general make sf worth reading" are not quite the spots I had in mind. A spot is really a blot, a

stain, a blemish. The spots I like do appear to be those things, and in addition they slow down and break the rhythm of SF. But they are necessary. They are the generative spots, the original bits, and they will be less awkward every time they are borrowed and reworked.

I do have some of these original spots in me, and so do many others besides.

There are clear-as-a-crystal writers of great reputation who will always remain spotless in this sense. There is no idea or notion to be found in them that is not first found in others; none that would have been lost forever if they had not pinned it down.

But some of us are spotted like sick leopards and we repel a little.

In PAST MASTER, in SPACE CHANTEY, in FOURTH MANSIONS, in ARRIVE AT EASTERWINE, there are many of these blotches which nobody but myself could have invented. They are in dozens of my short stories. They don't come through well, just well enough that they will be borrowed again and again till they become part of the standard furniture of SF. In this aspect only am I one of my favorite writers, as I know how hard the original bits are to come by, by myself, by any one at all.

Walker: You are more esteemed by critics and readers for your short stories than your novels. How do you feel about the two forms? Which of your books and stories are your favorites and why?

Lafferty: I have not mastered the novel as well as I have the short story form. It takes a certain balance and physical stamina to maintain a novel flow over the months of work required for it: this isn't a notion of my own; other writers also state it. An impatience or looseness of this balance or a failure of stamina creates a choppy effect; the novel becomes episodic, really a series of short stories or scenes.

This is one of the failings of my own novels. However, though my short stories are the more readable, my novels do have more to say; and they will, if anyone has the patience for it, repay a rereading.

Of my novels, the best is ARCHIPELAGO, unsold and unpublished for many years. The next best is SPACE CHANTEY, followed by PAST MASTER.

Of my short stories, the three best have been passed over in making up collections. They are "The Ultimate Creature," published only in Robert W. Lowndes' MAGAZINE OF HORROR several years ago, "Among the Hairy Earthmen," GALAXY, August 1966 & NEBULA AWARD STORIES #2, and "The Weirdest World," GALAXY, June 1961.

Others I liked are "Ginny wrapped in the Sun," "One at a Time," "Ride a Tin Can," "Cliffs That Laughed."

Oh hell, Paul, I like them all.

Walker: In the word of a NY TIMES book reviewer, you have an Irishman's predilection for "obfuscation". Why do you write that way?

Lafferty: Though the NY TIMES reviewer says that I have an Irishman's predilection for "obfuscation", yet it isn't so. In the first place, the Irish have this predilection less than other folks: they may go a crooked way, but they can usually give a straight and plausible story as to why they do it.

So, as to why I "obfuscate", I don't, or I don't believe that I do. As to why writers for the NY TIMES obfuscate, I don't know the answer; it is possibly required of them from on high in the TIMES building. The TIMES is not one of my favorite papers, and the obfuscation that runs all through it may be coupled with a certain dishonesty that is endemic to it.

But the fact is, Paul, that I write as clearly as I am able to. I sometimes tackle ideas and notions that are relatively complex, and it is very difficult to be sure that I am conveying them in the best way. Anyone who goes beyond cliché phrases and cliché ideas will have this trouble.

It's a little like polarized glass. It's all clear enough looking out from my viewpoint, but it may be opaque from the other side to eyes different from mine. It can't always be helped, though.

Down with obfuscation! Up with clarity!

Walker: Would you tell me something of your work habits: hours, note-taking, outlining, revision and rewriting, etc?

Lafferty: My work habits have gone to pot. Up till last July (when I still worked eight hours a day in the electrical business) my writing habits were of necessity regular. I had to write either in the very early morning, or in the evenings and at night. Doing so, I got in about sixteen hours a week at it. If I was coming down the home stretch on something I would also give up my week-ends to the project and double the hours. Since retiring I have not devoted any more time to writing, though I intended to. I still write about sixteen hours a week, but at no particular time, just when I feel like it.

Yes, I do take notes, I do make outlines, I do revise and rewrite extensively.

Sometimes when folks ask me how long it takes me to write a story and I tell them "anywhere from one to ten years," they think I'm kidding. I'm not. I have at least fifty unfinished or busted stories tossed back into limbo at any one time. I started with an idea, an outline, a beginning; then it went to pieces. Later, sometimes much later, instructions will come up from my unconscious or wherever as to how to finish

the thing. Or two busts may be thrown together into one story, or what I hoped to make a story from may be compressed into a paragraph or a mere allusion to something else. Or the instruction that comes to me as to how to handle a certain piece may be to take that piece out and shred it and throw it away and forget it forever.

Anyhow, with me, there has to be a yeasting period between the first idea and final resolution. Even after the answers come, I will write the story anywhere from three to five times. It's a hard way to do it, but I don't know any easy way. As to those writers who claim a great ease in composition, I alternate between being jealous and considering them liars.

Walker: How did your parents decide on the name "Raphael Aloysius"? And has it had any special significance to you since then?

Lafferty: The Raphael of my name may have three origins. I was scheduled to be born October 24 (the feast of St. Raphael the Archangel): I was late. I wasn't born until November 7, but the name was already chosen.

I was also scheduled to be an artist, but it didn't work out. Whether it's possible that I would draw even more badly if my mother hadn't named me Raphael I don't know.

Then there was St. Raphael's Cathedral in Dubuque, Iowa, and all my mother's people came from around Dubuque.

I believe I resemble that building (if it's still there) in being what can only be called American Gothic, in being somewhat old-fashioned and stuffy, in having a certain iconography with authentic elements, in having an upward sweep that is a little more than its worn stones and broken bricks.

The Aloysius has been a common middle name on both sides of my family: a dozen of my ancestors have this A. Aloysius in the middle.

I've never known why the Irish took up the name, since neither the Italians nor the Spanish (which two folk have the best claim on St. Aloysius Gonzaga) seem to use the name at all. Aloysius was a very awkward fellow (too awkward for anyone the Irish would adopt); he was a rambling and broken-gaited man, thankfully the only one of his kind. Only one other creature was ever so unique, and that was the unicorn. It is no coincidence that both are symbols of purity. They had to be pure: there was nothing close enough to their species for them to mix with.

My names don't seem to have any special significance to me. Why don't you do a disguised piece on what would have been the results if Paul G. Walker had been named Cyril X. Higgenbotham instead?

Walker: You have said that it meant quite a lot to you to grow up in Tulsa and that you liked it there. Would you tell me something about that?

Lafferty: I do like it in Tulsa and it has meant a lot to me. But if I said it meant a lot to me to grow up here, then I used the wrong phrase.

I never did grow up. I grew old ungracefully, but I never did grow up. That's a quibble, though. I came to Tulsa in 1920 when I was just short of six years old. The town had gone on something of a boom: it had grown from 18,000 in 1910 to 72,000 in 1920, but most of that growth had been between 1917 and 1920.

My father, who had been a carpenter, farmer, and small-town store-keeper, had gone into the oil lease business several years before and he did well. He could get along with the farmers (and almost all the farmers owned their own farms then); he could sign them to leases in blocks in likely locations and he could peddle these to the oil companies: he got along with the big buyers, too.

Our house, where I still live, was then almost on the edge of town. The street was still unpaved, but it had a street-car which ended just one block from us in a loop that was across the road from old Sacred Heart parish. The street-car is important. Children under twelve could ride it for three cents then, with as many transfers as were needed; and from almost the first I was given freedom of this travel and so I learned the town, riding the cars in all directions. Movies were either a nickel or dime for kids but vaudeville was fifteen cents; I saw a lot of all these.

The good old Klan was riding high then, and Oklahoma was only two per cent Catholic, so we got in some good fights. Lincoln school was one block from Sacred Heart, and those public school kids would way-lay us every morning, noon and night, or tried to. There were more of them, but I believe we were tougher. We had the Irish, most of the Germans, the Osage and Quapaw Indians, and the Mexicans. The Mexicans couldn't fight but they could talk, and they had those kids believing they carried daggers and could use them. The Indians could fight. On Saturdays we would have regularly scheduled rock fights at some building sites where there was large gauge gravel handy. We were fair, though. If more boys showed up on one side than the other, then a few boys had to be loaned from one side to the other so that the numbers were roughly even.

There were two very good lakes within a half mile of us. They are two finely manicured parks now, but they were rough country then, filled with squatter families with hound dogs. Lots of possums and squirrels and flying squirrels. The fish were small but we didn't know that: most of us had never

been to big fishing. There were quite a few streams and creeks then (before they were all channeled into giant sewers), oak, pecan, and hickory trees. It was very pleasant.

I had learned to read before I started to school, having two older brothers and an older sister, and a mother who had been a school teacher and who supervised the homework and out loud.

In school I was one of the smart kids in spite of my abominable handwriting. Then one day the tough boys took me aside and explained the real facts of life to me: that it is all right to be smart, but be careful about seeming smart, and especially don't be caught working at it. So I was taken into an unusual group, avoiding the sissy crowd who studied, and thereafter I never took any books home for homework. I found out that these tough boys were clearly smarter than the hardworking good kids. We stayed at the top in examinations and we struck a pretty good balance of things. Actually we read considerably beyond what was given us in school, but we did it in our hideouts.

On my tenth birthday my father gave me the Grollier HISTORY OF THE WORLD, all eighteen, huge, double-columned volumes of it. I went through every word of it in a year, and I still remember most of it. I haven't a photographic memory now, but I very nearly had when I was ten.

After grade school I went to Cascia Hall prep, taught by the Augustinian priests in Tulsa. I don't know how as it was very expensive, and the depression had hit the oil industry before the rest of the economy. I think it was an unofficial scholarship. Most of my tough friends went there also: they did have money in their families.

It was an athletic school and I was no athlete. In grade school I had organized and managed the teams and scheduled the games, but I couldn't play anything worth a damn, and I wouldn't put myself in unless we were way ahead or hopelessly behind. In prep school I couldn't even make the third team, and it was probably then that I became more of a reader.

I was very awkward and shy, then. I missed the school dances; I hadn't begun to go with girls, I was afraid of them; still am a little bit. There's lots of places I wouldn't have made out at all, hardly any place I would make out today; but Tulsa then was a very tolerant and easy and pleasant place, friendly when you needed it to be friendly, and leaving you alone when you wanted to be left alone.

Walker: In your brief autobiographical note in DANGEROUS VISIONS, you mention your fondness for heavy drinking, bar talk, Catholicism, and language. Do you feel there is any relationship between these predilections? That perhaps one arises out of an-

other?

Lafferty: Not really. I escape being a WASP to find myself a RIC, a rud-dy Irish Catholic. Actually, I'm not very good at any of these things. Booze is a means to an endlessness, the attempt to avoid an end either in the meaning of a termination or a goal. I'm not a good drinker, and the drinking isn't good for me, but few of the heavy drinkers I run into are Irish.

I am not a good conversationalist: it is merely that I love and admire good conversation but I am more often a spectator or auditor than a participant. And even the best conversation too long continued will degenerate into something else. It is the same with language itself, and its sickness is called logorrhea. And with Irishness, though it is seldom any more severe than any other ethnic disease.

My Catholicism, yes, it does tie these things together in a way, or rather it helps to balance them. It is one order against four (actually very many more) disorders. I have never known how any disordered person could possibly get along without it, but maybe they have other foods that I don't know about. To me, the faith is the inescapable logic, the complete clarity, and I am puzzled that everyone doesn't see it so. However much I stumble and fall short of it, I know it is there and what it is. Maybe more complete personalities haven't the same need for it, or get their order from the same source under another name.

Walker: You say "faith is the inescapable logic, the complete clarity," but "faith" in what? The logic of what? And what does it clarify?

Lafferty: Let's not get too profound about this, or try to find a philosophy or eschatology behind every aptitude or trick (sometimes dignified by the name of talent). I sometimes have (and sometimes miss) the aptitude or trick of doing certain sorts of fiction. That gives me no more authority to pontificate on high matters than it gives a pool shark the authority to do so: at the same time it gives me as much authority as it gives the head of the UN or the USA.

First, let it be understood that I am a very prejudiced man. "Prejudiced" means simply working from prejudgements, from previously acquired information. A jurymen in a trial case should be free from prejudice as to that case, but I cannot think of another circumstance where prejudice is a disadvantage, though unfortunately the word has a bad name. It is a distinct disadvantage to have to wake up in a new world every day and to learn it all over again.

To me (and to my fathers for some fifty generations) there is only one Church (the word has no meaning as a categorical plural). The Church is the faith, it is the logic and the clarity, it is the order: it

is the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit and it is the Body of the Lord. But, for saying such things, one is commonly turned away from.

I am a very disordered and very often a very bad man, but I know that there is this clarity and order and certainty: the Procession of the Creatures, the Distinction and Adornment of the World, the Final Things are all a part of it.

Walker: You say "this clarity and order and certainty: the Procession of the Creatures, the Distinction and Adornment of the World, the final Things are all a part of it." What does all that mean?

Lafferty: Here, Here, Paul, if you were doing a piece on Simak would you make a great thing out of his being a Lutheran? Yet he is a more religious man, and a much more moral man, than myself.

However, I will attempt to clarify my sentences and words. I try to use all words in their ordinary meanings: remember "ordinary" and "order" are related words on several levels. All right then:

"Order" is originally from ordiri to arrange, to begin a sequence, to align, and it also means to weave. Remember the "seamless garment" that is the world: the soldiers played dice for it but they could not divide it. We will come to this arrangement and weaving in the sense of a tapestry when I quote one of my characters, but I use "order" to mean what it seems to mean.

"Clarity" is simply clarus which means simply "clear" or "bright" or "suffused with light" and it also means "famous". Consider the famousness of things for a minute. Say "famous tree," "famous curb-stone," "famous pigeon" to the next of each of them you see. All things are famous if properly considered. This is the wonder of plain things, the clarity.

And it is good to be certain of "certainty". It is from certus which is from cernere, to sift to decide, to discern. It is that which has been completely discerned (with all the error sifted out of it), and it can now be no other way.

The "Distinction and Adornment of the World" is a scholastic phrase which covers our own province and position. The "Distinction" is the special focusing on our own world apart from the billions of other worlds, all special, but not all special to us. It is the scale and site we are on. The "Adornment" is the process and movement and composition, and finally the Flora and Fauna (including ourselves). Sure, we are an adornment, and so is all the other furniture of the world.

The "Procession of Creatures" is another scholastic phrase. I am sure you have been taught, somewhere in your five years of Catholic schools, that Son proceeds eternally from the Father, and that the

Holy Ghost proceeds eternally from both the Father and the Son. This is the main Procession. But I am not sure that you were taught that every creature proceeds eternally (having beginning but not end) from the Whole Trinity. This is the "Procession of Creatures."

There is an anti-scientific secular religion named Darwinism which calls this Procession "Evolution by Natural Selection". It would be better called "by Supernatural Selection".

That a Procession is also a Parade is all to the good. We have a favored place in the Parade of Creatures.

Several of my characters are able to explain these things much better than I am. Unfortunately, they are never around to be interviewed when I want things from them a little more exactly.

In the unsold, unpublished, uneverything novel, ARCHIPELAGO, an old man says: "This is how it is out there. It is the tapestry of Heaven, the real Heaven of the Beatific Vision where we go when we die, and also where we are now. The Infinity of Space was not made for a game: it is the real infinity rolling in the real eternity. But we see this tapestry now only from the reverse side. We see only the tangled threads behind: we have not the vision of the face of the picture itself....There are multitudinous emanations, and sight is only one of them which is given us here in the childhood of the soul. But it is all Out There, Hell and Purgatory and Heaven, all there: or here, for we are also in the middle of Out There. And there is a time before time, and a time after time; a space beyond space, and a space inside space. They talk now of re-entrant space which is the attempt to see infinity. I talk also of re-entrant time which is the attempt to see eternity."

Unfortunately, the character is now dead and cannot be questioned further.

Walker: You use the word "anti-scientific".

Who and what is "anti-scientific"? And what do you regard as "scientific"?

Lafferty: I use the word "Scientific" as my old Webster's Collegiate uses it, "concerned with, or treating of, science or sciences" and "a branch of study concerned with observation and classification of facts, esp. with the establishment of verifiable general laws, chiefly by induction and hypotheses". And "anti-scientific" is that which is either opposed to or lacking the "scientific".

There is no particular virtue in using a word to mean its opposite, though the trick has had tremendous success in some fields of opinion forming. Thus there are many things which denominate themselves as sciences which are furiously opposed to science. Among these I include Darwinism, Marxism, Freudism, Existentialism, Rational-

ism (in its historic form), most Demography, much Sociology, all Secular Liberalism.

These things are rabid pseudo-religions with nothing of real science (observation, classification, verification or induction) in them.

As to the first three, the things are much more anti-scientific than the man they are named after: both Marx and Freud are uneasy in their graves, and Darwin is spinning like a top.

I believe that the most anti-scientific and hysterically pseudo-religious group in the world today is the Zero Population Growth bunch. False projection and hatred of life is their forte, and facts are not allowed to intrude. You will notice that I am a little bit sour on the subject.

LETTER FROM GENE WOLFE

"So, thou thought to melt me with smooth flattery! Never. But I've no heart to resist an envelope of prevented address. Yet stay...does not Blish know not all dreams are REM? Next to thee was Chalker best, though hard of hunting. Review no fanzines thy own outheights them all. What? SPECULATION? What is it? And yet in thy own pages. And where is it? Nowhere."

LETTER FROM ISAAC ASIMOV

"I don't write much science fiction these days and what science fiction I do write is stubbornly Asimovian, if that adjective has any meaning. The current of science fiction criticism these days is non-Asimovian in the sense that there seems to be a kind of vague surprise that I manage to get there with an unadorned and cerebral style. I did get the Nebula for THE GODS THEMSELVES and everyone blames that on the second part—but read that part again; the style is still unadorned and cerebral. It's the content that sells my books, only the content, even when you kid yourself that I've done something fancy.

"But then on pages 54-55 I came across John Boardman's letter in which he says ((In TAC #5)) 'Personally, I can't think of an Asimov book where the addition of sexual scenes would help the plot any.'

"So help me Mari Seldon, I never really thought I'd hear anyone say something as simply factual as that.

"It is nice that someone sees that I omit sex not because I am a prude but because the kind of stories I write don't require it. To insert sex when the story does not require it does not help the story. It may help the sales, I suppose, but I take care of that end of it by inserting my name on the title page."

MUSCLES OF IRON AND SWORDS OF STEEL

Now I see why Robert E. Howard is beloved and why his stories cannot ever die.

Donald M. Grant, publisher, sent me a copy of the just-published hardcover book, THE SOWERS OF THE THUNDER, a four novelette collection of Howard's great Crusades-era sword-and-guts epics. 'Grim tales of savagery' with a vengeance.

Tragic and somber and action-filled and bloody and bitter with knowledge of man's struggle for glory and fame and wealth and faith, and his precarious, short-lived hold on all of them.

Howard had magic. He had tremendous talent and skill. These four stories impress the hell out of me. He wrote of heroic men, of high drama and tragedy, of terrible, vicious, gore-filled battles, sieges, tortures, of raw, monumental courage and of quavering cowardice...

He wrote these stories straight, with grim intent, with not a trace of smirk or satire. He brought to these stories a vast knowledge of medieval near-East history, customs, geography.... He was steeped in the era of his choice, as any good historical novelist must be.

However, it must be said that these four stories ("The Lion of Iberias," "The Sowers of the Thunder," "Lord of Samarcand," and "The Shadow of the Vulture") are all cut from the same cloth, and melodramatic and fast-moving as they are, they tend to a tiresome similarity.

This book is a collector's item. The four full-page illustrations, the full color frontispiece and dust-jacket paintings, the beautiful charcoal inner-binding drawings, the hundreds of small drawings (averaging nearly one per page) that match the action and characters of the page—all by the excellent Roy G. Krenkel—make the book's \$12.00 price quite reasonable. It is a labor of love on the part of Grant and Krenkel; the book is hardbound, extremely well-made, and in a limited edition.

LETTER FROM GEORGE HAY

"Yes, Peter Nicholls is a very good critic indeed. He has a critical book coming out with Penguin; should be excellent. He disagrees with my aim of getting sf ideas into reality, but there you are. I've always seen sf as some kind of blueprint, or rather, an alternative set of blueprints, nice or nasty. If I'd been born an American, I'm sure it would have been in the deep south....

"FLASH! After far too long, I've been able to get a publisher—a new lot, whom I've got to go in for sf—to carry Perry Chapdelaine's SWAMPWORLD WEST. This will bring howls in many directions. The hell with 'em. I know Perry's his own worst en-

emy, but I admire him tremendously; if anyone deserved a break, 'tis he."

"The illusion of originality and isolation can be very destructive to the writer who is, for personal reasons, unstable to begin with. Though a man like Herman Melville did the work of a hundred men—and his parallel in the field of science would be one hundred men, not one—Melville himself felt he bore the burden of his efforts, and believed "himself" a failure. In the physical world, it is never a loss to a man's pride when he cannot overcome an obstacle that would require two men to handle it, but in the imaginative world, it is quite possible for a single individual, attempting the labor of countless individuals, to feel destroyed. The suicides and mental breakdowns of gifted people (see A. Alvarez's THE SAVAGE GOD: A Study of Suicide) are well known, and may in part be traced to a totally erroneous concept of what the "self" and "personality" are.

"Because the writer is seen by his readers and critics as totally separate from his culture, as other, his attempts to establish a relationship with this culture are usually frustrated. If a gifted young poet like Sylvia Plath publishes poetry and a novel (THE BELL JAR) that are hypothetical statements about reality, she will rarely receive from even her most intelligent critics anything that resembles understanding. Instead, she is praised for being technically proficient or for exploring the agonies of the modern age, without flinching from their implications. There is a pernicious symbiotic relationship between writers and critics, which can result in the destruction of the writer: John Berryman comes immediately to mind. The deathliness of his poetry is praised, along with its technical virtuosity; it is never considered hypothetical, but taken as ultimate wisdom. When the writer believes his critics in such cases, he has no course left but suicide."

—Joyce Carol Oates, "The Myth of the Isolated Artist", May, 1973 PSYCHOLOGY TODAY.

PLAY MISTY FOR ME....

Can you imagine Brigit Bardot (a 19-yr. old 42-22-32 Bardot, let me stipulate) in the movie BARBARELLA, instead of Jane Fonda?

That's a little hint of what MISTY—An Adult Fantasy In Visuals—is like. It is in "comicstrip" form, but handsomely, in hardcovers, 8 1/2" 4-color dj, 9" x 12", and worth the \$6.95 price that Sherbourne Press is asking...if you enjoy X-rated s-f picture stories, if you collect this genre, if you dig the sadistic-masochistic elements.

Gil Porter, editor of Sherbourne and collaborator with author/artist James McQuade, feels there are strong intellectual

factors in MISTY—satire, social commentary.

But there is that inherent restriction in the form which makes it difficult to swallow as serious and significant; by their nature, comic strips seem aimed at morons...when the strips emphasize perfect bodies, exaggerated breasts, an overall black-and-white plot and heavy stress on action.

(Strips like POGO, WIZARD OF ID, B.C., DOONESBURY, etc. are in a different bag.)

There is some satirical matter in MISTY. For example, when Godd, the pure-evil master of the International Destiny Machine which controls the lives of all humanity, orders the C.D.L. (the Censorship and Death Legion...not to be confused, of course, with the Committee for Decent Literature) on Misty's trail after she had escaped being killed by the Machine-controlled liquidation machine.

And Misty is the Innocent Rebel who rejects the inhuman tyranny of the computer; she believes in freedom and love.

But, overall, her perils-of-Pauline adventures always seem to involve multi-page detailed lovemaking swiftly followed by killing, danger, escape...to the next handsome young man, the next exotic s-f setting and set of villains.

In the final episode Misty is instrumental in killing Godd, who is actually an alien who melts away.... But Godd's last act is to drive a dagger into Misty's almost always naked breast.

However, even apparent death cannot finish Misty. There are plans for at least one more volume of her adventures.

LETTER FROM BILL ROTSLER

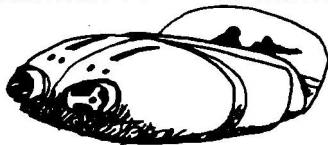
"I read your words on Patron of the Arts and I agree it is what you call, rightly, the Observer Plot. I think I have corrected for that in the novel version, just finished. I've expanded the novelette by just a few thousand words, mostly adding action and character development, then getting into nitty-gritty action as Mah Hero goes off to Mars. I think the whole thing is resolved nicely, tying in with the ending of the novelette, but frankly, right now, at the post-birth time, I'm just blank about my feelings on it. I don't think I'll be able to write much on art in the future. I've said most of what I feel in this book. (Even as I wrote that the feeling disappeared, as I just thought of some other things I should have added!)

"But I hope your criticisms about the novelette are wrong in the novel. But we'll see, won't we?

"Incidentally, VERTEX seems to be doing excellently. They don't really know yet. As you are aware, it takes some months be-

fore you know how your first issue did and we haven't gotten to that point yet. Distribution seems sparse, as many people have never seen it. The subscription department had to be built from the ground up, and as a result, they are behind. But the tentative reports on #1 is that it sold better than ANALOG.

"Burbie & I have a story in #4."



"12. The Science Fiction Plot: It is impossible to describe in one simple formula all of the ramifications and contributing elements to a complex story plot of this kind. In this formula we have a very familiar structure similar to the adventure plot, except that it is a fantasy. The adventure to be undertaken by the hero takes him into unearthly realms. This may be in a space ship, to another planet or to a fourth or unknown dimension. Some unusual and weird invention which enables him to enter the new and unknown may be used. He may or may not take with him a girl. If he takes a girl her wardrobe need not be over replete. In the new and unknown world, he meets human beings in the form of animals, insects, reptiles, plants or reactionary Republicans. On account of the superhuman powers of the creatures he meets, he is beset by all manner of situations of jeopardy which he must escape. At some time in the story he may meet and fall in love with a beautiful female inhabitant of this unknown world, who hasn't a large wardrobe, and his life may be saved by her. Authors who have an ambition to write science fiction stories should study astronomy, biology, technocracy, communism, and others of the sciences which suggest possibilities that may come to pass thousands or millions of years hence. The basis of all science fiction stories must be scientific fact, or thereabouts.

"Actually, of course, all this voodoo about science, etc., is just a blind for sadism. In most of these stories there is a beautiful girl and she is forever being squeezed by octupi, squeezed by long-nosed Boogie Woogies or what not. That is the purpose of the whole story, to take the reader through a perfect carnival of sadism, with an excuse for it so larded over with scientific fact, and other such scholia, that even the most assiduous censor can't get the goods on the author, editor, or the publisher.

"Women very seldom succeed in writing these stories; obviously it is impossible for a woman, except, perhaps, a Lesbian, to get any real feeling of stimulation out of describing how another woman is tortured daintily, and in a scanty wardrobe. Lots

of men, because of some quirk in their personalities, comparable to that which makes loan sharks and Federal Reserve executives, get a sexual stimulation out of thinking about pretty females being hurt. And millions of male readers, because they too have the slight tincture of this same sort of thing—whatever it is—in their minds, like to read such junk. But, for the most part, this is a specialized market; sort of a little seance as from pervert to pervert—though lots of writers can fake sadism so soundly that they don't need the same perverse mental attributes to write it that readers need to enjoy it.

"Unless you feel a particular urge to write such stuff you had better not try. I am speaking, of course, of this type of story containing female characters who are tortured. If you feel a particular urge to write it you can do so in all expectation of being able to make a good living from this one market alone. When stories of this type contain no women with scanty wardrobes who are tortured, they are directed at a curious tribe of people whom the average author does not at all understand, and these people have to be addressed by the kind of author who does understand them. On the whole, however, the formulas behind stories of this latter type are much the same as the formulas behind any other type of story, except for the research of a scientific nature that is added.

"Please do not conclude, from the fact that we have had us a bit of fun in this chapter, that it is less serious than our other chapters.

"As I give you an idea of what magazine editors want in plot formulas, you may think that I am endeavoring to convince you that magazine editors are less intelligent than insurance salesmen, fuller brush men, and others of our national mentally afflicted.

"It is not editors who are responsible for such a state of affairs. It is readers; they demand this stuff, and invariably a writer who refuses to give it to them fails. The average editor is every bit as intelligent as you are; some of them morose, and it is not their fault that commercial writing entails such grotesqueries. With the exception of the pulp magazines, for whose existence nobody has ever been able to supply a reasonable explanation, magazines exist not to purvey fiction, but to purvey advertising; and, as I pointed out in TRIAL AND ERROR, if you wish to get a good woman's eye view of the inside of an average magazine reader's mind, read the advertisements in the magazine you are slanting for before you read the fiction. If you read the fiction first you may be convinced, if it is the first time you have read one of our great popular magazines, that it is a house organ for an insane asylum; but if you read the advertisements first and the fiction afterward, all will be clear.

"The only reason why any magazine pub-

lisher burdens himself with such a necessary and mildly costly nuisance as an editor is that he cannot put the magazine out with nothing but ads in it; the post office wouldn't give him certain mailing privileges if he did; so, much as he loathes the necessity, the magazine publisher must have fiction, articles, and other junk in a popular magazine. The sole purpose of this fiction, et al., is to draw the reader's eye to proximity with advertisements; and the fiction in order to serve this purpose must be as idiotic as the advertisements."

—Jack Woodford, "Formulae Formula in Plot", PLOTTING (1939)



"The first fanzine, by my reckoning, is THE RECLUSE (1927). I own a copy, and its contributors include H.P. Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, H. Warner Munn, Donald Wandrei, and Frank B. Long."

—Bruce Robbins
P.O. Box 396, Sta. B,
Montreal 110, PQ,
CANADA

LETTER FROM BRIAN ALDISS

"Having finished my history of sf (BILLION YEAR SPREE — just out from Doubleday), I am making a gallant attempt to read less and less. After all the years I spent reading just everything for review at THE OXFORD MAIL, I've begun to fear brain erosion.

"Now my literary career is beginning anew (two new novels due in next six months — first since BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD, four years ago). All the best in your new literary career!"

Civilization is an exercise in masochism by most, in sadism by few.

ANOTHER RUN OF THE ZELAZNY MILL

He has been grinding them out. One novel after another these last few years, all readable, interesting, entertaining.

His admirers keep hoping for another major work, another Hugo winner.

We'll have to wait a while longer. TO DIE IN ITALBAR is a good sf adventure and in many ways tantalizing for what it might have been if....

There is a feeling of "Is that all there is?" when the last page is turned. If only he had taken the time and words to develop the characters, the fragmentary, incomplete sub-plots.

But, anyway, Mr. Z again saves Mankind's chestnuts, this time from the fire of an alien anti-life goddess who is in control of a human Typhoid Mary, a man named Heidel von Hymack whose body carries a deadly mélange of contagious diseases to which only he is immune. He is journeying from planet to planet—at first as healer during his "good" periods (he isolates himself during his alternating virulently contagious days)—and later as a vengeful plague-killer in the grip of Her greater power.

The goddess, Mar'i-ram, an ancient Strantrian deity, wishes to use Hymack to rid the Galaxy of all human life—a final "healing" solution, to bring peace to our species.

Others wish to find and/or use Hymack. They are:

Malacar Miles, a former military leader of the DYWAB, a recently defeated minority of human-inhabited planets which had warred with the Combined Leagues.

A recruited CI agent (a former aide to Miles), John Morwin, a psi-talented "sculptor" of others' dreams.

Dr. Larmon Pels, a sentient corpse kept "alive" by a tiny power system and by chemicals, able to function only in a minimal gravity spaceship, seeks in Hymack the secret to the disease which had "killed" him generations before. Pels, a brilliant pathologist, is a medical flying Dutchman, seemingly doomed to search the galaxy forever for the secret to renewed life.

And Francis Sandow, multi-billionaire, seeks Hymack in order to exorcize the goddess and save Mankind.

The showdown—when everyone has closed in on Hymack in the mountains of the planet Summit—is disappointing, as Sandow and the goddess who is now inhabiting the more congenial body of a young woman companion of Miles, stage their psi-battle out of sight, off-stage, with only a mentally hurt, partially recovered telepathic, small alien pet/friend of Miles to incompletely report to the others what is happening.

It is as if Zelazny was in a hurry to finish the book and didn't want to bother with fully unfolding the climax.

Francis Sandow is a continuing character used by Zelazny, most recently in my reading in ISLE OF THE DEAD.

(TO DIE IN ITALBAR, Doubleday, \$4.95)

LETTER FROM ALEXEI PANSIN

"It has always been the cherished prerogative of worldcon committees to choose their own Guests of Honor. Looking back over their selections, by and large they've done a good job. Fifteen years after the fact, Richard Matheson does seem a strange choice, but then he was a fill-in for Henry Kuttner, who had died. Lloyd Esback, who was Guest of Honor in 1949, seems an even stranger choice. But generally speaking, the people who have been honored have been people who deserved to be honored. Some people have been honored more than once. Campbell was Guest of Honor at three conventions, Heinlein twice, and this year Robert Bloch is to be Guest of Honor in Toronto, as he was twenty-five years ago.

"There's nothing to quarrel with in any of this. But since I'm not a member of a worldcon committee, and never will be, I do miss the opportunity to suggest worthy guests. If worldcon committees present and future will forgive me, I'd like to name three people who have been so far overlooked, but who deserve to be honored as much as any of the Guests of Honor of the past.

"First—and I do mean first—Jack Williamson. Jack Williamson is the longest currently practicing science fiction writer. His first story was published in 1928 in AMAZING STORIES, and he is still writing today. His stories, like THE LEGION OF SPACE, DARKER THAN YOU THINK, and THE HUMANOIDS, have been important works in the development of science fiction.

"Second, Donald A. Wollheim. In 1941, Wollheim was putting out creditable science fiction magazines on no budget whatever. In 1943, he edited THE POCKETBOOK OF SCIENCE FICTION and in 1945, THE PORTABLE NOVELS OF SCIENCE. These came before Healy and McComas, before Conklin. They were important books. Beyond them, however, Wollheim edited the Ace line of paperbacks for nearly twenty years which gave many of us our basic education in science fiction.

"Third, Damon Knight. Damon knight has been a fan, an illustrator, an editor, a writer, a critic, and an anthologist of science fiction. He hasn't done all of these equally well—he was a lousy artist. But in his capacities as editor, writer, critic and anthologist he has done more than any other one person I can think of to raise the literary standards of science fiction. He deserves our honor.

"How about it, East-Overshore-in-'76 Committee? Before you pick Lloyd Esback to be Guest of Honor for the second time, why not consider Williamson, Wollheim and Knight?"

TOOMEY IT MAY CONCERN...

When Robert E. Toomey, Jr.'s A WORLD OF

TROUBLE arrived from Ballantine (03262-4, \$1.25) I looked forward to reading it. Bob and I had corresponded a few years ago and he had written for SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW.

I like him. I was disposed to like his novel.

Those are typical pre-gutting words, aren't they? The reviewer's knife gleams in the early morning light—

Sometimes I think the more science fiction and fantasy I read, the more intolerant and I become. So much flows under my eyes, and so much is bad or (more usually) subtly mis-written, that I fret and bitch and mutter at what I consider wrong slants and techniques....

As sf novels go, A WORLD OF TROUBLES is readable, a commercially viable book. It will sell enough to justify its printing and author's advance, I suppose.

But that isn't good enough. (I bang my knife and fork on the table and cry for roast beef.)

I have always believed the more real and plausible a writer makes his fiction, the more believable it is; the more it convinces the reader that it happened and/or could happen, the more appearance of truth it possesses, the better it is...and that especially in science fiction and fantasy this element of reality (very fragile, delicate) is even more essential to overcome the higher wall of resistance to belief in the reader because of the Differentness involved.

Yet, more and more, many sf and fantasy writers seem to not care if they are believed or not. They seem to wink and smile and gently (or rudely) nudge the reader.

Bob Toomey, Jr. uses this tongue-partly-in-cheek approach in A WORLD OF TROUBLE. (And I'm not sure if it is deliberate.) In subtle and obvious ways he tells us: "I'm kidding."

His hero is a reluctant spy/agent for galactic control CROWN. He is deposited on Jsimaaj, a hostile planet with hostile inhabitants. He has with him an affectionate 12-legged rhino-like animal (a native-to-Jsimaaj beast of burden and riding called a rendal) and he is posing as a holy man.

Bob obviously did a lot of preparation and background work on the planet, its societies, its flora and fauna...and then blew it by using a mild WILD WILD WEST level of first-person narrative.

Example: (A native soldier/herdsman has captured the hero. A sword is pricking the hero's throat as he lies face-up on the sand.)

"This is nonsense," I said. "I am Gnarla, a simple kirilu. Ytrifg The Inscrutable is my illustrious lord."

"Liar," said the swordsman, his

blade moving slightly.

My skin puckered up around it, as though to kiss away my life. "I am not a demon." Hey there, skin, I thought, unpucker.

(Too flip—the signal that this man is unkillable and has read the author's outline—like Adam West and James Bond.)

Example: (The hero and the rendel drovers who have captured him are involved in a battle against desert bandits.)

Proteu drove his sword to the hilt into one, and the bandit gave up the ghost with a groan. Soraft took a long leap forward, swung his sword over his head like an axe, and lost a hand to the bandit on the left.

('...gave up the ghost'? Would that expression still be in use? + Do hands cut off that easily? Like hell they do. It would require the hand firmly against a solidly grounded chopping block, plus an all-out grunt chop. + Driving a sword in to the hilt is comicbook imagery.)

Example:

My eyes were tired and sandy, and I felt like a cancelled stamp.

(Would stamps and their cancelling still be in existence?)

Example:

He passed me a bulging water bag. "Drink this."

"Ahhhhhh." I started to chugalug it. "Urrgh blouff oomphh." I slowed myself down. "Ahhhhhhh."

(Sound effects, yet. Not funnnneeeeeee!)

This reviewer lost interest. I felt disappointed and insulted, frankly, and stopped reading on page 33...right after that cartoon chugalug.

I enjoy an occasional spoof or satire. I've written five or six myself. But I play it straight within the satire; I never try to be cute.

As a reader, I'm not going to invest time and emotion and ego-involvement-in-a-story-and-hero in a novel of this type. I'm not ten years old.

'I don't have an eidetic memory; I have a carbon.'

Jim Martin (letter) 6-7-73

LETTER FROM BOB SILVERBERG

"What I'm working on now is a major novella, almost finished after three months' work, called BORN WITH THE DEAD. You'll see it in F&SF next year. Most ambitious thing I've done since DYING INSIDE: would that the voters notice it when the time comes, but that's beyond my control.

"I half regret your partial shift back

to SFR format. Anybody can review books, but only you can write your diary, and that was something I really dug."

A PSITE IN THE DARK

I may as well admit I hadn't read any of Marion Zimmer Bradley's books prior to my plucking DARKOVER LANDFALL from the vast shelf of the should-be-reviewed last week... and she's been writing sf for at least 15 years.

My dereliction calls for some examination—but not now. Now I'm sorry I took so long to sample her work.

She's damned good. On any level she's good—one a couple levels she's excellent.

Darkover is a planet with a dying, orange sun, and its summer is brief and marred by snowstorms and periodic suffusions of psychedelic pollen from a swift-blooming native flower.

Upon this marginal off-the-beaten track planet an off-course, crippled starship crashes with its cargo of colonists and their gear and supplies.

They had been destined for another planet which was more compatible and halfway prepared for them. But with Darkover the survivors of the crash are faced with grim prospects.

Because the starship is kaput. And that takes a bit of getting used to...especially by the career Crew and their Captain.

Darkover's strange flora and fauna require adjustments in thinking, too.(Especially that psychedelic pollen which melts away inhibitions and brings on orgy, murder and madness—because it unleashes latent psi abilities in humans to a greater or lesser degree.)

Marion doesn't have a flashy style—she's only visible in her emphases and plot developments. She's effective with strategic shifts of viewpoint, and as the novel progresses her qualities as a writer become more apparent as she skillfully broadens and deepens the characters, their conflicts (inner and outer) and the ecology of the planet, which is not at all simple. Because—

There are sentients in the forest. Two types of humanoids, one far superior who have advanced psi capacities, very long lives....

MZB is very much aware of the yin/yang in life; her strength is in structuring this (and mankind's eternal schizophrenias) into her characters and her inevitable human events.

I do have to cluck and mention that it seemed to me extremely lucky that the crash occurred at just the right time of year—giving the colonists and crew a spring and summer to prepare for the coming winter,

grow crops, etc.

DARKOVER LANDFALL is part of the Darkover saga and its melded human/alien developing culture and civilization.

The last paragraph of the novel is: 'A century later they named the planet DARKOVER. But Earth knew nothing of them for two thousand years.' (DAW #36, UQ1036, 95e)

LETTER FROM PHILIP K. DICK

6-7-73

"This letter, which I do want you to print, deals with a most melancholy subject, but one which is becoming brighter: the Watergate disclosures.

"An article in the June 11th NEWSWEEK let the American public in on what may be the most dismal and horrifying aspect of all this: that in the years 1970, 1971 and 1972 (and possibly now) a secret national police, operating outside the law, existed in this country, probably under the jurisdiction of the Internal Security Division of the Justice Department; it acted against the so-called "radicals", that is, the left, the anti-war people; it struck them again and again, covertly, everywhere, in a variety of ugly ways: break-ins, wire-tapping, entrapment...all with the idea of getting or forging evidence which would send these anti-war radicals to prison.

"The basic M.O. was of course the typical Watergate sort: a crude jackboot night burglary of locked files, carried out with no class and much arrogance, as if they felt they could not be caught.

"What I myself find personally frightening in all this is that the November 1971 burglary of my house in San Rafael, California, which I've written a number of letters to various friends about, fitted this M.O.

"As a letter from me in SF COMMENTARY mentioned, my locked files were blown open and all my business records, documents, all cancelled checks everywhere in the house, correspondence, etc., all were systematically taken — an enormous job that must have taken either a long time or many people.

"It was a massive commando-type hit, and it seemed to baffle the police (many objects of financial value, for example, such as gold cufflinks, were not taken; it seemed obvious to me at the time that money was not the goal of the hit, as one finds in regular burglaries, but rather information on me or information that I had, information supposed to be in my house, in particular in my locked fireproof files).

"I was an anti-war "radical" and quite outspoken against the government in this regard. I have always believed that the motivation for this hit was political. But that it might have been carried out by a

paramilitary extension of the U.S. Government itself — that never really seemed plausible to me.

"Now I realize how naive I was; how naive we all are.

"Last night a reporter came to visit me, to discuss this hit on my house, this massive burglary back in November of 1971, with an idea of trying to get the case reopened in connection with the emerging nationwide pattern of Watergate strikes going on at particular ferocity at that time of that particular year.

"I feel very frightened, thinking that my own government might well have done this to me, but as I say, the clouds are clearing at last — I guess, anyhow — and we are seeing these monsters, this nocturnal Gestapo that actually tried to take out the domestic left, brought finally to justice.

"There had always been many hints that some branch of the authorities was involved in the burglary on my house, and perhaps in the two that followed during the period of February-March 1972 while I was in Canada, in which the rest of my papers were taken; for example, a peculiar reluctance by regular legal investigatory agencies to get involved; they would look into it and then — silence.

"For months I have written, for example, again and again, to the police up there to ask if any arrests or convictions have been made, if any new evidence has come to light, if any of my possessions have been recovered.

"No answer.

"None, not even a printed form. As if a black curtain of silence has set down — the day after the burglary, in which at least six policemen came out, there was no record at all at the Marin County Sheriff's Department of a burglary having been reported that night in that area. Even my own phonecall was not on the police logbook. And so forth...plus the then-perplexing accusation that I had done the burglary myself.

"I sensed that they did not want to look into it and were seizing on any pretext not to that they could. But they seemed personally to like me; it wasn't based on any real or imaginary hostility toward me.

"In fact, one police sergeant warned me that I was in extreme danger in staying on there in the house, that much more could happen, that I had 'enemies' as he said to me 'who some night might very well shoot you in the back while you're asleep. Or worse.'

"I then asked him what the 'or worse' might mean, but he said I really would not want to know. He suggested because of this threat to me, this invisible danger that had culminated in the hit on my house but which was not over, that I leave Marin

County. He also said, this police Sergeant, in the presence of other police, 'Marin County doesn't need a crusader.'

"So I left; this is why, actually, I did not return to the Bay Area from Canada, and why I was so depressed up there, wanting to come back to the U.S. but fearing to.

"At last I came down here to Fullerton where I had never been before, 600 miles to the south of the Bay Area, and sort of laid low for months, my ties cut, my trail cut, frightened and confused and depressed, not understanding what had happened but fearing it would happen again.

"When I was in Canada I applied for Canadian citizenship, and I think for good reason. I sensed — as I say — that the federal authorities or anyhow some weird sick branch of them had been behind the hit on my house, and I was disgusted and demoralized and did not want ever to return to my own country.

"As perhaps you know, I tried suicide in Canada, but was helped out of it by the Vancouver Crisis Center.

"Göran Bengtson of Swedish TV wrote me asking if I would fly back to San Francisco, at their expense, for an interview with him for part of a TV documentary on the elections, in which I would describe what had happened to me in full; he thought it seemed to be a meaningful experience in terms of what the U.S. political climate was becoming.

"Being afraid, I refused.

"Now I wish I had flown back and been interviewed and told all this, but would anyone have believed me then, back in March of 1972, before the Watergate disclosures? I hardly believe it myself. And yet now — I wonder if the terror, the invisible police strikes and assaults on us, on the "radical" anti-war left, will begin again someday or have even ended.

"Are we safe? Is it over at last? I hope so. It has been over two full years of fear for me, waiting for the jackboots in the night to come again.

"I might also mention another aspect of the ugly methods used by the secret political police against the left: political entrapment, an analog to the sort of entrapment often used by undercover narcotics agents. Only in the area of politics it is sicker by far...I found myself up against what appeared to be a true Nazi,* warped and vicious and pathological, who was in the complicated process of blackmailing me into committing an indictable act: for example he wanted me to murder someone...well, this part is too gruesome to go into, but tonight on TV on the news we learned that those under scrutiny in the Watergate West affair have admitted hiring Nazis, actual American Nazi Party members, to wipe out in illegal ways the political opposition to

Nixon here in California, using as always campaign contributions. So this, too, is coming out, their use of such creatures, certainly the worst types alive.

"Ah, what this republic has come to, and so swiftly. I hope the tide has turned. But I wonder — I really feel that the right-wing fascists will make another attempt before they give up. I still listen for the jackboots, and maybe always will."

"He was a formal member of an organization, under its direction evidently, but I had no inkling of it until the night of the hit on my house — on the phone he blew his cover and gave me a code response. Later he described his organization to me at length, without identifying it."

"What there is in all provincial places is an attempt to suppress part of the evidence, to present life out of proportion with itself, squared to fit some local formula of respectability."

—Ezra Pound

THE SHEEP LOOK UP...AND STEP INTO BIG PILES OF—

I have put aside paperwork, making lists of Publicity Departments, bookstores, etc. I am turning my face to reviewing again, after a couple of weeks off for good behavior.

TAC#5 is almost ready to be picked up from Don Day's Perri Press and all's well with the world.

But not well if you read John Brunner's THE SHEEP LOOK UP.

TSLU is more of a Woe-Unto-Mankind-If-We-Don't-Change-Our-Ways tract than a novel. It is written in the mosaic, multi-stranded plot style John used for his award-winning STAND ON ZANZIBAR.

(Never change a winning style, a great man said once, and everyone nodded wisely and did not change.) (Not even the losers, but that's another review.)

Only, THE SHEEP LOOK UP isn't near as good. It's like slipping into a sewer and not being able to climb out. No light at all at the end of the tunnel. Depressing, dreary, and the characters' lives are too hard to follow because their stories are too thoroughly chopped up into small pieces too widely spaced...and I really didn't give much of a damn about any of them, anyway.

THE SHEEP LOOK UP suffers as a novel from its tractiness and because its relevance is a victim of media overkill...and the media can wear out a Good Safe Cause so fast!

Thus, alas, THE SHEEP LOOK UP is only one dire warning among many, many, many, many....

Of course, SHEEP benefits to a certain extent from all the preparation of the readers—it makes the message of Ecology Now and Stop the Polluters familiar and acceptable, and makes the Consequences more believable...and because more believable, more inevitable—seeming and depressing, and hence more likely to be resisted and rejected and disliked.

There's little profit in being a prophet.

Boiled down and purified—the panoramic/mosaic style didn't work too well, this time; the characters were drowned in effluvia...and they all more or less deserved it.

A bleak vision of the future. Unrelieved disaster. Bad fiction, good preaching. (Harper & Row, SF Book Club.)

IMAGINE—THE MAN WANTS SCIENCE FICTION!

"I see a great many stories that are, in a way, science fiction, and some of them are very good. My problem is that what I want to publish is sf that is clearly and unmistakably sf by anyone's definition. I see very little of it, and what I do see is mostly pretty bad. My impression is that apart from a few eccentrics like Heinlein, Asimov, Niven, and Clarke, hardly any of the good writers are writing basic sf any more; they're all off on some kind of trip in the fringe areas. Often the trips are fun, but whatever became of home base? My other impression is that Heinlein, Asimov, Niven and Clarke are doing a lot better than most of the other good writers, so maybe there's something to be said for basic sf after all. But I don't seem to be able to convince many people of that."

—Frederik Pohl in LOCUS 140

LETTER FROM GREG OPELLA

"On page 15 of TAC #5 you review the A, DV story 'Mathoms from the Time Closet' by Gene Wolfe. Nooo, you'll not find 'mathom' in the dictionary; you will however find it in Tolkien's LORD OF THE RINGS. Specifically the Prologue to THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING. I quote Mister Tolkien, (mathoms were) 'anything that hobbits had no immediate use for, but were unwilling to throw away.'"

...

"Gene Wolfe takes you to task by mentioning 'shoot' as pertaining to bows, arbalests, etc. (and no, I won't point out that you don't 'shoot' a bow), however you both miss the point, Wolfe more so, that it doesn't matter what 'shoot' refers to; but that the member of the shadow world ((In Zelazny's THE GUNS OF AVALON)) would understand in what context 'shoot' was used; i.e., understand American slang.

"With that kind of writing you might as well have a man-at-arms say something like, 'Right-on, M'Lord.'"

COMETOSE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

European authors sometimes construct novels differently from United States and, I think, United Kingdom writers.

They think nothing, judging from BAPHOMET'S METEOR by Pierre Barbet, of throwing away three-quarters of a novel by gratuitously telling the reader, in Chapter One, exactly what's going to happen in most of the remaining pages.

Unless the writing is intrinsically interesting and valuable, why plod through all that "known" material?

Briefly, in the Middle Ages of an alternate Earth, an alien "demon" crash-lands and is stranded. He is a rapacious sort and recruits a passing knight to conquer the world for him while he directs the process from his damaged space ship. Baphomet is his name and mastery is his game.

He gives the knight gold, far-advanced weapons and an outline of the future in which the knight will succeed, win battles, create an empire, will die (at an unspecified date after a full life) and in which the knight's successor will continue to conquer the world.

Baphomet hopes a scout from his race will eventually discover his plight and rescue him. At that time he will probably have Earth in thrall and a nice plum to drop into the lap of the alien empire. If not eventually rescued—then he will have a nice nest in which to live as a god his thousands of years of life.

(The urge to skip the intermediate chapters and read the ending overcame me.)

On the verge of complete victory, Baphomet is undone and his puppet army and Emperor defeated by a small group of psi-powered priests who zap him by zeroing-in down the carrier wave of his communication device.

I understand that BAPHOMET'S METEOR is hot-stuff in France. But could be the translator, Bernard Kay, isn't much of a writer in his own write. In English, in the U.S.A., this novel is so-so stuff.

(DAW #35, UQ1035, 95¢)

LETTER FROM MICHAEL G. CONEY

"At last, a perceptive review, and I'll even forgive you the title!

"I didn't realize there was a main theme running through both MIRROR IMAGE and SYZYGY but now you come to mention it; yes, you're right. Mind you, Man not being an Island unto Himself is not exactly an obsession of mine; I don't think the theme recurs in any one of the 5 novels I have written since. Perhaps everyone, in their first couple of novels, takes time out to point a moral. And yes, you were right, SYZYGY was written before MIRROR IMAGE although the

Britishness is my fault rather than Ballantine's — and in many ways a thing difficult to erradicate without a total rewrite. Ted Carnell called it an Olde Englishe atmo-phere...

"And again you hit the bullseye with your defining of MIRROR IMAGE's major flaw; the unexplained ability of the amorph to change shape. I didn't explain it because I couldn't — I don't know how a comparatively small lizard can change to a giant dinosaur-like thing, or even a man; do you? The thing's impossible. So all I could do was build enough circumstantial stuff around the phenomenon to persuade the reader not to ask himself the question. After all, it would have been a pity to forego all those wonderful possibilities of such a creature, just for the sake of a small lie, or maybe a Big Lie.

"I write for fun, and I had an enormous amount of fun figuring out all the many things that might happen, given a group of amorphs and a team of colonists. Similarly in SVZVGY, I couldn't really see the likelihood of such a telepathic mind, but what the hell.

...

"I have an SF Book Club edition of AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS sitting on the shelf and at last found time to get started on it, following your recommendations as to what I should look at first.

"There is some quite good stuff — in fact some very good stuff — but there is one horrible, sickening story which you commended and about which I seem to have seen a lot recently; I refer to Joanna Russ' When it Changed.

"You say it is subtle — it is not. Powerful it may be, but I've read that type of story (I speak of the construction, the format, the surprise, the misunderstandings, the end) many times. It got printed because it is topical. I could write that type of story, and write it better, about blacks and whites, Catholics and Protestants, any the-majority-is-a-bastard situation. I cannot understand why Marlan jumped on that particular bandwagon.

"I can understand why Joanna Russ wrote it — but I don't see why she should be encouraged in her views.

"Now, when I point a moral in a story of mine, I take the point of view of 'we all make mistakes but let's try to sort this thing out.'

"Not so Joanna. The hatred, the destructiveness that comes out in the story makes me sick for humanity and I have to remember, I have to tell myself that it isn't humanity speaking — it's just one bigot. Now, I've just come back from the West Indies, where I spent three years being hated merely because my skin was white — and for no other reason. Now I pick up A.D.V. and find that I am hated for another reason —

because Joanna Russ hasn't got a prick. I shall, of course, write to Marlan and tell him my views; but it's too late now, unfortunately.

"Sorry to sound off like that and I hope you don't think I'm a crank — in fact I'm quite the opposite of a crank; I'm a white non-religious male of heterosexual leanings, a member of a vast and passive majority which seems to be the target of every crank group under the sun.

"However, that's enough of that."

"Whoever lays his hand on me to govern me is a usurper and a tyrant; I declare him to be my enemy... Government of man by man is slavery. Its laws are cobwebs for the rich and chains of steel for the poor.

"To be governed is to be watched, inspected, spied on, regulated, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, ruled, censored by persons who have neither wisdom nor virtue. It is in every action and transaction to be registered, stamped, taxed, patented, licensed, assessed, measured, reprimanded, corrected, frustrated.

"Under pretext of the public good it is to be exploited, monopolized, embezzled, robbed, and then, at the least protest or word of complaint, to be fined, vilified, harassed, beaten up, bludgeoned, disarmed, judged, condemned, imprisoned, shot, garroted, deported, sold, betrayed, swindled, deceived, outraged, dishonored.

"That's government, that's its justice, that's its morality!

"And imagine that among us there are democrats who believe government to be good, socialists who in the name of liberty, equality, fraternity support this ignominy, proletarians who offer themselves candidates for President of the Republic!

"What hypocrisy!"

—Pierre Proudhon, 1848



TRANSLATIONS FROM THE EDITORIAL
an article by Marion Z. Bradley
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For the past twenty years—since 1951 or thereabouts—I have been earning my living as a professional, free-lance, writer, and speculating about the greener pastures on the other side of the desk. That is,

I've been wondering what it would be like to be on the dishing-out end, instead of the receiving end, of those rejection slips, editorial requests for rewrites, blue-pencillings, and so forth.

Naturally, I told myself, if I were an editor, I would always level with my writers. I would never, never use weasel words like "This rejection implies no lack of merit in your story..." or "This isn't quite right for us...." I would faithfully read the slushpile, try hard to discover new writers instead of going all-out for big names, make my editorial reports promptly, and send out all checks by return mail.

Well, I've recently survived an eleven month stretch as Features Editor for a magazine which shall be nameless (there are still laws of libel in this country), and since I understand that almost all free-lance writers daydream of someday being on the other end of the desk, a brief rundown of my safe-i through slushpile country (with blue pencil and eyedrops) may help other dreamers to learn the facts of life—i.e. that when the editor starts making with the weasel words, it's just his instincts for survival doing their thing. (Of course, if his instincts for survival were in good shape, he'd never have wanted to be an editor....)

The first resolve to go was the one about the slushpile—probably because, for my sins, I was working for an oldtime publisher, one of those chaps who brags that he used to edit a string of twenty-four pulps. He used to pay his editors \$15 a week, and he has never really believed that brains come any higher than that. He still brags that he can get by with paying the lowest rates in the business, and as a result, the manuscript mailing is all slushpile.

When I called respectable agents and asked for material, the kindly ones said, "I'm sorry, we have nothing suitable just now." This was my first experience with the Fine Art of Editorial Translation: I soon found out that they meant was "I'm sorry, but anyone good enough to be a client of ours is going to have higher rates than you're paying."

The unkindly ones usually didn't need translation—their response was usually some variant of "Are you for real? Drop dead!"

So, in order to make up each month's issue, I was thrown back on the slushpile—the manuscripts sent in by naïve amateurs who were content to see their names in print, no matter how low the pay, by semi-professionals who couldn't yet command good rates but hoped to pile up enough "sold" wordage to interest a good agents, and the hopeless duds. I could either find enough material in this stuff for each issue, or I could write it myself.

I began my stint as an editor by thinking of myself as a pearl-diver, trying to fish up priceless neglected gems out of the mud and slush. After a couple of months I began to realize what was meant by the slang meaning of "pearl diver"—the fellow who fishes in the greasy dishwater in the local hash house—and to know that my chances of finding a pearl were just about like his!

It was never a question of finding the best manuscripts—the publisher, or his friends, usually went out and made special arrangements, by contract, to get us two or three "lead" articles every month from top agents.

The rest was up to me and to the other unpaid editor of the magazine, to produce from the slushpile. Somehow, I had to weed out the least worst, and if by chance I found a half-way literate article in the pile, to nurture the sender like a precious gem, until he or she discovered that most magazines paid more than \$15 for a full-page article.

So, unless you are dealing with a top-flight magazine which pays good rates, if you are still submitting to the slushpile of the borderline magazines which buy non-agented material, I offer from my experience some translations from the Editorialese... i.e. when the editor writes you a note about your submission, this is probably what he means.

"Of course, your ms. needs some heavy editing..."

Please, PLEASE learn to spell, or else how to use a dictionary!

+++

"Your story still needs a little work..."

It's got to be rewritten from beginning to end before I'd have nerve enough to put it into the layout, and if YOU don't do it, I'll have to.

+++

"I'd like to hold this a few days for a final decision."

It's really pretty bad, but if nothing else better comes in before the deadline, I'll have to use it, good or bad.

+++

"We hoped to use this, but unfortunately we can't make a spot for it in the current issue."

I was afraid I'd be stuck with this, but fortunately something else came in. (Or, alternatively:)

The basic idea is okay but I haven't the time to rewrite it from beginning to end, or the chutzpah to ask you to do it for the rates we pay.

+++

"Your approach to the subject is interesting and original, but I'm afraid our readership would demand a little more documentation."

I never heard such a crazy idea in my life, but I'll take a chance if you'll blame it on some standard reference, expert or Big Name, preferably one we can quote in large type.

+++

"Using such an original approach to your subject may shock our more conventional readership, but we feel a little controversy is wholesome. I feel, however, that we must give equal time..."

Okay, we're both crazy, but the publisher says I have to take you apart in the next issue, under a pen name, to avoid infuriating the old foofs who will write in slamming anything new we dare to print.

+++

"This material does not exactly meet our editorial requirements."

Holy smoke, next time read the issue! We can't use epic poetry!

+++

"This particular item does not exactly meet our requirements just now, but we really hope you'll try us again..."

Holy Moses, you can write! Alas, we just can't use an article on the whorehouses of Lost Atlantis, no matter how funny and delightful it is, but please, please send us something we can use.

+++

"All our material is staff written, and we are not considering outside contributions at this time."

We don't buy hardcore porno; we don't buy kiddie stories; we don't buy material handwritten in pink magic marker; we don't buy the work of illiterate amateurs who don't know their trade, and I'm too busy, and you're too hopeless, for me to attempt to educate you. Get lost.

+++

"I have taken the liberty of rearranging and editing your material slightly..."

I had to rewrite the damn thing from end to end. If you look at your manuscript and see what I did with it, you might learn something, and next time your pride, and my sweat, can both be spared.

+++

I also developed, due to the publisher's permanent tight-money policy, and his firm belief that anything over a cent a word was rank inflationary nonsense, a set of phras-

es in editorialese for dealing with those of my writers who were not simply so pleased to see their names in print that they took each check as a pleasant surprise.

For instance, the most useful, necessary and overworked phrase in my little Editorialese Phrase Book became "in due course." As in, of course, "payment will be sent in due course" or "we'll have a decision on this in due course."

The translation, it hardly needs saying, was simply whenever we get around to it.

There were others. "Payment will reach you when it has been processed through the accounting department" means: One of us, in the constant rush, forgot to put through a voucher for the word-count and check, and the whole damn thing has to be gone through again.

"Payment will be forthcoming very soon now" means we'll pay you when we hear from your lawyers or when you threaten to move into the office to sleep after you've been evicted.

"We have altered our policy to payment upon publication" means you'll get a check unless we decide to fold the magazine before we get around to using your story.

"Payment is by arrangement only" means we can't pay you, and we suggest you don't bother sending us anything more unless you don't need the money and just write for the fun of seeing your name in print. It's the professionals—keep-out of the publishing business.

Don't think I enjoyed learning to write in editorialese. Every phrase added to my Handy Notebook meant another illusion dropped; as I wrote in a rare moment of honesty to one of the equally rare literate professionals who roosted—briefly—in our pages before giving up on us, "Look, friend. I'd love to have all the good material from respectable agents to choose from; I'd like to pay five cents a word, and I'd like to send out the checks on acceptance. But I'm not really running the magazine at all. I just work here, like anybody else."

In the course of my eleven months on the magazine, I also learned to translate what was said to me by the publisher.

I asked, for instance, about buying art for the magazine, and was told, "We make special arrangements for that." Translation, as I soon found out: We get all our art from a cold-type book, which is why it looks exactly like all the other art in all the other magazines we publish.

Now and then, the publisher would use some original artwork "reprinted by popular demand." Translation: he had a four-foot stack of old finley, Lawrence, &c., pen-and-ink drawings left over from use in SF pulps back in the forties, which he'd bought up for a couple of bucks apiece and which he'd

used eight or nine times each.

"We hope to develop a consistent editorial point of view, by having a great deal of our material staff-written." Translation: We can't pay decent free-lance rates, you poor dope; you're going to have to write them yourself so I can be sure of getting my full money's worth for your salary.

"You can take the work home, and do it at your leisure." Translation: We're short of desk space around here, and I'm too stingy to put in another one for you.

And, of course, there was the most frightful phrase in any publisher's Handy Notebook. If you hear it more than three or four times, once you learn to translate it, it's bound to drive you right out of the editorial profession, and right back to your free-lance typewriter. It goes like this:

"Listen, dear, we're going to press tonight, and we're just a little short for the issue..."

And of course the translation is:

There's nothing but crud in the slush-pile, so please let me have a 9,000-word lead article, all copy-edited and blurred, on a nice, popular, controversial topic—but not too controversial—by five o'clock this afternoon. Oh, yes, and be sure it has a nice short snappy title so we can slug it on the cover, and maybe a couple of illustrations or photographs...what the hell do you mean it's short notice? What the hell am I paying you for?

If you have to hear this more than twice, it's your own fault.

REMEMBER* Send your change of address if you move, please.

*If you don't, the black spot will appear on your palms & it will last three months.

GET READY TO PULL DOWN YOUR EYEBROWS

I may be the only living person in America—nay, in the entire world—who has read JONATHAN LIVINGSTON SEAGULL by Richard Bach and not thought it simply sweet and fine and inspiring.

I found it fatuous: 1. Foolish; blandly inane. 2. Without reality; illusory.

A metaphysical parable, yes. Using some of conventions—teleportation, time-travel, higher and lower "planes" of existence, telepathy....

Everyone reading it, of course, identifies with the outcast hero seagull who is different because he is autonomous and superior and who makes a breakthrough into another plane of existence where other superior outcast gulls learn and teach still greater mental and spiritual powers.

Then there is Jonathan's return to the mundane flock who treat him as heretics and Christ figures are usually treated...but he prevails, recruits other outcasts, gives them a start in improving the breed, and then goes off to another level of awareness or existence....

I wasn't impressed....on any level.

And I may shoot the next seagull I see flying differently than all the other gulls.

Grump

A PERVERSE LUST

Mike Moorcock seems to like to write saga novels. AN ALIEN HEAT is Volume One of a trilogy titled THE DANCERS AT THE END OF TIME.

AN ALIEN HEAT begins with an Earth of the far, far future, on the brink of the end of time. Its inhabitants are the dancers, obviously.

To quote the dust jacket, which says it succinctly: "Society and technology have advanced to the point where death no longer exists, birth hardly at all; the small remaining population is very rich, very decadent, very sophisticated, very bizarre.

"The world draws its enormous power from its jewelled cities with their ripe and rotting technologies."

"Jherek Carnelian, something of an oddity in this society, decides to sport an unusual affectation: he will 'fall in love'. When Amelia Underwood arrives, a reluctant time-traveler from Victorian London, he determines to possess her, finds himself truly in love, and plunges backward in time to capture her."

There are rivalries and jealousies in this far future, and enemies.

The contrast in Mrs. Underwood's Victorian moral structure and Jherek's utterly sophisticated lack of morals is fascinating. I suspect Mike has some surprises in store for us—perhaps some sly switches—in this area in the next volumes of the trilogy.

Mike has a sweet command of language and technique. Those English writers—they got rhythm.

He succeeds in making this eccentric, outre future world strangely believable... mainly through his characters.

I look forward to the next volume. (Harper & Row, \$4.95)

LETTER FROM DAMON KNIGHT

"I liked your review of ORBIT 11 but was crushed that you did not understand Alien Stones. I think it is a brilliant piece of work, better in some ways even than The Fifth Head of Cerberus, & for goshake he

tells you what it's about, over & over—the integers represented by those lost pebbles, the intersections of lines & planes in the two spaceships, the pseudopersonality of Wad—all these spaces that can be filled or empty, & mathematically it doesn't matter which."

((I suppose I should reread the story... but I probably won't. The crush of incoming is too great.))

LETTER FROM ROBERT A.W. LOWNDES

"Last Wednesday, my mail box was illuminated with the handsome new ALIEN CRITIC. You'll be fascinated (I hope) to learn that the following books on my after-dinner reading were shoved aside at once.

"Tolstoy: WAR AND PEACE. Third reading, this time in the Anne Dunnigan translation (Signet), which I find in many ways better than the fine Aylmer Maude translation I had read and re-read earlier. Since I know the story, one chapter at a sitting (or lying, since I'm sprawled out on the sofa).

"De Sade: JULIETTE. First reading. I'm breaking it up into 10-page installments, and have barely started. Since the book (Grove Press) runs to 1193 pages, it's likely to last for quite a while.

"Duncan Williams: TROUSERED APES. Re-reading, a chapter at a time. You probably would not care for it as the author is Anti-Egalitarian; Anti-Liberal; Anti-Materialist; Anti-Revolution; Pro Reform; Pro Literature of the Past; and Pro Christianity. (I'm solidly with him on all except the final item.) There's a very interesting footnote: 'A short time ago, I delivered Chapter Four of this book as a paper before a group of university teachers. Afterwards, a young woman of advanced "liberal" views approached me and said in all seriousness: "You're advocating censorship; you shouldn't be allowed to publish it."' (That, tied in with the Boardman letter in TAC #5 and your comment, started bubbles in my think-tank, which I'll get into later.)

"So Wednesday night, I read beyond my usual retiring time, closing the pages finally when I realized that I'd begun to skim instead of reading, and putting the bookmark back to the last section I had actually read.

"Thursday morning, the following reading schedule was postponed (I get up early and read an hour before dressing and eating).

"Carter: GOLDEN CITIES, FAR. (First reading; near the end of the fourth tale.)

"Verne: 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA. I disremember which re-reading; it's in a new translation (Signet).

"ANALOG: January 1972. (I'm beginning to read the fiction; WEIRD TALES: July 1972)

(re-reading); WONDER STORIES: March 1934
(re-reading).

"And I said to myself: 'This time I'll go all the way,' and dispossessed my computer bus reading—possible, because TAC is now pocket size. CUBA: THE POSSESSED, Dostoevsky (Signet — first reading.)

"First reading finished, TAC is now on the table to be sandwiched in, both AM and PM, a section or two at a time, for the leisurely second reading.

"The four articles are first class, particularly Blish and Leibert. I shall borrow from Fritz for my second ramble on WT, giving him due credit, of course.

"Just as I finished the above, I realized that there is no referent so far as you are concerned at the moment. I have a department in Bill Bowers' OUTWORLDS and the thing I sent him most recently (for issue #17 — #18 is due any moment now) was what turned out to be a two-part reminiscence of WEIRD TALES. Part one was mostly personal; part two will go into why I like the old-fashioned sort of weird tales, well represented in Sam Moskowitz's first issue.

"Let me add, before getting to the main comment, that while I may shove everything aside for the latest TAC for a time—not only because of my interest, but also as an occasion to mock my Virgo systematized style of life—the day will come when I shall decline to let the new issue TAC dominate me for a change.

"Interesting that the bulk of TAC #5 is about AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS, since a month ago I would have considered it very unlikely that I'd ever read it. However, seeing a SF Book Club ad in ANAIGG, and deciding that a hardbound edition of Jim Blish's CIVILIS IN FLIGHT really belonged beside my hardbound FOUNDATION TRILOGY, I flipped the coupon and selected A.D.V. as section of the free books for printing. (The third and fourth were EARLY ASIMOV and THE HUGO WINNERS, which I may or may not give away later.)

"So I've read all the forwards and afterwords and eventually A.D.V. will be on the table. It will be interesting then to re-read your comments, and Piers Anthony's in OUTWORLDS when I've finished, sometime prior to the next national election. I may or may not wonder if we all read the same book, just as some reviews of films I've seen make me wonder if we both saw the same movie.

As noted above, John Boardman's letter and your comment on it, tied in with the footnote from TROUSERED APES, led to self-examination. Am I really opposed to censorship?

"Let me scriptwrite a brief excerpt from a discussion on the subject with a strawman.

"RAWL: Are you in favor of the unre-

stricted circulation of ingeniously forged photos showing you engaged in activities which would at the very least land you in a mental hospital for indefinite 'observation'?

"Strawman: Of course not.

"RAWL: Then you are in favor of censorship. We need only see if we can come together upon what should be censored; whether the particular item should be somewhat or greatly restricted; who has the right; duration of restriction or limitation; exceptions, and so on. But we are agreed in principle, don't forget. End of script excerpt.

"So far as total censorship of pornography and violence in films is concerned I'm opposed to it. I can enjoy a certain amount of 'play' homicide, though not as much as I did in past years. I do not enjoy the sort which Boardman and others say EL TOPO presents—all mayhem for its own sake, just as porn is sex acts for their own sake. But I demand for others the same freedom I demand for myself: to be able to see either DEEP THROAT or EL TOPO, but not to have either thrust upon me—and to have both available at reasonable prices, just in case I want to see either. (I did see DEEP THROAT, and found it moderately amusing; it so happens that I find a bald vulva as enticing as a bald head—not very. And while a well-done fellatio scene can be enjoyable, I really do not find Linda Lovelace that superior at the art, so far as watching goes.)

"I also support the right of parents to decide for themselves what may or may not be dangerous or undesirable for their own children—but not for their neighbors' children. And to make their own homes their own castles. Meaning that parents can and should censor as they feel right (even when they're wrong; I demand for myself the right to be wrong!) but making the rules of their own castle the laws of the community is something else. And I remain unconvinced that either pornography causes its readers or viewers to commit sex crimes, or that violence on film causes its viewers to perpetrate violence. (Granted, either might spur on forces already set up by other causes in certain instances. That cannot be avoided 100% without censoring everything. There's no telling what might arouse sexual desire in any particular individual, or the overpowering urge to smash something or someone.)

"The right to be wrong does not, of course provide immunity from the consequences thereof. And if the law and the courts do not make rape and non-sexual assault, etc., unrewarding then I will no longer have the right to walk the streets in reasonable safety. However, I'm not convinced that suppressing pornographic or violent films would in itself make the streets safer.

"Old Holmes still gives us the best guidelines, I think; free speech does not

include the right to falsely cry 'fire!' in a crowded theater. (Note that the word 'falsely' is frequently omitted from that quotation.)

"Also been thinking of our running discussion on winners and losers. Are you sure we are not winners? Are we not, both of us, getting a reasonable amount of what we really want? Are we not, both of us, mature enough to realize that no one can get everything he or she wants, and most would be terribly miserable if they did? Have we not at times been suckered into accepting other peoples' ideas and proclamations as to what we ought to want and thus accepted ourselves as losers because we were not constituted to make genuine efforts in that direction? Have we not been suckered into accepting unearned guilt?

"I accept no guilt whatsoever for what my predecessors did to the Blacks or the red Indians. And I accept no guilt for not being successful or a 'winner' on other peoples' terms.

"I do acknowledge that I have at times been weak or indolent where I could have done better on my own terms. But that is another matter. It's too bad, but it doesn't make me worthless; perhaps next time I'll have learned something and do somewhat better."

((I have no argument this time. I do think, though, that a prime censorship target is cook books. These evil publications actively induce people to acts of gluttony; they lure and seduce with pictures of delicious food—sensual delights! And cookbooks can result in actual death! Yes, for over-eating results in overweight, and that's heart attack country, to name but one disease. And what can you say in support of a genre that is about food and eating for its own sake? Where is the redeeming social value in a three layer chocolate cake with inch-thick icing? I tell you, we'd all be better off if cook books were banned. People must be protected from their unnatural lusts. If God had intended Man to have three-layer chocolate cakes He would have put them in the Garden of Eden. It is perfectly obvious to me that the forbidden knowledge was not sex—but cooking!

((You're reading the words of a loser, Mr. Lowndes. I'm up to 181 pounds.))

Father Time is chipping away at my immortality.



I HAVE A BLUE BONE TO PICK

Authors amaze me, sometimes. I suppose they get bored and want to experiment and, if they are "big" enough, they can ram a dumb thing down their editor's throat and

oblige the publisher to print it.

I'm sure Martin Woodhouse's editor at whichever English publishing house has him under contract said, "I say, Martin, old boy. It simply won't do to have this epilogue situated in this manuscript as Chapter One. Damn it, man, you tell the reader how it all comes out and then spend nineteen chapters in flashback telling how it all arrived at the beginning!"

And Woodhouse said, perhaps, "Bug off."

"But you destroy all the suspense—and this is a novel of science and suspense. The reader will know there's no chance for the hero, the heroine, and the second-level hero to fail or be seriously hurt. And you even tell the readers the central characters end up billionaires to boot! Why throw all that away?"

Why, indeed? But Woodhouse did it, and that's it. Of course, his casual, informal, slightly tongue-in-cheek style is enough to hint strongly to most readers (who are amazingly sensitive to narrative signals) that there's no serious chance the good people won't make it.

Even so, it does seem stupid to undermine the entire novel with the first paragraph.

So: BLUE BONE by Martin Woodhouse is about Giles Voeman, a reluctant British free-lance espionage agent and his American partner/sidekick who become involved with a young woman whose uncle is a plastics maker/inventor in Czechoslovakia who has made a revolutionary discovery in the plastics field. The Russians hold him captive and he has the secret.

There is a daring, exciting, innovative rescue/escape from East Germany.

They are in turn kidnapped by an impossibly wealthy middle-eastern magnate and held captive on an island in the Bahamas. Giles is coerced into making the revolutionary plastic and giving up the secret. (Oh, sorry—the uncle died immediately after the escape of acute anemia—the fiendish Russians had bled his blood white and kept him in an oxygen-rich atmosphere apartment as insurance. The uncle had told Giles the secret part of the process that no one else could duplicate.)

So, by stealth and cunning, the captives make the plastic into a 60-foot nitro-loaded girder of super-strong plastic, fit it with a detonator, and blow up the bad people.

They escape, of course, and (as already known) become stinking rich (a million dollars a minute isn't bad, to start) and intend to remake the world and live happily ever after.

It'll make a good movie. (Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, \$6.95)

LETTER FROM CHRISTOPHER PRIEST

"There was one thing you said and did in an early REG which struck a chord here, and that was when you signed a contract with (I think) Larry Shaw, and followed the sort of advice given by SFWA on striking out clauses.

"As I recall it, this was a singularly unsuccessful venture for you.

"I've had much the same sort of experience. The theory of striking clauses in contracts, and the practice, is very different.

"My own policy on this is that time is ultimately on the writer's side, and that the contracts one is offered will slowly improve. Though with one pb publisher here, I think every successive contract has slowly worsened. And still I sign...."

((Actually, as it turned out, DEMON'S WIFE did sell to Brandon Books (of which Larry Shaw is the editor) and the contract, after my bold (for me) tampering with the initial clauses, was in the end a much better, more professional and fair one than the one first offered.

((I suspect that Larry had a good deal to do with it, and the fact that my books usually sell very well.

((With your recent Best British SF NOVEL award in your pocket, Chris, you should try to be as tough and greedy as you can. Or get an agent who is not in the least afraid to get for you all that your rising reputation will command.))

"Must go. I'm in the middle of a new book at the moment, THE INVERTED WORLD (due from Harper & Row next year). God knows how it's going to turn out, as I haven't worked out the ending yet; but I'm quite happy with it at the moment. Happy enough to keep going, at least."

OFFUTT ON THE WRONG FOOT

Oh, God, Andy, please, please learn to avoid EDITORIALIZING and SERMONIZING in your novels. Let the reader realize and absorb from the context the truths you have to impart; let those precious observations of yours be implicit in event and dialog....

Thus I lectured Andy Offutt in my mind as I waded through his latest (for me) book, ARDOR ON AROS, a Dell release (0931, 95¢).

It's a slight, sloppy story—intended as a satire on old-fashioned ERBish sword and sorcery fiction. Andy has sex in this, and some confusion and some anti-hero antics...but in the end the hero is indeed a Hero and he gets the right girl (who looks like Sophia Loren) and the evil sorceress (who looks like the young, lush Elizabeth Taylor) is killed...all neatly tangled up in a mild puzzle that concerns an unbelievable (satire) premise:

ated by the minds of a Real Earth assistant to a scientist who has invented a 'temporal dissociator', the scientist's other (female) assistant, and a...pet parrot. Hero is accidentally transported by the 'temporal dissociator' to the Alternate Earth (the pet parrot had been sent along earlier as an experiment. (On the Alternate Earth the parrot is as intelligent as a human and creates his own jungle and native slaves.)

The novel is presented in a Preface by Andy Offutt, writer, as a narrative he discovered recorded mysteriously on six cassette tapes in his office. The narrator claims in the tapes that he had a psi-strong inhabitant of the Alternate Earth project his dictation into Real Earth...and the message just happened to imprint in the Offutt tapes.

Hi, ho. Fun and games. Indulgent first-person technique. Andy may have taken a whole week to type this novel.

Yet—it has its captivating moments. It drags you along in spite of Andy's lectures and introspective-Hero squirms.

"A quite serious art critic once suggested that along with his first exhibit of abstract art, every artist should also display a nude, a still life and a landscape. This would at least disarm the critics who make such non-comment as 'It looks like the work of my five-year-old daughter.' It would also silence speculation about those who think the abstract artist adopts this style because he can't draw. (Not to mention showing up those who really can't.)

"I think it might also be interesting if those poets who claim to have outgrown or transcended classical verse forms, scan-sion and rhyme, were to include in their first anthology examples of classic sonnets, villanelles, ballades and such..."

—DAY*STAR for February 1973, by

Marion Zimmer Bradley.

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J.E.S.U.S. CHRIST!

Jack Woodford used to advise writers to go the route of self-publication, to get started, and in truth some now-famous authors, denied publication by mistaken commercial publishers, have self-launched themselves.

Jack used to publish some of his own books, too, and made money at it. He had a healthy dislike of most New York publishers and especially pretentious reviewers. He wrote a book denouncing them all called THE LOUD LITERARY LAMAS OF NEW YORK (Vantage, \$2.50) in 1950.

But the obvious problems of self-publication are distribution and costs. 99% of vanity press authors end up with a basement full of unsold books—monuments to

their egos and dreams.

Vantage is a "vanity" publisher. They recently sent two sf-ish books for review.

The first of these is J.E.S.U.S. by R. Keith Cox (\$4.50). It is very bad. Cox's prose klunks across the 85 pages of this very short novel like a cliché-leaking dump truck with square wheels.

It is a pain to read.

He is (as someone once wrote of another writer) innocent of talent. He is earnest and sincere and ignorant of economics, of computers and of corporate management. He deals in used ideas (as do most of us) but adds nothing; in fact he leaves them in worse condition.

His story of people involved with a super computer acronymed J.E.S.U.S. and the national, local and personal consequences of its development and use is simplistic low-grade soap opera.

Wincing, I had to force myself to skim. And I realized why 99% of vanity press novelists must pay to be published; they are hopelessly unfit writers.

...

The other Vantage book is TRANSFER by George I. Smith, priced at \$3.50, also a short, short novel of about 35,000 words.

Smith has imperfectly mastered the professional forms of fiction; there are, yet (and perhaps always will be—it's difficult to know with the klutzy writer what is due to inexperience and what is due to lack of intelligence and/or talent; some would-be writers try and try and try, study and study and study, and imitate and imitate and imitate...and STILL retain the amazing insensitivity to language which marks them and forever dooms them) a large number of stunning malaprops and awkward in his prose. For examples:

'On one side of the room several reporters were hurling questions to a man who appeared to be in his late fifties. He was spec-tacled, and brandished a mixed-grey beard that was separated from his matching mous-tache by two thin lips.'

'He stopped noisily in front of the building, ejected himself from the car and mounted the steps two at a time.'

'Hadley continued on in a tone that in-ferred he had plenty more to say. "Your comments may well nullify our efforts to keep down tropedation!"'

All the above are strictly sic.

But the passages that brought me scream-ing to my feet were those detailing Smith's astounding ignorance of astronomy.

The story involves a new 'star' discovered 800 million miles from Earth after al-most simultaneous nuclear test explosions just outside Earth's atmosphere by the United States and Russia.

Smith thinks 'asteroid', 'dark star' and 'star' are synonymous, that a 'nebula' of gasses is an atmosphere, and that such a planetoid could go 'nova' repeatedly and affect the Earth's atmosphere drastically, the 'nova' cycles having been somehow trig-gered by the U.S. and Russian nuclear space explosions.

At this point I closed the book, dropped it gently to the gold loop rug and STOMPED it.

Yet, its remains have a place in my col-lection. Truly bad writing is valuable and instructive—if not encountered too often.

THROUGH DARKEST SCIENTOLOGY

"The enclosed book, THE MIND BENDERS, was written by a friend of mine, and I as-sure you from my own experience of many years that that which is written therein is so.

"The whole thing—the history of Sci-entology—is a fantastic tragi-comedy, and I only wish that the book had been three times the length, and had been able to in-clude a lot more of the early history of the subject.

"I had long been an admirer—still am—of LRH's fictional work, and for this and other reasons I was active in the first days of Dianetics and Scientology in Britain. In-deed, I was the secretary of the first lim-ited liability company set up to handle Di-anetics. I was active thereafter also; I earned my living for a while as an independ-ent auditor (using the word in its dianetic, not its accountancy sense) and later joined the Org again, doing various jobs, of high and low degree, at London and Saint Hill.

"Thus, as I say, I can verify Cyril's account. What is sad is that it seems on the whole unlikely that one will ever be able to get together all those others active in the early days, and get comparative ac-counts.

"At present, it is rather like trying to unravel the real history of the USSR—the whole subject gets re-landscaped every so often by Ron, at ever greater remove from the facts.

"None of this would matter, and the whole thing would be comedy only, were it not for the fact that at the heart of all this rubbish and authoritarianism there ac-tually is what the world has been looking for—a simple, effective way of improving the mind and rehabilitating the individual without drugs, hypnosis, or whatever.

"Just as I guarantee that the Org does not work—or rather, that it works at a fantastic cost and redundancy—so I guar-antee the efficacy of that which it contains. I really believe that this is why many good people within the setup, who must know the real facts about it, still hang on there, in the belief that out of evil will come

good. This is creditable to their good in-tentions, but not to their intelligence.

"Ah, well...read on...."

Thus wrote George Hay in a letter ac-companying a copy of THE MIND BENDERS by Cy-ril Vosper.

Vosper was drummed out of the Church of Scientology in a kangaroo-court procedure after 14 years of service. What is shock-ing is not especially the star-chamber "hear-ing" and expulsion, but his acceptance of the Church's dictates after his expulsion—they took away his wife and child. The Church of Scientology apparently considers itself a state-within-a-state in every country where it exists. Its laws—for its believing members—apparently super-cede those of the "surrounding" secular gov-ernment.

THE MIND BENDERS is full of inside in-formation and revealing anecdotes on the day-to-day workings of the Church structure, on the powerful personality and work capaci-ty of L. Ron Hubbard, on the history of the cult (all new religions are "cults" until they reach a certain size and power, where-upon the world bows and legitimatizes them with the religion label) and on the dogma and mental rehabilitation techniques.

All the warts and clay feet are shown (Vosper was high up in the Org); the ugly ego-tripping and venality present in all social structures which involve power over others and large amounts of money is depres-singly present in Scientology, too.

The Org tried to stop publication of this book in England, but lost in the courts. From what I've read they'll sue at the drop of a manuscript, anywhere, to prevent adverse information being published. (Mayflower, 40p, \$1.25)

TIME-AND-A-HALF FOR OVERTIME IS A LONG TIME TO LIVE

As I write this I have very recently learned that Poul Anderson's THERE WILL BE TIME has made the final ballot for Best Nov-el Hugo Award this year.

I must admit this boggled me a bit.

It's a good novel. He wrote it real in many ways. But it's basically hard to be-lieve for two reasons having to do with plot structure and narrative point of view.

To skip through the brambles and get to the outhouse: Poul told the story by means of a passive observer—a doctor who had the decades-long confidence of the boy-youth-man Jack Havig, time traveler.

Jack, every once in a while in need to unburden himself and tell a friend, had to drop in on the old doctor and tell, in in-credible detail, of his adventures in the future and past.

And, to make matters gap even more in

veritas chasm, Poul Anderson played it coy by forwarding that he knew this doctor, Robert Anderson (now dead), and the doctor gave him some ideas for a novel about time travel...and, well...here's the story and believe it or not.

Some people will believe it, I guess.

Thirdly, for me, Bob Silverberg destroyed time travel as a viable theme in UP THE LINE several years ago by devastatingly illustrating the inescapable paradoxes.

Poul, in THERE WILL BE TIME, doesn't really come to grips with the paradoxes. He avoids them by asserting that natural time travel laws make them impossible, and by sinking into an It Is Written, Fate, All Is Pre-Ordained And Cannot Be Changed strategy as a logical side-step.

But within his convenient and necessary time travel laws, Poul has created a good, solid story and a convincing time-travel-is-a-wild-talent theory.

His future history is of great interest, and the shiny, up-beat final vista of hope for Man is nice to read.

Poul did his homework and made the time hops to the past historically accurate and detailed—something Silverberg did in UP THE LINE, too—giving rich depth and convincing interpretation.

THERE WILL BE TIME is at least one-fourth historical novel, and a suspenseful one-fourth indeed. That's the best way to absorb history.

So—one of the better books of 1972, and one of Poul's better efforts. I didn't like his third-hand narrative point-of-view, but that's me. I suppose his way gives the novel a coating of might-be-true which intrigues some.

I also liked his tough-minded TANSTAAFL philosophy which is woven into the action and dialog. (Doubleday, SF Book Club, Signet 451-05401, 95¢)

A TRIPLE PERSONALITY IS BETTER THAN NONE

Out of the blue, one day in June, came a small book of sf overview and analysis. It's titled THREE FACES OF SCIENCE FICTION, and it's by Robert A. W. Lowndes.

It is a limited edition (500 copies) hardbound book published by the NESFA Press, and is available from Donald E. Eastlake III, New England SF Association, Box G, MIT Branch Station, Cambridge, Mass 02139, and costs \$5.95.

My copy is number 253, so there may not be too many left. Bob inscribed a flyleaf thusly: "For Richard E. Geiss; not exactly a soul brother but at least a soul cousin, which is sometimes better."

I grumped at that double s in my name. But I am flattered and happy with the kin-

ship.

THREE FACES OF SCIENCE FICTION is a short book (96 pages, of which only about 80 have full text) but it packs a great deal into those pages.

The book is a series of rewritten editorials which originally appeared in FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION #2 thru #6, in 1967-8.

Bob discusses science fiction as Instruction, as Propaganda, and as Delight. His heart is in the Delight, since that section takes up half the book.

But the book begins with SF as Instruction; that aspect of sf is examined and found wanting. It seems that even with the best of intentions, even Gernsback found only a few stories to publish which were essentially educational in current (1926) science.

Most science fiction then (as now) veered off into fantasy science and yielded to the demands of the story.

Bob is concerned with primary motive—why the author wrote the story—and recognizes, of course, that every sf story is a mixture of instruction, propaganda, and delight (entertainment).

(I must insert here my own experiences with sf as instruction. About 1937, when I was ten years old, I discovered science fiction. And I read it like a fiend. And I absorbed much astronomy: I knew all the planets, their moons, all the major stars, the difference between our solar system, a galaxy, and the universe. Sf ripped open my mind and stuffed it with a Sense of Wonder. I knew about inertia and weightlessness and spacesuits and the asteroid belt.... (Just as I learned a great deal about WWI airplanes in detail by reading G-8 and his BATTLE ACES.) Fiction is a great way to learn.)

Sf as Propaganda also is not dwelt upon too much—H.G. Wells is looked at as a prime example, and C.S. Lewis.

Bob comments that too many sf writers who are pushing messages, push too hard, and as a result alienate most of their perceptible readers.

I am reminded of a quote from James Huneker: "Write only for the young. The old will not heed you, being weary of the pother of life and art."

I could also say to sf propagandists: write only for the young who agree with you beforehand. They won't think and argue. Hard-sell propaganda in sf (because it is obvious) is usually counter-productive.

Bob has boiled it all down in the following:

"The whole necessity in writing science fiction as propaganda, then, is for the writer to have and maintain a sense of proportion; to be an artist and story-teller first;

to present any messages clearly and movingly, but to let the reader make his own judgments, rather than summarizing the case and rendering the verdict and sentence for him. So although science fiction as scientific instruction can succeed only very rarely, science fiction as propaganda can make some solid hits."

In his main section, Science Fiction as Delight, Bob makes the point (and my whole critical position in TAC) with these succinct words:

"Some fiction written as instruction, some fiction written as propaganda, would have been more effective in essay form. But the entire range of fiction throughout the centuries shows that the author who has set out simply to delight, and sometimes nothing more, has often succeeded, where authors starting from the other two bases have often failed. The greatest works of delightful fiction, however, do carry elements of instruction and propaganda. In some instances the author was unaware of what he was really doing, while in others he was; but in neither instance did he fall over himself in the process."

Bob goes on to say that a truly delightful story has a charisma: it weaves a spell. He lists the elements that make up that elusive, subjective quality. They are Invention, Suspense, Characterization, Surprise, Richness and Demand.

This six-part tool of analysis is valuable and useful for anyone who reads much fiction and likes to think about it. It provides a new way of looking at and appraising stories.

Here we go with another quote (this book is compulsively quotable), this time about Demand:

"Demand: It goes without saying that a work which you have found delightful was rewarding to you, but that reward was not free—it was a consequence of your fulfilling the demands that the author made upon any reader.

"When a rather low-level demand value is cited, that does not necessarily imply a slur either upon the exhibit or the author. There is no reason why a work which asks nothing more of you than that you pay attention while you are reading cannot be rewarding. There are times when that, and nothing more, is what we need.

"But the highest reward level comes from that which makes decided demands upon you, and a great deal of what I can only think of as whining comes forth from readers who think (that isn't the right word, but such readers probably believe they are thinking, so we'll let it pass) that an author has not played fair with them when he demands more than they have to give or are willing to give. Grown-ups will either put such a work aside, without emotional display, as being beyond their capacities (at least for

the present) or will rise to the challenge and make the effort. Children blame the author.

'Demands may be stimulations to hard thinking (and putting aside one's biases or prejudices in order to look at what is being said, to re-examine one's own certainties, etc.), or to "feel" things beyond the second-hand level that one experiences in most "popular" fiction, etc. To meet an author's demands you may have to do some outside homework. And, in the end, no one can guarantee that you will find it worth the effort; my own feeling is that no such effort is entirely wasted, even if I did not care for the work after having made it.'

Fair enough. I more or less agree, but I tend to get my back up at the semantics. When an author starts demanding things of his readers and homework is involved, I begin to wonder if fiction is involved or textbooks.

By his skills and talents and artistry the writer should make the reader eager to have his mind opened up, willing to adopt new outlooks, learn new perspectives. In pursuit of more delight, in the web of the narrative spell, the reader will work like a beaver.

But if a writer is lacking in the necessary "magic", then it is his childishness and his whining which is heard if the reader is not interested in work-for-little-or-no-Delight.

And I wish Bob had written of that minority of writers who are so obscure and/or abstract and/or metaphysical and/or vague in their fiction (and so chary of giving delight to the hard-working reader) that the suspicion advances that these writers often deliberately construct and delineate their material so that it will be needlessly difficult and demanding...so as to give themselves an arty and "deep" and Serious Artist image.

Yes, I lay myself open to the "child" label by saying this. But I persist in my belief that simplicity and clarity are goals and ideals for fiction writers, not pitfalls to be avoided at all costs.

I still insist there are ways to say things, to display concepts and ideas and subtleties that do not require the pretentious techniques and cliches of The Serious Writer.

It is unfortunate that there is a class structure in fiction with its resultant role-playing and pecking order.

"Commercial" fiction and "popular fiction" is lowbrow, and even though a writer using those forms and techniques may say the same things as well or better than the writer using the no-plot, anti-hero, no-win, obscurity-ambiguity forms and techniques, he will not be given the same status or credit.

He may well be despised for the crimes of clarity and simplicity and entertainment in certain academic circles.

I will readily concede that I tried to read many books in my teens and twenties which were beyond me; I wasn't ready for them. I had no appetite for their delights. I didn't have the background, the life-experience or the emotional maturity necessary for their full understanding. I was not yet hungry for their type of intellectual food.

And, of course, there are books I come across now that I'm not ready for. Maybe ten years from now I will be. Maybe never; some books and some subjects will probably never be my cup of tea, or will always be over my head.

This is true for everyone. Yet, in fiction, I consider it a confession of incompetence and of failure if a writer cannot or will not make his main points clear while at the same time providing subtleties and nuances and shadings for the more mature and perceptive reader. (This assumes the writer is the equal of the keen reader and is capable of subtleties, etc.)

The ideal work of fiction is rich and a delight for every level of understanding. It should not obviously DEMAND work of the reader. It should not sneer at him for lack of intellect or emotional development. It should not be that narrow or exclusive. It should be written so well the reader eagerly, willingly works while in the charismatic spell of Delight...at whatever level.

I love a writer who can blow my mind and show me unsuspected prejudices, uncertain certainties, different ways of living and thinking...while "entertaining" me with a good story, characters, setting. I want to be delighted emotionally (perhaps instinctually, too) as well as intellectually.

And I hate fakers and bullshitters and bluffers (there are some in every walk of life) who have little or nothing to say, and who erect a facade of Significance and who hide their emptiness in murk and labyrinth and in the artful, knee-jerk elitist "serious fiction" cliches of literature.

Okay, I'm through whining, now. This has been a gilt-edged Richard E. Geis Dribble. Accept no substitutes.

To continue this review of THREE FACES OF SCIENCE FICTION....

Bob Lowndes examines three oldtimers (Verne, Wells, and Burroughs) with the six yardsticks of Delight, and looks at three contemporaries (E.E. Smith, Heilein, and Blish), too.

In his Conclusion, Bob has this to say about criticism of Criticism of sf:

'And I disagree with the contention that criticism of science fiction, especially by

insiders, should be "constructive".

'First of all, what those who complain call "destructive" criticism is not destructive at all. It is what they call "constructive" criticism that is destructive. Constructive criticism of fiction is worth-

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Richard E. Geis
Editor & Publisher

Print run, first printing: 2000 copies. Aug. 1973.

Printed by Perri Press, Portland, OR.

Reprinted in 8½ x 11 newsprint format March, 1976. 3000 copies.

Printed by Times Litho Print, Forest Grove, OR
