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AN INTERVIEW WITH STANISLAW LEM

A NEST OF STRANGE AND WONDERFUL
BIRDS By Sam Merwin, Jr.

ROBERT BLOCH'S GUEST OF HONOR SPEECH

"DEAR LISA, HAVE JUST CLEANED MY
TYPEWRITER WHICH WAS A WILD AND
STUPID THING TO DO..."

By Ted Tubb

THE ALIEN CRITIC

Number Ten

THE HEINLEIN REACTION



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ALIEN THOUGHTS

I made the incautious, highly uncapitalistic admission elsewhere in this issue that I am now making a small profit on TAC.

I have now (June 18, 1974) approximately 1,000 subscribers and I sell approximately 700 copies to bookstores.

Counting new subscription moneys and renewals, I estimate I "clear" about \$300. per month. And I work full-time doing it.

Aha, some will exclaim! All he has to do is advertize all over and send out a couple thousand copies to bookstores and he'll be Rich!

Nope. You can't get there from here. Because in order to have any margin of profit at all, per copy, I have to mimeograph every page myself, gather the pages of every copy myself, and staple every copy myself and address and envelope every copy myself...

And after TAC #8 and #9 I can tell you that 3000 copies is my physical limit. I have to have time to read sf, you know, and time to do a little bit of professional writing outside these sacred pages, such as my column in If, and I still hope to write some science fiction (if only to show all those pros how it's done)... What's that noise? Oh...several hundred eyebrows lifting through ceilings....

So I have had to face a prospect. That is a limitation on the number of subscriptions I can accept. It lies around 1600...as things stand.

I send out about 200+ trade, complimentary and contributor's copies. That's about static.

So—1600 + 200 + 700 + 500 reserve comes to 3000.

Except that at the present rate of subscription growth I'll reach 1600 by the end of the year.

I've already cut back on my advertising. But subs are generated by retail sales, by library copies, by word of mouth, by reviews, too.

I can hear a voice from the balcony:

"Have TAC professionally printed, Geis!"

Ho-ho. I've looked into that a lot. Would you pay a buck for a 24 page zine? The difference in costs is my meager profit. Printed, a 48-page TAC costs enough to set me back to zero income. To make living expenses I'd have to cut the pages in half. Then is the cold equations. I refuse to cut that much of TAC's flesh and blood. Also, frankly, I'd feel like a shit asking a dollar for a thin, anemic thing like that.

(There is also the inevitable limitation built into daily processing-of-mail time. It can sometimes now consume an entire morning.)

There is a circulation limit to a one-man zine, and I do not want to get into a part-time employee scene, and I don't want erratic volunteer help even if it were offered.

So 3000 copies is it. TAC will become somewhat exclusive.

I can increase the number of subscribers by cutting down the number of reserve copies for future back issue sales...and I probably will...to about 350 reserve.

And I can cut down the bookstore copies. This is attractive for this reason: I only make 14¢ per copy. After all expenses are added in it isn't really worth it to sell TAC to retailers. I sell it to them for 50¢ (less than 10 copies ordered cost 60¢ each).

What I'm going to do is this: starting with TAC #11 (Nov. issue) the retail price will go up to \$1.25 per copy. I'll charge the retailer 70¢. He'll get 55¢.

The subscription rate will stay at \$4. for one year (4 issues), and \$7. for two years (8 issues). Foreign subs will continue to cost \$4.50 and \$8.00.

I more or less have to make some kind of retail increase anyway considering the latest increases in paper and ink. (And look for another increase in postage rates to be "suggested" for 1976 next spring. (Third and fourth class rates are already firmly scheduled to increase every year for the next four years!)

The alternatives for you retail purchasers of TAC are obvious: subscribe now and save a dollar a year, and more on a two-year sub. Or don't buy TAC at all. The retailer will perhaps revise downward his order and I'll have a few more copies to give to late subscribers.

The handwriting is on the wall, people: after next May I'll be very close to my subscription limit. After that you may have to get on a waiting list. Or, of course, you can simply pay the extra 25¢ if you get to the store before the stock is sold out. Because I'll have to freeze orders around the first of next year.

+++

I'm trying to be humble and modest about this, but it is difficult in the face of such paens of praise and preference I get. *cough-cough* *preen*

But the fact is an astonishing number of you subscribers and readers seem to want more and more Geis in TAC and not as much material from others.

It has taken me a long time to accept this. You'd really rather read Geis commentary, a Geis Dialog, Geis reviews instead of the Panshins, Ted White, John Brunner....?

Of course I'll still happily publish John Brunner's column when he sends it, and the Panshins when they complete a major analysis. And Ted White when he has time/energy/material for a column.

And I want to continue to publish an interview most every issue. And I want to continue publishing critical articles and reminiscences by those with important memories of the old days in the pulps (and more recent)....

DAMN! If I publish all that I won't have enough room for more me!

Well, I'll TRY to get more Geis in. But I've got a lot of material in the files that must be published (If only because I've paid for it!)

I promise, though, that after a few more issues the TAC mix will change.

+++

Don Redmond sent me a hand-writ letter (dated 6-15-74) in which he cudgels Mike Coney about the head for what might best be called involuntary sexism in his fiction. (Mike, asserts Don, is a captive of his society, brainwashed...)

But I don't want to get into the Coney/sexism or me/sexism bag again. That drawstring is tight and will remain so. Of course there are breathing holes (heavy-breathing holes).

Don goes on: "If sf is to be the revolutionary literature it is capable of being then it will have to stop preaching such attitudes as Mr. Coney projects or else it will simply turn into apologetic for our present society. Such attitudes lead only one place and that is to reaction leaving us in good condition to end up as the present generation of criers of darkness and doom predict."

Sf, of course, isn't self-conscious and self-directing as an entity unto itself—it's a spectrum of fiction controlled by writers, editors and readers. And the ultimate control of sf resides not with the writers or editors or even with the publishers—but in the marketplace, where the readers vote thumbs up or thumbs down on various writers and kinds of sf stories and novels and magazines.

Science fiction will be consciously revolutionary literature only if the revolutionaries gain overall editorial control. If that ever happened (A rich patron buying all the sf mags and major sf pocketbook publishers?) the genre would die very quickly. 95% of the regular buyers of sf would stop buying. (The patron would run staggering losses.)

Most revolutionaries don't like this undogmatic truth. They know what the public should think and read and spend its money on.

Of course, some socially-conscious "relevant" sf has been published. To the extent that it is well-written fiction and not this week's militant tract with dialog it has and will sell its share. (A small share, I suspect.)

But there's no way sf can become truly an advocate of current revolution-

ary social/cultural thought for these reasons:

1. The publishers know it's a money-losing policy and won't permit it because;

2. The bulk of the sf-reading public won't buy it.

Don wants sf to stop being what it is and be something it cannot be. Sf has always reflected current mores. The sf of the 30s and 40s and 50s and 60s shows this. Professors have written papers on it.

Sf at the moment reflects the major social concerns of the early 70s. It cannot reflect the major concerns of the 80s because even if we writers and editors knew the future and embodied it in our unconscious attitudes/fears/hopes as we wrote our stories and edited our magazines, today's public would reject it as something too foreign and far-out. And today's militants would hate it, too, because the future is rarely what we think it will be.

Don is probably a representative of a small minority of paying-customer sf readers. A strong case could be made that the majority of sf buyers are basically conservative, even reactionary in the view of Don and others who are young, idealistic and impatient. Look at ANALOG's sales, and Heinlein's sales and DAW sales and draw your conclusions.

You might say that the "revolutionary" readers and the "conservative" readers divide into one group who believe basic improvements in man can be made by force and/or education, and another group who do not think man can be so easily altered...and should not be altered 'for his own good' by gene-tampering techniques.

In a larger sense, the readership is divided into sf-as-entertainment vs. sf-as-literature & Higher-Purpose factions.

(Of course it's more complicated than that. The most entertaining sf is gripping and unobtrusively educational. When writers start putting "education" first or when they start

putting themselves first by writing "literature" the result is bad fiction...and readers have very good antennae for detecting stories with ulterior motives.)

I am in the group who don't think man is perfectible (since Perfection changes so often) or should be changed in the first place.

In passing, I think there are short-term cycles, mid-term cycles, and long-term cycles in human affairs. Great swmps of the pendulum of history—tides, if you will, caused by as yet unknown factors. It would be fascinating to make a series of overlaid graphs showing the sine-wave cycles in civilizations, governments, religions, economics, dress, literature, art, climate, sun cycles, cosmic waves, the variations of the Earth's electrical field.... We might be astounded—and dismayed—at the relationships revealed.

But back to Don's desire for revolutionary sf.

Science fiction has always presented all kinds of alternate "alien" and future societies, cultures and economies as background, as setting. In a subtle way sf has always been mind-blowing, revolutionary and anti-establishment.

But, of course, 'The future isn't what it used to be' and specific now-advocacy in sf is inherently self-defeating...and foolishly irrelevant.

As I wrote to Samuel L. Konkin III who edits NEW LIBERTARIAN NOTES:

"I am a minority of one. All basic ideas are extant; when a culture or society "needs" a philosophy or rationale, it's available, is adopted. The basic forces that move society are not ideas. Ideas are the emperor's new clothes."

+++

Maybe my ragging of the bankruptcy referee did some good after all: today (6-24-74) I got a check for \$39.94 as final settlement on my claim of \$525. Sheesh!

AN INTERVIEW WITH STANISLAW LEM

By Daniel Say

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REG Note: This interview has been updated and corrected by Mr. Lem as of December, 1973.

Note by Daniel Say: This interview was done in the course of several letters during 1972. All of it was done in English. LEM'S ANSWERS ARE ENTIRELY IN HIS OWN ENGLISH. This is not a translation. It has been edited for sense. Editorial comments have been enclosed in double parentheses and initialed.

LEM: Will you interview me? I can do some question-asking myself. As a sample, firstly, the numbers:

I have written some 28 books, and 23 were SF; translated in 26 languages; 5.8 million copies sold; an SF opera, CYBERIAD (with a young Polish pomponist, K. Meyer), the first part of which has been shown on our TV, channel one, for the general public—no men involved, only robots, androids and computers.

Recently published: my newest book, INSOMNIA, with a long short story, "Futurological Congress", and some shorter stories.

In 1972 there appeared another book of mine, PERFECT VACUUM, an anthology of fictive criticism, about non-existent books (some SF, some "normal" or "anti" novels, philosophical stuff, "new cosmogony", etc.). Now ((1972 REG)) I am doing nothing at all, since I have worked very hard till August.

Do I know some prominent men in the field?

Well, there is Dr. Franz Rottensteiner of Austria, with his fanzine QUARBER MERKUR, and I have written for him some articles in German which he translates into English for publication in Bruce Gillespie's Australian fanzine, SCIENCE FICTION COMMENTARY.

But perhaps I know more scientists than S-fictioneers.

What do I think about this high-brow theorizing about Lem & SOLARIS, to be found in the appendix of Walker's edition of this novel?

Well, I don't know. The author, Prof. Suvin, thinks I am already a living classic, stuffed with first quality thought (but he has not read all of my books).

It was so well-written that I have believed every word of it. So I am a classic and I must now watch my every step, in danger lest I write something stupid.

Who do I like in the SF field?

Well, to tell the truth, no one; even myself I do not love as I perhaps should.

But who do I find attractive and readable?

Bester, Le Guin (THE LEFT HAND...), Walter Miller, Aldiss, Delany...and D. Knight and J. Blish (his short stories) and J. Hougron (a French writer), and Capoulet-Junac from France, too, and Herbert Franke (a German writer), and, of course, a lot of other people.

But most of the stuff is terrible trash.

Well, I am ready to answer some more questions if you will put them.

Q: Would you like to tell us a bit about yourself? We know only the barest details from Darko Suvin's books.

LEM: Because my father and my uncle were doctors, I should have been one, too.

But first there came the war and I worked in a German enterprise as a mechanic and a welder (doing a little sabotage without any special effort, since I WAS a very bad welder).

Secondly, never did I love the medical profession too much: I planned to study theoretical biology. This was already my plan after the war, in 1946, when my family moved from Lvov to Cracow.

In 1947 I wrote some poetry and little stories.

In 1948 I became associate research worker in the "Circle for Science of Science", organized in Jagellonian University, I wrote some little essays for a scientific journal, LIFE OF SCIENCE, I tested university students, and, because the Circle imported scientific literature from abroad for all our universities (there was after the war a great scarcity of the newest literature in all fields), I simply devoured all books that seemed interesting before they were sent where they belonged.

That was when I first heard of cybernetics..

Then came the Lysenko affair; I did not know much about biological matters, but nevertheless enough to discriminate between right and wrong, and I told myself it was better to change my plans.

My then already written novel, NOT LOST (translated by Suvin as TIME SAVED) could not be published for political reasons.

I wrote another novel, a naive SF story, ASTRONAUTS. This was the beginning.

Q: Why did you leave doctoring?

LEM: Well, as I said, I was not dreaming about being a doctor. I like this kind of education, but for purely cognitive reasons.

I was undecided what to do. I knew only I did NOT want to be a physician. Perhaps I like books more than human beings. But I did not think seriously about a writing career then—around 1948-50.

Q: What hobbies and other recreations do you have?

LEM: Now, practically none. I used to play tennis, did some mountaineering and skiing every winter, but none of that anymore.

I play with my little son (he is five-and-a-half in 1973) and that is all.

I like to do photographic tricks, and to work on my car, and so on, but

there is no time for hobbies. In my country it is practically impossible to have a secretary; I must do all my work, correspondence, etc., alone. This takes, every year, a little more of my time.

I answer letters between 6 and 8 in the morning, then I give a lift to my wife to the city (she is a doctor and we live in the suburbs), then there is lunchtime, and new mountains of correspondence, and books, and telephone calls (TV, film, editors, journalists, etc.), and in the evening I am again complaining, another day is gone, and I have done practically nothing new—that is, I could not write new stuff—I can not afford to answer the fan mail, only in "extreme" cases...and to do anything, in the end, I flee to Zakopane (High Tatra) where every year I live incommunicado for a month.

So no hobbies, sir, only work, and lectures, and this is getting worse.

Q: How did you start writing SF and why?

LEM: How and why I came into SF, I simply do not know. Initially this was no serious matter, and now this is my profession. Kind of irreversible process.

Q: What did you read when you were young and what were the first SF influences. What were the Polish and Western literary influences or books that you liked and did you model any of your early writing on any of them?

LEM: I loved books when I was a child. I read all books, even anatomical handbooks, from my father's bookshelves. And of course Verne, Wells, some Polish writers, not on the whole typical for my age—as, say, Grabinski, who wrote weird and ghost stories.

But my first contacts with then contemporary SF were late—I was then an author of some SF myself (after 1951).

From my master and chief in the Circle of Science I obtained Stapledon (ODD JOHN, FIRST AND LAST MEN). Stapledon made a great impression on me.

But other books, not in any way connected with SF, too (e.g. R. H. Rilke, J. Conrad, Saint Exupery).

Systematically I have been reading SF only while planning my monograph. I did like some authors and some books, but their influence is not, I think, comparable with that of properly scientific books.

I learned English while reading Bertrand Russell, N. Wiener, Shannon, McKay, and so on; I "decoded" them with a vocabulary. I could not afford to buy books during the German occupation, nevertheless they were on my table, as they came to me by accident. I remember reading then Eddington's DER INNERE AUFBAU DER STERNE, in no way a popular book; I read this German version because it was there. I liked the inner architecture of stars very much—in his presentation. And mathematics, and biographies of great men of science, especially of mathematicians.

With one single exception I have been reading all obtainable books. I did not feel any attraction toward historical books. I am attracted only by the the content of scientific books, and the quality of style is for me also of great importance.

I like men who write with a hint of irony, say, as Bertrand Russell (his splendid HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY) or the physicist Feynman. And Ludwig Wittgenstein, and a couple of others.

I must say that all this was studied without any thought of pragmatical character, say as a prelude for writing SF. I simply like reading scientific stuff in a first-class—this is important for me—in the FIRST HAND presentation, and if it is too difficult I work hard to grasp the meanings; this is my attitude even now.

Say, structural linguistics was tabula rasa for me till 1965, but when writing my PHILOSOPHY OF CHANCE—this is an essay in empirical theory of literature—I became aware of my ignorance, so for one year I did nothing but study mathematical linguistics and structuralistic literature of all possible kinds.

I think all these books shaped my mind, more profoundly than fiction. As for fiction, I am highly selective; I read some of it for duty, not for pleasure. (To know, simply, what is going on in the mainstream, what are the guys doing.)

Q: Your English is quite good. Where did you learn it and why don't you try to do your own translations? What languages do you read or speak?

LEM: Oh, no, my English cannot be good. I do not understand spoken English nor do I speak it; I can only read, and I wrote my first letter perhaps three or four years ago. Before then I did not even imagine I could write a meaningful sentence.

I speak French, German and Russian. I now and then write an essay or a review in German, or in Russian; I have lectured in both of these languages. But, to write one's own literary works in a foreign language, that is another matter. I must express myself in this in Polish only.

Perhaps it shall sound as arrogance, but I have this feeling, that I have virtually more ideas than I could put into books. (Ars longa, vita brevis.) This is where PERFECT VACUUM came from, as an answer to the question: how to write books while not writing them? Why, the solution I found is of course ironical—to write essays, reviews of nonexistent books—but it was on the whole not a bad solution to this problem.

I do not make screen, TV, or other adaptations of my own works; in general, I do not like to do anything in the reverse. I abhor the idea of repeating myself—while doing adaptations, or translations, or whatever.

PERFECT VACUUM led to my next book, IMAGINARY GREATNESS. (This English title cannot be a right translation, since in Polish and German there is the same word for 'quantity' and 'greatness' from which comes the ambiguity in the Polish title of the book, absent in the English version.)

This book is an anthology of forewords to various books from XXI Century (Forewords only, that is.) In a day or two it shall be present at our bookmark-et (1973).

Q: Will your treatise on SF affect your writing of SF, and if so, how? Could you give us a short summary of the treatise? How did you get the Western books for your treatise and do you keep up with the current SF scene?

LEM: SF AND FUTUROLOGY was my fourth nonfictional work. It was preceded by "DIALOGI" (1956), SUMMA TECHNOLOGIAE (1962), and PHILOSOPHY OF CHANCE (1968).

Of course all these books have somewhat influenced my writing, even if only indirectly.

Especially SUMMA: this book is not similar to the contemporary brand of futurology, because I did not know anything about futurology while writing it. This is an "Ideal Futurology", that is, analogous to "ideal gases" or "frictionless machines" of physics. You have no friction in these machines, and there is no "fiction", i.e. political, social "noise" in my SUMMA.

I was searching after the answer to the question, is the human knowledge and mastery of all possible phenomena of matter, mind and body delimitable? What about "astroengineering", autoevolution, mechanization of mind processes, automatical breeding of information, metaphysics of automata, problems concerning regulation and steering of cosmogonical processes, cultural "encapsulation" of psychozooids, technological collapses, etc?

Of course this was an unrealizable task, but, then, I like mostly unrealizable tasks.

As to SF AND FUTUROLOGY, it was, I think, a problem of decency. I am called an SF writer, so I felt my duty to be oriented in the whole field, to know the theory of the genre, but to my greatest disappointment I could not find a trace of such a theory.

Then I set myself to build it.

It cannot be built in an alogarithmic manner, this I know now for sure; and the reductio ad absurdum of 99% of today's SF, realized in this work, was sincerely, done inadvertently. The more I have been reading of contemporary SF, the greater was my disenchantment. Initially I had been thinking only that I could not obtain the proper books, but then I saw that they are as rare as diamonds of fist size. But I repeat: I was not in the least interested in an "annihilation" of SF, I was simply searching for something unexisting in the whole field.

How to put it? As I see it NOW, there was a big misapprehension on my part. After READING Stapledon (and HEARING only about the newest SF) I had been anticipating—for sure unconsciously—a gigantic, multibranched tree, growing from this seed. I did not so very much like Stapledon for what he had accomplished, but for the way he opened new endless perspectives, gigantic possibilities for an ongoing construction of hitherto unarticulated hypotheses. I saw, how much better is the broad frame of Stapledonian discursive thought than his purely artistic capability. So I anticipated his successors would outgrow him—in both dimensions. But, in comparison with the informational content, and the intellectual density of his books, contemporary SF is one big recession.

The general rule as I see it is now: how to put an idea into as many words as possible, how to inflate every little crumb of originality—or even of pseudo-originality.

So my so-called contempt of today's SF is no feeling of superiority; I am simply searching after truly NEW information, and I am instantly antagonized by any old stuff disguised as something dazzling.

I am awaiting not one but a multi-dimensional series of breakthroughs, while mostly the Sfctioneers are doing the opposite to my expectations—running in circles.

But what kind of content am I—or, rather—was I awaiting? Why, hitherto unknown patterns of philosophical thought,

new sociological concepts, a galactical variety of new psychozoical phenomena, some insight into "automata thinking"; some of them all pointing to the human fate, others being simply new hypotheses about the nature of the Universe, and so on.

But I have found only old myths superficially encrusted with pseudo-scientific vocabulary, fairy tale structures, little tricks, primitive inversions of elementary meanings. In a word—substitutes, disguise and mimicking. Generally absent is the originality of NEW ontologies.

If you will compare the SF work of a man such as Asimov with his nonfictional work (scientific popularization), you will see how much of his better knowledge Asimov "tames" as a Sfctioneer. How much more he KNOWS, and how much falsification and simplification he puts into his SF stories. You do not seriously for a moment think that he himself BELIEVES, say, in planetary plants waiting for terrestrial cosmonauts to make fools of them by means of hallucinogenic manipulation of their minds—or do you?

There is, of course, the need for a prima facie contra-empirical PREMISE for a story, and that it is a permissible thing to be done: (licentia poetica), say, as cosmonautics with superlight speed.

But there is a big difference between ONE contraempirical premise, and the unceasing neglect of the total factual evidence.

Either the SF writers are simply ignoramuses, or they withhold their better knowledge from their literary work.

What should have been perhaps an extravagant exception became the law of the genre.

I am, of course, for ALL gifted authors, and for EVERY kind of well-written story—say, for Cordwainer Smith, but not as a "SF writer", because he was not that, only a MODERN fairy-tale teller, and I like fairytales very much. I only do not like fairytales given for empirical hypo-

theses, or trash and nonsense proposed as "bold speculation".

At first I was very perplexed by the state of SF. Now I think I understand it a little better.

Nevertheless I remain an alien body amidst SF—and so I understand perfectly why my work can offend some SF writers, antagonize and disturb them, even if, from a bird's eye, such a situation is extremely grotesque. This, because SF should be galactically broadminded, and ready to accept every possible pattern of hypotheses, while, as shown by the evidence of some hostile reactions, SF is paradigmatically a closed, petrified thing, ready to condemn every "deviation".

Even if someone like Richard Geis (in his late SF REVIEW) was broadminded enough to accept my SOLARIS, he said nevertheless, ending his review, that it is "thinking man's SF".

The conclusion leads—unavoidably—that all remaining SF is NOT for the "thinking man". Great Scott, what kind of reader is he implying? Unthinking?

There you have this dividing gap. While reading a fairy-tale we must suspend our "rational doubt"—of course. But the reading of a story with the same suspension of disbelief, typical for fairy-tales, is for me a contradiction in adiecto in SF.

I think it is mostly my education at fault. All the galactical empires with their feuds and wars, all those DUNES, are a terrible bore to me. There is no possibility that I could enjoy any kind of SF "extraterrestrial anthropology", since the very first authentic true study of human cultural behavior contains much more of "wonder" than all this primitive stuff.

Take, say, the history of arachnidism, or of some orgiastic rites, or the symbolic role played by praying mantis in some parts of THIS world, or some hundred similar motives, how can they be seriously compared in all their intrinsic complexity and metaphysical ambiguity with the "creeds and beliefs" of galactic races as they are (in an infantile way) shown in SF?

I do not say that all SF, to be positively appreciated and esteemed by me as reader, must conform to contemporary science. Never in the world. It only must represent a degree of logical cohesion, or intellectual focus, of intrinsic complexity, COMPARABLE with the already attained complexity of contemporary science, and with the diversity of human behavior, and with the wonderful architectonic of biospherical homeostasis, and so on.

So, while I could not summarize my treatise on SF, I am trying to show you my motives for writing this book. (How could I obtain the SF? But this was easy—from my various editors, and being abroad and buying those books, and so on.)

Q: Are you in contact with many SF writers?

LEM: Contacts with SF writers? Practically none.

Q: Have you read much Western criticism of SF (Blish, Amis, Knight, etc.), and what do you think of it? Was PERFECT VACUUM intended to be a commentary on it?

LEM: Yes, I know the criticism of Amis, Moskowitz, Blish, Knight, Lundwall, and of some others. I know too some works of new, academic criticism, say as published in EXTRAPOLATION. Well, this is on the whole reviewing, and timid attempts at genealogical description, sometimes written cleverly and with wit (as e.g. Knight's IN SEARCH OF WONDER), but there is not a trace of a general theory of the genre.

Well, to put it precisely, there were some attempts at such a theory, say for example, Prof. Suvin's. But I do not think that his trials are the right thing. He attempts to build a SF theory partially based on historical reflexion of genealogical type, and only partially descriptive (=synthesis of diachronical and synchronical modes).

But as I see it, a SF theory, not value oriented in any way, purely descriptive, NON-BIASED in any way, is an impossible task. It would be an iso-

morphic analogy of general biological theory (in theoretical biology). But this type "environment" with its "organisms"—here the biosphere with all the living things, there the "ecology" of SF, embedded in fandom plus the "silent majority" of passive readers—are in no way isomorphic.

So, while a purely descriptive, diachronical AND synchronical general theory of life phenomena is a comprehensible and possible thing, this is not the case with SF.

WHY? Because ALL the living organisms are truly perfected; they represent only "the best" of all evolutionary attempts at solving the survival problem. So a biologist must not EVALUATE every genus and species, while an SF critic is obliged to do this very thing. Evolution is simply eliminating all "badly built" organisms, but the environment of readers is not, alas, so competent a filter and judge.

So the primary task MUST be some evaluation, based on general trends and axioms of a cultural character. I think that, on the whole, the "inner" criticism of Blish or Knight is—objectively—a more honest thing than some of the maneuvering shown in various papers published in EXTRAPOLATION. You cannot tacitly concentrate yourself on a couple of works, selected apriorically, and at the same time not say a word about the horrifying badness and platitudes of the average, the mass SF production.

A descriptive task is admissible only if you take into consideration the WHOLE SET of the proper phenomena. The very attempt at a "selective" blinding equals scientific dishonesty. I am sorry to say it, but it is so. And, to continue, survival is the ultimate goal in natural evolution, but works of art cannot be appreciated according to their "survival fitness" only, especially if it is of the purely commercial kind.

So this SF theory must be goal and value oriented. No perfectly neutralized theory—axiomatically neutralized, that is—can be made. So there you have my opinion on the newest academic

criticism, in brief. The inner criticism, as found in fanzines, is no good, either.

Take the famous problem of the definition of SF. My, but this is pure scholastics, medieval manners, totally irrelevant, the search for religious dogmas. They are necessary in a religious belief as instruments of discrimination between orthodoxy and heterodoxy (to be condemned).

But the first duty of a creator, in science or in arts, is to crush and transcend every existing definition (but of course not to simply IGNORE it!). Is not creation by the very meaning of the word something HETERODOXICAL, not in accordance with the hitherto reigning dogma?

How does our knowledge progress? Take two initially separated concepts of logic and of thermodynamics. From where comes the new concept of information? Why, from HYBRIDIZATION of logical and physical aspects of phenomena; that is, from abolishing formerly valid definitions.

So the only reasonable definition of SF can only state what are hitherto known necessary conditions to be fulfilled by a work of literature, with a clause that the emergence of a new "mutation", "species", "genus" of such work may in fact abolish all our contemporary operational definitions of "what an SF work is, and what it is not".

For instance: is a straight history of the United States' future—SF or not? I mean a kind of a handbook, without any dialog or romantic encounters, etc. Is a piece of an encyclopedia from 2918 A.D.—SF or not? Is a treatise on multisexual behavior of the 20th generation of cyborgs—SF or not? Is a lecture on cosmogonical theory from the XXXI century—SF or not? Is a general theory of automata, with inbuilt libido—SF or not? Well, I think this to be the very essence of SF possibilities.

But all this is relevant ONLY in SERIOUS SF. All other modalities—satire, pastiche, grotesque, allegory, etc.—are simply literature using or

abusing some typical SF tricks or masquerades.

And I am not only nihilistic when talking about SF. I think the mainstream of today is in general retreat from main positions, attempting an "aesthetically disguised and camouflaged" escapism (with some exceptions, of course), and so I have privately coined an aphorism:

The mainstream tells us now practically all about nearly nothing, while SF tells us almost nothing about all.

(This means: the "mythological realism", the anti-novel, etc., are phenomenally eloquent about totally marginal, minor, irrelevant details and pieces of life, and at the same time SF speaks clumsily, out of focus, badly—about "all", that is, the Universe, human fate, life in the Cosmos, and so on.

No, as was already stated, PERFECT VACUUM has nothing to do with SF criticism. It was my intention only to write some new books, while in a way not writing them—to economize mechanical effort while not sparing the intellectual effort. And the "SF books" represent a small minority in PERFECT VACUUM: some three pieces amidst some 14 or 15.

Q: How do you write? —when inspiration hits you or in short regular daily stints—with notes or from a prepared mind? Do you prefer long or short stories and which of these is easier for you to write?

LEM: I do not know anything about Her Holiness Inspiration. I have tried all thinkable, rational, optimization procedures (tactics of writing).

All in vain. I do not know where my ideas come from. Some 95% of them I judge worthless—but of course one could build around them some "SF narrative". They come in dreams, but this is very rare; sometimes while reading scientific papers, especially mathematical ones. But then, there is no evidence of a rational linkage between a new idea and the said paper. Perhaps this reading works as a "mixer" or "amplifier", or an apparatus which loads

"pure diversity" into my head. I simply do not know.

I write in a very messy, wasteful way. I must write every piece as a whole. If it is badly done—and it is ALWAYS bad the first time—I must simply throw it away and write again. It goes that way four, five, or even ten times; with luck at the end, sometimes, and sometimes with a dud there. I am the author of some 25 or 27 volumes of PUBLISHED fiction, and of 100 or more volumes of "worthless embryos"—wasted time and paper. This waste is enormous, but there is no help for it.

And truly I never know what I am writing—if it will be a short story, a novel, a serious thing or something grotesque—what problems may emerge, and so on. This is one hell and damnation, especially since I AM a rationalist, but it is so. Amica sapientia, sed magis amica veritas.

I was always interested in the mechanism of creation, and hold the opinion that this mechanism is practically the same in all men, in science as in arts. Some profound observations were made by the late Wadarnard in the field of mathematics. Of course you cannot get something from nothing, so the process of "loading" one's brain with various kinds of information is a necessary, even if not sufficient premise of the creative work.

I have done some structuralistic "sleuthing", dissecting a couple of SF novels and stories in my SF AND FUTUROLOGY, to get at the "skeleton" of the narrative, and I could see from the evidence where practically all those structures come from. At first glance one could think psychoanalytical explanations to be on the whole sufficient (as they were in a case stated by Blish in his THE ISSUE AT HAND where all the enigmas of an extraterrestrial civilization reduce themselves to some sketches of genital organs), but this is not an universal role. Even if I do not know what makes my imagination tick, I have accumulated some preactical knowledge on how

to start it.

Firstly, I must have something as a crystallization nucleus, and I do some combination gymnastics with it. The results, measured in terms of originality, are mostly miserable. But I know this is only the preliminary phase; if I am occupied only with this concept, if I think about it with not too few and not too many interruptions, something may emerge of a new quality—but only during the time of an interruption; all this I am visualizing myself, with the picture of a little starter who moves a big wheel.

This "big wheel" of the "creation mixer" is directly unattainable and not to be observed by means of introspection. But it MUST be somewhere in my head, and it begins to "spin", and eventually it will produce something. Most often this "something" is a cheap idea, because not only my consciousness is lazy.

^{The} relevant thing here is that if I ^{do not} exert some effort to start this process there will be practically no result—so, principally, I could do nothing at all, live as a vegetable, if there were not some first impulses coming from God knows where...perhaps simply from totally random thought processes.

And if I do not grasp the emerging idea as if it were a fish ready to dive again in the unconscious blackness, I will forget it and remain only with the idiotic feeling of having lost a chance. And if I am depressed or something of this sort I truly do nothing to catch the idea and it goes...never again to be caught.

This I know well, because in my workroom are true mountains of papers, and sometimes I will find an old note, read it as totally foreign stuff, with amazement, and ask myself where, by God, did I get THIS sort of an idea?

All this is very interesting, but of course those are the preliminaries only, because then comes the hard work, of totally another kind and character. This secondary work is under my control, but the primary effort is in no way under my control, so I feel sometimes a

nauseating fear: what if this or that idea is my last and there shall be no more? Well, they are coming yet, but I think that such a business is a very unreliable one.

Q: Is writing profitable for you? How is SF regarded in Poland? Are there the same genre versus mainstream arguments in Poland as over here? Does the state support you? How do you get Western royalties?

LEM: My income is big—relatively, of course. I am not a millionaire, but after all I have every year some 8 to 10 foreign editions, and two books re-edited in a series of my "opera selecta" home, and every year or every second year a new book, and there is TV, radio, film and so on.

My works are reviewed in Poland with care and a certain distance because we have no specialists in the SF field, so the reviewers ignore the whole background of world SF production.

Some of the best reviews were written not by professional critics, but by philosophers, scholars, etc. One philosopher, a lady, has written an essay of 60 pages on my novel, MASTERS VOICE (and the novel is not voluminous at all—some 190 pages). A curiosity are two or three reviews written by the Russian cosmonauts.

"Genre versus mainstream"? Well, this is no hot issue since I alone am the genre in Poland. Of course there are critics who will never write a word about my work. But you must have various kinds of people to make a world. I am in a way "estranged" with my SF, kind of a Robinson Crusoe at home.

The state does not support my work in any special way. I am simply in demand: the editors will take anything from me because you can bet that it will be sold out in a couple days. Of course this is to some degree caused by insufficient number of copies printed. But on the whole I have had already printings of 100,000 at home, and this is not a small number for a small nation of 32 million people. Ceteris paribus

it should be equal to about 700,000 in the US for an American author.

((60,000 for a Canadian author.—d.s.))

At home there is a magic in my name; the public buys my books blindly, even, I think, if one was a treatise on lymnology...because my work on the theory of literature sold instantly, even though written for specialists and there was a "warning" in the subtitle. (3000 copies sold in a week.) Of course that inflates one's self but I am aware of an intrinsic misapprehension—and surely 90% of the buyers could not reread this book.

Western royalties? Why, they are coming here, and I can use them. But how? Make a world tour? But, please, when?

Q: How have the visual productions of your SF been (such as ASTRONAUICI and others). Is there any western SF movie that you have seen that you could compare it with for our understanding?

LEM: All films made from my works were very bad indeed. The single exception was ROLY POLY done by Andrzej Wajda (it was a short film for TV).

The character of this badness? B-pictures clumsily done. I am now on guard and it is not a simple thing to persuade me to sell film rights.

Q: How do you feel about fandom? Why has not an SF fandom developed in Poland?

LEM: Well, to tell the unpleasant truth, I think fandom to be the gilded cuffs of SF. It diminishes the maneuvering space of writers, is intellectually passive, lazy, opportunistic, and very low-brow artistically; that is with bad taste, scientific ignorance, and so on.

This I deduce from western fanzines and SF magazines, while comparing my own appreciation of SF works with the one given there. And comparing reactions of fans in America and in Russia to various SF titles. (My own

books were also "used" as a measuring rod).

In comparison with those groups in the Soviet Union who read SF, western fandom must be judged low grade, both intellectually and in matters of taste.

Why so? To postulate a generally higher level of intelligence in Russia against the West would be nonsensical. The distribution of IQ must be practically the same in both countries and shaped as a Gaussian curve.

But then comes the process of reader recruitment. Here works the factor causing the above stated difference. The Russian fans do not represent the total population average but only the intellectually higher fraction of it. If one assumes that the average level of fanzines, of fan mail, of evaluators of books (sometimes done by readers in various SF magazines), are all reliable indicators of literacy, intellectual fitness, etc. of the whole of American fandom—the conclusion is unavoidable, that in America science fiction does NOT attract the better minds. So the general trend of selection of SF readers is opposed in both countries.

Assuming that the accumulated evidence supports such a statement, one should ask again, what causes this opposition of selection trends? My answer follows:

Firstly, SF is more attractive for the Russian readers than for the American ones because in the Soviet Union the total number of intellectual attractions in leisure time is smaller. Because of this the dispersion of the public is not as broad in the whole spectrum of possible doings in Russia as in America.

Secondly, SF attracts in the Soviet Union a greater number of intellectually active people, than in America, according to the prominent social and cultural role played in Russia by literature; this is a decades-old stabilized phenomenon.

Thirdly, in the Soviet Union the typical SF trash (the bulk of all American SF production) is absent. The general trend in publishing American SF

in translation shows systematic filtering, that is, selection of intellectually and artistically appreciated authors and titles. The very presence of such a selection works as a positive feed-back loop, attracting in the first place intellectually mature minds.

(There WAS some poorly written, nearsighted, dull and unimaginative pseudo SF in Russia, produced mostly in the fifties, but after the great "cosmonautical overture" this brand was displaced by more gifted new authors and abandoned by the reading public. In a way the prominent social status of cosmonautics worked as an amplifier of values attributed to SF.)

And last, but not least, SF played in Russia a part in some literary experiments which would have been otherwise absent.

Put together, all these factors result in a hill-climbing gradient of SF in the Soviet Union.

In America the reverse is rather the case.

Firstly, SF was born there as a pulp phenomenon, of lowest quality, ignored by critics and the educated public.

Secondly, from this initial situation stemmed a cultural ghetto, with some trends unavoidable in such an "encapsulation". They are:

(a) total commercialisation of all the literary production. While some elite publishers play the role of "maecenas", sponsors of spiritual values, publishing works highly appreciated by prominent critics, even if there is no great chance of market success, no analogous patronage is to be found in the ghetto. The sole indicator of book value is selling capability. What does not sell will not be re-issued, even if highly appreciated by some first-rate critics (because of this, Stapledon is not permanently in print—evidently the market demand is not great, so all permanent values of his books are of no concern to the SF publishers).

(b) the total dependence of the

authors upon the buying public; because of this the selling capability and the intrinsic value of a book are co-extensive; any SF best-seller, only because it sells best, is the masterpiece, the work of the century, etc.; as is known, this correlation is invalid, and the professional criticism in the mainstream is not by any means highly impressed and subordinate simply by the selling success of a literary work. So

(c) the "inner criticism in the SF ghetto lacks the sovereignty typical in the mainstream.

Thirdly, any cultural ghetto implies a caste system. The men residing in the higher caste may freely penetrate the lower ones, but any movement in the opposite direction is impossible. And, truly, a mainstream writer can write a SF book and nevertheless hold his higher status and position, while an SF author cannot operate as freely "both ways". The fame of the mainstream writers is a general phenomenon, while the prominent SF fictioneers are known practically in the ghetto only.

Fourthly, the mass-produced trash obscures and swallows up even masterpieces which are somehow born in such pitiful conditions. (So you can see some attempts at evading the "SF damnation" by skillful maneuvering. As known, some typical SF novels were published "disguised" for "mainstream literature".)

What is now the part played by fandom in this situation?

It is too passive to work as a full-fledged system for judging and evaluating books. It lacks, as a whole, resolving power; it cannot discriminate between the very best and the mediocre. It can only console the frustrated authors by mimicking the customs of 'great literature' from where come all the conventions: thus the Nebula as substitute for the Nobel Prize, and so on.

This is the broad picture, with the general complex trend, and if you observe single authors you will remark

how they all converge, to become craftsmen, and to produce the typical, average SF. The poorly gifted rise a little up in their output (that is not bad, of course), but, alas, the truly gifted (often after writing one or two original and hopeful books) show signs of degradation in the long run. They all converge—and put together, they produce this mediocrity, banality, so typical of American SF.

Of course there are brilliant men in American fandom, but they have no cultural influence, no access to mass media, no chance of bearing upon the editorial policy of SF houses or magazines, etc. Some of them, I think, the most brilliant ones, are frustrated addicts of SF. This frustration is typical for the very best authors, too (say as Aldiss or Ballard). Now you can perhaps better understand why I have used bad names in speaking about fandom, even if fans are guiltless, taken individually.

Of course, I was speaking about a general, statistically relevant trend, and not about this or that person. I do not see any real possibility of this trend being reversed. (It is a so-called complex trend, and those long-range trends are of principal concern in futurology.)

Q: What do you read besides SF? Do you read much American or English SF?

LEM: Well, I will give you practically the whole list. Firstly, I read THE HERALD TRIBUNE (Paris edition), NEWSWEEK, the French L'EXPRESS, LE MONDE, and FIGARO. Then comes LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR, and occasionally a NEW YORKER or something similar.

Then—SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, SCIENCE ET VIE, SCIENCE (British), and DAEDALUS. Then the Russian PRIRODA ("Nature"), TECHNIKA MOLODESNY and some other popular and non-popular science journals. Then any new available scientific books.

And then works of fiction. From the U.S.A. I like very much Mailer, Malamud, Bellow—and, to tell the whole truth, one book as good as HENDERSON THE RAIN

KING contains more relevant information and is for me of greater value than a metric ton of SF.

I know French and West German literature, too, to some degree, of course. The day has only 24 hours. But as I see it there is something of an emptiness in the French literature of the last decade. The situation in Germany is not much better. Do you perhaps know the SF or pseudo-SF work of a German writer, Arno Schmidt? It is very interesting, even if not similar to American SF, so I doubt if it was translated at all.

Q: Why do you feel your books are popular in Poland and Western countries?

LEM: The causes of my popularity I do not know. My opinion is as good as any other. I do not think my books are popular in various countries for the same reasons.

See, I am esteemed in the Soviet Union where my nonfiction books are known, too. For the Russian public I am a sort of mongrel between a sage, an artist and a computer. The greatest part of my fanmail comes from Russia, with all sorts of manuscripts, and gifts, and some of it from Germany.

For what am I appreciated? I doubt if a statistical analysis of my fan mail could give a relevant answer, because it is one thing to know that one likes this or that, and another to specify why and what causes this empathy.

I can only say that I never avoid difficult, unpleasant, or unanswerable questions—in my own work. E.g., I do not believe in ESP, in precognition, in telepathy, in UFOs, so I never write about them.

The popularity implies some tensions between an author and his readers, too. We are not yet in paradise. I am asked, say, to write more about this subject and theme, and again, not to write theoretical treatises, etc. If I have time I answer some letters and plead my cause, but I do not change my mind. That is, I am adamant as to my choice—

in my plans. I do not believe in salvation of the world by means of literature, but I do believe in moral and intellectual values in writing.

Perhaps I should add that there are great groups of readers not contacting me at all, or contacting in an incomprehensible way; say, the Hungarians...or the Japanese. I do not know what they think of my books. In both countries they are edited and re-edited, but I hope you will understand that I cannot afford to learn Hungarian and/or Japanese, to read reviews of my books.

Q: Do you think that the relative ignorance of westerners to the SF of Poland and to the tradition of Polish literature will hinder our appreciation of your works?

LEM: No, this I do not think. Firstly, because we have no tradition of SF in Poland at all. I saw a little review of SOLARIS in an American SF magazine, where the reviewer said, "The strangeness of SOLARIS evidently must be caused by the 'Eastern European tradition'". It was very funny because I do not know anything about such a tradition. There was one great SF writer of Slav origin: Karel Capek. I like his work very much. But a whole "tradition"? No, sir, there is simply no such thing.

As to the tradition of Polish literature—of course I have written some stories, totally un-understandable to any western reader, because I put in a strong dependence upon our (Polish) sociocultural and historical background. But on the whole they make up a small fraction of my writing.

The difficulties I come across are rather of linguistic character. The central force of my language is localized on the syntagmatical level of inner word structures (causing mutability, unknown in western languages); and to make a bad thing worse, my forte is neologisms; they cannot be translated, they must be equivalently "reinvented", and this is a very difficult task. I myself could never do such tour d'adresse.³

But there is another problem, not correlated with my origin. The general level of sophistication, of intelligibility, of my works does not remain the same; it is slowly rising.

My earliest books were simple things indeed, and those later written are more and more sophisticated. This was not planned, and I think that the more difficult a problem to be attacked, the more complex the solution.

On the whole I cannot say I'm glad there is evidence of this rising complexity of my books. I would prefer to write in a simple a manner as possible.

But then there comes the decision-making: take, please, the problem known as CETI ((Communication with Extra-terrestrial Intelligences—ds)). Not for a moment could I seriously believe in anything like the famous "telepathic" communication with extra-terrestrial intelligence. This "solution" will never hold water; it is no solution at all, only pure, infantile magic. In theoretical linguistics, in comparable anthropology, the very thought of closing an intra-cultural communication gap by means of "telepathy" becomes pure nonsense. How could I build a story around such a concept which has no cognitive value for me?

Or take the relation between man and intelligent machine. I do not believe in a mechanical substitution of this machine for the concept of God. So all stories in SF, going in this direction, are nonsensical for me as a reader. These "solutions" are of no value at all. I cannot help it.

Even science has fallen into some naive naive extrapolative trends involving mystical thinking—such as the famous debate in cybernetics: are we inadvertently building a new artificial species which will destroy or dominate us? The future is full of dangers, only they are irreducible to the historically known ones.

Q: You say that you know more scientists than SF authors or fans. In what sciences are they and what are your relations with them?

LEM: My acquaintances—scientists? Well, I know two Nobel prize winners, some astrophysicists, cyberneticians, and so on—I have not seen them for years; they are mostly Russians. I could not, alas, get to Armenia to participate in this CETI conference, but my paper will be published in the collected works of this conference. But I am not necessarily a writer, that is, a SFictioneer, to them; I am sometimes simply a kind of colleague.

I have published some papers in some specialized scientific journals (e.g. on theoretical biology, on the correlation between ethical norms and technological change, on the technical premises for interstellar contact with the "Others", etc.). So we discuss this and that—write letters. They send me their papers and new books, and I do for them what I can.

Well, I was a member of our astronomical society, and then of the cybernetical one, but I could not afford the time—for the serious work—and I do not like to be the stuffed member of anything. So I have resigned. But not from the friendship with some truly gifted men of science.

And that would be now the end of our chat. I liked it, because I like difficulties—and of course it was difficult to be articulate in a language which I do not speak. So thank you for this opportunity of explaining a little of myself.

+++

LEM FOOTNOTES

1. I think I shall underline the pragmatic coherence of my non-fictional work here. Pay attention please to the fact of what a state of isolation I have been working; I lacked intellectual tools in a similar way Robinson Crusoe lacked the mechanical ones.

So, firstly, I have "taught myself" what is to be extrapolated from the body of cybernetic concepts (DIALOGI, 1956); after that came the task of building a general frame for the set of possible SF patterns, but again I was feeling the absence of a basic theory of a literary work.

(Such a theory was necessary since SF ex deffinitione must be a particular case of the whole set of literary activities.)

So the PHILOSOPHY OF CHANCE was rather a preliminary phase for the proper next step to be done, since the only available theory of literature—the phenomenological one, as built by our philosopher Roman Ingarden (and known to specialists everywhere) was of no use to me because his theory is of a non-empirical character: its statements are neither falsifiable nor verifiable in any experiments.

So I have built an attempt at an empirical theory of literary work, the whole divided into two parts: the general or abstract theory of literature where the basic outline is given with some hypotheses called, for practical reasons, laws; and the second part, a kind of applied theory (that is, I am applying the hypotheses and rules as stated in the first part to the particular analyses of various works of literature—to gather up the positive evidence).

That is, from where did some discovered regularities come from, as, say, the statement about the inverse proportion of the sophistication level of a reader's set and his "resolving power"—in relation to a given sample of books; these books then play the part of standardized measuring instruments since their "value content" is already established.

So, e.g., one takes Tolstoi's WAR AND PEACE and GONE WITH THE WIND by Margaret Mitchell and gives them as reading material to groups of people.

The unsophisticated readers find both of these books to be very similar indeed, and at the same time GONE WITH THE WIND scores higher than WAR AND PEACE because Tolstoi's work is found to be partially "boring" (because it includes some historiosophic remarks, etc.). A fraction of this unsophisticated group will eventually give the opinion that Tolstoi's novel is the "better" one...but only because the members of this group have heard Tol-

stoi to be an equal to Shakespeare, and Margaret Mitchell not. So they do not reveal their true opinions, but behave in a conformist way.

Then came other experiments, mostly of a pure thought character since I could not afford to undertake the true experiments in the real field (being without adequate means and possibilities). Nevertheless all those hypotheses are principally checkable in experimental study.

Then there was a set of experiments designed to be specifically damaging to a literary work, to appreciate its "resistance", that is, how much damage of a certain type a work can sustain before falling SEMANTICALLY apart. (The general rule here is: the more "realistic" a work the greater its resistance, as stated in the terms given above.)

Then came more complex problems, of books with an inbuilt semantic ambiguity. On the whole the first approximation gives a picture comparable with the state of affairs known well to psychologists: in the December, 1971 issue of SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN is a paper by Fred Attneave concerning multistability in visual perception. Analogous mechanisms probably underly the "multistability" of some prominent literary masterpieces, only their transformability is of a semantic and not of a visual character.

A novel with inbuilt semantic ambiguity, such as one written by Kafka, is something of a trap—and an ambiguous visual picture is also a trap since it cannot be explained (understood, grasped) COMPLETELY.

From this it is theoretically possible to deduce those topological qualities which amaze and to a degree "paralyze" us. This is the definitive meaning of a given work of art.

Again, further considerations involve problems of contextual character, and a new one—the problem of contradiction and antonymy in a book's meanings.⁴

Some of these contradictions are to be found in various dogmas of various religious creeds where they play a very relevant role, namely the role of a

Sacred Mystery. Taken in a purely formal way they are contradictions of a simple, logical type: (creo, quia absurdum est).

So, after writing this PHILOSOPHY OF CHANCE—the title implies stochastic and statistical aspects of literary creation and "receiving" of literary works—I was ready to write about SF.

Again I needed a reference system, and this was given by the general principles of futurology. (You must always have a stabilized reference system to do research work; the individual parts of the whole body of explored areas can then change places; thus one time the given books are the STANDARDIZED measuring rods, and another time group as known by the already diagnosed "resolving power" is the standardized measuring instrument, and the set of books represents the unknown variable.

(Both named books—the general and the SF applied theory of literature—are, so to speak, branches of humanistics, reinterpreted in terms of natural science. The last book—SUMMA TECHNOLOGIAE—represents, therefore, the "generator of diversity", totally isolated from all artistic (literary) considerations. It is interesting and noteworthy to remark that while all these books are coherent in a way explained above, it was not my conscious intention to make them my tools, ready for use in SF writing. It was only after writing them that I became wise enough to discover their very practical usefulness in my profession.)

2. A couple of American reviewers have rather deprecated Fred Hoyle's novel, BLACK CLOUD. This novel was nevertheless quite an event when published in Russia. The translator was an eminent physicist from the elder generation, Professor Frank-Kamenevsky. BLACK CLOUD was found to be incomparably better than a whole lot of American "eschatological" SF which describes some kind of global cataclysm.

Some of the top men of Russian science then played the part of SF critics. There is no evidence in the Soviet Union

of a strong positive correlation between the immanent value of an SF work and the volume of its printings. Because of this, selling success cannot play the role of an automatic indicator of book value. This is bad, on the whole, because then the readers are forced to make choices themselves, to decide which are the best works of the year.

I should perhaps add that I like BLACK CLOUD very much, but all of Hoyle's later books were a terrible disappointment.

3. Here is an example: how are SF possibilities to be extracted from combined manipulation of isolated concepts. Take an entry from a dictionary—say, INFORMATION, and you postulate a new kind of equivalence...between information and mass...so assume that when one counts to a trillion the very process of counting materializes an "equivalent mass", say a proton. So there you have the premise for a new kind of cosmogony with strong metaphysical implications: how the Word became the flesh—that is, how the Lord's Countdown made the World.

Well, this above was a momentary flash of mine, so I shall instantly make copyright claims. The "flash" about equivalence of mass and information is now ((Dec. 1973)) in the form of a new story written some weeks ago. (An information collapse of civilization—the end of the computerized world—a kind of comic inferno.)

This kind of linguistic play can be used in a grotesque way, too: I have derived "computainer" from "computer", and this was a special French type of computer...programmed for debauchery only.

4. I am doing my best now to introduce Philip K. Dick—his UBIK—to the Polish public. His books are sometimes true Gordian Knots, and he abuses the principle of antonymical construction, but nevertheless he is quite an individual—unique—a quality absent in 98% of all American SFictioneers (I am making a verifiable statement: you can

remove an author's name from a book and ask the readers to guess it; the guessing will be a very difficult task, mostly, since the majority of SF books are made from interchangeable parts of a standardized character.)

May I add here another remark to this point. There are two plagues of American SF: the Trash Plague and the Mystification Plague. But the first plague is not as bad as often stated. The trash is no ontellectual problem at all. You have everywhere a lot of bad taste and since there are men who like trash, they should have it—in a democratic society ("according to their needs..."). (The alternative, you see, is always of a censorial, restraining character. To abolish all the trash production one must introduce a kind of "enlightened absolutism" in the cultural domain—a very dangerous thing to do since the regime may degenerate into an ordinary "unenlightened" tyranny.)

But the problem of counterfeited values is a very serious and dangerous one. Since I cannot go into this matter here, I will only give an example of proliferating mystification. A famous producer of it is Theodore Sturgeon. Ironically, he is the author of the well-known "Sturgeon's Law" (about 90% of "everything" being trash). Well, he himself does not write trash, that is true. He does another job—he produces counterfeit literature. An essay on Sturgeon's SF should be titled "Mystification as literature."

Proof of this statement is a difficult thing because Sturgeon produces CREDIBLE imitations. Only after comparing them with some of the "true originals" can you discover the well camouflaged difference.

So, for example, compare ODD JOHN with Sturgeon's MATURITY. The true problem of a "superman" is of course ontological, and not of a businesslike character. This was stated in the work of Stapledon very clearly. (Even if the plot of the novel is on the whole melodramatic.)

Sturgeon has misplaced the central concepts while introducing as the heart of the matter his so-called attempts at

defining "Maturity". Well, this "point" is no point at all, because the very meaning of this word is full of ambiguity and who shall be the first man to discover it if not the hero—that is, the Superman?

But Sturgeon's hero behaves as if he were a clerk in a Gallup poll asking the opinions (on "maturity") of the public.

See, he does not know himself what to do and what maturity is, so he appeals to the "common people's wisdom".

Well, can you visualize a Socrates, a Nietzsche, a Spinoza, an Einstein, polling the men on the street in search of the ultimate wisdom of life? If this is not a mystified problem there is no such thing as mystification in the whole world!

In ODD JOHN you have three phases of the superman life—the "Sturm und Drang" phase in which he learns of the world he lives in and becomes an Edison simply to acquire financial means; the second phase is one of searching for answers and making decisions; and the final phase is one of tragic collapse.

In MATURITY you have the unintentional caricature of this plot: after the "Edison" phase of inventing little gadgets and writing plays, comes the "polling phase"—that is, not a gain but a loss of selfawareness. And then comes simply the illness as a substitute for tragedy. The appearance of tragedy is forced on us by the inbuilt erotic triangle, and the crucial point in the life of Sturgeon's superman is the moment when he restrains himself from intercourse with the woman character because he bows before the holiness of virginity. A superman, my foot! Rather an unintentionally malicious caricature of a superman, I think.

I would not go to such length and say these unpleasant things if this case was not the very proof of FANDOM'S IMMATURITY. It is noteworthy to find that while some OLD GREAT MEN of SF such as Heinlein and Asimov were critically attacked by some young critics in the last decade, this was rather not the case with Sturgeon's SF. I personally

prefer the top work of Asimov and Heinlein to that of Sturgeon because the first two are pretending nothing.

Asimov has simplified his superior knowledge to coin this or that plot. Heinlein was criticized for some of his social and moral views, but Asimov has never pretended to be the Proust of SF, the psychological connoisseur, the great esoteric specialist in hair-splitting. Heinlein was blamed, say by my good friend Franz Rottensteiner for his authoritarian attitude, but the moral or political attitude of a writer is one thing, while the quality of his craftsmanship, of his performance, is quite another. The French writer Céline was a collaborationist in the time of the German occupation, but nevertheless he remains a very skilled and gifted novelist of some individuality.

In general an author should be appreciated for his BEST, and not for his WORST accomplishment. I think some of the books of Heinlein and of Asimov shall remain with us even if covered by the patina of anachronism, as, say, the work of Jules Verne.

But I am sorry to say that is not the case with Sturgeon. He is the Baroness Orczy of SF, and his celebrity is more proof of the critical incompetence of fandom as a whole.

I repeat: trash is not the worst SF plague, because it pretends nothing and counterfeits nothing. Mystification is the real danger since it obscures the real problems by substituting in their place gullible pseudosolutions. Sturgeon's law is a halftruth: truly you can find trash everywhere, but the surviving, applauded, highly valued mystification is found only inside a cultural ghetto.

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LEM NOTE: (Dec. 1973) At the very end of all this may I ask to introduce the following appeal: I shall soon become the editor of a series of SF books (Lem's Choice) to be published in Cracow by my editor there, and we have already accumulated some of the best of American SF books, but of course not all the best stuff. While I am receiv-

ing from the United States the newest SF: DAW, Ballantine, Ace....and I have in a way too much of it at my disposal ...I do not have a lot of older good SF. So if someone who is a right person, galactically broadminded, should feel the need to enrich the Polish bookmark- et, giving me the opportunity to get to know this or that SF title, I would be very thankful for such books sent me.

REG COMMENT: Mr. Lem's argument about "mystification" in SF has me largely mystified, and since I don't believe I ever read Sturgeon's "Maturity" (Lem writes as if it were a novel, yet I can't find it listed anywhere) I can't express any opinion.

Mr. Lem has an imperfect understanding of fandom, obviously, since he seems to think fandom includes the whole SF establishment. It does, I suppose, in a large, nebulous sense, but not as fans and professionals know fandom in the United States, Canada, England and Australia...in short, everywhere outside Eastern Europe.

And for a man who stresses science of the known kind and will have nothing to do with the soft, speculative "sciences" of the mind, I find Lem's own fiction curiously "soft" in the sense of metaphysics, symbolism, ambiguity and obscurity—the elements professors drool over but which leave most Western readers unhappy in a dramatic resolution sense. SOLARIS, THE INVINCIBLE, MEMOIRS FOUND IN A BATHTUB and THE CYBERIAD are not what I would call hard science fiction. Well...THE INVINCIBLE would qualify, I suppose.

Seabury Press, 815 Second Av., New York, NY 10017, has published MEMOIRS FOUND IN A BATHTUB, THE INVINCIBLE, and THE CYBERIAD. If memory serves me I think SOLARIS was published in hardback by Walker.

It must be noted that this interview with Stanislaw Lem appeared first in Daniel Say's badly mimeographed, low-circulation fanzine ENTROPY NEGATIVE #6.

Man is imperfect—observe his Godwork

LETTER FROM FREDERIK POHL

May 11, 1974

"Two people have told me that although what I said in "The Shape of SF To Come" was sooth enough in some ways, I was much too hard on Robert Silverberg. Come to think of it, they are right.

"The thing is, I gave that talk more than two years ago, and even then I was talking about the stories Bob was publishing a couple of years still earlier. I think it was fair comment about most of his early work, but it certainly is not about what he is publishing these days; and I would like to amend my remarks accordingly.

"When Bob Silverberg writes at the top of his form he is about as good as SF writers ever get."

((("The Shape of SF To Come" appeared first in SPECULATION #31 (1972), then in TAC #7, Nov. 1973.))

"Pay for it? I've got my pride, you know—I can always rape...or at worst go home to my wife."

LETTER FROM DISCON II

May 13, 1974

Ron W. Bounds, Vice-Chairman

"Well, as they say, better a belated answer than none at all.

"First of all, let me congratulate you on the nomination of THE ALIEN CRITIC to the Final Hugo Ballot in the Category of 'Best Amateur Magazine.' The other magazines nominated were ALGOL, LOCUS, and OUTWORLDS.

"In answer to your previous letters to us, we intentionally delayed ruling on the 'semi-pro' magazine issue. Jay Haldeman, in the first part of the year, was accepting correspondence on the subject, as he mentioned in a letter printed in LOCUS. I have kept tabs on some of the correspondence on the subject in various fanzines, notably GRANFALLOON. I'm beginning to be sorry I've never subscribed to TAC. In Minneapolis, at Minicon last month, I finally purchased

a copy of issue #1, Vol. 3 (Feb 1974). A good looking zine.

"But time does fly, and, almost before we knew it, it was Hugo Nomination Ballot deadline time. The Ballots came in and showed one thing in particular, that most fans consider the 'zines in question to be 'Amateur Magazines'...fanzines, natch...and deserving of nomination for the hugo in that category. And so we ruled.

"The Hugo nomination ballot wording was scrupulously paraphrased from the official wording in the World Science Fiction Association Rules, and we had nothing to do with 'authorizing' or not 'authorizing' the wording.

"Also, let me congratulate you on your nomination personally to the Category of 'Best Fan Writer' in the Hugo Nominations. Susan Glicksohn, Jacqueline Lichtenberg, Laura Basta, and Sandra Meisel were the top nominees as well."

((By the time this issue of TAC is published the Hugo voting deadline will have passed (I trust), and I can speak my mind here without unduly influencing the voters. (As if anything I could say would influence the vote—sometimes I think the best way to get what you want is to keep silent.))

((I consider TAC last year to have been an "amateur" fan magazine...because it didn't make a profit. The intent was there, but if intent was a measure of reality we'd all be impossible to live with.

((Similarly, since I made no profit on my TAC writing last year, I think I qualify as a fan writer.

((BUT—this year, 1974, the period for which the Hugoes will be voted on next year—I am now making a small profit on TAC (at last, o lord, at last! It Can Be Done!) and thus and forsooth and hear ye, TAC probably won't be eligible...nor will I as a fan writer (and besides, my column in IF gives me a tremendous advantage).

((Ghod, I'm a filthy Pro in Fandom. *delicate shudder*))

TIME FOR A BREAK SAID THE EDITOR AS HE CRACK- ED A FEW BOOKS

"A breather, Geis," pleaded Alter-
Ego after I had chained him to the task
of stenciling the Lem interview.

"This is like slogging through a
swamp," he continued, wiping his ten-
drils of sweat.

"Come, come; Alter," I replied.
"Surely smoothing out syntax and cor-
recting a bit of odd punctuation isn't
all that had."

He offered to let me finish the job
(With some indecorous language, I might
add), but I refused.

"I will let you review a couple
books, Alter, if you promise not to be
too violent."

He agreed and licked my toes in the
bargain, so I hereby abdicate this typ-
er and allow him his modified freedom.
Of course I accept no responsibility
for his views or his inevitable insults.

+++

Thanks, Geis. You're a Prince—
you ought to be crowned. Now...what
have we read lately?

Yeah... It pains me to admit that
Poul Anderson's newest, *A MIDSUMMER
TEMPEST*, is probably the best writing
he's done in years.

There'll be arguments as readers and
purists try to categorize this novel—
fantasy or s-f?

Here he has made Shakespeare's fairy
personae real in an alternate world, set
the forces of the Old Ones (but Nice Old
Ones) against the evil of oncoming In-
dustrealization, and dramatized it with
sword, cavalry and cannon battles, a
daring escape, old-fashioned love, a
Quest, dangerous journeys, Temptation,
a final great battle between the forces
of Good and Evil (and the relevancy is
marvelous), and tied it all up in a ra-
tional framework.

His characterization is better than
usual and his language is superb. I
didn't know he had it in him.

A MIDSUMMER TEMPEST will be on the

Hugo and Nebula ballots next year, I
imagine, unless the fans and writers
forget it as the months pass.

It's a Doubleday book, \$5.95. Worth
buying for your permanent collection.

++

Thank God that's over. Now I can
slaughter a book. Hand me the next one,
Geis. *STAR RIDER*...by Doris Piserchia?

(I don't like the smirk on his dumb
face.) What is this? WHY ARE YOU GIV-
ING ME ALL THE GOOD ONES? And, damn it,
this is by Doris Piserchia, a woman!
What will Joanna Russ and Vonda McIn-
tyre think?

Well, I'll get this over as quickly
as I can. It grunches me to admit it,
but Doris has written herself a damned
good far-future adventure novel. The
heroine is a juvenile jak—a member of
a psi-powered race of humans who travel
the galaxy by means of a very credible
teleportation. They go into types of
sub-space called D-2 and D-3. They are
hedonists, childish, irresponsible,
totally free.

Oh, I forgot—they can't jaunt with-
out a mount, a kind of horse-size in-
telligent, loving beast also with psi
powers.

The novel is Jade's story (the hero-
ine) and her entanglements with Big Jak,
with the mythical planet Doubleluck, with
the Gibs (repressed jaks, planet-bound),
the "slave" race of dreens who have a
psychotic wish to rule the galaxy, the
alien varks who have been observing the
humans for millenia, the crisis of
faith and reason—for-living among all
humans as they need to expand to the
next galaxy and can't...and it is the
story of Jade's rough and tumble com-
ing of age and it is satire and ser-
ious and exciting and...

It's incredible, but once you get
into it it has you by the throat and
you don't give a damn.

It is a Bantam pocketbook ('A Fred-
erik Pohl Selection'—and a fine one)
08408, \$1.25. It should be nominated
for a Hugo and Nebula, too.

+++

-16-

Now the good ones are out of the
way, right? Wrong! I'm stuck with the
best sf novel A. E. van Vogt has writ-
ten in years: *FUTURE GLITTER* (Ace 25980,
95¢).

In an Author's Introduction, van
makes fascinatingly clear that this
novel (as with most of his sf novels)
is based on real-life trends and facts.

This one is built around an ulti-
mate Earth dictator and the techniques
used to maintain himself and his coterie
in power down through the generations.

It is also about an incredibly far-
seeing scientist's plan to overthrow
the dictator.

The plot and action may boggle you
a bit, but you'll read to the end and
you'll wonder if some smart politician
in this country, someday, might not use
the techniques here described.

I haven't enjoyed van Vogt so much
since *THE WEAPON SHOPS OF ISHER*.

+++

Food for my fangs, Geis! For pity's
sake, a little rancid writing for me to
rend and tear.

Thump Ahh...I smell the smell of
too-clever writing, the aroma of cute-
ness, the scent of terminal tongue-in-
cheek disease.

Yes...let me inhale deeply...oh,
thank you, Geis! A Ballantine book.
And by one of my favorites—Alan Dean
Foster!

Now then *munch munch* ...It's call-
ed *ICERIGGER* and it is about a kidnapp-
ing, being stranded on an ice planet,
hungry aliens, a pretty girl... And,
best of all, it is written in a jape
style that instantly tells the reader
he's been had: whatever suspension of
disbelief is invested in the story is
a waste because the author is busy be-
ing clever and mocking and 'light' and
so the danger and suspense and reality
of the situations is fake to the point
of no-idiot-can-believe-it and only
those few who like writing like the
following will get beyond the first
chapter.

'True, the fellow was momentar-
ily incapacitated, having entangl-

ed himself in the now completely inoperable mechbar. But he was snorting and mumbling with dismaying energy.

"Sir, I appeal to your moral sense. Public drunkenness is bad enough. Eliminating our evening bar business, not to mention the bar, is worse. But your refusal to heed the admonitions of a ship's crew in free space is insulting. What have we done to offend you?"

'The other gunman was a huge chunk of brown with flat face, rainbow-hued teeth, and formidable biceps. Right now he was trying to control his laser and subdue a package of squalling, scratching femininity that was apparently human. Apparently, because it seemed to have eight legs and twelve arms, all pinwheeling at once. The curses that issues from somewhere within the bundle, though, were undeniably Terranglo.'

It must be admitted grudgingly that the balance of the book is not as clever as the above quotes. It is more of a straight adventure...about on a level of Tony Curtis in his recent TV series with Roger Moore.

Somebody at Ballantine has a weakness for this kind of lighthearted s-f adventure. I am reminded of last year's A WORLD OF TROUBLE by Robert Toomey. I hated that one, too.

ICERIGGER is Ballantine 23836, \$1.25.

Then there's the story of the man who avoided reality for 70 years with drugs, sex, alcohol, fantasy, TV, movies, records, a hobby, lots of sleep... And on his 80th birthday died without ever having faced any of his real problems.

The man's younger brother, who had been facing reality and all his problems for 50 years with psychiatrists, nervous breakdowns, tics, tension, headaches, worry, anxiety and ulcers, was so angry at his brother for having gotten away so free that he had a paralyzing stroke.

The moral to this story is that there ain't no justice that we can stand to live with.

LETTER FROM JACK WODHAMS

May 13, 1974

"Okay, you weis Geis, you ask for this...

"Naturally I have heard about you, your name craps up everywhere, even on the seats. Some inscriptions describe you, perhaps unfairly, as 'Dick the Prick'—although this may be a reference to a different Dick entirely: Delap, for instance, or Burtob, or The Lionhearted, if the walls are old enough.

"More pertinently: over and over again, through assumption and by implication, we see that writers are very touchy over the matter of their professional status. Many writers are concerned, do bridle, even to reveal an anxiety neurosis and classic symptoms of feather-ruffled dignity where their caliber as 'professional' is queried.

"To be a professional fiction writer is indeed a tenuously illusive ambition, and I say this not because 'professional' fiction cannot be written, but because the best fiction must inherently contain amateur qualities, that freedom from circumspection that experts cannot afford.

"This is to say that the best fiction is always a speculative venture, for the author more than for anybody. Certainly any previous experience, some writing success, can be helpful, an encouragement, but in undertaking a fresh work, the better writer endeavors to develop, to test new means, to wrestle to achieve a brighter illumination—and inevitably, essentially, the writer must grope, to walk with what boldness he can muster that path he perceives as yet untrodden.

"Professionalism, by connotation, suggests parameters, suggests standards, rules, great areas of ready-made answers, as though repair might be made to factors lacking in natural virtuosity, to suggest that, in wordsmithing, the brilliance of a

rare and subtle inspiration should predictably be assured to be appreciated.

"Maybe not so sadly, it just isn't so. The writing of fiction is Art; it has its premises based upon art, is an art form, and as such has an immeasurable, an aggravatingly indefinable and oftentimes seemingly purely fortuitous value.

"JONATHAN LIVINGSTONE SEAGULL was not written by a professional. GONE WITH THE WIND was not written by a professional. FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON was not written by a professional. All simply because a writer cannot know beforehand precisely what the reaction to a very new work might be. Wistful supposition is the antithesis of nitty-gritty realism. But a writer is intrinsically obliged to guess. The writer can only be hopeful—hopeful, yet! The writer is naive, has to be, to cherish such faith.

"Doctors, plumbers, surveyors, printers—such as these have a profession in the true sense of the word, a conceived range of capability that will assure them a certain return for a prescribed and recognised service. There are professional writers—journalists, composers of textbooks, compilers of forms, scribes who take the minutes for government and commercial enterprises—but these are not artists, are not required to be, and, indeed, the first frowns upon literature as an art form occur where is indulged any deviation from the plain recording of the prosaic.

"I am not a professional writer. I am an amateur, and I guess I always will be. Against the advise of Bob Hoskins, I refuse to do rewrites, and I reserve the option to tell any editor who asks to go and get stuffed. Oh dear, what an amateur I am, right to the childish conceit of my defensive demand for equality. I should maybe join writers lib. But this is life, isn't it? We need look no further than the nearest mirror to find a subject for wry amusement, if not for downright hilarity."

((I figure a writer is a pro if he gets paid for writing. Beyond that

it gets squishy underfoot. Of course there are 'commercial' fiction writers as there are commercial artists. And professionalism involves knowing the tools of fiction writing—the techniques of narrative—and being able to write without the malaprops and horrendous clichés of the awkward, beginning writer. Professionalism also means reliability: keeping promises, meeting deadlines when they are accepted, and turning in reasonably clean manuscripts. After that you can be as "amateur" and artistic you want.))

"I don't trust anybody who didn't like LORD OF LIGHT."

—Brett Cox

A NEST OF STRANGE AND WONDERFUL BIRDS

An Article

By SAM MERWIN, JR.

During my seven-year tenure as science fiction editor for Standard Magazines, the Thrilling Group or whatever, a considerable change both in the nature and quality both of science fiction itself and its audience took place.

Which of them was the more responsible I cannot say (probably it was symbiotic) but the 1944-1951 metamorphosis from the idolatry of E.E. Smith and EandO Binder et. al. to that of Ray Bradbury, Arthur C. Clarke and their far more sophisticated colleagues and rivals spanned a considerable gulf (gulp? gulch?)

Organizationally, the general format was similar to that of the other Ned Pines fiction groups as organized and maintained by Executive Editor Leo Margulies. It was simple, easy to maintain and very efficient—far more so than that of any other rival magazine group I ever dealt with or heard about.

If it sounds assembly line, it was—with the only variations between THRILLING WONDER STORIES and STARTLING STORIES being those of the lead story lengths and departments.

TWS led with a "novel" of at most 30,000 words (sometimes inventory needs

dictated using a pair of 20,000 worders instead), while SS led with a "book length" novel of 40,000 to 50,000 words. Save for series character novelets or short stories which ran more or less regularly in one or the other, all briefer efforts were put into a single science fiction file to be tapped as needed.

My control, at least as long as Leo was there (he departed in mid-1950) was far from complete. Each story, including my own literary (?) efforts, had to make the rounds of other editors serving as readers (as I did myself for the whole range from Love pulps to Westerns). Controversial division of opinion put a story on LM's desk for the final okay or veto.

There was no regular budget per magazine under this system. We had word rates ranging from one to two cents per word for our authors. If the inventory grew overfull, we got a bit more choosy. Occasionally, when it got low, we accepted more borderline material.

If the editors remained virtually anonymous under this system (my name did not appear on the sci-fi title page until after Leo left and Fanny Ellsner—the last name is wrong, sorry—more or less took over in late 1950), it worked, I believe, better than that employed by any other large pulp fiction hamburger factory.

At one time, for some years in fact, I had charge not only of TWS, SS and such semi-legitimate substations as FANTASTIC STORY QUARTERLY and WONDER STORY ANNUAL, but the three sports fiction magazines and a good portion of the far larger mystery-detective books.

Most of us (those who could anyway) moonlighted for our own and other magazines to supplement our invariably inadequate salaries.

Jim Hendry used to land in the SATURDAY EVENING POST now and then, Charley Strong ground out adventure novels endlessly for low-priced hard-cover houses. I myself hit MCCALL'S and had books published by Doubleday and in collaboration with Leo in 1945, had a near best-selling historical novel published by

Samuel Curl. I also did a good deal of work for Popular Publications, who paid me better word rates for sports and mystery fiction, during this period.

Frankly, I preferred editing the science fiction periodicals, as I believe I mentioned in a previous letter to ALIEN CRITIC, first, because the field always interested me greatly and because a number of the writers we drew were many notches above the average pulp fiction median. Some were flashies, some petered out, but others have gone right on, save when interrupted by untimely death, to become important literary figures or at least what passes for "important" writers (whatever the hell that means).

Of them all, in retrospect, I believe I found Henry Kuttner the most interesting. If geographical and other problems prevented us from becoming close friends, we were good ones for many years. I think Hank has a greater variety of resourcefulness in his approach to the field than anyone else I have ever met. An editor never knew what sort of fantasy or pseudo science was coming from his prolific typewriter, from the false uncle in "Call Him Demon" to the Pete Manx time travel spoofs he collaborated on so hilariously with Arthur K. Barnes. Shy with strangers or new acquaintances, he was as articulate upon closer acquaintance as any man I ever met.

We had fine contacts with Ed Hamilton and Leigh Brackett on both coasts over a period of years, and the work they did for me speaks for itself. I don't blame Leigh for putting in her big efforts for Howard Hawks in the Fifties and Sixties (for the money if nothing else) in RIO BRAVO, et. al. What a hell of a fine writer—what a pair of them!

Ray Bradbury's was a friendship of some substance that flourished for some years on both coasts. I purchased eighteen short stories and novelets from him—my personal favorite was "And the Moon Be Still as Bright," which later formed a part of THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES. I have always felt his talent was platinum rare if spread

thin, rendering longer story forms difficult for him. But within his limitations, he has always been brilliant.

Will Jenkins (Murray Leinster) was another standby and good friend. A fascinating scientific speculationist (like Ray B. and Fletcher Pratt he was largely self-educated), Ray and I had one of those rare relationships in which we could discuss and trade story ideas with absolute mutual confidence. He, like Hamilton and Kuttner, was one of the small group of gifted writers who made with ease the transformation from early space opera to the more sophisticated forms. He also was a quasi-regular with the SATURDAY EVENING POST.

More occasional contributors, because their efforts were in demand in better paying markets, were Isaac Asimov, Ted Sturgeon, Phil Klass (William Tenn), A. E. van Vogt, Eric Frank Russell and Bob Heinlein.

I shall not soon forget an evening at Horace Gold's apartment during very early GALAXY days when Isaac asked Horace what he had lined up for the third issue and HLG mentioned having bought an effort of mine titled "Judas Ram". Isaac exploded with laughter and, when Horace asked him what was so funny, said, "You mean you bought one of Merwin's own rejects?"

I had a long confused Transatlantic time with Eric Frank Russell because, after buying a novel for SS from him, I kept trying to get him to sign some forms that would put a big dent in his income tax fees in the U.S. He refused to answer, finally exploding in an angry letter that the then British Socialist government had so flooded him with forms that cost him money that he was damned if he would sign any more. Subsequently, he apologized.

Another angry Englishman was William F. Temple. When I rejected a story of his, he sent me back a furious reply to the effect that all editors were failed writers who had no business judging the work of a real working author. He then applied to me the Dr. Fell verse. You know,

"I do not like thee, Dr. Fell,
The reason why I cannot tell.

But this I know and know full well.
I do not like thee, Dr. Fell."

This was in the late Forties and apparently at some point around then I had a burst of my stuff published or appearing in England. He came in with a handsome wry apology that did my ego no harm and he became an excellent contributor to the magazines during the last few years of my stay there.

I knew L. Ron Hubbard rather more briefly, but the founder of Dianetics and Scientology remains memorable for an occasion when I took him as my guest to a Hydra Club get-together. Ron had had a few and I was later informed that after I left him there he retaliated by pulling Fletcher Pratt's goatee! Glad I missed that one...

It is my belief that I bought Arthur C. Clarke's first American-sold novel-length story for SS in 1947-48 in AGAINST THE FALL OF NIGHT. He also sold me, among several other stories, an item called, "A Walk In the Dark" which reminded a number of fans of "The Thing In the Cellar" by David H. Keller. Frankly, when I got to know Clarke—slightly—I found his personality somewhat chilling. But his intellect and talent command respect everywhere.

Again to the best of my belief, I bought John D. MacDonald's first fiction efforts shortly after World War Two. He wrote some excellent science fiction before the mystery story and Gold Medal books got him and made him rich and deservedly famous.

Fletcher Pratt was one of the few authentic geniuses I have had the luck to meet. His ideas for stories were invariably superb, but he just as invariably lost interest in them before they were finished. I was always having to send them back to have the endings more fully rewritten.

There were so many others who helped, like Margaret St. Clair, whom I never have met, with her deft fantasy and comedy touches, like Jack Vance, another inconnu who came on strong after the last big war, and the gifted Raymond F. Jones, who got caught in Dianetics and, for a time at least, was unable to

write because of his hanging-out hang-ups. Not to mention Fredric Brown, an always underrated big talent whose WHAT MAD UNIVERSE ran back-to-back with Clarke's AGAINST THE FALL OF NIGHT in SS to give me probably my two best issues.

They were quite a bunch. I'm glad I had a chance to know most of them as well as their work.

"Paranoia is a recent cultural disorder. It follows the adoption of rationalism as the quasi-religion of Western man and the collapse of certain communitarian bonds (the extended family, belief in God, the harmony of the spheres) which once made sense of the universe in all its parts. Paranoia substitutes a rigorous (though false) order for chaos, and at the same time dispells the sense of individual insignificance by making the paranoid the focus of all he sees going on around him—a natural response to the confusion of modern life."

—"Paranoia" by Hendrik Hertzberg and David C. K. McClelland, HARPER'S, June, 1974

BIG BOOK ROAST: \$1. PER PLATE. PROCEEDS TO A WORTHY CHARITY

THE FALL OF COLOSSUS is D. F. Jones' sequel to COLOSSUS. You all remember the movie, I trust: COLOSSUS: THE FORBIN PROJECT.

In the first book Jones managed to get mankind into the clutches—the perfect do-gooder clutches—of a super-computer which was both immortal and indestructible.

The result a few years later is a better world in many ways, and a lousy one as far as man's spirit and creativity goes. Colossus is worshipped as a Deity and Dr. Forbin is the Deity's right hand man.

Yet, for all the Computer's spies and super knowledge, there is an underground resistance and Forbin's wife and one of his prime assistants are part of it....

The whole thrust of the story is how to get mankind out from under the benevolent dictatorship of the Computer.

Then the Martians contact the underground via a tight focus laser radio beam to Forbin's wife... Then she is implicated in anti-Colossus activity and sentenced by Colossus to a breeding/sex experiment (Colossus is unendingly curious about mankind) and in the experiment Jones sets up a situation which will curl the hair of women libbers and even raise the eyebrows of dedicated male chauvinist pigs.

Anyway, with a little help from the Martians a puzzle is fed past the censor circuits to Colossus' vulnerable 'mind' and the poor thing is caught in a logical trap that ends with him burning all his transistors to a crisp.

Mankind is FREE!—to set up a "necessary" dictatorship of humans to run things during the transistion....you understand about transitions, they seem to last a long time—

Whup! A surprise! With Colossus fried and dead, what's this message coming from space? Yikes! The Martians are coming! The underground heroes were dupes! Colossus was mankind's defense! Now Earth is about to be invaded.

—And a third D. F. Jones book is even now in the works. Shades of H. G. Wells.

Disgusting! Contemptible! I actually enjoyed it. Not even Jones' incredible "American" dialog put me off very far. Let's face it: I was born in the pulps and I'll die in the pulps. Give the pulps a boy from his 10th to 15th years—and they've got him for life.

Put another rolled-up paper log on the fire, Martha, and tune the \$900. stereo to the old-time radio program on KEX, and I'll let you play with my genuine plastic imitation Jack Armstrong decoder ring (the originals were metal, dag nab it, they don't make things like they used to).

By the way, THE FALL OF COLOSSUS was published in hardback by Putnam and costs \$5.95.

"Shaver has rocks in his head."

—Mike Deckinger

LETTER FROM
ALBERT DYTCH

May 20, 1974

"One item on the agenda of this letter is to point out my new address:

Albert Dytch
Box 1085, Route 1,
Florence, OR 97439.

"Another item—what started this letter, in fact—is your brief review of FEMALE SEXUAL FANTASIES by Hanja Kochansky. I just want to set the record straight; the fact that the book was at one time a far more interesting study hasn't much bearing on the book as a commodity, but since I was involved with its production and saw its slow demise I want to say a few things.

"Interestingly enough, it was Fred Pohl who originally bought the manuscript, against much resistance from the other authorities in that august company. Then the manuscript delved into each woman's life and mind and personality, so there was a good play between them and her fantasy, and it was all done in a very comfortable style of reportage. There were some problems of inarticulateness which Fred turned over to me, and the author and I worked very hard getting the whole thing into the shape we mutually arrived at.

"It was the first big editorial job I'd ever handled and I was delighted both with the responsibility and the outcome.

"Fred Pohl was gone from Ace some time in the next few weeks, and the publisher then decided that what had been a bone of contention anyway was 'unpublishable'. I'm not going to go into all the ridiculous arguments that followed; suffice it to say that what made it 'unpublishable' was precisely what made it a good book. I was 'asked' to delete all but the 'sexy' portions, and when I did so the book was too short. So the job was handed over to a senior editor—a woman who had been against the pro-

ject from the start, being an uptight career woman—who patched into the book a portion of the very sections I had deleted. What came out of the process was a patchwork with no heart to it; it was like taking a human being apart and putting it all back together except for a few vital functions and the emotions. It wasn't alive anymore.

"But I think the book still retains at least a little of the light of truth it began with. I agree that there is not too much new in the way of content (you should have seen the other half of the book! it would have wiggled even you); what I still find interesting is the form these fantasies take—like the convent fantasy, and the dream of the Fellini-like festival with a woman and an ape in a cage—remember? The roles and emotions the fantasies spring from are not opaque even to a guy of my tender years, nor is the energy that neuroses can generate. But I found the play of imagination sort of interesting. What's missing from the book is some sort of rapport between reader and woman which the author had established in the original manuscript; it made all the difference in the world. One of Ms. Kochansky's talents is to let you see someone in a few words, but you'd never guess it now. The information she can transmit has been filtered too many times. You pinpointed it: the book is "hot stuff".

"The whole affair was a real heartbreaker. I'm not working for any publishing houses right now. The top of the publishing heap has earned my respect and admiration—I tend to think of Ballantine, and Random House, and Viking and a few others, though I'm sure there must be skeletons lying around somewhere—but there is so much shit woven into the rest of the field that sometimes I wonder how any brilliant colors ever shine through. And I only worked in the field for a year-and-a-half!

"Now I know how crotchety old editors—surely you are not exempt—got that way."

((Yeah, I'm a "crotchety" forty-seven years old.

((Sometimes I feel I'm an expert on shitty publishers. Why, I've been ripped off so often I'm covered with scars.

((I am reminded of the time a publisher delayed any word on a manuscript I'd sent him. Months went by. I was living in Portland, then, and he was in Los Angeles. No answer to letters. And then a friend sent me a copy of the published novel!

((The publisher had literally stolen the book! No contract, no money, no nothing! Needless to say, I wrote again. Was answered by another company who had taken over from him, he having gone belly up. They promised to pay me \$500. for the book (\$500. in those days being worth what \$1500. is now) and enclosed a check for \$75. as a first installment.

((Fine, okay, except THEY promptly went bankrupt and in the 12 or so years since, the state bankruptcy referee has sent me obligatory legal notices to the effect that he has awarded this or that big creditor or set of lawyers so many thousands of dollars in claims (and awarded me not one cent), and I have sent him indignant letters chewing him out for paying off the Big Boys and not giving a thing to small claims. He does not respond, of course. I suppose he's callous to the screams of small fry. But I continue to scream.

((Royalty statements are a laugh. Talk about fiction! (When your book has gone into a second printing that you know of—or maybe a third, who can tell if they don't record it on the cover or inside—and the initial print run assured you a big royalty if sold out, what do you do if the publisher blandly says yes, but the returns are heavy, and... And never, never issues a royalty statement in spite of contractual obligations? Sue him? COSTS TOO MUCH! The lawyer would skim off any moneys obtained.

((That's the box a beginning and veteran writer is in. And the many, many writers who are reading this are nodding and smiling ruefully. They've almost all of them got similar scars. But we are a hardy breed.))

"Persons who see life as a series of 'crises', and who pride themselves on being 'the coolest man in the room' when a crisis actually develops, sometimes rise to positions of the highest responsibility. The same is true of people who believe themselves persecuted and harassed by 'enemies' who are out to 'get' them—and who, as a sort of 'protective-reaction strike', persecute and harass these same 'enemies'. The danger such a person incurs is that with the powers of his high position at his disposal, he may force reality into a conformity with his delusions. He will then find himself besieged by real enemies, who will indeed do their best to 'get' him. But since such a person has been preparing for precisely this all his life, he will be well equipped to 'fight like hell' when his back is against the wall."

—"Paranoia" by Hendrik Hertzberg and David C. McClelland, HARPER'S, June 1974.

POSTCARD FROM BOB BLOCH

May 20, 1974

"TAC #9 prompts me to try out one of my new cards on you and to inscribe it with compliments for an interesting issue. If the recent installment is at all typical, I'll be eagerly looking forward to more of Sam Merwin's reminiscences. What some of the younger fen may now dismiss as irrelevant has a habit of becoming more and more important as years go by: unfortunately, by the time appreciation arrives, the moment of truth is past recapturing. We can already regret that Anthony Boucher and John Campbell neglected to set down personal memoirs: by all means, let's preserve what we can in the sf field. They're doing it now in film societies—too little and too late in many instances—but at least the importance of first-hand recollection is recognized. And I'm glad you're doing your share for future historians. Besides, Merwin is a damn good writer."

LETTER FROM HARRY WARNER, JR.

April 13, 1974

"I agree with your blast at writers who unnecessarily complicate matters for the average reader. But I think this matter involves more than my personal willingness to spend hours or days trying to find someone who knows the secret which will unlock the latest incomprehensible novel. This is a much more general serious problem because right now, the entire publishing industry and the habit of reading are in grave danger all over the nation, not just in the science fiction prozines or among fans who read the paperbacks.

"Consider what has happened in the past twenty years or so in other fields of entertainment. You pay no more today for a large-screen television set which has full color, automatic fine tuning, both UHF and VHF channels, and other refinements like transistor circuitry than you did around 1950 for a black and white set with only a dozen channels. Cable companies have sprung up to take care of areas where tall buildings or distance from transmitters made home reception impossible years ago. In about the same period, phonograph records have changed from fragile to unbreakable, the lp has created immense savings in space and improvement in fidelity, stereophonic sound has become standard, and the choice of repertoire and artists in any type of recorded music has expanded staggeringly. Movies, which were supposed to be killed by television long ago, are still alive because they've changed: reproduced in dialog the way people really talk, used photographic techniques that Hollywood once didn't dare to risk, tied in with television networks for production and distribution of new and old films.

"Meanwhile, what has the publishing industry done? It hasn't even tried to solve the distribution problem that was just as bad a quarter-century ago as it is today. It has permitted the physical product to deteriorate with cruddier paper and grayer type because of cost-

cutting efforts and it has still allowed its product to triple or quadruple in price to the consumer over that period. Newspapers still don't use color for anything but advertisements, paperbacks don't run interior illustrations. The paperback industry is having serious problems, only the "fact" magazines are healthy, and there are fewer newspapers every year.

"This is no time for making it harder for readers in science fiction or any other field. In-group writing techniques may be fun for authors and editors, giving them the sense of knowing something that the hoi polloi doesn't about what the stories mean, but they could help deliver the coup de grace to an industry that should have started decades ago to meet new competitors for the entertainment dollar and changing times."

((The printing industry has developed bigger and faster presses...and the printing unions have demanded wage increases to the point that they've more than wiped out the costs saved with better machinery. In fact, printers may be killing off more publishers than increased mailing costs and poor distribution.))

"We all are exceptional cases. We all want to appeal against something. Each of us insists on being innocent at all cost, even if he has to accuse the whole human race and heaven itself."

—Albert Camus, THE FALL (1957)
(thanks to Mary Roberts)

POSTCARD FROM
DR. FREDRIC WERTHAM

April 30, 1974

"Many thanks for sending me the Alien Critic with your review of THE WORLD OF FANZINES.

"Such praise by Geis
Is certainly nice.
It couldn't be better,
So I'll write this letter
Just to tell
May AC do well!"

Dear Lisa,
Have just
cleaned my typewriter
which was a wild and
stupid thing to do...
An Article By TED TUBB

...and one I do very rarely because I don't really know how. However, after blowing off an accumulation of cigarette ash and rubbings I drenched it in petrol and then, working on the assumption that every moving part needs oil, then drenched it with oil.

The inevitable result is that the damned thing's gone all sticky and the keys move as if through quicksand. So I've just drenched it with petrol again and am writing this to get the machine back into some kind of working order.

Why the explanation? It covers the undoubted mess of typos I'm going to make, the misspellings etc. And it proves once again the sense in the old adage—leave well enough alone.

A thing, when you come to think about it, that politicians never do. As soon as they get into power it seems they look around to find what they can interfere with. Is there something the public enjoys? Ban it. A scrap of personal freedom which, so far, has been overlooked? Regulate it.

The one thing about power, in fact the sole attribute which makes people want it, is the ability to enforce their will on the rest. Every damned government has added to the restrictions—and not one that I know of has ever lifted a ban, a limitation or in any way has added to personal liberty.

A blind eye may be turned to things like pornography—but the laws are still there and, at the moment, are being enforced. And don't try to walk naked down the street. There is no law against—but they'll grab you for conduct likely to cause breach of the peace. In this freedom-loving (freedom for whom) so-called democracy of ours you can't win.

Oh well.

Start again:

Dear Lisa...

...the keys are a little easier now and the alternative to writing this is to work and the aim of all Mankind and the sole purpose of living—from one point of view at least—is not to work but to have fun. To which should be added the qualification that work, by definition, is something you would rather not do—if you want to do it it isn't work but fun. So, in heaven, you would pick the jobs that need to be done and which you like doing. In hell you are forced to work at what you don't like doing at jobs that don't need to be done.

End of philosophy.

Talking about book reviews I have yet to come across a reviewer the equal of Algis Budrys who used to appear in GALAXY. His reviews always twanged a sympathetic string in my heart and the times when he didn't actually review books but, in a sense, reviewed authors, not in particular but en masse, shows that he has a keen insight into the problems attending creative endeavor. One of the things he pointed out, and with truth, was that writing holds occupational hazards one of which is the inevitable loss of reading enjoyment. And this is because a writer cannot remain wholly detached from what he is reading—always the critical faculty is at work.

So you pick up a best seller and read it and lower it to stare bleakly into space while within the skull the mind buzzes with baffled fury. This is good? This has sold? This is what is wanted? My Ghod! Why, oh why have I been wasting my time when crap like this gets the praise?

Or:

This is good! This should sell. This must be what is wanted! Why have I been wasting my time attempting the impossible!

So dump the paper and sell the typer and get a nice, quiet, comfortable job clipping tickets or sweeping up leaves and stop trying to attain

the giddy heights of professional success.

Of course we rarely do.

There are other hazards, naturally, dare I mention the financial instability? The loneliness—writing is a very solitary occupation—no matter how extroverted the author might appear in company, what overcompensation he might make, or the facade of a rich, full enjoyable life he might present—basically, when he is working, he works alone.

And I mean alone. No one can help him, it's all up to him and either he makes it or he doesn't. And no matter how big the room or how luxurious, when working his world diminishes to the span of a sheet of paper—and then, of course, there is the BLOCK.

Every artist knows of it, everyone engaged in creative endeavor. Everyone has experienced it; for some it lasts a short while, for others a long, but it is always the same. The head turns in to a steel ball hanging between the ears. The imagination withers. The very desire to work fades and dies and is replaced by a terrible antipathy to the entire thing. You don't want to write. You can't think what to write. The fingers rebel, the head aches, the eyes twitch. The soul shrinks and depression comes in a wave. You are mentally impotent. Hell is very near.

There are ways to beat it and everyone has their own. Some will roll in a sheet of paper and write regardless of what they are writing, just putting down words and using the fingers knowing that, if they do it long enough, the BLOCK will vanish. Others take a long, long walk. Some get drunk. Others take temporary jobs. Most just have to wait, never certain that the BLOCK will go, yet knowing that it has happened before and passed, and yet... And yet...

"For sale. One used typewriter, dictionary, paper, carbons, and erasers. Ex-author emigrating. Cheap for quick deal."

It happens.

And then, of course, there are the critics.

I suppose that book reviews should not really be included in a list of occupational hazards, but they are real and they are there. And it will never be known just how many young writers have been permanently damaged by a too-effusive review any more than it will ever be known just how many have been blasted by a bad one to cringe and crawl quietly away never to touch a word again.

And the thing about it, the one thing which makes normal writers scream and froth and beat their women, is that the average reviewer doesn't know what the hell he is talking about.

What I mean is they aren't reviewing the book at all—they are simply airing their own opinions and personal preferences.

Illustration.

How often have you read a book and then read a review of that book and wondered if both you and the reviewer had read the same work at all? Or done it the other way around? The normal review seems to consist of a pundit pontificating:

"In his latest book X has shown once again his mastery of the language and his shrewd insight into human motivations, this, coupled with his undoubted genius in the depiction of character and his mastery of showing a future society in a few deft touches, brings every word to life. I urge you to rush out and buy STARK AGAINST THE STARS, a novel which breaks old taboos and extends the frontiers of neo-sexuality in a manner hitherto unknown in the genre...."

And so on...and on...and on...

Of course, if the reviewer didn't get a free drink the last time he and the author met, or had to buy his copy, or just felt bloody-minded, we could just as well get:

"STARK AGAINST THE STARS is yet another production from the hack-factory managed by X. It is pathetic in its feeble attempts to depict characters, a society which couldn't

work and, anyway, was done better by Y years ago. X won't take advice but if he did I would suggest that he devote his time to second-rate pornography—that, at least, might be within the realm of his talent."

And neither type of review tells you anything about the book at all.

The way to review a book, the only honest way, is to first determine just what the author intended to do then decide whether or not he did it well. For example: if I write a space opera it has to be judged as that, not compared to a philosophical discussion on the impact of aliens with men. And, equally so, a novel based on the impending explosion of the sun can't be judged on the same plane as one in which three men and one woman are cooped up in a space ship with only enough air to last two of them to planetfall. Or one in which giant ants pour from a Martian ant hill to chomp the colonists.

Some things, naturally, are universal. Good writing in the sense that it does not offend and conveys keen entertainment—which is what writing fiction is all about. Logical development of plot and response to given characters to present situations. But don't blast an action story because it is just that and you don't happen to like action stories. And don't laud a book because it contains a heavy sex element and you happen to be a randy cowson. Judge each work on its own merits. If it's bad say so and say why. If it's good, ditto. If you can't do that then you shouldn't be reviewing at all.

And so we come to another of the author's occupational hazards—and for the purpose of this screed the last. It is the Visitor.

The visitor is young, male, very keen and dedicated, knowing just what the author is doing wrong and willing to say so. He hasn't phoned in advance because that way he can be put off and, anyway, to phone would be polite.

Instead he rings the bell and stands

on the doorstep and you have the choice of either slamming the door and getting the reputation of being a hard-hearted, selfish, callous son-of-a-bitch, or letting him in for a cup of tea. As you are a tender-hearted, polite man, and were young once yourself, you let him in. The first time, anyway—we all have to learn.

Let's fictionalize the rest.

The room was just a room with a table and a couple of chairs, only two because visitors were rare and the ones he liked to call weren't really interested in sitting down not when there was a bed in the other room. A dream, he thought, such people never called, but his trade was in the creation of dreams and surely the Great Scribe above would not begrudge him this little fantasy? And now instead of a lissom shape and a yearning dedication which would bring her to her knees at his feet eager to listen to pearls of wisdom he knew, so well, could flow like a limpid stream, he had this young man.

Looking at him the Tired Old Author—hereinafter known as Ioa—sighed. Well, he thought, each of us has his cross to bear. But this cross promises to be heavy. First he had arrived late and Ioa knew just what that implied. Second he had that look. Third—Ioa narrowed his scrutiny seeing what he had expected to see. The uniform of jeans, anorak, long hair and beads. And, of course, the beard. They always wore a beard. And he would be intense and probing and a little rude. Once Ioa could have matched it but now he was old and tired and life was gray.

Bleakly he reached for a bottle.

"You drink a lot," said the Bearded Young Man—hereinafter known as Bym—"Do you find it helps your creative faculty?"

A grunt as Ioa poured and drank and poured again, his hand and arm were moving with ingrained reflex action as if continuing a life and will of their own. Many years, he thought grimly, too many years. When did I take the first drink? How long has it been since I poisoned my metabolism with noxious liquors? Too

long, he decided. One day I must break the habit. To be clean again, unsullied, free from the dependence on the vile juice. And yet... And yet...

"I tried mescal once," said Bym. "And a little pot and a couple of times some lsd. I must say that it expanded my consciousness and showed me the realms beyond the obvious. I think an author's duty is to explore those regions, don't you? I mean, in your last book—"

"Latest," grunted Ioa, he was touchy about such things. "You said, last," he explained. "I'm not dead yet."

"Well, that's right, but—" Bym looked at the bottle. "May I?"

To drink alone was a mortal sin. Ioa filled a second glass, wary as he poured. Maybe the sprout would get drunk or pretend to get drunk and then honour would force him to provide a bed for the night. Booze, bed and breakfast, he thought grimly. That's what the guy was really after. A free flop for the night and what did he have to offer in return?

"I called on you because of something of yours I read a short while ago." Bym sipped the glass. "I can't remember the title but, man! it was wonderful! Such a tender grasp of human motivations, such a fine development of character, I'm not lying when I tell you that it was the finest thing ever to come my way."

Ioa said, "What was it?"

"I can't remember the title, but it was really great."

A ploy, thought Ioa, mildly amused. To probe would be useless. To mention a title would be worse. A handle was all the bum needed and then would expand into a rhapsody of enthusiasm, taking care, of course, not to pin himself down. A sure way of flattering any writer but he had bumped into it before. He frowned, remembering the old pain, the bleak confrontation when he had finally realized that the gushing young thing hadn't read a damn word he had written but was using the ploy to gain an introduction to someone else.

Someone she had read. That was the part which had hurt.

"The thing is," continued Bym intensely, "I have this great idea for a novel. I can't write it myself, for one thing I lack your talent, for another I haven't the time, but it's something you could do really well."

"What is it?"

"Well—" The old, familiar veil dropped over the eyes. "Well, you know. A great idea like mine—I can hardly give it away now, can I?"

"So?"

"Well, I thought we would collaborate. I give you the idea and you knock it into shape and then we split the proceeds down the middle. That's why I really came. After I read that thing of yours—I wish I could remember the title—anyway, after I read it, I thought, that's the one man who could use my idea. It'll make us both rich." He added, "Hard cover first then paper back, foreign rights and then the film. Maybe it'll go into a television serial."

Ioa said, "Have you written anything yourself?"

"Some poems. I haven't written a novel yet, I haven't the time. I mean, I'm busy traveling around."

"Why?"

"Why do I travel? Well, I guess I've got to find myself, you know."

"I can help you there," said Ioa. "You are at this moment—"

Bym stared at him, unbelievably. "I don't mean my actual location," he blurted. "I mean, I've got to find a purpose in life. Why am I here? Why was I born? You catch?"

Too well. Ioa reached for the bottle. Another nut, he thought. And a male one at that. With a woman he could have— The arm did its job.

"Well, what do you say?"

Ioa could have said to hell with it and kicked him out but it was late and the booze was beginning to take

effect and the alternative was to go back to work and he didn't want to do that. He had three characters trapped in a cave by a giant slug and spiders, poisonous, were dropping from the roof, their guns were exhausted and the girl was hurt and he had stopped because he didn't see how the hell they were going to get out. Tomorrow, maybe, he would know, but tomorrow was hours away.

The glass, he discovered, was empty. I drink too much, he thought, and smoke too much and think too often about women. I'm rotting my lungs and liver and the other thing is playing hell with my equilibrium. And now this creep wants to sell me an idea.

He said, "Just what is this notion you have?"

"My idea?" Again the veil. Like all non-writers Bym had an inflated idea of the value of a story-concept. He had yet to learn that ideas didn't make a story. There were other things.

ASIDE: Note to Aspiring Authors #1 — hereinafter known as Ntaa. It has been said, and with truth, that there are no new ideas—only new treatments of same. An idea is the barest of skeletons on which to build the flesh of a story and, particularly in the case of a novel, it isn't enough. We are talking about novels. The idea must be expanded into a plot, one or more sub-plots added, characters formed, scenes determined, situations developed, and a correct blend of narrative, dialogue and description merged into a whole. An overabundance of one can only be achieved by the sacrifice of another. Like a cook making a cake, the proportions are determined by the author to the success or failure of the final product.

Continue.

"Look," said Ioa. "You think your idea is of value, right? Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. You trade me one for one. For example, as a starter how about this for an idea? The gardner is mixing up new fertilizer to increase the size of his marrows. It does that and more, it increases the size of the insects around and before we know it we have huge ants and wasps and beatles

running around chomping up people and smashing down houses and threatening the very lives of the human race. Got it?"

"I think so—hasn't it been done?"

"A few times, maybe," admitted Ioa. "But so what? Have the gardner a girl research worker, set the scene on mars, make the insects develop intelligence—hell, use your imagination!" The level of the bottle, he noted, was way, way down.

"Well—" Bym looked uncomfortable. "My idea isn't exactly like that."

"What is it?"

"It's different."

"How?"

"It has deeper social significance."

"In what way?"

"It reaches into the basic formation of mankind and illuminates hidden mysteries."

"You're certain?"

"Yes."

"Absolutely positive?"

"Yes."

"I'll say it again," said Ioa. "Your idea is different to mine. Right?"

"Right."

"That's what I thought you said. A different idea to mine."

"Yes."

"A better one?"

"Yes."

"I see."

Ntaa #2: Between the first word of a novel and the last there is an awful lot of space which has to be filled if the buyer of a book doesn't want a notepad. Padding is a bad word to authors, but at times a little can be an asset. The above is an example of obvious stretching. When it becomes obvious it becomes bad. The trick is to use it and not make it obvious. Of course, the Ideal Novel would not contain one unessential

word. As yet the Ideal Novel has not been written.

Continue.

Bym swallowed his drink and held out his glass for more. "I'd like to trust you," he admitted. "But, you know, you hear stories. A lot of authors pinch their ideas—or so I've been told. Look, suppose I tell you about it and you write it down and sign it and then, if you use it later without telling me, I'll have something to prove it was mine in the first place."

For a guest he was being very tactful. Ioa felt a rising tide of anger and quelled it with an effort. He said, "Forget it. Don't tell me. I don't want to know."

"But it's a wonderful idea."

"So you keep telling me. Do you know how long it takes to write a book? A long time. How long will it take you to tell me your idea? Minutes, if that. A bit of yak with no sweat and you want half? Maybe you should leave?"

"Would you be willing to buy it?"

"An idea? No."

"A synopsis then?"

"Have you got one? No? That's what I thought. Well, it's been nice meeting you. Your last train leaves in thirty minutes."

"Listen," Bym had decided. "The idea," he said. "If you use it then, maybe, you'll think of me. Right?"

Ioa said with feeling, "I'll never forget you."

"Well now, it's like this. We have this old and ancient race and their world is on the edge of destruction so they build a ship and put into it a man and a woman. The man's name could be Adam and the woman's Eve. They leave and land somewhere and have all sorts of trouble and the ship has a computer which they mustn't touch and the woman does and then—" He broke off, Ioa wasn't listening. Instead he had risen to return with a black-leather book which he threw on the table. "What's that?"

"The original," said Toa. "They land, of course on Earth. Surprise, surprise!"

"It's been done?"

"Moases wrote the first version."

"So it's no good?"

"Sure it's good." Mollified Toa helped himself to more liquor. "A strong plot, human frailty, a villain lurking in the woodwork, battle, murder and sudden death. One of the best books ever written. You should read it when you get the time."

"I see."

"They give them away, you know."

"They do?"

"In hotels."

"I don't stay much in hotels."

"You could pick up one cheap."

"From a bookshop?"

"Some bookshops."

"The big ones?"

"Yes."

"I'll remember that."

"You remember it."

"I will."

"You'll enjoy it."

"I think I might."

"A lot of people have."

"They must have."

"It's a best seller."

"Yes?"

"Yes."

NTAA #3: Not another example just of padding, though it is that, but an illustration of the need to identify. After a while the reader tends to forget just who is supposed to be talking and, if some sub-editor cuts a line of dialogue, or the typesetter misses one, confusion can result. Hence the desirability of labels. He said, Toa said, etc. There is no need to continually say how he said it, i.e. Toa growled, barked, sneered, smiled, spat, snarled,

hissed, and so on. Not, that is, unless you want to write a crummy book.

Continue.

Nursing his glass, Bym said quietly, "I guess I've got a lot to learn." He had, but Toa wasn't taken in. The humbleness was a front, this character would never be humble, it was a ploy to stay because the train was leaving and he didn't want to go. But he'd had his warning and, anyway, there wasn't enough booze for the two of them.

"A lot to learn," repeated Bym. "How, for example do you know where a story should start? And how?"

"A story starts where the author wants it to start. The beginning is as good a place as any because then you avoid having to use flashbacks. And how? Well, each to his own. The only general rule, I think, is that if the reader's interest isn't held then he won't bother to read on so all the rest is a waste."

"A hook?"

"Could be."

"Action?"

"If you're writing that sort of book." Toa glanced at his watch (See?). It depends. You haven't much time if you want to catch the last train."

"I—"

"Go, man!" Urged Toa, "Go!"

Alone he sat looking at the bottle, the ash in the ash tray, the empty space where his visitor had left something undefinable. A smell, he decided. Odd how those who were so eager to find themselves never took the trouble to make sure they'd be welcome once they arrived. Or maybe it was just himself. These people upset him with their supreme conviction that they knew it all, that they were right and he and all his kind were wrong. Old, he thought, that is true enough, but why, oh why, don't they realize that they too, one day, will be old. And that in the weary journey through life some of us, at least, may have learned a little on the way.

He was getting maudlin and more than a little drunk. Not drunk, he corrected himself, simply unwound. The night was still young if you counted time from midnight. Time enough to set down an idea. Not Bym's, but the other. The giant ants. Action could be got from that. Intelligent ones with an infinite depth of understanding of the human condition.

Idly he considered titles. MESSAGE FOUND IN A HOLLOW BONE THROWN ON THE ENGLISH SHORE BY THE MIDNIGHT TIDE?

Too long, he decided. It wouldn't fit the covers, lacked punch and who could remember to spout that mouthful when asking for the book. ALIEN FURY perhaps? Or, TERRAN GODDESS OF THE ANTERS. CHITON OF CHARN? DEATH ALL AROUND US?

He shook his head, undecided, but a title would come eventually, that he knew. In the meantime there was unfinished business. A mag sent for his perusal and comment and one he had enjoyed as he had enjoyed the thought behind it. Concern, he thought, a reaching and touching, if only by proxy—at least he hadn't been forgotten.

The machine was still gummy but it would work. As he sat a fragment of an old song drifted through his aching mind.

"As I sat at the typer, tired and ill at ease, and let my fingers wander, idly over the keys...."

How did it go now? Never mind. It was time for him to get down to it.

Dear Lisa, he typed and paused before continuing.

Dear Lisa,
Have just cleaned my typewriter which was a wild and stupid thing to do...

((First published in Lisa Conesa's ZIMRI #5, 1973.))

A true cynic doubts everything—including his own cynicism.

LETTER FROM BILL ROTSLER

Undated, but mid-June.

"I must write in comment to Mike Gilbert's letter on the state of S-F art, at least as it pertains to VERTEX. I have no quarrel whatever with Mike's points, as I think they are all true, or true most of the time, certainly enough to be significant.

"What I wish to comment on is that I have asked, personally or in letters, virtually all of the science fiction fan artists to submit portfolios of work, cartoons and covers, all on speculation. What has been the result? Virtually zero. Mike himself sent a batch of what had to be "clean up the desk" sketches, which I returned, asking for better, and got them, but still not anything like his first rate work. Despite the ego-boo (and some money) of having a portfolio of art printed in VERTEX, plus an ego-stoking article (usually by me, since I know them) I had a helluva time getting art from people.

"There was some protest about an artist submitting a cover on spec, but I find this silly, as writers submit on spec, and so have cover artists for years. Granted, VERTEX does not want the "usual" SF cover of a spaceship against an alien landscape (etc.), but a simple sketch could give us an idea.

"I pulled in SF fan artists (as well as non-fan) by the scruff, got them assignments and some failed even to keep deadlines, and one passed on the assignment to another, without even telling us. I went to local art schools, pleading for art, managed to get a few artists. One found in a story he was given to illustrate (and he was a good illustrator!) that a character took the name of the Lord in vain, quit, and would have nothing more to do with us.

"At this writing we are desperate for covers and I don't think this will change much in the future. Naturally, I have tried to give work to my friends (what else is nepotism for?) but only to those I think can deliver (what else is my word for?) but only Barr, Austin &

Kirk have come through.

"We have received a few covers on spec, almost all hideously amateurish, completely wrong, spaceship-in-orbit-of-alien-sun, etc. George Barr sent us a beauty, in execution & idea, but done with such pale colors as to be unusable on a cover.

"We need covers, folks. We need cartoons. (I've had to sit right down at Don's desk and draw on "right now" almost every time.) We have had strange relationships with fan cartoonists, too, who shoot themselves down all the time. We need illustrators. We need art portfolios to get an idea of an artist's qualifications, and possibly for a printed polio.

"When I say 'we' please understand I am not an official part of VERTEX at all. I even asked my name to be removed as "visual coordinator" (whatever that is) because I was strongly against the sloppy artwork of one illustrator. I was even given one of my own stories to find an illustrator for, and couldn't. (I also have copies of VERTEX hand-delivered by the editor, as I lay here sunburnt from an injudicious weekend naked in the sun.)

"I would like a GIANT number of artists available to us, from those capable of "every-rivet-showing-on-the-gleaming-ship" style to the wildest and most abstract. I would like the artist mated to the work, style to style, but I can only do that if I have competent artists available.

"Send me portfolios (with return postage, please, and in sturdy containers, and with your addresses, yes, Virginia, they do send work without either name or address) and show me. VERTEX, 8060 Melrose, Los Angeles, CA 90046.

Being a criminal is a rotten job—but somebody has to do it.

Pederasts of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your—ARRGGHHH!

TORTURE GARDEN--Where Geis stomps through the tulips

Much as I am beginning to admire Jim Baen's acumen in choosing fiction (& columnists) for GALAXY and IF, I also begin to suspect he may have a wooden eye when it comes to choosing artists for interior illustrations.

I have only the new (July) issue of G to base these misgivings on, but how any editor could go with the less-than-pulp-quality drawings of the unnamed artist whose not-so-subtle amateurisms undermined "The Frontliners", "Opening Problem", "Act of Mercy" and "Orbitsville" (Bob Shaw must have wept) is beyond me. Jack Gaughan was his usual competent old-pro self in the two he did.

Then there is that atrocity on page 115. It is listed on the contents page as "Showcase" and Edward Kimmel is the artist. This item is 'first in a non-verbal series.' It shows an empty, out-of-order phone booth sitting in a prehistoric forest (I guess) posed beside it. What this means is non-verbally obscure to me. I'd settle for a really good full-page SF cartoon every issue...but Jim probably would have as much or more trouble getting quality as Bill Rotsler.

The cover of the July GALAXY is very good, by Wendy Pini. I'd like to see more of her work.

Her cover illustrates Verge Foray's lead novella, "The frontliners" ...which I found unbearably pulpy and cute—characters with amazing mental powers in a far-future galactic civilization acting like 1950s girls playing earnestly at CIA games. Shallow and unbelievable. I trust this was bought before Jim took over.

Bob Shaw's work in this issue, however, is a joy to read. "A Full Member of the Club" is mature, clever and smooth. Most important, it grabs and holds interest.

His 3-part novel, ORBITSVILLE

is perhaps his acceptance of the Big-is Beautiful syndrome of American science fiction. (I mean, man, if Niven can win a Hugo with RINGWORLD, why not use a Dyson Sphere of immense size and work out a dynamic personal struggle in it?)

Whatever his motive for writing it, I have to compliment him for an engrossing story from the first paragraph on. I have only one grump—ORBITSVILLE is a lousy title: based on out-of-date slang that would not have survived the end of the year it was coined, much less hundreds of years into the future. (Ten years ago I wrote a book called GIRLSVILLE, and by the time it was published the "ville" fad had faded from the youth vocabulary and was only echoed in always-late exploitation titles.)

The August IF shows no signs of the "handmade" look in interior illos and titles that flawed the July GALAXY. It (IF) has a strong, hot-colored action cover and poor to good interior illos.

But the fiction—Fritz Leiber's "Midnight By The Morphy Watch" and the concluding half of Saberhagen's Berserker serial, and Bob Shaw's "A Little Night Flying" make it a memorable, way-above average issue.

If I can be objective, I think my column adds to the impact of the magazine.

There is a loose, willingness-to-experiment feeling, now, to the format of both GALAXY and IF that I like. There is variety and an editorial presence. The magazines are alive.

Next issue of TAC I'll concentrate on another set of promags.

LETTER FROM
BRUCE D. ARTHURS
6-1-74

"Was glad to read the informative letter from James Blish, which cleared up some misconceptions of mine. (I am continually astounded at how many of them people point out to me.)

"Speaking of non-sf stories being printed in an sf anthology or magazine, I did a little checking recently and

found at least three blatant examples besides "A True Bill", all from different sources:

"No Bands Playing" by Heinlein in VERTEX — the only connection between sf and this story, of course, is the author's reputation as 'Dean of Science Fiction Writers.' (Offhand, I believe that title has been applied to Clarke and Asimov as well. Maybe they're really a junta?) I believe (and this time I'm sure I'm right) that VERTEX would not have bought the story if it had been written by an unknown writer.

"The Kozmic Kid" by Richard Snead in FANTASTIC — This isn't sf, either, though a quick reading might give that impression; it's a dope story, with realistic description of hallucinations, the paranoia of the drug culture, and the mental and moral destruction caused by them. It could easily be passed off as non-fiction, even!

"What Happened to Nick Neptune?" by Dick Lupoff in F&SF — In its own way, this is the worst of the three stories. It has an sfnal element, all right; part of the story takes place after the entire Earth has been reduced to cinders by an alien race and 90% of the Earth's population has been evacuated to the asteroids. But...this sfnal element has nothing to do with the story! NOTHING! Lupoff could have just left the Earth untouched, and the story wouldn't have changed a bit. In fact, the move to the asteroids is so well-done that everyone is able to take their possessions with them; the same chairs, the same tables, even the same paintings on the walls! What the story really is, in fact, is faan fiction, dealing with the rabid collectors, the completists, in fandom.

"The trouble with all this is that I enjoyed all the stories. (Well, I don't think one could use that term with the Snead story, since, I think deliberately, it nauseated me. But I was impressed by it.) Taken on their own, out of the context in which they were published (and ignoring that added bit about the asteroids in Lupoff's story), they all come across quite well, and I read all of them straight through.

"But that context is what bugs me! Taking it for granted that these stories deserved to be published, did they have to be published in sf magazines? Is the market for short stories so bad outside the sf markets that there's no place else for them to go?

"*grump* (And that's about all I can do about it, too, I guess.)"

((Don't be discouraged, Bruce. The life of a Guardian of the Genre is hard, but there are rewards....aren't there?))

I LIKED IT? I DIDN'T
LIKE IT? (Check one)

Okay, with the firm understanding that it is the 4th of July, I have a headache for which I have taken two Acanin...Anacin...and that I hate all humankind, let's get on with the book reviewing. Bailiff, bring in the first novel!

Ha! You can't fool me, Captain Future. You can change your name to Cap Kennedy, you can rename your spaceship, you can change the names of your trusty companions, but you are still out there saving mankind from fates worse than death (as well as pure extinction, of course).

Well, whatthehell, welcome back. You and Perry Rhodan and the other series saviors are unconsciously mocking reminders that sf ain't quite grown up yet...and probably never will.

Captain, you've managed to limit the childish insults your "adult" companions exchange, and your authors are allowed a bit more credibility in plot and action, but I worry about you...I wonder, in this day and age, don't you think you could show just a tiny bit of interest in women? Are are you and Chemile and Saratov and Luden all "fixed" by the Earth government?

The name of the adventure I read? It was #6: SEETEE ALERT by your house name "Gregory Kern". (DAW UQ1103, 95¢)

+++

Now, adults (of a certain kind) alert!, here is a future James Bond named Jack Anderson who works for a world-

wide TV expose reporter named Eve Savage. Jack is a former U.S. intelligence agent and has mastered all kinds of body-mind techniques, and has a series of fake molars containing: super speed, the speed's antidote, and a self-hypno chemical that helps him resist deep-probe interrogation.

The time is 1994 and the action is fast, hard and deadly. In between, the women are all beautiful and unable to resist Jack's 'old-fashioned' macho sex appeal (in a world of rampant bi-sexuality and beyond). He favors an 'antique' 357 magnum handgun to the modern lasers and nerve-disruptors.

This may be the first of a series. It is titled 1994: The Savage Report. Blurbed 'Jack Anderson against Dr. Tek'. (The mad toothbrush mogul?) It is published by Freeway Press, and has a Kelly Freas cover and was written by a damn good commercial fictioneer: Howard Rheingold. (FP2033, \$1.25)

+++

Yet another series is that of Simon Rack, an agent in the Inter-Galactic Security Service of the Federation.

I should add that Commander Simon Kennedy Rack ('Kennedy' seems to be a magic commercial name) has a partner, Ensign Bogart, and they are both in the smart-aleck, immature, rebels-against-the-boss but crackerjack agents tradition.

Laurence James is the author and he appears to have a vague idea of the size and proximity of galaxies. He treats them like nearby solar systems or sectors of our galaxy. (On patrol in the 'Omni-cron' galaxy, he receives a message from Earth garbled by electrical interference in the 'million miles of space' separating them.

This series apparently is originating in England, since Zebra Books issues these Rack adventures 'by special arrangement with Sphere Books, Ltd', an English publisher, and the book is dedicated to Bruce Pennington, an English sf artist.

This book is Rack #2: WAR ON ALEPH (Zebra 8468-0035, \$1.25) and has a very good, intriguing opening chapter set on

the planet Aleph, but as soon as the 26-year old Simon Rack and his side-kick (age 31) are introduced the writing quality disintegrates.

Okay, boys, let's haul ass out of here, I've got a date with Jacqueline Lichtenberg!

LETTER FROM JACQUELINE LICHTENBERG 5-29-74

"Alien Critic #9 was pleasant reading, and I look forward to #10 eagerly. You've got one of my pet subjects peeping into the lime light again: SF ILLUS-TRATIONS.

"I made my debut in print with a letter to the old AMAZING when I was 16 years old (some 16 years ago) with a few paragraphs lambasting illustrations for being inaccurate to the point of having nothing whatever to do with the story. My first published story (Jan. '69 IF) boasted an illo so utterly irrelevant and totally inaccurate I didn't even feel frustrated, just plain contemptuous (not of the editors but of the stupid artist who didn't know his forearm from his armpit).

"With my novel, HOUSE OF ZEOR, I corresponded at some length (probably just within the bounds of toleration for the poor editors) on the utter necessity for an accurate picture of a Sime on the cover illo. So, out of extreme deference to artistic sensitivity in a beginning novelist, the artist (CAYEA) moved the tentacles from armpit to elbow, and left out one crucial pair of them while completely forgetting the still-important sheaths. Apparently CAYEA doesn't know his elbow from his wrist.

"I have discussed cover illos with writers such as MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY, and it appears that after a few years of battering one's head bloody against a stone wall, writers go back (as befits the basic temperament of the species) to rely solely on words alone to communicate with their readers. I have suggested to Jack Gaughan that artists should be part and parcel of the creative process of storytelling. I have often moaned, 'Oh,

if only I could draw this!' Because often there are things which are quite clear to the mind's eye but totally undecipherable by-and-of-their very nature. That's what art is FOR, to describe the undescribable, to take up where mere words leave off, to concretize a conceptualization. (Which is of course why STAR TREK is such an odd success, it uses visual media to do what words cannot; so what if all the words aren't the best sf words ever written? The additional power of visual reinforcement of the storyline makes it even more powerful than the best books for visually oriented people.) "

((I've got to say it: 'concretize a conceptualization' is a marvelously inept phrase. And the odd success of STAR TREK lies not in the general picturing of hard-to-describe images; every movie, cartoon, TV show does that to one degree or another—it lies in the detailed creation of Spock (which tapped a river of psyche-response in the youth of this country) and in the perfect casting of Leonard Nimoy in the part and in his excellent portrayal. Without the dynamics of the Spock character and Spock-Nimoy, STAR TREK probably would have lasted only one season...or part of one season.))

"I still consider the melding of wordsmith and linesmith into a creative unit to be one of my ultimate and lifelong crusades. Gene Roddenberry has done this in a way, once, with STAR TREK. They've shot him dead on all other attempts, and because of his Spock-like artistic integrity, he'd rather do nothing than do less than his best. I myself have taken a slight detour into the realm of surrender to art editors (at least on the pro scene), and am trying to develop my ability to communicate pictures through words only. However, on the fan scene, my Kraith Series accepts creative contributions from its artists, and seeks them whenever possible.

"The Kraith Series is the main body of my work published in STAR TREK fan-zines (for which, I believe, the Hugo nomination was given me this year.) It is written by some 25 or more writers,

and I haven't got an accurate count on the artists who have illustrated it in the uncounted fanzines that have carried either the fiction or the Kraith non-fiction (both STAR TREK and sf fanzines). But one prominent artist-contribution to the series background appears on the covers of the volumes of KRAITH COLLECTED."

((The "pure" sf fandomites sneer at both comics fandom and ST fandom. "We" are the mainstream; "you" are the "fringe" fandoms. I do not subscribe to this extreme provincialism and chauvinism. I find it interesting that probably both comics fandom and STAR TREK fandom are larger than the active-fans (in fanzines published, in enthusiasm) in sf fandom.

((I also find it disturbing that I had never heard of the Kraith Series before you mentioned it in your letter. I have a few trades with comics fanzines but none, apparently, with the hardcore ST fan publishers. (But, I suppose there are hordes of ST fans who have never heard of TAC or Geis.)

((The Cayea cover on the dust-jacket of your Doubleday sf novel, HOUSE OF ZEOR, I thought quite good as an impressionistic painting of the Sime/Gen conflict. What's a tentacle and sheath or two between friends? Not one reader in a thousand will finish the book and note the inaccuracies of the d/j illo. But now, on to what you've been waiting for—a review of your book.))

....AND THE WINNER IS..

Jacqueline, you've done a masterful job of creating a future world of at least two main human mutations (still mutating, improving), their cultures, and especially the Sime society in conflict with itself and with the Gens.

You've done so superb a job of depth and breadth and width of this after-the-Big Blowup future, that it's a monster to review—so much of this world is so interdependent that encapsulizing the story and background is Extremely Difficult, and I resent it.

In a sense the Simes are life-force

vampires who need to "suck" the Gens to live. Trouble is, most Simes cannot control their thirst and kill the Gen they have seized.

A few Simes (a new mutation) have learned to act as life-force batteries—they sip from Gens and give rations to "tamed" Simes. Thus there is a social conflict between the unreconstructed Simes and the few "Houses" of new-type Simes.

The new co-operative style of Sime/Gen life must win out because of a Malthusian Doom approaching: the way things are going the "killer" Simes are going to run out of Gens in the foreseeable future, and all mankind will be wiped out. (Because a Sime MUST have Gen life force or die! A Sime cannot create his own.)

To further complicate the situation, children all look alike and only "change" into Simes (tentacles grow from their arms, a thirst comes upon them...) during adolescence.

God—there's so much to explain! And I'm butching it.

This Sime/Gen world lives. And you present it, explain it, detail it beautifully. I couldn't skim or skip—the scenes dragged me back down into them.

The novel is flawed, though, in two ways. First, all that lovely detail and complex sociology and psychology and etceterology is forced to clothe a klunky old plot skeleton—Gen agent sent into Simeland to rescue a vital, captured Gen government official who also happens to be the agent's lady-love. (And the occasional pulpisms of style you fell into, as when 'the Sime bit out an oath in Simelan and rounded on the Gens' and 'Valleroy shuddered. This he hadn't bargained for!')

(In fact, Valleroy's continual shuddering seemed overdone and obviously plot-necessary to create crisis, tension, suspense.)

The second flaw is that it is stated that if the Gens don't get Aisha back she might be forced (by the "killer" Simes), if her identity as engraver for the Gen Treasury is discovered, to engrave another set of plates making it possible to flood Gen territory with counterfeit bills which would disrupt the Gen economy and plunge all into a pogrom-type war.

Except in this low-technology Reconstruction period—when one head of a Household passes another head of Household a small bag of coins to help buy a set of Gen captives—paper money is not a major factor in the economies of the Sime/Gen world. At the first sign of a flood of "genuine" paper money in Gen territory the government could outlaw ALL paper money and operate the economy on coins and a rudimentary cheek/credit system until new paper of a different design could be printed.

Whether the Gens would be so outraged at the Sime counterfeit operation that they would attack is doubtful.

So, in that sense, the whole novel is built on sand. But what really matters is the richly developed world of the Simes and the Houses, not the flimsy, pulpy plot.

I'll give you a B+ on this, Jacqueline. (Said the "expert")

'From that moment when art is no longer the food of the superior (l'aliment des meilleurs), the artist can exteriorise his talent in new formulae, in all manner of caprices and fantasies, and in all varieties of intellectual charlatanism. People no longer seek either consolation or exaltation in the arts. Instead they seek the new, the extraordinary, the extravagant, the scandalous.'

—Picasso

TWO MORE WINNERS...
Well, make it THREE.

THE GODWHALE by T.J. Bass is one of the best far-future, sweep-of-history, destiny-of-Man, Truth-and-Consequences novels I've read in a while. I'm impressed by T.J. Bass and want to read more by him/her.

The title is deceptive; the novel is the story of Larry Dever

whose genes dominate the future and whose frozen half-body is revived, frozen and revived again as the centuries pass, as he fruitlessly tries to wait for advanced medical technology which will give him—at last—a whole body.

The Godwhale is a huge sea-protein harvester with a conscious computer mind which decommissions herself after the seas have long been strained of all life and mankind has been reduced to a neolithic few water tribes who barely scrape by among the sea relics of past glory, and teeming millions in underground Hives who are small, soft, weak poor-excuses for men and women and who are ruled by a ruthless (rational) super-computer.

The Hives are running down, the seas are dead and all's inevitable doom for Mankind and the world...

But then Larry is awakened into a Hive, slated for protein utilization, manages to survive in the Hive 'tween-walls' underground, and begins a revolution that eventually results in the re-seeding of the oceans, the creation of a viable counter-culture in the seas, the defeat of the bad-scene Hives and new hope and future for mankind.

Sounds routine, but it is that rare item, a mature, realistic, well-written s-f novel with depth and wisdom. Superb story values, too. (Ballantine 23712, \$1.25.)

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TOTAL ECLIPSE, by John Brunner, is the most recent book of his I've read, and it's a downer, triumph and tragedy.

A colony of scientists try to solve the puzzle of an alien race that flourished and died on a planet 19 light years from Earth. While back home an international crisis looms and their supply-lifeline is endangered.

The group struggle to understand the extinct aliens' psychology and culture...and—

It's a suspenseful story. Fascinating. Depressing. John hasn't much hope for us, I fear. This is another Dire Warning. The title is the message. (Doubleday, \$5.95.)

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Another tragedy, more personal and intimate, with the inevitability and power of Greek Tragedy, is D.G. Compton's THE UNSLEEPING EYE.

It is about a man who sold his soul to an amoral TV producer; he allowed his eyes to be turned into miniature TV cameras so he could be a tremendously effective "reporter" for a show that dwells morbidly on people who are dying.

It is about Roddie the unsleeping eye and Katherine who has been told she has only a few weeks to live.... And it is about life, death, guilt, expiation, greed, and a near-future that seems grimly inevitable.

D.G. Compton is a superb novelist. He reaches in and squeezes you where you hide. (DAW UV1110, \$1.25.)

SMALL PRESS NOTES & OTHER IDLE COMMENTS

You can't call the french edition of GALAXIE (#121, Juin 1974) a small press magazine, but you can note that it has infinitely superior interior illustrations (especially those by Cathy Millet) compared to those in all American sf mags except, perhaps ANALOG.

(Thanks to Marc Duveau, TAC subscriber, for the copy. He wrote an article for the issue which has a lot to do with Norman Spinrad's writing... I judge from the title: "La SF en marche: Norman Spinrad.")

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George Scithers, who is Owlswick Press, sent a review copy of his celebration of Roy G. Krenkel art, CITIES & SCENES FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD. A big book, about 12" x 13½", 82 pages, beautifully printed and bound.

High-priced at \$16., but with art books that's expected. If you really admire Krenkel's recreations of ancient cities and peoples. I will say this for him: his style and knowledge gives his drawings an atmosphere, a kind of Truth. You say to yourself, "Yeah, that's probably what it was like in those olden days..."

-31-

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Stephen Gregg's ETERNITY #3 shows improvement over #1 and #2. It is more than simply a "semi-pro" science-fiction & fantasy magazine.

It has a lot of poetry, articles, an interview with Kate Wilhelm, features dealing with books, recordings, "roaches", comix... And fine artwork. Again let me rub salt into wounds by saying that the art and graphics are superior to those in GALAXY-IF, AMAZING and FANTASTIC.

The outstanding piece of fiction is "A Knight For Merytha" by Roger Zelazny.

I'd say ETERNITY is aimed at the young, literate, wide-interest sf and fantasy reader.

How many of them kind are around, Stephen?

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More evidence that sf is getting a foothold in academia is the W.C.T.E. SERVICE BULLETIN #30 (April, 1974) \$1., which has an extensive bibliography of sf books with thumbnail one-two line reviews, plus 'secondary sources' descriptions of many fanzines and the few books about fanzines and fandom. Also listed are selected publishers' addresses.

This 28 page (8½ x 11) offset, one-staple-in-upper-left-corner publication is compiled by Roger Sween for the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English, Inc., Univ. of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI 53211.

Thanks for the kind words about TAC & Geis, Roger.

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Jeff Levin of Pendragon Press, Box 14834, Portland, OR 07214, sent along a copy of their FROM ELFLAND TO POUGH-KEEPSIE, a chapbook printing of Ursula K. Le Guin's speech to the SF Workshop at the Univ. of Wash. in 1972.

This is a limited edition of 776 numbered copies and 26 copies lettered a-z. It has an Introduction by Vonda McIntyre. I can't find a price for it. I don't suppose they'll turn down a dollar.

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THE NATURE OF THE BEAST 7-8-74

Something is surfacing. I just sent an ad to THE VOICE, a singles publication here in Oregon. Seeking a rare woman to fit the nice monster that is Geis & Alter.

What brought this on is boredom with my routine (Mom and Augie are good company, but after two years I know them inside-out and need someone to talk to and go to shows with and make love with. Masturbation isn't quite enough.) and the simple fact that C— is more and more cutting loose...fewer letters, long gaps...and this is giving me psychosomatic problems: clenching of the bronchia causing a wheeze, tight, lump-in-throat sensations, deep sighing, coughing (words I cannot say) and maybe even the minor arthritis in my knee.

C— has two children now, is stuck with her husband and is obviously more and more reconciled to her life in Southern Calif.

What do you do when you apparently love someone you can't have and don't really want? With C— I go bonkers on all levels in a terrible push-pull syndrome. The sooner I finally get over her and cut loose emotionally, the better.

So I guess I'm beginning to go looking, in my anti-social, left-handed, exclusive fashion, for someone whom I fit and who fits me. Just a question of time and luck.

Want to read the ad?

"Portland author, 47, 6', 180, strong-minded, informal, gentle, anti-social, lustful, relatively poor, slightly physically handicapped, cynical, wants the rare woman who reads, doesn't smoke, who hates parties, hates pretense, is not fat, has no dependents, and has a car. For talk, companionship, easy-going dates, closeness. Exchange letters and photos before meeting."

Nothing like being honest.

I'm not going to hold my breath.

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Sam Moskowitz wrote 7-3-74 to ask about a Murray Leinster speech that he had sent me to publish in PSYCHOTIC in 1955. The speech was titled "Science Fiction Aint What It Used To Be—And Never Was." Leinster delivered it at the Metrocon in 1954.

But in the spring of 1955 I went gafia with a vengeance and killed PSY (or was it then named SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW (in its first incarnation?—my memory is very hazy)), gave the few dollars in sub money to the Red Cross or some charity like that, gave my unpublished material to other fan publishers, gave away my own file of PSYCHOTICS, my extra copies, and went off on a toot of non-fan activity and writing (full-time professional writing starting in 1959), with only marginal contact with sf and fandom as a some-time member of the Cult.

Anyway, Sam had been shown a copy of a mimeographed fanzine later in the fifties which contained the Leinster speech, but the publisher never sent a copy to Sam..nor to Leinster.

Help us lay this ghost! What was that fanzine? Who published it, and how can Sam get a copy?

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The really fine aspect of JOHN W. CAMPBELL, An Australian Tribute which Ronald E. Graham and John Bangsund published this year is the personal, human, anecdotal side of Campbell—the man revealed in short reminiscences by Jack Williamson, A. Bertram Chandler, and Wynne Whiteford.

The whole 8 x 11 softcover book is 100 pages plus covers and has a Campbell Bibliography by the redoubtable Donald H. Tuck. This is a first edition of 300 copies, 200 of which are for sale. But no price is indicated. I would say that \$2. is a fair price. The address: Parergon Books, P.O. Box 357, Kingston, ACT 2604, Australia.

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THE FILM JOURNAL #6 (\$1.50) is devoted to "The Science Fiction Film Image" and has photo sections dealing with spaceships, alien landscapes, a film of

Lem's SOLARIS. Address: Box 9602, Hollins College, VA 24020.

Slick paper, 9 x 12, 32 pages plus covers. Mostly stills you've seen before. Overpriced.

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Everything you might ever want to know about the Cthulhu Mythos but were too apprehensive to seek...might be a good description of the READER'S GUIDE TO THE CTHULHU MYTHOS (Second Revised Edition) published recently by the Silver Scarab Press. Compiled by R.E. Weinberg and E. P. Berglund, it is a bibliography of Cthulhu Mythos works from 1917 to 1973, including published and unpublished stories, stories in progress and those projected; includes listings of non-fiction, parodies and poetry, as well as pamphlets, brochures, etc., including Non-English publications.

Whew. For aficionados of a special enthusiasm, for collectors, specialists. \$5.00. Silver Scarab Press, 500 Wellesley, S.E., Albuquerque, NM 87106.

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Stuart David Schiff sent along a copy of his WHISPERS #3, a 68-page half-size format offset magazine. It is devoted to the horror and macabre in fiction and illustration. This issue is focused on the art of Lee Brown Coye, and I find I admire his sculpture more than his drawing.

The fiction is of pro quality: "The Shortest Way" by Dave Drake is long on creation of mood and place—I really believed in those three Romans on that eerie abandoned road in the wild Dalmation hills—but short on the essential believability of his explanation of that horrible attack by cannibalistic hill people. To assert that they were ghosts of a crucified tribe of criminals is simply a cop-out.

"Elizabeth, My Love" by G.E. Symonds is a trite story with a switch at the end. Good, not much, though.

"Sticks" by Karl Edward Wagner is a very good Cthulhu Mythos story that is very convincing. Uneasily convincing. The highest tribute.

(See The Archives for sub & address.)

THE TRADITIONS OF SCIENCE FICTION AND CONVENTIONS

The Guest of Honor
Speech at the 31st World
Science Fiction Conven-
tion, August 31, 1973

By ROBERT BLOCH

Speaking to you today is like taking a journey.

For me, it's a combination of time travel and an ego trip.

Twenty-five years ago I came to Toronto's first World Science Fiction Convention as a guest of honor. And now, a quarter of a century later, here I am again, at Toronto's second World Science Fiction Convention—as a huest of honor.

In one way it's very gratifying. But in another, it's a little discouraging. I just don't seem to have made any progress.

Of course many things have changed during that time—and I'm one of the things. In 1948 I was thirty-one years old—the youngest professional writer ever to be guest of honor at any Worldcon. And today, I'm one of the oldest.

In 1948 when I first came here there was no such thing as a Royal York Hotel. Even the name was unthinkable—for in those days no Canadian was willing to admit that royalty ever yorked. Most of the yorking that went on at that convention was done by the fan guest of honor, Bob Tucker.

Today, your fan guest of honor is William Rotsler. And I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you just how happy I am about this. Over the years, the Worldcons and the world of science fiction have honored many famous fans, and justly so. We have recognized Forry Ackerman for the way in which he has promoted such monsters as Dracula, Godzilla, the Wolf Man and Jim Warren. We have hailed Sam Moskowitz for his autobiography, *THE IMMORTAL STORM*. We have paid homage to Harry Warner, Jr—science fiction's foremost man of letters. But during all this time, no one has made a greater contribution to fandom than William Rotsler. Quietly, modestly, and above all, generously, Bill has contribut-

ed literally thousands of pieces of artwork to fanzines; his creations have been bestowed on neo-fans as well as the big names. There are few fanzine publishers who do not have reason to be grateful to Bill Rotsler—and certainly, every reader owes him a debt of gratitude. I'm very pleased that a small portion of that debt is being repaid here, at long last. I am also pleased that Rotsler is finally emerging in professional publication with samples of his writing ability, which have neretofore only surfaced in the pages of fan magazines. He is truly one of our finest versatile talents—and I am boubly honored to share this occasion with him.

In the presence of such protean ability, I'm a bit puzzled as to why I am privileged to appear here at all.

To begin with, science fiction is youth-oriented, and I'm an old man. I didn't think so yesterday, but there was a party last night and I'm an old man now.

Actually, I don't have the qualifications for the guest of honor role. Unlike the leading writers of science fiction today I don't even have an entourage.

You all know what an entourage is. An entourage is a group of people who say to themselves, "If I hang around this guy long enough, maybe he'll put my story in an anthology."

Nor am I one of those writers with charisma—the kind who causes every head to turn automatically when he enters a room while people exclaim in hushed whispers—"Hey, look—here comes what's-his-name!"

I have never been the kind of writer who could go to New York, have lunch with the editors, and come away with contracts for seventeen books. The last time I went there I had lunch by myself at an Orange Julius stand. And Julius made me bring my own orange. The only contract I have out on me is from the Mafia.

I have never won a Nebula Award, and I can't afford to buy one. There is only one Hugo Award on my shelves.

You ever been to Silverberg's house? The place looks like a pawnshop with a bed in it.

Unlike many of my colleagues, I don't get big fees for going around lecturing to students at universities—in fact, I seldom use such language when I speak.

And when you get right down to it, I'm not really a science fiction writer at all. Over the years my work has been published in many science fiction magazines, but almost everything which appeared has been fantasy.

Of course this doesn't necessarily disqualify me, because quite a number of authors accepted by the field have been fantasy writers. Edgar Rice Burroughs and Robert E. Howard, for example. H. P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith come to mind, and C. L. Moore. When you come right down to it, Richard Matheson is a fantasy writer, and so are Ray Bradbury and Theodore Sturgeon.

So perhaps that's one of the first traditions of science fiction conventions—fantasy writers are treated with as much dignity and respect as a genuine Trekkie.

And that, I believe, is a tradition we can all be proud of—the tradition of democracy.

Social historians haven't gotten around to the study of science fiction conventions. But when they do they'll discover a rare phenomenon. Our conventions first began forty-four years ago, and from the very beginning they have always been ahead of their time because they cut across all artificial distinctions of economic status, race or creed. The only caste system we recognize is one based on achievement.

Even if that achievement happens to consist of self-advancement.

We have just five major divisions in science fiction. Neo-fans—big name fans—hacks—pros—and J. G. Ballard.

In my time I have been a member of four of those divisions. If I'm lucky, some day I may even make the fifth—I'm waiting for word from the Pope right

now.

I've told you, in all truthfulness, that I don't really have the qualifications for guest of honor. I do not write pure science fiction and I'm too old to write impure science fiction. I can't make the sort of impressive speech you're accustomed to hear from notables like Poul Anderson, Clifford Simak, Ben Bova, Frederick Pohl, Larry Niven, or Sprague deCamp.

This is probably why the Convention Committee assigned me the topic of The Traditions of Science Fiction And Conventions. For this at least, perhaps, I have certain credentials. Over the years, long before the time of many of you, I wrote for fanzines. Some of that writing was then collected in hardcovers in what I believe was one of the first professionally-published book of fan magazine articles, THE EIGHTH STAGE OF FANDOM. I conducted a column on fan magazines in the prozine IMAGINATION during the 1950s, during which time I read 18,973 Harry Warner letters and looked at 47,000 Rotsler illustrations, including two clean ones. I wrote one of the first professionally-published science fiction stories about fandom, in FANTASTIC UNIVERSE—and one of the first professionally-published articles about fandom in THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION. I have actually attended fifteen World Science Fiction Conventions—and at one of them I was sober.

That is probably the second tradition of science fiction conventions.

The third, and to me the most important, is the symbiotic relationship between fans and pros. Symbiosis has been the single constant which has held conventions together over all the years. And with good reason.

To begin with, let's start by stating the premise that most of today's pros were yesterday's fans. So many of us began in an amateur capacity—writing, illustrating, editing or publishing fan magazines. And it was at conventions—Worldcons such as this, or regional affairs—that many of us first made personal contact with the professionals in the field. As a result,

there's this strong feeling of equality which I alluded to before; a feeling which is really a carryover from the days when convention attendance was limited to two or three hundred people and there was ample opportunity to get together with one another.

Today, however, there is a growing feeling that a gap exists between fandom and prodom, and—let's be honest about it—a certain resentment of the fact.

Yet fact it is, and we must accept it.

Today, as we all know, conventions have grown into immense affairs. No longer do we have just a few hundred attendees—why, before I came in here I counted over three hundred people in the ladies' washroom alone. The reason I went there is, because the men's washroom was too crowded for me to get in.

I have no figures on the number of people who are expected to show up here during the weekend, but I already know that the sheer volume leads to some frustrating situations. For example, somewhere in the audience today is, I believe, a gentleman named J. Vernon Shea. Here is a man who was a member of the Lovecraft Circle—a lifelong fan, and a professional anthologist and fantasy writer whom I have known for forty years. And right now I'm wondering just how we're going to manage to find one another in this crowd, and during this busy convention schedule. Just as I wonder how I'll find so many others with whom I've corresponded, or who have been gracious enough to send me their fanzines. There has been a great deal of talk about snobbishness, exclusivity, closed parties and cliques—without, I think, sufficient awareness that the very size of today's affairs can be a major obstacle to personal communication.

Those of us who have been around over the years have learned to accept this, but I'm hopeful that some of the newcomers will realize the problem too.

Realistically, there are certain limitations. I have said that many of the pros started their careers as fans. But if they devoted all their time to

fanning and fandom, they would have no careers at all. So one of the questions is—to what degree can a pro remain in fandom?

Why is it that some pros are active fans and others are aloof?

Again we come back to the fundamental fact—a writer has nothing to sell but his time.

Paradoxically, a part-time writer has more time for fan activity than a fulltime writer. Even if he moonlights from a regular job he can afford to indulge in fanac because he's not dependent on his writing for a living. He is less apt to take on assignments involving hasty deadlines—and is less concerned about meeting them. So the part-time pro has a better opportunity to function fannishly than his fulltime colleague—unless his fulltime colleague has some independent source of income.

Along with the time factor, we've got to consider the matter of physical endurance. As a general rule, the younger writers have more stamina than the older ones. Any bartender can tell you that. So can some fem-fans.

Now we come to another paradox. The more fans a writer has, the less time he has for them. Robert Heinlein won't write for fanzines—if he started he'd be inundated with requests for material. Arthur Clarke was forced, last year, to prepare a form-letter in order to answer fan correspondence.

Another thing we're inclined to forget—writers have their individual idiosyncrasies. Some writers just don't enjoy being letterhacks while others keep up a large correspondence. Some writers are lousy critics. Some critics are lousy writers.

As for face-to-face confrontation at a convention like this, let us remember that not all writers are equally at ease as speakers, panelists or even in social situations with strangers. Some writers are shy—others are Lester del Rey.

There is also the matter of the generation-gap. In the early days of

fandom and science fiction conventions, it seemed that almost everybody was roughly in the same age-group. Aside from Doc Smith and a few others, the writers, artists, even the editors, were scarcely more than half a dozen years older than most of the fans. This made social contact much easier all around.

But time passed—the writers got older, and all the while new, younger fans kept arriving on the scene. To complicate the situation still further, today we have many new, younger writers with a totally different frame of reference.

So the gap widens. Because of the very real differences which do exist—in terms of time, energy, and attitude—we must learn tolerance. The young fan who puts down the old pro is making a grave error; twenty years from now he may be hooked on Geritol himself. And the old pro who turns his back on young fans is really rejecting himself as he was twenty years ago.

The only group that can really bridge this gap consists of the editors. Editing is the one pro activity where a writer can earn a living by maintaining full contact with fans. An editor is not necessarily well-paid for his work, but communication is a part of his job. What he writes in his magazine or in a fanzine, or in editorial introductions to anthologies is essentially a sales-promotion. Maintaining relationships is his profession. But even here, a truly professional editor must consider a wider audience and cater to other tastes than those of fandom alone. The mature fans and the mature pros recognize this and accept it. As for the less mature, again it's necessary to maintain our traditions of tolerance.

Anyone familiar with the history of science fiction fandom knows that there was never really a time when the lion lay down with the lamb in the Garden of Milford. Early fandom was plagued with feuds, political differences, power-plays and Donald A. Wollheim. But fandom has survived and flourished because most of us have made a genuine and continuing effort to find common ground in a common interest.

And there are some things in which we can make a common cause today, whatever our ages and backgrounds may be. For example, there's the necessity of presenting a united front against censorship.

Science fiction has come a long way from its early preoccupation with gadgetry and hardware. Gone are the days when we got excited over books like TOM SWIFT AND HIS ELECTRIC NOSE-PICKER. Today many of us pride ourselves on improvements of style and choice of themes; we feel that science fiction is no longer a genre but a recognizable part of the mainstream of literature. In fact, there are some who claim we are the mainstream. But if so, we will have to face the problems of the mainstream—and that's where censorship comes in.

When I speak of censorship, I'm not talking about mere attitude. If some aspects of today's science fiction are distasteful to various political groups, educational bodies or religious organizations, so be it; they are entitled to their opinions and they are at liberty to express criticism.

What concerns me—both as a writer and a reader—and what should concern all of us—is not expression but suppression. The actual effort to exclude and eliminate science fiction as something antisocial, immoral and full of chlorestoral.

For example, banning science fiction from public libraries. Almost a century has passed since certain misguided zealots managed to bar Mark Twain's HUCKLEBERRY FINN from library shelves on moral grounds. And yet today some librarians are at it again—and this time science fiction is one of their targets, in certain localities.

Now I'm not questioning the honesty of their motives; it's the librarians' judgement that I don't trust. Librarians, I've found, are people who make more of a fuss if a book is overdue than they would if the same were true of a girl-friend.

I am willing to concede that librarians feel a certain obligation to safeguard the young from excessive vulgarity.

But I think it's going a little too far when you insist on changing an author's name to something like Kurt Vonnestom-ach, Jr. —or Isaac Rear-endimov.

So I think all of us in science fiction must share the burden of continuing the battle against arrogant and arbitrary censorship.

And we can't rely on the critics to do our fighting for us. The so-called serious critics have always had a very poor batting-average when it comes to estimating the value and viability of literary output. When I entered the professional field, back in 1934, the major critics ignored or dismissed the work of such "pulp hacks" as H. P. Lovecraft, while devoting their serious attention to significant and important writers—Conrad Richter, T.S. Stribling, and Evelyn Waugh. They voted the Pulitzer Prize to Caroline Miller for LAMB IN HIS BOSOM. Well, I was young and naive and I thought perhaps they'd just made a mistake—Lovecraft would win next year. But in 1935 the Pulitzer Prize in Literature went to—you guessed it!—a book called NOW IN NOVEMBER, by Josephine Johnstone. Run down to your favorite bookstore or newsstand and try to find these immortal volumes today. But the ignored and despised Lovecraft is there.

The popular fiction critics are not infallible either. Again, in 1934 and 1935, they were beating the drums for ANTHONY ADVERSE, and for Lloyd C. Douglas' GREEN LIGHT. Since then ANTHONY has suffered adversity and the GREEN LIGHT has burned itself out—but people are still reading and enjoying Robert E. Howard and C. L. Moore.

So I've come to the conclusion that Chronos is the real critic. Only time will tell—and the true test of writing is survival.

That is why our field is important. It's the fashion nowadays for people to say that the short story is dead. This is understandable, if they read THE NEW YORKER. But those people are mistaken. I say that the short story is alive and well, and living in science fiction.

Now I've stood up here and issued a

plea for tolerance and understanding. I've criticized the critics for not appreciating science fiction. And it's a great temptation to let it go at that—to leave you with the impression that I am a person above prejudice, above petty preferences—that I have no opinions or convictions of my own—and that my sole aim in life is to play Mr. Nice. But the truth of the matter is, I'm as biased and bigoted as the next fellow—and we all know what a slob the next fellow is.

So at the risk of offending some people, I'm going to be honest and state some of my personal likes and dislikes in the science fiction field today.

There are certain writers whose lifestyle I look upon with amazement, or at least a lack of understanding. I have never, for example, been particularly thrilled by the writer who decides he's some sort of super-Renaissance man—the kind who regards himself as talented in all fields—like Leonardo da Vinci, only better.

You know the kind I mean. He not only wants to paint The Last Supper—he wants to cook it and serve it, too. And pass out the after-dinner mints.

I am also suspicious of another type—the writer whose title is longer than his story. I tend to back away from any short story with a title that sounds like the name of a bad rock group.

In my prejudiced opinion, this smacks of pretension—and to me, pretension is the enemy of good writing. Authors are often accused, and sometimes rightly so, of writing not for their readers but for the movies. I think it's just as bad to go off to the other extreme and write for the critics.

I do believe in experimental writing; I think experiment is healthy. But as a student of science I must remind you that the word "experiment" is not necessarily a synonym for "success." If you watch the Late Late Show on television, it may be that you have seen an old film called DR. EHRLICH'S MAGIC BULLET. In which case you know that Dr. Ehrlich conducted six hundred and five unsuccessful experiments before he came up with

606, for the treatment of syphilis. Let us all remember this lesson—some experimental stories have the magic formula, but others are just diseased.

In a way, of course, every story is an experiment. Reduced to simplistic terms, all fiction—of whatever kind or length—consists of just two ingredients; form and content.

This is a fairly recent discovery for most science fiction writers and their readers. As a result they sometimes tend to hail an innovation in form as something new and daring, when in actuality it is borrowed from so-called mainstream work written years ago. The same is true of content; science fiction is a late-comer to areas of subliminal impression and sexual fantasies.

Nor does one have to be a member of the Now Generation in order to qualify as an experimental writer. The two most consistently bold and trail-blazing authors in science fiction have been pioneering for twenty years—and surely all of us know what a tremendous debt we owe to Fritz Leiber and Philip Jose Farmer. Leiber for form—Farmer for content.

Finally, I must take issue with a notion held by certain fan critics who seem to deplore the fact that science fiction is reaching a larger public and gaining acceptance. They're afraid this is going to spoil the quality of the authors' work. There is a certain school of thought which says that in order to advance the cause of literature, the writer must suffer.

Now, I don't hold with this at all. I've always felt that if anybody's got to suffer, let it be the reader.

One more thought on the subject of our changing times.

"Standards have vanished! Wickedness triumphs! All virtue and justice are gone! The world is degenerate! So said our fathers, and thus we repeat today. And so shall be the voice of our children!"

No, that's not Sam Moskowitz speaking. A man named Seneca said it, in

Rome, two thousand years ago.

That's probably where Sam Moskowitz heard it.

Now Seneca was a philosopher—and like many philosophers, he took a dim view of this world. Today's philosophers seem generally inclined to take an equally dim view, and so do many of today's writers. If they are so-called mainstream writers, their view is apt to be not only dim, but narrow. Because they are limited to the present. Even their fantasy is based directly on present-day reality.

Here is where science fiction writers—and readers—have an advantage. They are not confined to the present; they can examine the past and explore the future. They are not limited by time, or space, or the perception of five senses.

In 1948, when I spoke at the first World Science Fiction Convention ever held in Toronto, the world seemed a vastly different place to the majority of its inhabitants. The use of atomic power was just beginning, television was in its infancy, supersonic flight was a pioneer venture. The analysis of the DNA pattern, the everyday employment of the laser beam, the concept of organ transplants, the technique of carbon-dating, the emergence of the computer—all these matters and many more were foreign to a race which had lived on this planet for millions of years without ever descending more than a few hundred feet beneath the surface of its seas or rising more than a few miles above its land areas.

In 1948, the average individual would have scoffed at the notion that in less than twenty-five years a man with a heart-transplant could sit down in front of a television set in his own home and see other men actually landing on the moon.

The average citizen would have scoffed—but not the writers or the fans of science fiction. We've been doing it for many decades—all this and much more. We lived in the space age when most of our fellow human beings were still riding streetcars.

Only now is the scientific establishment beginning to explore, expound and expand upon matters which were known to every teen-age reader of the once-despised pulp magazines out there in the huckster room.

It's only since the first Toronto Convention here that the scientists are confirming what we have speculated upon from the start. Archeologists and anthropologists have revised their estimates of mankind's past tenure on this earth many times over during this brief span between the two Toronto Conventions. And astronomers and physicists have similarly revised their concepts as to the age of the earth itself, and of the known universe. Engineers and technologists have transformed their techniques and are transforming our lives in the process, for better or for worse. And the space age, which we persistently predicted, while orthodox authorities sneered, is here today.

Yesterday's fantasies have become today's realities. And today's realities will fade in the face of tomorrow's triumphs—or terrors.

Does that mean that science fiction itself is doomed? When reality catches up with speculation, will the dream die?

I say the dream will never die—as long as we still have our dreamers. The men and women who write and who read science fiction.

For some years now I've been advocating that science fiction shift its focus of interest from outer space to inner space—move from an exploration of the universe beyond man to the universe within man. This is presently happening in our field. And along with it, parapsychologists and phycisists are turning their attention to the same area. Once again, we are the fools who rush in where the establishment angels fear to tread—but this time they seem less reluctant to follow in our footsteps. Science fiction still has a function to perform—to point the way, not just to the stars but to our own psyches.

Let's not lose our perspective here. The bulk of science fiction will continue to be written—and read—for entertain-

ment, for escape, for enjoyment rather than education. It will be written—and sold—for money, and much of it will be hack-work. But the best of it will continue to contain elements of invention, imagination and innovative intelligence to stimulate the intellect of readers and challenge the concepts of science itself.

And that is the greatest tradition of science fiction.

There's one more tradition I haven't mentioned, and that is the tradition of this convention.

Science fiction conventions are for fun. We gather together from all over the world in the spirit of friendship and mutual interests, to enjoy ourselves the way friends should when they get together.

Like all friends, we have our differences of opinion, our disputes, our disappointments and disagreements. Not all of us are interested in the same facets of convention programming, not all of us share similar tastes—but in the final analysis we are bound together by the fannish tradition. Perhaps you haven't found the convention very entertaining yet—but once this speech is out of the way, there's no reason why you shouldn't have a good time.

I have said that science fiction is the only field which considers all aspects of tempora; existence—yesterday, today and tomorrow. When I said it, I was speaking primarily as a professional writer. Now, for a moment, I'd like to speak of it as a fan.

It is my privilege to have been a part of science fiction's past. And that past contains, for me, many warm and wonderful memories. It was my great good fortune to have known many of the gifted and gracious people who are gone but far from forgotten. I think of Vernon McCain, Ron Ellick, Don Ford, E. E. Evans, Dale Tarr, Ted Carnell—who lived fandom, loved fandom, and contributed so much of themselves to it. I think of the many writers who were a part of the fannish phenomenon—Hugo Gernsback, H.P. Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, David H. Keller, Stanley Wein-

baum, Ralph Milne Farley, Rog Phillips. I remember Henry Kuttner, Cyril Kornbluth, Anthony Boucher, E.E. Smith, Charles Baeumont, Willy Ley, John W. Campbell, August Derleth, Fredric Brown and the others who meant so much to me, not just as fellow-professionals but as friends. I'm proud to have shared the past with them.

And I'm humble to share the present here today. To be the guest of honor at this Convention is a rare and rewarding experience—it is something that cannot be bought, bargained for, or won in competition; something you have bestowed upon me, something which will never be forgotten by me in the future.

As for the future—that too I hope to be able to share with my fellow-fans and my fellow-professionals for a long time to come. But I can never hope to own it.

From somewhere in this audience today—somewhere amidst all the young people here—will come the fresh talent, perhaps even the genius, of the future—the artists, editors, writers. A new Orwell, a new Huxley, a new H. G. Wells.

Tomorrow belongs to you.

If you can keep your head while all about you others are losing theirs...perhaps you're the executioner.

LETTER FROM ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS

2-28-74

"Re your comment that I was acting a bit testy 'so soon after having achieved composure and withdrawal from the cares of mankind' (your words, Richard, not mine) the truth is, I have sort of backslid.

"In the mountains of Colorado last summer the spiritual growth exercises I was using relieved me of the gut problems I had had for 24 years but when I came back down into this below-sea-level desert country, back came the gut problems.

Then, by great good luck, I discovered what I had done to myself 24 years ago when I was naively exploring a process called Dianetics. I had done to myself what I would not have done to a yellow dog. No, it does no good to claim you did not know the gun was loaded, the gun is always loaded and you always know it.

"At that time (1950) Day's index had me listed as being about the fifth from the top of the all-time sf writers in numbers of stories published (not counting westerns or detectives, of which I had written more than I care to remember).

"Included among the things I did to myself was to kick myself right out of all skill with words. It took me 24 years to find out what I had done to myself. No, I don't blame anybody for it, not even me. Now that I have brought out of the Night Mind this hidden material, the gut problems are largely gone again. They will probably come back, reduced, then go away, then come back, still further reduced, until I no longer notice them.

"You achieve a state of 'composure' then you backslide, you fall off to the right, you fall off to the left, you fall off down, then you fall off up. So far as I can see, all life is a struggle to achieve some pinnacle from which you are certain to fall (or depart because of boredom, we are all refugees from heaven) then strive to scramble back to some delusive position where we can again regard ourselves as King of the Hill.

"I think I can see this same effort visible in the #8 issue of your fine magazine, as witness the letters from Harry Harrison and Ted White. And from others, including your comments. And maybe even mine. I've got news for you. You get to be King of the Hill only as long as your Day Mind can hold its stance, then comes on stage your Night Mind, with new writers, new directors, and new stars, creating a whole new script. Or vice-versa.

"How do you get your Day Mind and your Night Mind to work on the same script at the same time? Some day I'll

tell you—when I find out.

"I thoroughly enjoyed Kirk's cover on #8. I've said it before but I'll say it again—fan art is often out of this world.

"The letter from Charles Platt re the situation at Avon, and elsewhere, makes me glad I am retired. Ghod, how I would hate to buck that New York market for a living these days."

((Would you equate "Day Mind" with conscious mind, and "Night Mind" with the subconscious?))

Stop the world! I want to get back on!

BOB TUCKER HAS MOVED!!

His NEW Address: 34 Greenbriar Drive,
Jacksonville, IL 62650

LIFE IN HOLLYWOOD
A Letter From Pearl

4-8-74

"I HAVE SEEN THE FUTURE AND IT DOES—
N'T WORK!!

"So...I am moving out of the Glenwood this month, leaving behind memories of friendly crickets chirping behind my refrigerator, cozy mildew creeping up my walls, the scintillating shock of swinging my feet out of bed and into a pool of water, about 100 black neighbors, every last one of them dressed to emulate Sly of SLY & THE FAMILY STONE, and a number of tacky fags who actually enjoy wearing hairnets around the pool. If I sound bitter, it's because I am.

"It's my fault of course, to have let myself be seduced by the Pepsi commercials on TV into believing that gregariousness really is all that much fun and that I too could be a mindless, happy, beach-running, boat-sailing, bike-riding all body motion and no brain matter type person. And even without the water beetles, non-working fireplaces, the sound of gun shots on Saturday nights as my friendly neighbors took aim at our security guard (this really did happen), I would have had to face the fact eventually that I can't relate

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to the kind of people who can lie immobile in the sun for hours without getting bored....to say nothing of those who rigidly grasp reflector boards in their catatonic fingers. Ah, human dignity, where has't thou gone?"

((Pearl...it was never there!))

"Neither am I able to form fast friendships with people whose total conversational contribution has to do with the temperature of the Jacuzzi and whether it's higher or lower than the one in the last place they lived. Nor can I get off on knowing that every one of my 100 black neighbors has a custom-built pool cue which he carries in a leather case or that if I leave my door unlocked, the night will come when the friendly security guard will try my knob and then come in and get real friendly. Imagine paying \$250.00/mo. rent for those kind of privileges!

"And so I am leaving, somewhat changed by my tenure here: a little meaner, a great deal more paranoid and afflicted with contrapuntal indigestion, nausea/heartburn. I have rented a pad near Sunset Blvd., heavily planted and totally private and, at no extra cost, I can get off knowing that Waldo Salt lived in the next apartment for seven years. I will go on balling my very own security guard at no charge whatsoever, picking up strange people on Santa Monica Blvd., will buy a color TV set and settle down to a comfortable, if rather deviant, middle age. MIDDLE AGE—after the Glenwood and the bright, new, making-it people—how delicious that sounds."

"To a sodomist, a Ms. is as good as a mule."

—Greg Stafford.

EXCUSE ME; BUT MY CHEST
JUST GOT IN THE WAY OF
YOUR ARROW
A Letter From
CRAIG STRETE

5-30-74

"I don't want to get into a shooting scrap with a bunch of white people but I did want to say that you are wrong

(in the sense that you have been told the wrong information) about the role of women in tribal societies. The most important warriors in many tribes (Cherokee, Carew, Ojibway and others) were often women. The war councils of the Cherokee were often seated by as many and often more women than men. The women had say in the war councils and fought just as well, perhaps more savagely if the old stories are true, in battle, as the men. This is all before the coming of the white destroyer. The anthros and sociologists don't know much about Indians in the old days. I like your magazine so I wanted to offer this information (which I would certainly not tell you if you were an anthropologist). I think that Russ and McIntyre are probably right if they are saying that women are as strong as men because I believe this to be so. Male muscular prowess is not a guarantee that you will win a hand-to-hand combat. The strengths of women in battle is not to be underestimated. It is not mere muscle. They have more savage attitudes and greater fight drives (war spirits) than men.

"The roles as you have described them are taken from the opinions of Indian experts and are of course, not true. I do not belittle your knowledge since much is not available to whites because of the wishes of Indians to protect themselves from whites, but I did want to say that for every tribal society (before the coming of the whites) that you can find in which these things as you have described them appear to be true, I can name ten where it is not true, or better, in some cases, where the opposite is true. I do not mean offense by this writing.

"Other thoughts: the principal occupation of the Cherokee was war. Not only were there women war councils, but women peace councils. Even in historic times, the women often beat their husbands. The Cherokee had women as chiefs. Women were the best torturers, capable of better and more sustained harassment. Cherokee women, in all of the nine clans, enjoyed a clearly defined supremacy in tribal life.

"I edit RED PLANET EARTH, a magazine of American Indian Science Fiction and

some day we will be so good you will have to write about us."

((No need to be diffident about disagreeing with or correcting me, Craig; no one else is. IAC is a give-and-take learning experience, I hope, for all concerned.

((Anyone interested in RED PLANET EARTH can write RRI, Box 208, Celina, OH 45822.))

 "The extract of hemp seed (Cannabis indica) administered to various persons produces a great exuberance of ideation; it is not new ideas but the exaggeration, amplification and combination of ideas that pre-existed in the person's mind. Hashish produces one curious effect...; this is a singular inclination to make puns and plays on words."

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, March 1874
 (BCSFA NEWSLETTER #9(a))

 LETTER FROM
 KAZUYA SEKITA

6-4-74

"Got your THE ALIEN CRITIC #6. Much thanks! Surprised to find Asimov's letter. I enjoyed reading Books Reviewed and I like Interior Art also. Please remember me to artists.

"I'm above all interested in sf&fantasy artworks. The Book Publishers addresses is useful to us Japanese surely. Now I'm collecting Verne-Wells originals in 19th century and American pulp sf mag slides. In trade I can send Japanese edition of (1880) FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON, (1880) FIVE WEEKS IN A BALLOON, 17th century GULLIVER'S TRAVELS, (1915) THE WAR OF THE WORLDS, and many more. Also, I'm interested in American sf pulp mags (CAPTAIN FUTURE). Finally for those who are interested in early Japanese original sf art works, my poor article with many photos is to be published in TRUMPET #12 (Tom Reamy, Box 162, Woodson, TX 76091). That article is titled "Some Original Japanese SF Art of the Early 20th Century."

Kazuya Sekita c/o Katsurada
 I-36-2 Sakashita,
 Itabashi-Ward Tokyo 174, JAPAN

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GEE, I'M SORRY YOUR BOOK STEPPED IN FRONT OF MY SPEEDING REVIEW

Pardon me, while I paw through my Books Read stack for a book I can demolish. I enjoy a good killer review every now and again.

Huh! The worst I can come up with is Mike Coney's THE HERO OF DOWNWAYS (DAW U01070, 95¢), and all I can say bad about it is that it is a run-of-the-mill sf adventure in a future in which mankind is living like moles in the earth, primitively, after a surface devastation.

The true hero is a heroine who unravels the puzzles of the ancient giant remnant technology, is the key to bringing together the varieties of underground mutant humans, and brings her tribe to the surface.

Coney has woven some surprises into the book, and it is worth its reading time. (Even if he didn't especially think much of it as he wrote it. What do writers know?)

+++

Philip Jose Farmer's TRAITOR TO THE LIVING is a superior pot-boiler, a highly professional job of high-grade hackwork. Them's compliments, folks.

It is about a machine that maybe can allow communication with the dead, who maybe live in a kind of dreary limbo. (Or are these "spirits" actually alien life-forces lusting to transfer to living humans?)

Phil works out the possibilities in a realistic, fast-paced, fascinating story-line. He doesn't cheat; the social, cultural, economic and psychological impacts of the machine called MEDIUM are shown. It is set in the near future.

I would fault Phil (I can call him Phil, I met him once at a convention, talked with him on the phone, corresponded) for the too-clever, too-many-switches ending(s). It got to be too wild for credibility. Do people really scheme, plot, plan, and anticipate that far ahead in real life?

TRAITOR TO THE LIVING is a Ballantine original (23613, \$1.25).

LETTER FROM: S.F.W.A.
andrew j. offutt
4-1-74

"Despite the date, this is not an April Fool letter. It is only in my capacity as treasurer and membership chairman of S.F.W.A. that I send this along for the clarification of your readers and writers.

"Contrary to misinformation published in your eighth issue, the records of S.F.W.A. indicate that Harry Harrison, having resigned not too long before during internal difficulties the business of no one outside S.F.W.A., submitted a check and application to rejoin S.F.W.A. in June, 1973. He did not receive a formal letter of acceptance, but a 'Welcome home, Harry' from me. He would have received that prior to 1st July. The world convention in Toronto took place two months later. At the time of the S.F.W.A. meeting under discussion in your magazine, then, Harry Harrison was a member in good standing. So, just for the record, was Phil Farmer. So was yours relatively truly, who was also the man who ended the controversy in that meeting by asking Ted White's advice as to the offering of terms/discussion between this professional organization-of-writers and his publisher. In all likelihood Ted White has not mentioned this in print because he has forgotten—maybe a sensible suggestion such as asking his advice re our dealing with Mister Cohen sent him into a state of semi-shock!"

((Thanks for the official information. I doubt if Ted White shocks all that easily.))

The ultimate morality is to deal with people on their terms. Thus love a lover, hate a hater, cheat a cheater, kill a killer, be a friend to a friend, give honor for honor, a lie for a lie, a smile for a smile, a pleasure for a pleasure, honesty for honesty, truth for truth...if you can.

ANOTHER VIEW OF THE TOWER A Letter From TONY CVETKO

5-15-74

"I received TAC #9 a couple of days ago and, as usual, I read it immediately, but one thing in particular caught my eye: Dave Miller's "review" of THE TOWER. Dave gives the impression that the record is totally worthless and I can't disagree with him more. Since you published his impression of the record, I thought you might be interested in the opposite view.

"Elwood's ad for THE TOWER leads one to expect great things, but the record doesn't live up to that promise. It is worth buying, though. Dave mentions that the quality was bad. The quality of my copy is very good, the only scratches and other noises being put there by myself (I accidentally dropped the needle...), so either I got an odd copy or Dave did.

"But the main thing is the actual story and the acting of the story. There are three main faults with the record, the first being "over-acting" by some of the performers. This shown mostly on the first side, and to a lesser extent on the second. In fact, I thought the second side was quite well done and much more enjoyable than the first side.

"The second fault of the record was the narrators. A bunch of them talk and then only one talks and it tends to get a little annoying after a while.

"The third fault of the record was the "modern" music that was put in the beginning and end of the record. True, there wasn't much of it, but it tended to spoil the effects of the record and I was puzzled as to why it was put in there.

"If these three faults could have been eliminated, the record would have been very successful in my opinion. However, THE TOWER still was very interesting and I'm glad I bought it. The medium offers much more than a printed story and I'm confident that Elwood will improve future records. I plan to buy the next one that comes out (if there's a next one) because, as I said, I was satisfied with THE TOWER."

THE ICHTHYSAURUS by Victor von Scheffel (1867)

Translated by JOHN BOARDMAN, 1974

A roaring is heard in the fern-trees,
The glimmering waves ride high,
Lamenting with eyes full of teardrops
The Ichthyosaurus swims by.

He cries that the times are decaying,
That changes are sweeping and basic,
That things are not what they used to be
Back in the good old Jurassic.

"That disgraceful Plesiosaurus
Does nothing but swill and carouse;
The Ptrodactyl, so they tell me,
Is flying back drunk to his house.

"The Iguanodon is a lecher
Each eon he brags of his prowess.
Already, out in the light of day,
He kissed the Ichthyosaresss."

"There's surely catastrophe coming,
For things can't go on as they are,
I thought the Jurassic was dreadful,
But worse is Cretaceous by far."

Thus fretted the Ichthyosaurus
As he sang his Cretaceous lament,
But his sighs were drowned out by
the roaring
Of the flood that the heavens sent.

And all of the Saurus relations
Died out while a man might have
blinked,
They lay in Cretaceous strata,
Because, of course, they were extinct.

This song of lament has come to us
In form of a petrified myth,
It was pressed between fossil album
leaves
Inscribed on a coprolith.

H. Warner Munn, an author whose stories appeared in WEIRD TALES during the 20s and 30s, attended our convention. It was the first convention he had ever attended. Although I didn't talk with him as much as I wanted, he did mention that he had travelled with H. P. Lovecraft and he was very interested in hearing Dr. Mason Harris' talk, "Fear of Sex and Foreign Races in the Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft." It wasn't those

things that Lovecraft was afraid of, Munn said, "He was afraid of fish."

—Mike Bailey, BCSFA
NEWSLETTER #9(a)

READING HEINLEIN
SUBJECTIVELY
...The Reaction

Almost everyone who wrote a letter of comment on Alexei and Cory Panshin's analysis of Robert A. Heinlein in TAC #9 made similar points...mostly in rebuttal or rejection.

But first a fringe matter raised by:

JAMES BLISH 5-22-74

"The essay by the Panshins may well be as important as you think it; I have not made up my mind yet but both Judy and I thought it a most impressive performance. We both wish, however, that you had not imposed your own paragraphing style on the piece. Your arbitrary rule seems to be that no paragraph must run longer than two sentences, which is destructive to the whole idea of what paragraphing is for. It makes a complex argument like the Panshins' even more difficult to follow because it distorts or smooths out weighting and emphasis, making every sentence seem as important as every other one. I am dead sure that the manuscript is not paragraphed in that way; this argument could not even have been thought that way.

"I was pleased to see the reminiscences of Sam Merwin but I would like to make a small correction: among the fan-letter writers he mentions who 'remained, alas, just that' he includes Joe Kennedy. While it is true that Kennedy never became a fiction writer, he has been a well-known poet for some years and now is editing a very good poetry magazine."

((I mentioned your comment to Alexei in a letter. His response was: "We did notice the reparagraphing. So did Alfred Bester when we ran across him on the bus to New York last month and gave him TAC #9 to read to while the time. Very interesting that Blish should have commented on it, too. We felt that mean-

ing was lost through the reparagraphing. But we also understood why, given the print medium you were working in, you thought it necessary to reparagraph."

((I suppose I am almost neurotic in my concern for easy-reading mechanics; I have been turned off and discouraged by "brick walls" of type in other magazines, and am convinced that lots of "air" is a good thing on a page. I don't use illos, so I tend to short-paragraph material...at the same time I try to not damage the thought-flow and structure of the piece.

((It's a kind of trade-off, in a way—a greater percentage of people will actually read the material, while perhaps losing a bit of author-intended emphasis and impact.

((I am willing (with hindsight) to admit that in "Reading Heinlein Subjectively" I paragraphed not wisely, but too well.

((The following letters contain interesting non-Panshin/Heinlein comment, and it is included, according to my editorial instincts.))

POUL ANDERSON 5-19-74

"The Panshins' essay on Heinlein was interesting but, I fear, as unconvincing as all other criticism of the psychoanalytic variety. The basic problem may well be that psychoanalysis itself—any school—is unconvincing. The developmental hypothesis on which they base their study is merely that: a hypothesis among among scores of others wildly different. When there are so many conflicting notions about a subject, it's a sure sign that nobody knows what the hell is going on. It seems to me that we are finally beginning—just barely beginning—to get a scientific handle on how the human mind grows and works; but we're doing it by way of such disciplines as chemistry, neurology, cybernetics, and ethology, not by metaphors, however picturesque.

"Even on its own terms, though, the reasoning won't stand up. For openers, how will it explain BEYOND THIS HORIZON, a novel from the very period under consideration? Here we are shown a soci-

ety quite unlike our own, and one which, while it does have its problems, is clearly better than ours. The element which the Panshins would call the Demonic, the revolutionary movement, is obviously a mere episode, arbitrarily put in to provide a little action in midstream for serialization purposes. (We soon learn that the government had the revolutionaries under surveillance all the time.) The novel—still one of the author's best in my opinion—is really about personality on the one hand and philosophy on the other, neither handled in a way to fit the critical scheme proposed. One could cite numerous other Heinlein works that won't conform either, but this example should be sufficient.

"As for the alleged inconsistencies from book to book, in matters like politics, we only need take our choice of two common-sense explanations. First, people change their minds as time goes on, and if they are writers, this may well show in their work. (It is no secret that around 1940 Heinlein was a politically active New Deal Democrat, but that events caused him to move elsewhere. Like any sensible person, he judges a tree by the fruits it bears.) Second, any writer worth his salt will employ a variety of characters, not all of whose opinions are necessarily identical with his own or with each others'. To see how protean it is possible to get, consider Shakespeare.

"Finally—isn't it reasonable to suppose that a skilled writer like Heinlein is not helplessly acting out some kind of interior drama, but actually knows what he is doing?

"All in all, I'd say that if there are to be such studies of a body of work, they can most rewardingly concentrate on the ideas which an author resents. (Ideas, because so-called judgements on things like literary quality are almost invariably mere noises which only tell us something about the critic's emotional condition. The large majority of critics are totally style-deaf, for instance. But any intelligent person should be able to discuss the intellectual content of a work with some objectivity.) Certain-

ly Heinlein has, over the years, given us a great deal to think about. One may not always agree with the propositions presented—and as noted above, probably he himself frequently does not—but they are always good material for discourse.

"—Turning briefly to quite a different subject, John Brunner and various other gentlemen on the subject of arbitrary and often deleterious editorial changes of text: for purely typographical reasons, sometimes a small cut is necessary in a magazine. A conscientious editor will sweat blood over deciding what to remove, and a pro author should be able to go along with him. After all, the ten or a dozen lost words can always be restored in anthology publication, which these days is highly probable if a story has any merit whatsoever.

"Beyond this slight concession to the laws of geometry, and to similarly slight changes in spelling for the sake of publishing 'style,' I see no excuse for changes not okayed by the author. Fortunately, reputable houses seldom make them. For a number of years now, my own policy has been to give each dog one bite of this kind; after that, I stop submitting to the market in question, at least till it gets a new editor.

"Of course, the writer has to do his own part, first by turning in text which doesn't absolutely require emendation, then second—in the case of books—by trudging through the dismal business of copy editing and proofreading. I have yet to find a field of human endeavor, sex included, which doesn't require a certain amount of forethought and preparation if it is to work well.

"—Congratulations on your column in IF. I enjoyed the first one and look forward to more."

((It isn't general knowledge yet, but in a second article on Heinlein, some 25,000 words long, that Tom Collins is scheduled to publish in IS (long, long overdue), the Panshins do talk about BEYOND THIS HORIZON at great length. I have word that the article, a pre-review of TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE which properly should have appeared be-

fore the book was published, will come out within a few months.

((Certainly in my own experience, I was writing different emotional/intellectual content novels in the early 60s than in the early 70s. A certain maturity, a certain bitterness and disillusion are evident. Change is inevitable.

((Why I chose to explore one way, why I chose certain characters, certain situations... I can see that I was expressing deep inner conflicts, decisions, realizations, fears, needs. Some writers are much more personally into their books than others. I'm inclined to go along with the Panshins in thinking that why a writer writes as he does is as important as the objective content. Two areas of interest, two ways of enjoying a writer, depending on your character and personality...at the time.))

((I wrote a very good, I think, Alter-Ego & Me Dialog for the IF column, the October issue. I suspect I'll be doing one for every column from now on. They might be a very popular fixture.))

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GREG PFISTER 5-29-74

"This is in response to the Panshins' article "Reading Heinlein Subjectively" in TAC 9. I apologize for the absurd length of this letter. In the words of a classical author whose name I forget, 'I didn't have time to write a short letter.'

"I must first confess to a certain prejudice concerning the Panshins' "subjective" theorizing in TAC 9 ("Reading Heinlein Subjectively"): The categorical statement of the unprovable—a practice close to "proof by blatant assertion"—sets my teeth on edge. This has been true ever since, in 12th grade, I was forced to memorize the six types of human personality as propounded by St. Bombastius Fustian (or some such), a medieval Scholastic.

"The point is that the structure the Panshins build using instinct/intuition/intelligence — Self/Other/Demonic is nothing more than a collection of arbitrary statements which can be neither proved nor disproved. Systems of this sort are akin to religions: Either they

resonate with your experience, conditioning, and/or glandular reactions — so you take them "on faith" — or they don't.

"Apparently, Geis, you are in tune with the Panshins on this. I won't comment on your comments, but you might talk to an objectivist (libertarian? I've gone colorblind.) and an idealistic pure socialist about the existence of "pure" capitalism and socialism.

"However, I am not in tune with the Panshins. The reason is this: while it is not possible to prove or disprove such constructs, it is possible to compare them with structures having similar or identical purposes; and on these grounds, the Panshins' theorizing is simply grotesque.

"The questions of what instinct, intuition and intelligence really are and how they interact have been debated for a very long time. So has the more basic question of whether those three "really" exist and how useful they are as concepts — how well they serve to explain human subjective experience and objective behavior. As an extreme example, B.F. Skinner has thrown them all out in favor of a view which is annoyingly simplistic but appears to produce the results he wants.

"Personally, I find the Panshin theory to be disgustingly pathetic in comparison to the work of Freud, Jung, Adler, Rogers, Kohler, Lorenz, Laing, etc. The claim that the Panshins are not attempting to compete with these people is invalid. In attempting to describe human subjectivity — relative to SF or not — they have entered a very well-defined arena and have succeeded only in making themselves look silly.

"The Panshins have produced the "soft science" equivalent of the statements of A below:

"A: 'If you get far enough away from massive bodies, you can go as fast as you like.'

"B: 'Oh, you disagree with Einsteinian relativity and the assumption of uniformity.'

"A: 'Relativity? Uniformity? Ein-

stein? What's that? You know, if there's nothing you can hit which is big enough to slow you down appreciably, you can obviously go as fast as you like.'

"B: 'Nnnngungh.'

"I do not mind the creation of Yet Another Theory. Existing theories are just that, theories, and choosing between them is at this point as much a matter of taste as anything else. What I do mind is producing a theory in apparent ignorance of prior work, and hence of ignorance of the subtleties involved. Doing this can be relied upon to produce gross bloopers, holes and useless theoretic redundancy.

((Here Greg provided an example of a Panshins' hole, blooper and redundancy...which I decline to print for space reasons.))

((Greg, you cannot on the one hand say that other psychic landscapes and dynamics cannot be proven or disproven, that belief is a matter of taste and inclination, and then go to the argument of Higher Authority (Freud, Jung, etc.) and other theories' complexity and subtlty, to discredit a new, simpler theory. The Catholic looks down on the savage who believes in a Sun god.

((I am forced to cut your long letter (3000+ words) and I don't doubt do great damage to it. But it's this or cut the letter entirely. I wish you'd taken the time to write a short one.

((You say "The Panshins' theory is little more than a tissue of ignorance." I doubt they are ignorant of psychology in the first place, and there you go appealing to unprovable "knowledge" again to knock them down. You feel that because they duplicated parts of other psy theories and didn't conform to others, that their theory is a "home brew" and the more polished and perfected Freudian and Jungian theories are preferable.

((You say "I managed to read through part 1, Despite being more than a little irked at the sententious writing style. On starting part 2, I quickly became violently ill and skipped immediately to part 3. This I read, understood and enjoyed with no knowledge of the theory

beyond that expressed in the first two sentences of part 2. (After reading the rest of the issue of TAC, I did return to part 2 and read it through, concentrating on thinking charitable thoughts.)"

((You seem to have emotion involved in your rejection of the Panshins' theory. As you say, it is not to your taste.

((If you wish to write Alexei and Cory, their address is available from me. They have a photocopy of your complete letter.

((The Panshins' general comment is as follows:

"Our purpose in writing the piece was not argumentation for the sake of argument, nor was it to set forth a final and exclusive position. The purpose of "Reading Heinlein Subjectively" was to offer an alternative point of view. Either a reader can understand it and apply it, or not. If he chooses not to, or is unable to, it really isn't useful for us to quarrel with him in print."

((And in further comment, the Panshins sent the following which "Cory read somewhere":

'What is your view about inner knowledge?' asked the mild-mannered dervish Adduh of the traditionalistic theologian Abdurrashid of Adana.

'I have no patience with it.'

'And what else?'

'It makes me sick!'

'And what else?'

'The idea is revolting!'

'How interesting,' said Adduh, 'that a logical and trained mind like yours, when asked for a view on a matter, can only describe, instead, three personal moods.'

((As for me, at this point in time, I believe there is a psychic "structure" or dynamics that operates in the human mind, something like ^{what} the Panshins have constructed, married and reconciled to the Transactional Analysis and Primal Therapy theories. And may God have mercy on my soul.

FREFF 6-2-74

"The Panshins' article is—well, I

find it somewhat boring, mostly because I can't get into lengthy dissections of the human psyche that attempt to set down concrete functions and rules. And, I suppose, because of late I have become almost entirely disenchanted with Heinlein. (I tried re-reading several of his books that I had liked when I read them at fourteen and fifteen years of age. They all bombed, they all annoyed the hell out of me. I'm almost scared to attempt reading the ones I particularly enjoyed, because I like having pleasant memories of them. The books still read smoothly, glibly—perhaps too glibly—but their philosophical content annoys me to the point that I want to debate with Heinlein, and he isn't there to do it with. Result: frustration. Why frustrate myself when I can read authors who don't stack the deck so noticeably?) A human baby is not utterly helpless and isolate from the universe; indeed, it is from the fact that a newborn infant blurs the boundaries of self and universe together that he draws what strength he has...the kind of strength known to aikido study in Japan as ki, which I would be tempted to class as mystical bullshit were it not for the fact that it is easily and physically demonstrated. Aikido, mostly philosophical study aimed at unifying subconscious mind with conscious mind/body, either works or you end up flat on the mat. It's a defensive martial art. (Also interesting to me is that the Panshins, like so many people in western psychological theory, split things into three parts. Fascinating... father/son/holy ghost, id/ego/superego, self/other/demonic...not that these represent analagous concepts, but that they are triads...whereas in most eastern religions, particularly those leading into and from zen buddhism, the concept that everything is at once part of a duality forming a whole. Yin/yang, eternally flowing into and growing out of each other.)

((Western psychologists are now into exploring the different conscious/unconscious roles played by the left and right lobes of our brain; the yin/yang if you will. I think our triads and our dualities can live together.

((Freff now has comment on the long filler-quote I used in TAC #9 dealing with comic books.))

"MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE should be retitled MUCH MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE. I don't know De'V Hanke or his/her qualifications for discussing the process of writing for the comics, but my immediate reaction is that he/she is guilty of a tremendous idiocy. Yes, a comics writer needs, to be good, a special kind of visual/storytelling capacity, to feel out how action should move through the medium of panels on a printed page. But to place him in a position of omnipotence! Mon dieu, such a ridiculous thought! (Also, a bit of non sequiter: Hanke's gratuitous slap at art students is mildly annoying because it is aimed at an image that does exist, but is not the entire. Some art students are asses. Many are wonderful people, and a hell of a lot better artists than some of those in the comics industry.) I find it marvelous that the examples of bad writing he presents, and good writing as well, are all connected with comic artists, although Eisner and Kubert have shown talent at both.

"Look, Hanke, no matter how well written a panel, no matter how it is described, it is the artist's choice as to how he presents it in actual visuals. No writer on Earth can stop Neal Adams from making his backgrounds as detailed as Adams wants. Most writers have no say at all in how the actual artwork finally comes out!

"Two other things are important to consider: the editor, and the production process. The editor can often ruin either story or artwork. It has happened to me, it has happened to many others. It will always happen. Comics are not a thing where the writer comes up with his story and somehow, magically, it turns out as he wants it and is sold to the people of the world. At National you write a script, the editor diddles with it, it is given to an artist, he draws it, the editor diddles with the artwork, somebody inks it, another letters it, someone else colors it, the editor diddles with it again...and then it is printed. At Marvel you write an outline with rough thoughts, an artist draws it,

then you write the specific dialog and captions...and likewise.

"A decently-written panel can 'stop' an artist? Bullshit!

"(For personal credentials I offer up knowing professionals in the field of comics writing, production people in the field, and the fact that I make most of my living from comics scripting for Gold Key.)"

+++

GARY FARBER (undated, mid-June)

"Robert Anson Heinlein spoke here in New York on Wed., May 29 at the Poetry Center of the 92nd St. YM-WHA. He came out onto the stage in a full tux, ruffled shirt, black tie, and all. He appeared somewhat uncertain of what the audience wanted to hear, and had no prepared speech. Apologizing that he was tired and nervous, he asked to be excused for any stammering he might do, and said that if it appeared that he was chewing gum, this was so. Aspergum. He several times asked the audience if there was something in particular that they wanted to discuss. He went over much of his Annapolis speech, reprinted in ANALOG. When asked several similar questions on current sf writers, (i.e. what is your favorite sf writer, whom do you enjoy reading, etc.) he refused to comment, but did say he prefers Wells (H.G.) over Verne. He also said that for light reading of non-sf, he enjoys Donald Hamilton's Matt Helm series, and much of John MacDonald's detective writing.

"After the staged speech, Mr. Heinlein and anyone interested (about 60 hardcore fans) adjourned to a nearby room where RAH sat at a little table and signed books, programs, etc., according to a rigid system of protocol (first one copy of one of his books, then a second, then a third, etc., then a program, then an autographed piece of paper, etc.) (Personally, I got an autographed copy of TIME ENOUGH..., STRANGER, THE MOON...MISTRESS, TROOPERS, DOUBLE STAR, and a paper with Best Wishes, blah blah. Greedy, aren't I?)

"I happened to ask him if he saw the article on him by the Panshins in

TAC 9.

"Foolish me (an uncommon event, I assure you). He replied coolly, 'I do not read fan magazines.'"

"Speaking of Alexei Panshin, a funny thing happened... about the time Heinlein had just finished up signing things, and was talking quietly to anyone who wanted to, Alexei Panshin (or an imitation claiming to be him) stepped out of the crowd and said (this is all to the best of my limited memory, and if anyone wants to quibble about exact words, they may do so with limited probable justice, but I believe that the gist of it is correct. If anyone has any objections, or corrections, they should bring them to me, and I'll see if I will agree to them.) 'I'm Alex Panshin.' At which point in the many dimensioned universe, Mr. Heinlein said brusquely, 'Goodbye sir!' and turned away angrily. AP then tried to say 'You said on the stage that your attitudes change over the years,' but RAH interrupted him in the middle to say very very forcefully and angrily 'You have gotten hold of and read my private papers, Sir, without my permission. This I will never change. Goodbye sir!' AP tried to finish his previous statement, but was again interrupted by RAH saying 'Goodbye sir' several times and finally said 'Goodbye sir' and left.

"Most questions Heinlein refused to answer, such as 'Will you be at the DISCON?' and 'Will you write another novel with Lazarus Long?' He also said that his favorite novel is always the one he is working on currently."

((Fascinating. I sent a photocopy of your letter to the Panshins, and the following is their comment. (I did not send a copy of your letter to Mr. Heinlein because, while we are on good terms (last time I heard from him) I don't want to impose on him or bother him with items he'd likely not wish to see. If he wishes to respond to me privately or for publication after reading TAC #9 and #10, fine, but his long-standing policy has been not to respond to reviews or analyses, and I don't expect him to alter that policy now.)))

"Thank you for letting me see Gary Farber's letter. I can confirm it to this extent—the person who stepped out of the crowd and addressed the man signing autographs and dodging questions was me.

"On the other hand, I'm not so sure that the man who came to the Poetry Center and addressed the gathering in Heinlein's name actually was Heinlein. I've had a month to think the matter over, and I am now convinced that the "Heinlein" I saw that night was an imposter, an actor taking the real Heinlein's place a la DOUBLE STAR.

"I first became suspicious during the talk. I expected biting cogency from Heinlein, the same sharp intelligence, the same originality of view that first made me a fan of his work so long ago.

"Instead, however, what we were offered was platitudes, canned anecdotes and twice-told tales. Nothing new. Nothing an actor could not have been coached on. Nothing I couldn't have said word-perfect myself.

"Added evidence: Heinlein, or the actor who impersonated him, only accepted written questions from the audience and picked out those which he chose to answer. The real man would not have needed to protect his real state of knowledge that way.

"This pseudo-Heinlein even so said some incredible things. He said that his stories were entertainments and no more. He said that he wrote his stories only for money and for no other reason. He said that repeatedly. He must have hoped that we would not notice the significance of the old Heinlein anecdote—which he repeated—about snatching up a remark of Mrs. Heinlein's, disappearing into his study and reappearing thirteen days later with a complete novel, THE DOOR INTO SUMMER, when any reasonable person must surely know that this is not the way that entertainments written solely for money are produced.

"Gary Farber's letter further confirms my suspicions. He says he asked the "Heinlein" that he so gleefully ac-

cepted autographs from (what are they worth now, Gary?) whether or not he had seen the article on his work by the Panshins that had appeared in TAC #9. And the man replied, 'I do not read fan magazines.' Replied 'coolly', we are told. A cool reply indeed from this impersonator since the real Heinlein not only advertises in LOCUS but has a subscription to TAC. Obviously a ploy to avoid having the real extent of his knowledge tested.

"I believe this is also why the man threw his left-field accusation of reading his mail at me. It is true that nine years ago, when I was in the course of researching HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION, a widow of a friend of Heinlein's, desperately hungry for attention, pressed some letters from Heinlein on me. I said to her: 'I can see that you have a great deal of respect for Mr. Heinlein and if there is any possibility in your mind that letting me see his correspondence might be in any way a disservice to him, I would prefer that you did not send me the letters.' She did send the letters. They proved to have no relevance to the book, and I returned them.

"Heinlein knows this. He is in possession of the entire exchange of correspondence I had with the woman.

"But the imposter apparently only knew of the fact that I had seen letters from Heinlein many years ago, and used this to avoid meeting me. This actor assumed the guise of anger to keep me at a distance since he feared I might know too much about the real Heinlein and might have exposed him.

"Wow! It is all very strange to me. What is really happening behind the scenes is a mystery I haven't fathomed yet, but I am sure we will all be surprised when the truth is revealed. I may have said too much already.

"For my part, however, if Heinlein is still alive—the real Heinlein—I have hopes of meeting him someday."

((I had some difficulty transcribing your letter, Alexei. The acid in your typewriter ribbon ate up the paper...))

NEW LIBERTARIAN NOTES has run a 3-part libertarian-oriented interview with Heinlein this past spring. Copies, I am sure, are still available. See the NLN ad in this issue.

Is a compulsive science fiction collector in the grip of a shelf-fulfilling prophesy?

And finally, with a statement that says what most others said about the Panshins' Heinlein analysis,

BUZ BUSBY 5-17-74

"Alex and Cory write a good and mostly knowledgeable stick, so long as they concentrate on what Heinlein says. When they (or anyone) get into what someone else "means" or "wants", my skepticism rises in direct proportion to the degree of certainty with which the proposition is stated. And in attempting to see into a man's head while at the same time doing a Procustes to make him fit a theory, I think the good Panshins climb out on a very shaky limb indeed. It's a good theory, whether it is applied to an individual or to his writings. The fallacy is trying to equate the two, which are not the same and never will be.

"Item: there is no reason why a writer should be "consistent", objectively or subjectively—in fact, there is every reason why he should not be. Consistency equals predictability, and what reader (or editor) wants predictable stories?

((Most.))

Alien, n. An American sovereign in his probationary state.

Critic, n. A person who boasts himself hard to please because nobody tries to please him.

—excerpts, THE DEVIL'S DICTIONARY

((thanks to David W. Miller.))

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I want very much to get a copy of REG#1 and TAC #4. Anyone willing??? Bruce Rudd, 1025 Elm St., Moorhead, MN 56560.

SForum: an informally outrageous SF journal, published by Tesseract, the Univ. of N.H. SF Society. Essays, reviews, short fiction, poetry, art, special features. \$1 per issue, 6 for \$5. SForum, F. Bertrand, Editor, 23 Grove St., Dover, N.H. 03820.

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ft, left, left a wife and seventeen chi

LETTER FROM
ROBERT A. W. LOWNDES
6-23-74

"How am I? Too heavy and drinking too much as usual. I not only do not expect to remain in this frequently aching and constantly abused body for another ten years — I've no desire to stay around that long! Otherwise, I'm enjoying life on my own terms and thank—

-46-

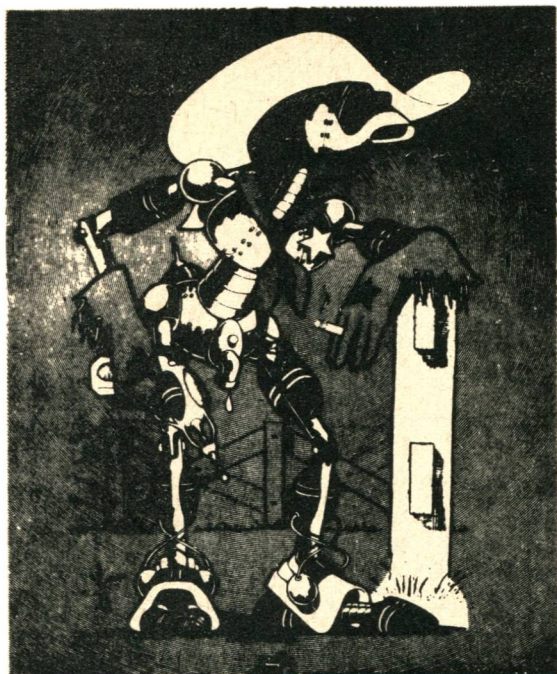
ful for that. My job is a constant challenge, which keeps at least a trace of a sharp edge on me; I've not the self-discipline needed to work freelance — and tell myself that I really ought to work on developing it, it, because when I leave Gernsback Publications (unless it's dead on the field of honor — salute, please) there isn't going to be anyone else who'll be willing to pay the old horse a decent salary. So I'll have to push myself instead of depending upon working hours and a rough production schedule to push me. (That's why I could never make it as a freelance writer. Too slow, too erratic, and too easily discouraged when something didn't sell.)

"Each year I get farther from the science fiction scene.. Presently, I'm not reading any current s/f mags at all, not even purchasing ANALOG. (Not that I love it less but that I'm more interested in other reading matter that leaves me no time for s/f.) But I can tell you this: the magazines either are disappearing or have disappeared from various newsstands that were still carrying them last year. Softcover books, however, seem to get either as good or better display."

((I am in many ways only a frustrated Company Man. Trouble was, the right publisher never recognized my editorial genius...and now, should a Big Publisher want to hire me, I would almost surely refuse the job—because I am now, after all these years of freelancing, being my own boss, getting used to my own schedule...controlling my own life ...I'd be a terrible employee. I wouldn't last a month. And an employee with thousands in the bank and self-employment skill (aces down in the hole) usually won't last—unless he is a top dog in a company. And even then.... habits are hard to break. There is always a dependency side to an independent person, though. Masked, sometimes, but always there.

I don't mind paranoiacs; I employ them often—to protect me from my enemies!

My delusions are real!



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