

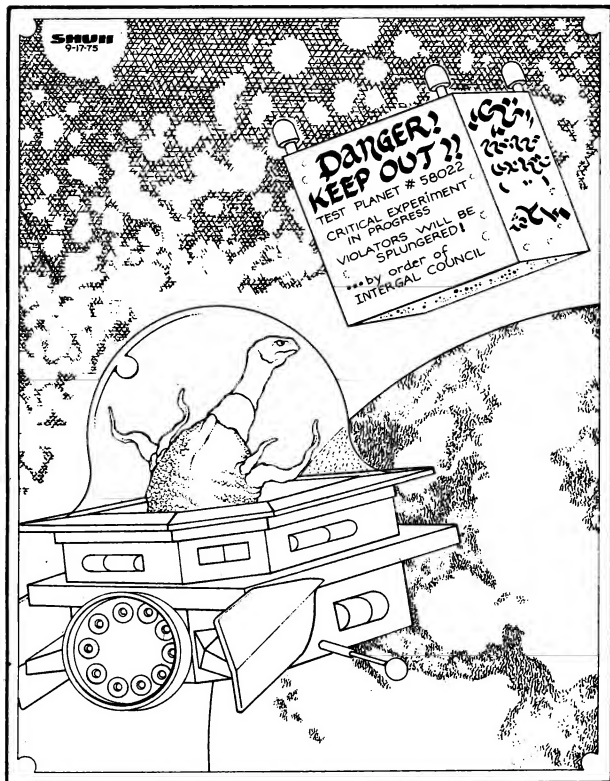
# SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

SFR INTERVIEWS

\$1.25

Jerry Pournelle

16



## ALIEN THOUGHTS



Not all publishers are ogres...

And not all writers are saints.

It has come to my attention (I get letters, I get phone calls) that some major hardcover and pocketbook publishers are now inserting into their contracts with authors a provision that if a completed manuscript (contracted for on the basis of an opening chapter or two and an outline) is unsatisfactory to the publisher and is either not wanted under any conditions or the author is unwilling to rewrite to suit the publisher, then the author is obligated to repay to the publisher the money given as an advance against royalties upon signing the contract, if the work is later sold to another publisher.

In other words, the author keeps the sum paid him but if he sells the rejected work to somebody else he has to pay back the first publisher.

OUTRAGEOUS! cry some authors; these publishers and editors often reject manuscripts for capricious, unjustified reasons! They want their money back say ten years later if that work is dug out of the trunk and sold to another company?

Yes.

Because the money given following the signing of the contract is an advance. It is conditional money, every time. And until the completed manuscript is officially accepted, that advance money is in essence in escrow.

Of course most writers live off the advance money as they write the balance of the book.

But it has happened that some authors during completion of the ms. have radically changed the plot and action of the outline. Or have done such a slipshod job the editor has had to reject the finished manuscript. Or have even failed to complete the manuscript.

One major editor has told me he has to

reject up to 10% of the completed mss. he has contracted for. This is an expensive luxury. Because it is unlikely that any editor or publisher is going to casually throw away thousands of dollars in advance money; rejecting a manuscript under penalty of losing or tying up a bundle of cash is not a happy thing to do. Editors don't last long if they have that habit, and publishers who do it or allow it too often end up in bankruptcy court.

Because—let's face it: how often will a publisher actually be paid back his advance money even if the manuscript is later sold to another publisher with perhaps lower editorial standards who pays less money even if the later sale is discovered? The publisher of the first part is faced with having to probably sue an author who probably hasn't the money to give back in any event, having spent the second publisher's payments on back bills and current rent, etc. The legal costs would likely equal or surpass the money owed. And think of the bad press for the publisher as he "persecutes" the poor, abused writer.

So you see, while there are numerous (and probably far more) horror stories told of non-paying, rip-off publishers, there is another side to the coin which we rarely see: editors and publishers get together and moan to each other about the sonof-a-bitch writer who is a year late with a book...the writer who sent in a thinly disguised rehash of one of his earlier books...the writer who moved and cannot be found...the drunk or doper author who sends gibberish....

In writing and publishing, friends, it is always Let The Buyer and Seller Beware, because too often writer-editor-publisher affairs are conducted by people who don't know each other personally. That's why established professional writers are so well liked and well paid by publishers and why writers who are known to be good and dependable are usually busy, busy, busy...and why beginning, unknown writers of talent often have a tough time breaking in. It is why the established writers can often pick and choose to a degree among established, trustworthy publishers and editors, and why the beginning writer must often deal with bastard editors and/or rip-off publishers. And why poor-but-honest editors and publishers often must deal with unreliable writers.

It is ever thus, given the nature of the beast.

NOTE FROM W. G. BLISS

\*JUST HEARD RATHER BELATEDLY THAT AN OLD FRIEND AND CORRESPONDENT, RICHARD S. SHAWER, DIED ON THE 30th OF NOVEMBER AT THE AGE OF 68. OUTSIDE OF A LARGE LITERARY LEGACY (PALMER HAS KEPT I REMEMBER LEMURIA IN PRINT), HIS MOST IMPORTANT WORK WAS WITH ROCK IMAGES.\*

You probably noticed, as you flipped through this issue before settling down to read this section: no heavy cover, and no advertising.

So why no cover and ads?

The cover first: I didn't think the cover for SFR 15 would cost as much as it did. When I got the bill from Limes Litho, I blanched, and I don't blench easy. That lovely Castilian Gold 80-pound Paramour cover cost doubled the printing cost of the issue over a 48-page self-cover. The expense is not so much the paper; it's the separate two-sides print runs on a smaller offset press, and an extra collating cycle.

The four extra pages and heavy cover don't seem worth all that money. Especially when it means drawing down the reserve by \$300., which is what I had to do.

Another reason to give up the heavy cover is weight; it increased the weight of SFR 15 over #14 by 30%—and that translates to a lot of money in postage, especially with the late-December increases of 25-30% in every class of service.

(The post office is a good way into a suicidal cycle of declining volume, increased rates to compensate, and consequent further declines in volume.... What will happen, for instance, when local governments and corporations turn to bi-monthly billing and mailings, from monthly? I imagine the post office would love to ask congress to pass a law making monthly bills to consumers mandatory! The p.o. is already spending big money in an advertising campaign on TV to hype first class mailing (in competition with the phone company who is urging us to call a friend/relative).

(The basic problem is the big payrolls. Eighty-five percent of the post office overhead is in salaries, and most of us civilians don't think mail clerks and handlers and carriers' jobs are so complicated and/or onerous as to merit their average \$17,000. per year wages (including fringe benefits). The postal unions, of course, have

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# REVIEW

Formerly THE ALIEN CRITIC ●

FEBRUARY 1976  
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the country by the balls, and the congress wouldn't allow the postal service corporation to even try to break the unions, so at intervals, the rates and wages will go up and up and up....

(There is also, I am told, a too-large superstructure of supervisors, superintendents, etc. who are drawing appropriately heavy salaries.

(By the way, my application for second class mailing privileges has recently been approved here and has been forwarded to Washington D.C. for final action...which may take six months or more. Until then SFR is still in the limbo known as Second Class Pending. I still pay third class bulk mailing rates each mailing, but if/ when the permit comes through I will be credited with the difference between 2nd class and 3rd, for all the mailings I've done during the Pending period. That will help a lot.)

So, it's back to the 48-page newspaper, self-cover format, with a different color ink for the covers and (I think) six other pages inside, to liven up the package a bit. A color-change I am told is about \$75. extra. That I can afford.

Are you asking yourself, "So why did he cut out advertising if he needs money so much?"

In fact I did cut the advertising: sent back four full-page ads, a couple smaller display ads and a few classifieds. Because, as I discovered, the post office rates, rules and excessively complicated regulations punish a small circulation magazine which accepts ads. The post of-

fice rewards the non-profit publication, and tends to inhibit the low-income publisher.

There are those (I among them) who feel the post office should provide classes of service determined only by the speed of delivery, and should not concern itself at all with what it delivers (aside from offal, explosives, and dead bodies).

However, the conditions that prevail are beyond my control: I don't make the rules, so I'll find those to my benefit.

If I publish ads (beyond marginal listings of back issues, for instance, and publishing notices) I must send SFR to bookstores by parcel post. BUT if I carry no ads I qualify SFR as a "book" and can send copies by the special 4th class book rate. (Two pounds of SFR sent by parcel post to zone one costs 77¢, to zone 8—\$1.48. That same two pounds, book rate, costs 50¢ to anywhere in the U.S.A.)

That little class difference can save me up to \$100.!

The number and extent of ads in SFR determines how much second class postage I'll be charged, and this rate is determined by a complicated formula having to do with zones... I don't understand it. But it is significant.

The only way to make it worthwhile to carry ads is to charge enough to overcome the losses imposed by the post office rate structures. If I did charge those amounts I would not get a single ad.

So there is really no alternative: no more advertising in SFR. This way I have an extra four or five pages for reviews, letters and editorials.

And, too, I have never been comfortable with advertising in mazines; I always felt vaguely pretentious, that I was playing at being a big prozine publisher...and there was vague guilt, too, because I never felt the advertiser was getting his money's worth in readers/exposure.

So it goes.

And this editorial—or diatribe—is on the marvelously idealistic expectations and illusions of some counter-culture writers and poets.

They seem to believe that money grows on trees and that those they scorn and revile owe them a cultural living. Somehow, in the minds of these avant-garde creators, the middleclass, capitalistic, puritan Es-

tablishment is supposed to suffer contempt and abuse while funding and encouraging efforts to spread anti-establishment writings.

The Establishment is supposed to feel guilty for making money and to expiate this guilt by paying organs and organizations who will obligingly attack them.

I think this play is wearing thin.

To be specific, I am speaking about BEYOND BAROQUE, an avant-garde, counter-cultish little magazine and writers/poets complex in Venice, California (coincidentally near where I used to live a few years ago).

BEYOND BAROQUE is mostly funded by the National Endowment of the Arts, the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines, and a few people who contribute.

Lately BEYOND BAROQUE was voted a \$5 thousand grant by the Los Angeles Arts Commission—but it is opposed by an Arts Commissioner (female) who is urging Mayor Bradley to delete the grant from the budget because she didn't like the four-letter words and "underground elitist" tone of the BB publications.

George Drury Smith, President and Editor of BEYOND BAROQUE is defiant and incensed. He will not impose censorship to get money! He asks all those 90% of the readership who are freeloaders to pony up some cash to keep the place going.

He says: "We pledge to go on and to continue:

1. our fight for government support of the arts
2. our fight for freedom of the press and of artistic expression
3. free distribution of our publications as long as possible."

His appeal will fall on 8% deaf ears, I imagine, and sooner or later BB will go down the tube...and rightly so.

But, ah, the illusions shown in #1 and #2 and #3. Smith is just beginning to discover that those who pays the money almost always calls the tune. The government doesn't have to "say" behave this way and that way in stark, commanding voice; the subtle pressure of wanting to keep that precious money coming year after year will promote a gradual, unconscious self-censorship, a delicious series of rationalizations in editing. The magazines and the organizations which don't please the Givers will be cut off and will starve, and the ones which please the Givers (or at least don't offend) will be allowed to continue to suck at the government teat.

WHY AM I OVERSTRESSED  
AND UNDERFINANCED?



Freedom becomes "freedom" when it is dependent on the government check.

W, now...that boggles me. 'Our fight for freedom of the press and of artistic expression.' How noble. How shit-eating hypocritical. What he means is freedom of his subsidized press and freedom from restrictions by those who do the subsidizing.

Freedom of the press doesn't mean a welfare press.

As for free distribution.... It continues to be true that people do not value what they get for nothing. They tend to think it can't be worth much (in this context) if it's a give-away magazine. And even among BEYOND BAROQUE's writers and poets I suspect that attitude exists—the suspicion (or gut knowledge?) that if a writer is first class, has real talent and discipline, he'll be published by paying magazines with large circulations.

The bottom line is still: does someone want to read your work badly enough to give some of his work (money) in exchange for it? That is the best compliment, the most valuable (in every sense) praise.

The thought occurs to me that from a cynical standpoint government funding of the BEYOND BAROQUE coterie (and others like it/them) is probably worth it; the money keeps second and third-raters off the streets, ties them to the government in a subtle way so they won't go too far in radical thought/expression/action for fear of losing their "free" money. This way the no and low-talents can squabble among themselves over the few crumbs the National Endowment and Coordinating Council throw their way. And they can keep their illusions and pretensions for a while....while they whine and beg for money.

Yes, I do feel contempt for this type of welfare-for-writers operation, and I feel disgust for those who play the humiliating game of noble-writer-with-pala-out.

There are hundreds—probably thousands—of small-press publishers in this country who survive because they are able to print and distribute books and magazines people value enough to buy. They survive also because they are willing to subsidize their presses themselves! They have the ultimate, true freedom of the press. And they have self-respect. And my respect.

The Federal Reserve, true to its usual fealty to the President, is pumping a great deal of credit (money) into the banking system. The banks are supposed to make lotsa

loans and stimulate the economy.

But the banks are having trouble finding loans, and the leading banks are having to lower their prime interest rate to lure people to borrow.

It was desperation to use all the funds available to them which has gotten the banks into a dangerously vulnerable position the last few years. Greed knows no bounds. And now the Fed is throwing more fuel on the fire.

The stockmarket, extremely sensitive to any hint of lower interest rates and better business, has leaped through the 900 Dow-Jones Industrials "barrier" and is approaching 950.

The conventional wisdom is that prosperity is on the wing again. Of course, some jaundiced observers see it flapping rather oddly, with one wounded wing and a trail of feathers, but the mere fact that it is off the ground is enough, right? (Never mind that Housing Starts just went down—contrary to expectations.)

But look ahead a year-and-a-half; the current and last year's federal deficits (and they are massive!) will be translated into a 10% inflation rate (or more). The financial woes and weaknesses of the cities and states and banks and the in-debt-to-their-ears corporations will become worse, and when, two years from now, the inevitable "recession" begins again because of maybe 20% inflation and 15% prime interest rates, the slump will be catastrophic and the ensuing business, bank and local government problems will scare the shit out of all of us.

The news recently that the Chase-Manhattan (the Rockefeller bank) has tremendous potential losses due to bad loans and too much New York city and state paper (see the pretty bonds, see how they deteriorate before our eyes) is crogling. It wipes out my cherished conspiracy theory that David Rockefeller is the Secret Master of the Gigantic Fortune Group Which Controls the World. Who needs a Secret Master who can't even manage a single bank well? (Yet—I cling to the theory that Nelson Rockefeller was not "fired" from the upcoming w-p slot on the Republican ticket, but in fact decided to cut loose from a sinking Ford, and that Rocky's leaving is a signal that Ford is to be dumped; it is Ford who is being let go, for incompetence, probably, and for becoming infected with Presidential Fever.)

We are obviously in the hands of incompetents, in government and out.

(It has been my belief for years that

legislators at all levels should have their salaries cut one dollar for every law they pass. As it is they seem to feel they must justify their salaries by passing more and more laws each session, with an inevitable percentage of stupid, unnecessary, counterproductive interferences in business and private life.)

Of course the federal government must inflate money yet again to "get the country moving again" because the higher costs of energy are still forcing up prices...a process that takes years in a complicated, layered economy such as ours. Higher real prices for energy means a real lowering of our standard of living; less real wealth can go for goods.

Instead of facing up to this by letting The Market adjust itself and by encouraging production, the politicians are putting off the discomfort (and they hope getting re-elected) by their usual 'after us, the deluge' tactic of deficit spending (while weeping at the resulting plight of the middle and lower classes, and while they slip the guilt by pretending "inflation" is an alien force nobody understands and which is beyond control, like a plague from the stars).

In the end, having inflated and mal-adjusted the economy to the brink (and over the brink) of disaster, our leaders will blame everyone but themselves and their policies, and they will in panic slap on wage-price-interest controls, set up a huge bureaucracy to administer them, set up a huge enforcement force, be astonished and dismayed at the resulting black market and public dissatisfaction, continue to print funny money to pay for it all (while the real producers of wealth are forced to stop, or 'disincentived' to stop, working).

Enough. The handwriting is on the wall. Only exceptionally good sense by millions of voters can keep the liberals from following this path. If we elect Humphrey or Kennedy or anyone of that stripe this year, with an obliging Democrat House and Senate, you could find yourself in five to ten years being forced to register with the government (somehow, liberals don't believe in voluntary programs) for mandatory placement of your labor skills during "the emergency".

They'll call it something else, but it will be slavery.

Thanks to Ballantine for sending THE INVISIBLE CRASH by James Dines (Ballantine 24870, \$1.95) and THE BANKERS by Martin Mayer (Ballantine 24750, \$2.25). Both are excellent.

\*\*\*\*\* 5

## AN INTERVIEW WITH JERRY POURNELLE

September - October - November 1975

REG: Jerry, you seem to have "appeared" on the SF professional scene rather quickly—about four years ago. Is that when you first began writing fiction...science fiction? What prompted you to turn to writing SF?

POURNELLE: I guess it did look a bit sudden. Actually, I'd been involved in the space business for a long time, and had numerous friends among the writers. I used to pick their brains before writing my own brand of SF, which was our input to the National Space Requirement. It got to be a running joke: I said I wrote SF, but I didn't need characters or plot, just good settings for stories.

Then I'd tried to write SF off and on since my undergraduate days. When I was a student I did manage to sell a few words, but never any science fiction, mostly because in those days the only SF I read was *ASTOUNDING* and I always tried to sell to John Campbell. He kept sending me back those 9-page letters telling me what was wrong with the story and inviting me to try again. But come the late 50's and I hadn't sold anything and after Sputnik instead of scrounging up space experiment equipment out of leftovers from bomber weapons tests we had money crammed down our throats and the Generals and GS-15's yelling DO SOMETHING! So, I pretty well gave up trying to write fiction of any kind, and got to work on trying to keep people alive in space and in environments the engineers thought people might face in space. Turns out a lot of the work was not needed for space, although the heat stress adaptation stuff I did may be useful other places; and when we got out of human factors and into systems design we were even busier.

About 1960 or so I began corresponding with a number of SF writers. And in the middle 60's I got a choice given me by the aerospace industry: go into management or take a hefty pay out. I was the junior man on the scientist list, and they were perfectly fair about it—they couldn't afford what amounted to internal consultants anymore. Up to then it had been a gas. I worked on what I wanted to and didn't have management problems, there was only one engineer and one secretary working for me directly, the project teams furnished all the other people and all the administration and management work. But when they gave me that choice I got to thinking about it and

decided I'm not cut out to be a manager. Not only do I like to get my hands dirty in the labs, but there's this problem—I tend to get people upset without intending to. All of which makes me a pretty poor candidate for management, so when I was offered a professorship I took it.

I'm not really sure why I wrote my first novel. It sure wasn't lack of something to do—I was not only a professor and acting department head, teaching far too many hours a quarter, but I was also the president of the college's research institute, and writing proposals and getting 6-figure grants and directing studies. Maybe it was my subconscious telling me I couldn't keep that up. Anyway I did write a novel, a mystery-adventure thing, and I asked a writer friend to read it and tell me if it ought to go to the wastebasket or what. He sent it off to his agent, which is why I've always had one of the best agents in the business, and after maybe ten publishing houses, the novel sold. I was still professoring in this small college and my characters in this spy story seduced each other and the Dean wouldn't have approved of having one of his people writing like that, so it sold under a pen name.

I still hadn't sold any SF, but I decided to try again, and wrote John Campbell asking if he remembered me—and damned if he didn't continue an argument we'd had twelve years ago, as if not a day had passed. He also reminded me that he'd tried to get some non-fiction out of me back in the days when I was actively working the space business. So I sent him some stories and he told me what was wrong with them, and then one day he didn't send a letter, just a check, and after that he bought a lot of my stuff, most of which wasn't published until after he'd died. In fact, there was so much of my stuff in the inventory that Kay Tarrant asked if she could run one series under a pen name. She wasn't buying anything, just making up issues out of what John Campbell had bought, and I had that serial going, so we revived my mystery pen name for the other template. So all of a sudden there was a lot of my stuff published.

As to why I write SF, I like it. I can make more money writing non-fiction, and for a while I used to get an assignment for something like an arti-



cle on nuclear power plants, write that up for a good fee, and then write a half-dozen SF stories using the research. It was always more fun doing the fiction than the fact article, but fiction pay rates are pretty low, at least for short fiction, and it doesn't much matter whether you're an unknown or a big name, the rates are still low for short fiction.

I think that's a bad situation, by the way. It means that new writers can't really support themselves writing science fiction until they've either written a whole book that's salable, or written and sold enough short fiction that they get a book offer. They can't support themselves out of short fiction sales while they learn their trade. On the other hand, the lower rates for short fiction mean that the old established names get out of the way, and the competition for short length sales isn't as steep as it would be if they paid a lot, so maybe it balances out. But I was talking to Stuart Cloete (*RAGS OF GLORY*, *TURNING WHEELS*, etc.) and he told me that when he got into the writing business back in the 40's he got paid five thousand dollars for a single short story! In those days you could live a year or more on that much, and live pretty well. Nowadays a five grand advance is pretty hefty for a book.

Anyway, I turned to writing because I was getting tired of teaching and writing proposals and bringing in research contracts for other people to have fun with, and somehow things began to click. The key decision was back about 1969 or so, when I was offered a high GS rating and a lot of money to manage some aspects of Army Aviation, and I thought about it and

thought about it—they'd gone to a lot of trouble to get the Civil Service Commission to approve a really good offer, and I felt guilty not taking it—but we'd just made some good sales and paid off all the credit card companies, and I'd got some steady assignments doing non-fiction columns and science features, and my wife and I decided we'd try to stick it writing, although we knew that would be the last professional job offer I'd ever get. So we stayed with it, and I'm glad.

**REG:** Care to reveal that Mystery/SF pen name at this time? In general, do you think it matters if a relative few aficionados and fellow professionals know a given writer's pen names and pseudonyms, so long as the mass of SF readers is unaware? And do you think (especially now with a lot of bibliographic and academic work going on in SF) a writer has an obligation to, at some time or another, reveal that type of information to those interested?

**POURNELLE:** Oh, there's nothing mysterious about the name. One of the Wade Curtis mystery novels managed to get copyrighted in the name of Jerry Pournelle, so—

I did have fun over that once, though. There was this English professor who wrote in to *ANALOG* saying he was going to cancel his subscription because of this idiot Pournelle's serial, *SPACESHIP FOR THE KING*, but one of his students showed him an absolutely marvelous story about saving the whales and international corporations and such like ("A Matter of Sovereignty") by one Wade Curtis so he was renewing his subscription after all. I met the fellow at a convention a few months later, and introduced myself as Curtis. Then he saw my name tag...

As I said, I used a pen name because the Dean of my college wouldn't have approved of what I was writing; and after that I was stuck with it. And I'd used pen names earlier, back in my student days, because I wasn't proud of what I was writing (no, not the skin trade; worse. True confessions, and in the 50's at that, when they were particularly dreary, and no, —I'll NEVER tell what name those went under.). But the usual reason for pen names is having more than one story in an issue of a magazine, isn't it? I never thought about obligations to reveal; I am damned if I'll ever reveal the name I used to write some of the penny dreadful stuff I did way back when—

**REG:** I have just received the Pocket Book edition of *THE MOTE IN GOD'S EYE*. Are you happy with that cover? It is dramatic and...er...eye-catching. Do writers ever, in your knowledge and experience, have any say in covers for their books?

**POURNELLE:** You saw the Pocket Book edition of *MOTE* before we did. We'd been assured that the cover was truly ugly, but last night I was presented with a copy to be autographed and maybe it's because everybody told me how ugly it was, but I thought it wasn't bad. Has nothing to do with the book, but it's eye-catching and might get people to pick the book up—and selling books is after all what we're in business for.

I guess some writers have control over covers, but I never have, and I don't think Larry ever has either. I've always thought editors and publishers knew something about their business. I may be wrong on that—a lot of writers have told me stories that are truly horrible—but I know that I don't know anything about marketing and what makes a cover sell books, so I've always thought it would be silly for me to get involved in that part of the racket.

I mean, suppose I had cover control and rejected a cover on the grounds that it wasn't very pleasing to me, and they got another done and it was very pretty but nobody bought the book?

But some writers do get cover control. Harlan tells me he insists on it, and gets it. I know Spinrad has lately had some say in the matter—but he's had to go to New York to do it.

**REG:** *LOCUS* #179 (Sept. 27, 1975) announces the news that Roger Elwood will be editing a new SF magazine (*ODYSSEY*), and that the lead novelette will be one by you. He is quoted as saying, "there will be no restrictions except for my usual ones on sex and profanity."

I haven't seen any specifics on his 'usual' restrictions. In your understanding, what are they? (Apparently he won't put anything on paper, at least for publication.)

What is that lead novelette about?

**POURNELLE:** Since I'm writing the novelette now, I'd rather not discuss it. That's a peculiar thing; sometimes I like to talk about work in progress, and other times I don't. Spinrad hates to talk about what he's doing except in very general terms. A lot of "how to write" books will say that you can "talk a story out", so you can't write it. Then there's Larry (Niven) who

once said that until you can tell the story to a roomful of people without boring them, you don't really know how to write it. Of course in our collaborations we have to discuss what we're doing in enormous detail, so all those early superstitions I had—probably got them from those tipster how-to-do-it publications—can't be true. But I still would rather write a story than talk about it.

As to Roger's usual restrictions, I don't find them onerous. Certainly Roger will accept material that Kay Farrant would have rejected out of hand. *ANALOG* under John Campbell was a relatively prudish magazine, you know. Not that John was particularly blue-nosed, but Miss Farrant simply wouldn't put up with explicit (or even very strongly implied) sex, or profanity, or such like. But you know, she wasn't all that much more restrictive than the other magazines. I wasn't writing SF at the time, but I've seen a letter from Fred Pohl to Larry Niven in which Fred apologizes for taking the word "damn" out of one of Larry's stories. (Maybe it was something stronger; but an expletive, and not motherfucker, either.) Fred's rationale was that he didn't care, and his readers probably didn't care, but many of *GALAXY*'s subscribers were adolescents and their mothers would care, and if they saw foul language in an SF magazine they'd cancel the subscription.

Now that wasn't ten years ago. Nowadays I guess things like that don't happen too much, but I can't help thinking Fred had a point there. How many early Heinlein stories had any scenes whatever that would have offended a Victorian librarian? It's only recently that SF has sprouted explicit sex and strong language. Read any of the novels



back in '67 or so. Mack Reynolds was making up his own terms, like "nardy" and such like, and investing them with obscene or blasphemous properties.

I haven't written all that much for Elwood—on a Laser novel, to be exact—so I'm not sure I understand all the restrictions he's supposed to have. I did BIRTH OF FIRE very quickly. It has soldiers in it. They talk the way soldiers do. Roger accepted it as is and sent it on. The publishers in Toronto say they've taken out some of the cuss words! Not Roger.

I don't like that very much, by the way. I'm perfectly willing to write without using explicit language if I know that's what I'm supposed to do. But it's harder. How do you make barracks talk natural and still keep it bawdier? So I'm looking forward with some, uh, interest to seeing just how Toronto has "cleaned up" my novel. With the novel-ette, I'm just keeping things the way I would have if I were writing for ANALOG and Miss Tarrant were still there.

You know, in a way Roger is more honest about his restrictions than the others used to be. Like Fred's letter to Larry—I can agree with Fred, but isn't Roger entitled to the same restrictions Fred insisted on? Why is it worse because Roger believes himself that such language is offensive, as opposed to Fred who didn't care but thought his readers' mothers would object? Actually, a skillful writer can get across almost anything he wants to without being explicit, can't he? Leave things to the reader's imagination. I can put a couple of characters in a bedroom and have them holding hands when the door closes. Now the next time you see them they're madly in love or something. Readers who think that would come about as a result of a Parchisi game can think so, and more imaginative readers can think of something else.

I'm not sure I understand all the excitement about these restrictions anyway. Sure, there are stories that just won't work without explicit sex scenes and very strong language. Nobody prevents those from being written. You just don't send that story to Roger Elwood. But after all, most stories don't need either one. People screw, say the "no censorship" people, and thus it's unreal not to say so. But then people go to the can, and pick their noses, and dig ingrown toenails out, and fart, and do lots of things. Everyone does. But most stories don't describe that sort of thing, and why should they? I can think of a story that requires a character to pee on stage. Happened in real life: a priest friend of ours came over and we spent the evening drinking beer, and since he lived pretty close he was walking home. I was ready for a walk so I went with him. About half-way there father X has to go, and there's no place to do it, and right there on a public street he hoists up his robes and lets fly against a wall. Now if I ever use a character like that in a story I'm damned well going to have to put that incident in, right? I can't even imagine him now without thinking of him as the kind

of guy who'd give up a very lucrative career as an oil driller, become a priest, take one of the worst mission districts in the area—and pee against a wall. I can't even imagine what might have happened if a police car had come by during the proceedings... So there the scatological incident is required. But most stories don't need to sit the characters on the pot. Or put them in bed, for that matter.

REG: Your comment that you and Larry Niven discuss matters in enormous detail during collaboration suggests the next question. What are your procedures from beginning to end, in collaboration? Is Larry the only one with whom you've collaborated?

Afterthought: did your procedures vary from MOTE to INFERNO? You and Larry obviously had a lot of fun with INFERNO. Whose idea was it?

POURNELLE: Larry had been toying with the idea of writing a sequel to Dante's INFERNO since college lit. days. Somehow he could never bring it off. One night we were discussing something else, OATH OF FEALTY, I think—→ a "straight" SF novel about arcologies and cities in about 1990, one I originated—and got to talking about INFERNO. I thought of a couple of ideas, and he ran with them, and then I ran with a couple of ideas he'd had, and the sparks began flying; by morning we'd decided to write INFERNO and put the other book aside until we'd done it.

It went very fast. After all, you don't want to spend any more time in hell than you have to. It was a very painful book to write. We were able to go fast, then, because we got obsessed with the thing, and couldn't work on anything else once we got into it.

It also went fast because we had the basic structure from Dante. We didn't want to change Dante's geography any more than we had to, but we did want to work in C.S. Lewis's theology rather than the rigid and unmerciful cause-and-effect sin-and-suffer theology of Dante. That turned out to be easier than it might at first have appeared.

We did have fun with the book; but not as much as you might think. It's painful to put people in hell. Some of the scenes were so hard to write that we kept putting them off; and I

think my first draft of one scene in there was the worst thing I've ever written in my life. I knew it, too, when I gave it to Larry. Fortunately he was able to rewrite it, not changing the action much at all, and turn it into something effective.

INFERNO went different from MOTE, and I guess every book does; the books and their characters take on personalities of their own. I have never done fiction in collaboration with anyone else. Stefan Possony and I wrote THE STRATEGY OF TECHNOLOGY together, and a book called CONGRESS DEBATES VIET NAM (which was more editing job than writing) and a study privately financed on

WHAT RHYMES WITH 'GOUGE'?



trends in the US; Possony is at the Hoover Institution at Stanford, and we had big phone bills, and mailed dictation back and forth a lot; it was something like working with Larry except that we didn't get back-and-forth sparks flying that come when Larry and I have late night brandy and coffee sessions.

As to how we do it: well, one of us gets an idea and decides it's a big theme and that for one reason or another we don't want to do alone and the other could help with. We discuss it, and if the sparks start flying and it gets us both excited, we start outlining. After MOTE we've sold the books



in outline, and so we're committed to writing them.

We'll by then have decided just what must be done in the notes: what problems have to be solved, what engineering data we'll need, what research one or both of us must do. We get that done.

Then we start writing. It's usually obvious which scenes ought to be done by which of us, and which could be done by either. Sometimes Larry will do a whole series of unconnected scenes and I take them and rewrite and weave them into a continuous chapter. Whoever does the first draft, the other rewrites; we do that continuously, passing rewritten parts back and forth with one of us keeping a master copy; every now and then we'll xerox the master and archive the draft material. And the book just keeps growing that way. When I see something Larry's just done it almost always sparks me into thinking of incidents that ought to be added, and Larry does the same thing with my drafts; sometimes that will aim us out to a whole new sub-plot, and we have to get together and decide how that will fit structurally into the book as a whole.

It's all a lot easier than it sounds—easy in the sense that any writing is ever easy, and of course it isn't; all writing is hard work. But I've found that working with Larry is generally easier than working alone, and I think the stuff the two of us do is better than most of what either of us has ever done alone.

We also decide who will have final decision over what for any given book; but that's only so arguments can be settled. Actually neither of us has ever exercised a final authority; we've always convinced each other. I'll generally defer to Larry on literary matters; plot points and how someone or some institution will react are generally decided by me; but there's nothing rigid about that, either. We have so much respect for each other that when there's a disagreement we'll work pretty hard to understand what the other one is saying and why he disagrees; and when we've done that, often as not we'll find something better to write, something new that we both agree with and that incorporates both views.

Eventually, we have a next-to-final draft, and one of us then rewrites the whole thing from the beginning so that

the style differences will be washed out; this has worked pretty well, I think. Few people, including ourselves, can find transitions between scenes I did and scenes Larry did. For a while we could keep track of who did what because of type-face, but after several re-writes that vanishes; and then Larry sometimes uses my pen, or makes notes in the ms. from suggestions I've made, and later we'll wonder just whose idea that was. By the time the final draft is done and ready to turn in the book is in one style, and the differences are resolved, and it doesn't look like a collaboration at all. Or so we hope.

REG: Will INFERNO appear soon as a paperback?

POURNELLE: That's a sore subject. We have a contract for INFERNO with Simon and Schuster, but they haven't been answering inquiries about when the book will come out. We turned in the ms. over a year ago. They had a change of editorial staff at S&S shortly after they bought INFERNO, and it seems to be an orphan there. We recently sold the English rights for a good sum; you'd think the U.S. edition would be out before the English one would.

We've got a lot of favorable comments on INFERNO including some from professors of English lit. and one theologian, so we think the book will sell well—if it ever gets into print! The GALAXY serialization is fine, of course, but there ought to be a book too.

REG: Jerry, I squaled with outrage at the ending of INFERNO. You and Larry went to great pains to constantly ask questions about the nature and identity of Infernalism...and then you didn't answer the questions. The POV character stays behind (how noble!) and the reader is cheated. What gives? Is there a sequel written and unpublished as yet, or is the ambiguous ending all we'll ever get?

POURNELLE: I'm sorry about your outrage; perhaps you were expecting more—or less—from the story than was in there. I thought the ending was pretty clear. Carpenter has discovered charity—I'd rather use that phrase than nobility—and believes he now knows the purpose of Hell. The novel was an attempt to wed the theology of C.S. Lewis to the geography of Dante. g

It was left purposely ambiguous through most of the work simply because that's the way Carpenter's mind works; but I think he now knows where he is. And isn't his learning charity a requirement of his being able to leave at all? Had IF existed INFERNO would have been published there instead of in GALAXY; does that help answer your question?

Sequels: We don't know. INFERNO was a very hard book to write. I would rather not live in that world again for a while. Larry and I have toyed with sequel ideas—where is Billy? for example. (Probably a guard at the lake of boiling blood.) Who would Carpenter try for first? That sort of thing. But it wasn't written with a sequel in mind, and if the book is too symbolic for your tastes I guess I can understand that without agreeing. After all, BLACK EASTER and such life—and A CASE OF CONSCIENCE as well—had ambiguities but I think no one really doubted what the author thought was real. I really am sorry you didn't care for the ending. I liked it a lot.

REG: The rational action isn't consistent with man's past; we as a species are usually irrational. So the odds are we won't behave as we 'should'. What scenario do you realistically project for the next fifty years?

POURNELLE: If I really knew how to predict the future, I wouldn't write so much. I'd get rich prognosticating. There are so many ways we can go, and things have come to the point where I really believe that accidents, "fortuna", blind chance, can have decisive effects on history; there are so many irreversible things we can do now. In the past it wasn't so true: even the Franco-German War of 1871, which had a lot of chance in its genesis, wasn't all that decisive over the general trend of the world; but nowadays we can blast ourselves right out of the high-technology civilization we've built.

A book I read a good 20 years ago has stayed with me ever since: Harrison Brown (yes, that one; the man I got to be a keynote speaker at the SFWA banquet) wrote CHALLENGE OF MAN'S VAST FUTURE a long time ago, and he points out that if we lose high-technology we can never regain it; the easily mined energy resources, the easily obtained oil and coal, the easily got-at iron ore, is all gone; it takes high technology to get the makings for high technology.

And it's true, and that should be what worries us at least until we've got viable colonies in the asteroids (if you see a similarity to a situation in MOTE I don't have to say....).

But realistically I expect we'll muddle along. We'll survive, but not with much style. We'll get out to space, but it'll take a long time because we'd rather have a bureaucracy protect us from defective lipstick than invest in space. We'd rather have subsidized social workers and "universities" than get out there where we can all get rich. But eventually we'll go there, although it may not be

the U.S. of A. that does it, and after that we can't help but have a lot of resources and energy, enough that maybe we can do some industrialization of the "developing" countries without polluting the planet. If you haven't seen Harry Stine's THIRD INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION which Putnam's is bringing out as a book, I recommend it as one of the best works on what may —and with any luck will—happen.

I guess I remain a technological optimist and a political pessimist. I fear The Club of Rome and all the other 'I've got mine and damn it stop polluting my planet' people, most of them tenured or rich or both. I worry about investment levels. I'm scared of the brand of democracy we have, because with the global village problem the voters don't really get a chance to make decisions; they are presented with a mess of "facts" spewed out by half-educated "editors" more concerned with boxoffice than truth; they never meet their legislators or anyone who has control over their lives; and being basically pretty good people they put up with being hyped until they finally get something crammed down their throats that they can't take, and they go rampaging off to do something. So we have almost the opposite of the kind of government the framers envisioned. In fact, we've got almost precisely what they were terrified of, so frightened that we nearly had a monarchy here instead of a republic. And that scares me. We've hedged freedom around until we are fast approaching a pocket-money state, where the only economic decisions an individual can make are where he spends his loose change; we're not allowed to blow our wad and take the consequences—or invest it and get rich and keep the riches.

How I do run on.

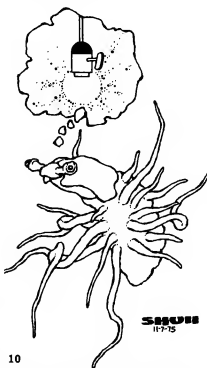
Sorry to be so late with this answer; had a couple of deadlines that just couldn't wait, and the Elwood novelette was harder than I thought it would be.

If you're still interested, "Bind Your Sons to Exile" is an attempt to look at what kind of people might be the first to go live on an asteroid; to put up with severe hardships to make Earth a garden again. In "Finkler" I already had the viable Belt Civilization and it wasn't so hard to see why people would go there. "Bind Your Sons to Exile" is an attempt to look at the initial steps. It took a lot of work, because Roger's magazine is supposed to appeal to others besides fans and traditional SF readers, so I had to put in a lot of "Heinlein-type" detail that could have been hinted at in a story for ANALOG; and I had some word limits, so much had to happen on-stage that I'd have preferred to have happen on-stage; and the viewpoint problem is pure hell in that kind of story. How to get across ideas and concepts and things that every character in the story must know and know well? No convenient midshipmen to lecture to; no dumb-blond beautiful scientist's daughter; so how do you explain elementary facts? I think it succeeded, though. At least I liked the story. I would like to have let it run about 3000 more words, but with all it's the

kind of thing I'm told I do well, a straight hard-science, no miracles, forced-events future story that I believe really could happen.

By the way, you may have noticed that most of my stuff is that way: If I can't believe the story can happen, I probably can't write it, with some minor exceptions like that "flying saucer" piece in VERTEX which was humorous.

It's a limitation I have. Probably not a very pleasant one, either. But I'm so far pretty nearly stuck with it, and it does at least make my stuff reasonably consistent—readers can expect reasonable realism and won't be



10

surprised by Arcturian octopi landing in the last chapter to resolve all problems...

REG: I'm not sure I understand how/why mankind will go out into space and 'all get rich'. Isn't the cost of space travel still prohibitive? Doesn't the increased costs of energy make space travel even more unlikely? (Or are you counting on a hydrogen fusion process to unblock the Grim Realities of the Rome bunch and other Doomseers like Harrison Brown?)

POURNELLE: I just wrote a long column for GALAXY called "Survival With Style" in which I dealt at length with the problem. We don't NEED fusion to get

into space, although it will help a lot. With present energy methods and lots of big mirrors in space we'll have enough energy to do a great deal of our polluting manufacturing out there; and get our metals there, too. Hell, one minor asteroid contains enough metal to supply THE WORLD with the per-capita metal production now enjoyed by the United States! And that's not counting any breakthroughs. How do we move an asteroid? A couple thousand hydrogen bombs will do the job if nothing else will; and laser triggers for fusion weapons are hinted at by AVIATION WEEK right now. I suspect although I don't know that Defense already has them; certainly they're not impossible to develop. In that sense we HAVE fusion power.

The Rome bunch doesn't really impress me. I know how to manipulate exponential curves, too. But nature doesn't have exponentials. Why should exponentials be a model for predicting the future? I fear that I find Forrester's models not a lot more convincing than observations of the sacred ravens or examination of the entrails of slain sacrificial cattle. It's easy to take the model apart and show what's wrong with it. And it definitely assumes a closed system—yet why assume that? There's all of space out there.

Expense. Sure, space is expensive. But ye gods, Zero Growth is FAR MORE expensive. ZG condemns half the Earth to eternal poverty! Now me, I'd rather give up some of the neat things I amuse myself with, and maybe pay another thousand a year in taxes (I'd hate it, but I'd rather) if that's what it takes to subsidize getting into space. It might even be worth it in esthetics: getting strip mines off my Earth, leaving the condors in Los Padres National Forest alone, letting Death Valley be a Monument and not a strip mine; and in health, getting a lot of gup out of the air I breathe. But even if it's not worth it in purely economic costs, it's got to be worth it in another way: the long-term prospect of Earth, according to the best and most optimistic Club of Rome model, is DOWN. Doom even if we achieve Zero Growth tomorrow and fanatically stick to it! By 2400 A.D. at the latest we run out of non-renewable resources in Forrester's most hopeful Zero-Growth model! Now for God's sake, shouldn't we be trying to do something about it?

I also point out that there are costs and costs. I can show you forecasts by eminent economists proving that air cargo can NEVER be worth the cost, and passenger travel by air MUST be restricted to a very few emergency situations; and those were made in the 20's! One of the major costs of space is investment, and interest on that investment. But you know, you don't really miss interest in your life, because really you don't invest money.

Look. Apollo cost about one to two hundred dollars per head spread out over a ten year period. Now all stacked together that's a lot of money, but at a few bucks each per year it was nothing. The same for a really big space investment program. Let's say 200 billion bucks. That's a thousand dollars a head, or a hundred a year for ten years. For that we get a good leg up on avoiding DOOM. Isn't it worth it? And I mean now 200 billion in hardware and salaries, not charged with interest. Just figure, OK, we're in a mess, and we've got to come up with a hundred bucks each—in my family that's \$700—a year for ten years to help bail ourselves out. With that investment you can be damned sure that space will start paying off with more of everything for all of us.

So why not go out in space and get rich?

REG: Jerry, you've no doubt read Phil Farmer's views about the imminent 'death' of the oceans, of Costeau's warnings...and other environmental doom reports. In your view is the world situation as serious as it is painted?

POURNELLE: No and yes: the situation is reasonably serious, but there's so much that can be done about it that I find the doomcriers counterproductive.

Look, this is the first generation that has both awareness of the environmental problem and the technology to do something about it. Half of our environmental crises couldn't have been detected fifty years ago. Now we can see the problems coming and DO SOMETHING about them.

Now, God knows I'm no Pollyanna. I can get just as worked up about certain irreversible situations as the next man. I've put off buying a new car—my present one is a '64, so I can hardly be accused of conspicuous consumer-

ism—because I want a Japanese auto and I will not buy anything major from the Japanese until they stop exterminating the whales. If everyone in the US would do that, and send the Japanese Embassy in Washington a postcard telling them they just bought a Taiwanese TV instead of Japanese and they'll go on doing that until Japanese ships stop exterminating the whale, we'd get somewhere. Endangered species have to be looked at one at a time—I can't think we want completely to end evolutionary processes on this planet—but they're a critical and irreversible situation.

On the other hand I can't get all that worked up over some of the headline grabbing horror stories. I'm



particularly suspicious when the warning comes from people who oppose all technology. And when the same groups stick their legal ear into every technological remedy we've got—don't just ask for more safety studies on nuclear power plants, but outright want to 'end nuclear pollution'—I begin to wonder if they're not the biggest part of the problem.

In fact, nuclear power plants are a good example: by the worst reckoning, the "thousand year accident"—the kind that wouldn't happen but once in a thousand years—would kill perhaps thirty thousand people. Disaster, right? Horrible, right? Certainly it is, but last year the National Safety Council was gloriously happy because only forty-five thousand people

were killed on the highways. Usually it's more each year. Tell me, if we had cheap electric power for drilling tunnels, and cheap power to run subway trains, would more or less people be killed on highways? And nobody seems to look at the costs of present-day power systems, which probably knock off about ten thousand people a year in this country through air pollution.

It takes energy and technology to keep this planet running with this population. There's an alternative: starve off 75% of the population. I've heard "ecologically aware" people put this forth as a serious proposal! I really wonder if the survivors might not envy the dead.

Yet at the very time when we know we need more energy and technology to clean up the messes we've made, all our R&D is cut back. Not just government funding. Taxes are so high there's not much internal R&D in the big corporations. And it's more than R&D, too: there's huge investment required in power plants. Billions of dollars. Where will that come from? Three quarters of the world lives in poverty because they haven't enough investment capital to buy the technology of the West. A Pakistani engineer knows what his country needs. He's not stupid. He's just helpless because he hasn't got a trillion bucks to sink into development.

So how did the West do it? We saved the investment funds. I should say, flint-hearted capitalists, who lived well themselves, forced a lot of people to live intolerably miserably so the money could be saved. I've often wondered what would have happened if old Samuel Weiss had come along fifty years after his did. He was the guy who discovered that the reason women died of "childbirth fever" was that physicians didn't wash their hands. His colleagues had him locked up in a madhouse, by the way. But suppose he'd not discovered this (and nobody else had; an unlikely proposition, to be sure) until well after the Industrial Revolution was under way. Labor would have been in very short supply. Immigration and a capital exportation would have been forced on the industrialists. We'd have had a bigger industrial base all across the world before the population explosion.

It didn't happen that way, though, and we're stuck with the result, and I see no way out of our problems without one hell of a lot of capital investment, which means savings—and we're in a political world where "savings" is a dirty word. The government runs a big deficit to finance consumption. Deficits don't cause inflation, they are inflation, and inflation is a tax on savings. Or a fine for saving. Just as when I paint my house and fix it up the city fines me for it. (They call it increased property assessments.) The city fines me for driving too fast, so I don't. They fine me for fixing up the house, so I don't. And they fine me for saving money, so I don't do that either. So who the hell is going to save the investment capital we need to finish the job of industrialization? We got where we are by exploiting cheap natural re-

sources. If you like to call that "raping the planet!" I won't even disagree, although I'm not sure what the alternative was. But now we know better; we know how to do it properly; and suddenly in the middle of all this wealth we can't save up the investment capital to buy the technology we have on the shelf. That's scary.

You get me running on—the original question, about the death of the oceans. Sure, we have to be a bit careful. We also know how to get artificial upwelling to make ocean desert areas bloom—and extract useful power in the bargain! Yet that project gets about a million a year, which sounds like a lot until you realize it's about 30 man-years of effort, enough to pay for studies but no hardware.

I remember a big Coteau program about the horrors of sediments at New Caledonia. It scared the bejesus out of me. Last week I talked to Russell Seitz who'd just come back from New Caledonia—and the polluted area is about 10 square miles out of several thousand miles of coastline; and for that cost they're changing the way of life of a hell of a lot of people who're so primitive they have to talk in languages that have about 500 words. As Russell says, you can get a kind of psycho-linguistic superiority complex down there; those poor bug-gers can't even express complex ideas. But that's all changing as a result of the mines. Now which is better? Keeping those people "unspoiled" and eating each other, or making a temporary mess out of ten square miles of ocean? Could we get the minerals out without messing up the ten square miles? Sure. Who's going to pay for it? This is all they have to sell—do we now tell them, "Hey, we got rich making a mess out of things, but don't you do it?" I haven't noticed any rush of concern-

ed people to collect the capital to form a non-polluting resource exploitation company, knowing that such a company would have lower profits! I've seen a number of people trying to make somebody else put up the capital.

I don't think realistically any large number of people are going to opt for unpolluted poverty. That suggests to me that we'd better get our arses in gear and invest in the technologies we need to have unpolluted wealth. We could do it. Read Harry Stine's *THIRD INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION*, or some of my *GALAXY* columns. We know how to get out of the box we're in, if we're willing to save the resources to invest in the new technologies.

I'm not so damned sure we will do it. But we could.

REG: In the July 1975 *GALAXY*, Larry Niven described you as standing somewhere to the right of Genghis Khan, and quotes you as saying, "I like to think of myself as a twelfth century liberal."

In terms of present-day orientation I would hazard you as a Libertarian of the first L. Are you an admirer of Ayn Rand's philosophy?

Would you care to write a *Distributist* on what is wrong with the American (or world) social/economic systems as of now?

POURNELLE: I suspect 13th Century Liberal would be a closer description. I am not the usual definition of a Libertarian because I believe freedom is a very important value, but not the ONLY value. I particularly can't accept the total economic view of things. Who speaks for the Grand Canyon? In economic terms the best thing to do with it would be to dam up part of it for power, and put concession stands on more, and build little houses with a view on more yet; I'm sure the government would be able to sell it for a lot of money; in fact, far more than I suspect the people collectively would be willing to put into an envelope and mail to the Conservation Fund or whatever. Some things, in my judgement, are too damned important to be left to whim and even to majority sentiment; much less to the market place.

As to Rand, no, I have little sympathy for the totality of her views. In *ATLAS SHRUGGED* she has a judge say explicitly that he has a book, a plan, that if published would "save the world"; but he is not going to publish

it because the world isn't worth saving. Now that's not only a petty sentiment, it's a revealing one. Me, I don't believe any such plan ever could exist; the idea that one book would "save the world" is ludicrous. But if such a book did exist and the author, because he didn't care for the way he'd been treated, refused to publish it—

Whitaker Chambers once reviewed Rand with the following remarks: "Note that there are no children in Rand's books. There cannot be children, because there is no place for them in her scheme. You can't exploit babies, and they have very little economic value. They are to be loved, not marketed."

That's not an exact quote but it's close enough. And I agree with it.

I do think that if Libertarians and Conservatives were the major political parties, this nation would be safe. The Conservatives would continue to argue for certain public measures—remember that the Mine Safety Act was a Conservative measure, opposed bitterly by the Liberals of the last century. The Poor Laws, which provided some relief (on the parish level) for paupers and indigents were Conservative, and repealed by the Liberals at one point. Anti-trust activities are in my judgement a very legitimate government activity. Defense and the administration of justice cannot, in my judgement, be left to the market place.

With all that I'm damned suspicious of government activity. The horror stories are easy to count by: fences built at government expense around rotting equipment to hide it from visiting taxpayers or congressmen; swollen bureaucratic salaries and payrolls at a time when unemployment is rampant—and unemployment is caused in part by lack of investment capital, which has been drained off to pay for useless government activities, making a vicious circle. Of course a lot of investment capital is lost by sheer envy: egalitarianism through taxation. Which is a very silly policy, because it means that either investment is controlled by government—or there isn't any. Either way a bad break for the people who don't earn so very much. Equalization of income won't really help many people: average it out and see; the only way large numbers of people get better off is to have a great deal more produced. And historically, a libertarian economic system has been the



SCOTT  
9-13-75

most efficient way to expand production and relieve poverty. I'm afraid to tinker with it too much. I know in theory there are a lot of wastes in it; things are made that I think the world might be better off without and I can't see any use for, but when I start dictating that you can't buy expensive platform shoes I give you the right to say I can't buy that crazy Buck Rogers stuff (what good did reading that crap ever do anybody! Let's save on trees by not printing it)...

Anyway, I'm reluctant to tinker with economic freedom, but my attachment to libertarian economics is derivative, not primary; I value it because it is useful, not simply for itself. Which makes me Conservative and not Libertarian.

I also think cultures have some right to be themselves. I don't get unhappy about some little Kansas town that wants it to be a crime for people to smoke in public or drink anytime or sell pornography or hold dances or wear miniskirts. If that's what they want for laws, I think they have a right to them. (Hell, they deserve them.) Just don't make me live there, and leave me a place where I can have the kind of laws I like. I'm willing to defend Resume Speed, Kansas' right to screw laws if they'll help me defend my right to the kind of laws in my town/state. I grow weary of Philadelphia lawyers who file suit in Federal Court because they don't like the laws in Bent Whistle, Texas, or Dallas, or Oregon, or—well, you get the idea.

I just had my taxes audited. The agent was a very nice fellow who showed me something about investment tax credits I hadn't known, and collected less than a hundred bucks but showed me how to save at least that much on next year's taxes. I think the tax laws in this country are too bloody complicated, and I know damned well the progressive tax in a time of inflation is going to be ruinous to investment, but I can't in conscience say there shouldn't be taxes at all. Adam Smith recognized that there are common goods which benefit everyone but which are so complicated that private enterprise simply can't handle them. This again sets me apart from most of the libertarians I meet who have no use for any kind of collective action.

I guess I have sympathy with Libertarianism, but I think it's not real-

istic. Human beings aren't simply machines that operate by economic laws. I know that on sober reflection I'll vote for laws that when I'm faced with them myself I'll rail against. My preference is to keep government action as local as possible; I'm willing to give far more power to cities than to states, and to states than the Federal Government. This is just the opposite of the political trends of the past few years. I'm afraid that when we tell cities that, in the name of freedom, they can't do something, then, if that "freedom" doesn't work out too well, we've invited the national government to step in and Do Something—and the result will be restrictions I can't evade by moving across city lines. I'll betcha we have national censorship in my lifetime, and a main reason will be lifting local censorship. Now let's not get onto censorship as an issue, and whether it's good or bad; my views aren't all that different from yours, I suspect. But as a practical matter, when you tell local communities they can't prohibit sales of something they don't want, you may well be inviting the national government to get in the act unless you can persuade a majority of people in the country at large that we're better with no censorship at all. And I'm not at all confident I can persuade everyone of that, although I am certain I can persuade local majorities in some local areas to think the way I do on the matter.

Enough. You invited both a definition of my views and a diatribe, and I seem to have given you both.

REG: Jerry, you've been a recent President of the Science Fiction Writers of America and you are now still very much involved in the organization. You are aware of information in re the financial stability of the various magazines and book publishers which is denied most writers and fans. In your view what will be the shape of science fiction publishing 3, 5 and ten years from now?

POURNELLE: I'm really lousy at making predictions; every time I think I've spotted a market trend, somebody else gets rich writing the kind of story I decided I'd like to do but thought wouldn't sell.

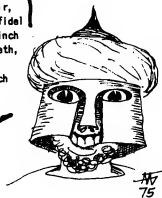
The magazines are in trouble. No question about it. I think myself that if GALAXY would sink a bit more money

into paying the writers—promptly on acceptance—they'd make the investment back; but profits are low. And it's a vicious circle: name writers can't afford to write for the magazines, whose rates haven't changed in decades; this hurts magazine sales since books don't cost much more and have name writers in them; and magazines can't stay on the stands as long as books so the distribution costs are higher than for paperbacks. Mail costs are awful, and low circulation means low advertising revenue—ANALOG will survive, staying what John Campbell called it: "It's a gold mine. A little gold mine, mind you, but a gold mine." That's because its circulation is up there above the profit margin point. NSF I gather makes a profit, but I suspect that it's a labor of love: if the publisher didn't love the magazine, he'd put the investment into short term Treasury bills and make more money.

On the other hand, I don't underestimate Roger Elwood's ability to make things a commercial success; and if there's another paying magazine or two around it might induce other publishers to make the investments needed to bring theirs up to the profit level. That might, of course, be fatal even so; the requirements of commercial success may be something I wouldn't want to see. I don't think so; I think a well-told story will continue to sell for a long time; but we'll have to see.

Harlequin started the popular romance lines, and now every publisher wants in the act with highly publicized romances intended for the same audience. Amazingly the market hasn't saturated even with millions of copies—hundreds of millions even—sold each year. Perhaps the Laser line will have a similar effect on the market, and serve as a recruiting ground for readers of more complicated SF than Laser wants to publish. After all, I understand, some of the romance lines get pretty torrid, almost what would be called poor a few years ago (Harlequin has stayed with chaste scenes, but others haven't and they sell lots of books)—so if Laser does well it doesn't mean that other publishers' lines will be carbon copies.

Beg to report sir, the athletic infidel holding his 42-inch sword in his teeth, swung on a rope through a 34-inch doorway.



SF sales took a big jump back when Mrs. Heinlein began publishing in SATURDAY EVENING POST. It's possible that Laser will do the same thing for us. Possible.

Maybe 25 people make a living as full-time SF writers, and another 100 make a significant income from SF. That's up a LOT from the old pulp days. Another big jump in the potential market for SF could bring that up to double or triple what it is now; I doubt there'd be much more. But we do write good escapist literature (or some of us do) and there'll be a market for stories that tell people, hell, things aren't so bad, look at the adventures you might could have—especially in bad economic times such as we seem to be facing.

But for my guesses: 3 years from now we'll have the beginning effects from the Laser line, and its imitators will start (if Laser does well). That will expand the number of markets for the SF-adventure (PLANET STORIES) type of tale, and contract the market for other stuff. I won't kill the "quality" market, but it will mean that fewer non-adventure titles will be published. I'll also predict that the magazines will stagger along, possibly one folding and another new one taking its place, that kind of thing, but there won't be any really significant changes in that picture.

Five years: Well, that's contingent on the 3, isn't it? If there's been a real expansion of the market caused by the popular adventure stuff, then I'll predict that there will now be an expansion of the "quality" market as well; the original crop of adventure SF readers will have "graduated" and want something a bit more complex, a bit more daring, a bit less formula. The adventure market will continue, of course, although perhaps tapered down a bit. Magazine rates will either have gone up a bit, or the magazines will be all newcomers with almost no name authors at all (except for serials; magazine editors are in a buyer's market for novels now and that won't change)—if the magazines have survived at all. (ANALOG will be around forever; don't know about the others.) Somebody will have tried paperback magazines, but it's going to take a concerted effort to get some laws changed to make that practical and profitable.

In 10 years we'll either have got the shuttle and started some real space operations, taking newsmen into space and making space a possible career choice for a lot of people—or we'll be in pretty bad shape on this here Earth, and escape literature will be in demand. Either way SF will survive.

REG: Any final thoughts in general about your sf and sf writing philosophy?

POURNELLE: I write adventures, entertainments, and if there's a message in there—and of course I think I have something to say—I don't put big hands pointing to it and shout that this is serious and significant.

14 I have nothing against the "literary" type of

SF, but I don't enjoy it much myself, and I don't think I'll ever write any of it. I don't know if I can write the kind of thing that's heavy with symbols and deep character study.

I also think that most sf is about ideas, and for me at least it's damned tough to both explore the ideas and "develop the characters" as demanded by critics. It's the easiest thing in the world for a critic to say "the characters are cardboard" (don't they ever have any original phrases? and usually that critic will complain about clichés, too!) but in fact most sf that has "well developed characters" generally either bores or appalls me.

Appalls because too often the ideas and the background have been sacrificed to the "characters"; the people are "real" enough but the story isn't, or the society isn't, and in particular the law-enforcement mechanisms aren't real at all. I can't at all believe in either Mrs. LeGuin's twin worlds of THE DISPOSSESSED, for example. I don't think that the anarchist outfit would work because I think somebody would get tired of starving and put together an outlaw band, requiring that the "government" put together a police force; and from there things would develop fast. Nor do I believe in the soldiers she puts in the commercial nation on the other planet. But that's my hangup, and I wouldn't at all say it wasn't a good novel with good character development and such like. And I've chosen one of the best of that type novel to show what I mean; I could have picked a story that was obviously so good.

I write to entertain. If my entertainments tell people that there are ways to get places they never thought we could go, and places we might go that they'd rather stay out of, that's great, and not unintentional; but I don't write to preach at people (not even in my columns), and I never thought you could teach anybody much while you bored them. I may work harder at my "sociology" than most sf writers do (after all, I ought to get some use out of my degrees in social science) but I try to keep that from showing. Maybe I try too hard; I guess MOTIE startled people with the aristocratic society and no long explanation of why I think such things could happen in future; and maybe a bit more preaching would have been better in

there. But MOTIE is selling well, and for every one who didn't like the book there seem to be a few dozen who did; and I guess you can't please everybody.

REG: Thank you very much, Jerry.

★★★

LETTERS FROM POURNELLE  
11-18-75

Announcement, etc.: Pocket Books has decided to bring out INFERNO in April of '76. Largely as a result of comments from the magazine serialization, and your own, Larry and I have scheduled a conference to decide whether we want to make a few changes in the ending. They won't be "substantive" changes, but "explanatory" ones in the sense of nailing down points that we thought were clear, but which seem to be insufficiently so for readers for whom we have respect. I don't guarantee we will make changes, but we're going to spend at least one evening discussing the possibility. And I thank you for your comments, even if I regret that you weren't as happy as you might have been.

LATER IN NOVEMBER: FYI, as a result of your comments, those of my wife, those of an English professor at U of Michigan, and a couple of other people whose opinions we respect, we're making some minor changes in the ending of INFERNO.

It doesn't change the book, merely amplifies: Carpenter, at the end, is quite convinced that he is in fact in the violent ward for the theological insane; that this is no Infernoland and no fantasy of "builders" but the real live Hell; but it is not quite what the bristone preachers have tried to make out. It is, as C. S. Lewis tried to say, a place of persuasion.

I trust you did notice something about INFERNO: Carpenter wonders about his quiet homosexual neighbors—but doesn't find them in Inferno at all. The people he does find in that particular circle are something else again.

Anyway, in the new ending, there's nothing objective happening (our U Mich correspondent suggested that we have a heavenly shout of triumph when Benito mounts the last turn into the world of Purgatorio out of Carpenter's sight; but we did not put that in. There's a reason for this, and I guess if the reason isn't clear, there's not much

we can do about it; but we don't believe we are defrauding the reader.

After all, Lewis's "Great Divorce" turned out to be a dream; we haven't done that to the reader.

And we've enough opinion now to show that many readers, once we've made clear what we're trying to do (and a number, including Prof. Aron at U Mich understood perfectly, but were afraid that others wouldn't) are satisfied with the book as it stands.)

I'd hope you might change the opinion expressed in SF, because the last thing we want to achieve is to leave readers feeling outraged; but as I say, the best we can do is to make it very clear what Carpenter believes has happened to him at the end of the book—and demonstrate that there's no evidence that his opinion is wrong. But we are not going to step in as omniscient authors and make it any clearer than it is made to Carpenter.

The ending changes amount to about three paragraphs rewritten and two inserted; nothing major; and as I say, the end is clear, that Carpenter, not having adopted any formal religion or religious views, now believes that he is in fact in the violent ward for the theologically insane; that he can escape; and that he can take others with him when he escapes, provided that they want to go.

Beyond that we can't go. I hope it helps.

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REG COMMENT: I hope it's clearer in the revised Pocket Books edition than you make it in this letter.

Is he in the violent ward for the theologically insane in Hell, or in a mental hospital on Earth—and has been hallucinating this version of Hell?

But, on further thought, I think there is a more fundamental problem with the novel:

Maybe two points. 1. Carpenter is a science fiction writer and his task is to try to make rational what he sees and experiences—he (like me, like most of the readers) cannot accept a real Hell! And he is there to "explain" the phenomena in terms he (we) can live with. And, incidentally, to make the novel superficially sf and publishable in an sf magazine, to an sf audience. As a "straight" religious/moral fantasy it might not have found a publisher.

2. Through the journey through Hell, Carpenter boggles at the cruel and ex-

treme and unending punishments exacted for mostly minor sins. And with the final knowledge that this is Hell, and that suffering is real, the reader (me) rejects it. We are not the true believers of Dante's time. In his reality, God is dead for us. We cannot accept those draconian punishments because we are not sure of our free will, we are not sure of determinism... But we are sure we cannot buy a God that inflexible and apparently sadistic. (Of course it is reassuring that we are so important to be worthy of all that attention and effort...but most of us in our hearts don't really think we are that important.) It comes down to this: In this day and age, for most science fiction readers, aliens conducting a strange, mass experiment for unknown reasons are more believable than a real Hell as conceived by Dante and softened by C. S. Lewis.



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#### A LETTER FROM JERRY POURNELLE ON ANOTHER MATTER

17 November, 1975

'I fear I can't let your remarks about SFWA go unchallenged. The purpose of Science Fiction Writers of America is not merely to help the kids; and most of the services you propose that it limit itself to would be of use to the beginning writers; there'd be little reason for the Grizzled Old Veterans to belong to it. And without the GOV's, it wouldn't be much use to the newcomers.

'Now it's true that most grievance work involves small dollars and newer writers; most, but NOT ALL. Furthermore, the very existence of SFWA and the knowledge that there is a mechanism for generating concerted action by the GOV's is itself sufficient to settle a lot of disputes before they start.

'All publishers aren't rapacious, but it's amazing how many see things only their way—until they discover that SF writers really can act in concert. Then the viewpoint suddenly changes.

'Up to the minute market reports would cost more than SFWA's annual budget. Who would compile them? Who would check to see if the information as reported by the publisher were true? Pam Sargent does a magnificent job for the time she's able to invest. Who do you have in mind to do more?'

((Someone who lives in the heart of New York whose phone calls to editors and publishers would not be expensive, and whose phone number could be circularized to all editors and publishers when they have upcoming needs to be broadcast. Easily filled-in written forms might also be sent to the known sf editors and publishers. I would consider paying a non-writer sf enthusiast a small sum per monthly report to insure promptness.))

'A 10-page FORUM could be sent monthly for \$100., provided that we got most of the work done free. Who will do it?'

((If SFWA incorporated and acquired a second-class controlled-circulation permit (non-profit), astounding savings could be made in postage at very little cost in delivery-time. I am unsure if more than one publication can be sent under such a permit by an organization. The point is, if SFWA really plans to be around for ten years or so, it would pay to incorporate in NY as a non-profit organization.

((Failing that, with the increased postage rates, using a local budget printer, the cost of printing and mailing a 10-page (8 1/2 x 11) one ounce zinc first class is now \$117 for 500 copies.

((Who will do it? I will, if the mailing labels are provided and if SFWA will pay me \$50. per issue for paste-up, collating, stapling, folding, sticking-on-the-labels and stamping. Oh, and if SFWA will give me a free membership in the bargain. Some incentive must be provided to insure promptness. That's the American Way. If SFWA can afford about 33.5¢ per copy, or a bit over \$4.00 per year for a monthly FORUM (out of \$12.50 yearly dues), fine. (And I would not indulge in sexist editorial humor.))

'Grievance work runs less than \$2.00 per member per year; not a magnificent saving. Eliminating grievance work would not reduce the dues, especially if we add on 'Up to the minute market reports', legal services, and a monthly FORUM. In fact what would be more likely to happen, were SFWA to adopt your proposals, is that the GOV's would form their own new organization, dropping out of SFWA entirely; and leave the empty shell for people who seem to need WRITER'S DIGEST more than they need a professional organization.'

((I wonder what is so attractive about SFWA now to the Grizzled Old Veterans?))

'I would rather see SFWA increase dues for active (voting) members to about \$50. a year, tighten up active membership requirements (but leave room for non-career associates, and for newcomers in non-voting relationship), hire it-

self at least one full-time employee who is preferably the relict (widow or widower) of a former full-time SF writer, and do a lot more of what it does now, plus adding on some intelligence, investigatory, and representational services. The number of pirated editions of SF works grows yearly; shouldn't someone try to stop that? But of course I have in mind an organization useful to working writers who make a reasonable income from writing SF; I should think fan organizations can handle other types of thing. As to market reports, again that's mostly agent work; ditto a good bit of the legal work and tax advice; not that this isn't legitimate activity for SFWA, but were it SFWA's only function, I wouldn't myself bother with the outfit.'

## THE GAMES MALZBERG PLAYS

There is the fatal attraction, somehow...the puzzlement...the lure to critical destruction....

Barry's fiction does that to me. I can't leave it alone, even though I know it'll leave me baffled or frothing or astonished.

THE GAMESMAN (Pocket Books 80174, \$1.25) is his latest Kafkaesque metaphor of life. It is right and proper that he dedicated this one to Philip K. Dick, for it has a kind of unreality about it, a soft at the edges soft-focus field of view. Full of agonized indecision and cynically outraged idealism...or ideally outraged cynicism? And full of easily skimmed talk-talk-talk.

Maybe that's why I read Barry's fiction—it's so easy to skim his dialogue and simply structured and repetitive books.

What is THE GAMESMAN about? In a future society of infinite boredom the citizenry are permitted to enter the Game and to take tests in the hope of winning. But winning is virtually impossible and cheating is almost always detected: punishment is The Pit.

The Game is life, of course...and the central character, Papa Joe (also known as Block) is trying to pass his test—to successfully fuck a woman. He has failed so often, though....

Then his Gamesman suggests they cheat—One thing leads to another—the Games Master enters....

Very near the end of the novel is this passage:

"You have no choice," he says, "you have no choice at all," and drags her toward the door. Poised

against the wall, shuddering, I know that I should do something now, I should take some position, this is, after all, Papa Joe's story and not the story of any other Player; I should be at the center of events, I should be making matters change, swinging them in some direction they would not take without my interference, this is one of the principles of the Game to say nothing of narration itself (why I have gone to such trouble to explain this if I intended to do nothing I cannot explain) but I cannot move, something holds me in place, it is not fear so much as a total disinclination....

That is Malzberg speaking, I suspect. That is his narrative credo; that is his life view.

He may be right.

## ONE MORE DOOM TO WORRY ABOUT

Rene Barjavel's THE IMMORTALS (Ballantine 24626, \$1.50) isn't very rational or logical, but it has some interesting concepts and entrancing conspiratorial twists and turns.

It is what happens when an Indian scientist and his team discover 'accidentally' a virus that stops aging in any living thing it infects.

Anything! In this novel, immortality is totally democratic.

What would happen if every animal, every fish, every phytoplankton, every bird, every spider could continue to live on and on?

How do you control the spread of such a virus? How do you keep the few world leaders who know of it from using it on themselves?

This story is set in NOW. So—how come Mao is still alive? What's the real reason for the assassination of Jack Kennedy.

And why is there an isolated island in the Pacific ringed by a squadron of the U.S. Navy with orders to kill and burn anyone or anything that tries to escape the island? Why are Russian and U.S. atomic missiles zeroed in on the island?

THE IMMORTALS is a good, gripping, intriguing novel that starts slowly and builds to an explosive climax.

But true to his intellectual calling, Barjavel couldn't resist an ambiguous, maybe yes, maybe no ending.

## DOZE WHEN THE GOOD OLD DAYS

Here we go, folk, into another review about another Ron Goulart two-finger exercise: WHEN THE WAKER SLEEPS (DAW UY210, \$1.25).

He uses his usual funny/satirical style in this story of philanderer Nate Kobean who is injected with sleepy-time fluids by a jealous scientist hubby and wakes fifty years later on a devil cult's altar.

Worse, the injections assure Nate an "immortal" life—he will sleep again for fifty years after a few months, aging not a whit as he snoozes, and then again...and again...and...until he is perhaps accidentally killed while sleeping or while he is (with other 'nappers'—the scientist hubby was very angry and jealous, and his lovely wife was very promiscuous—trying to find a way to stop the process of recurring sleeps.

A sample of Ron's style of satire is Nat's discussion with the scientist-husband while strapped to an examination table. The jealous husband asks:

"What do you know about cryptobiosis?"

"Well," said Nate, wishing he could scratch his ear, "we did a segment on it a few months back on the News for Tots show. Of course when your chief newscaster is a hand puppet you have to be a little superficial in your..."

After some strange and macabre adventures every fifty years, the 'nappers' have hope that a series of counter-injections will halt their snoozing periods. The story is rather arbitrarily cut off, like yard goods.

What Ron has done is construct a very good straight SF plot and stuff it full of his patented silly putty. But the yen is inspired in the reader for a serious, detailed adventure using the same plot and incidents.

LITTLE BOY: Are you an acrobat?

DR. LAO: Only philosophically.

—THE SEVEN FACES OF DR. LAO

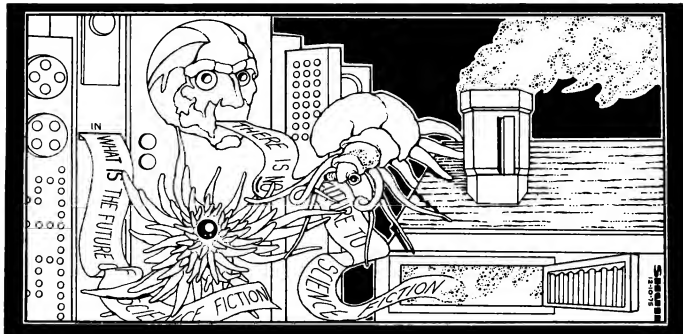
(Thanks to Russ Dixon)

"People like to have their sense-of-wonder hard-on stroked. As a writer, you don't always want to do just that."

—Jack Dann, "The Heaven and Hell of Jack Dann" by Joe Salimando, SUNDAY PRESS, Binghamton, NY Nov. 30, 1975 (Thanks to Lorenz J. Firsching)



LOVE, CARELESS LOVE, O CARELESS LOVE:  
THE TRUE AND TERRIBLE HISTORY OF SCIENCE FICTION



ALTERNATE WORLDS: THE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF SCIENCE FICTION by James Gunn. Prentice Hall, \$29.95. Illustrated, plus appendix and index, 239 pp.

Reviewed by Barry Malzberg

There is a banquet table snapshot taken at the 1955 Cleveland World convention on page 193 of this magnificent book catching eight people, one of them the author, another the late Mark Clifton in a variety of attitudes which I found stunning but this is merely one instant at one table on one evening of but a single convention; it a true history of our field were to be compiled it would have to be multiplied by at least a thousand such conventions, a hundred thousand tables, six hundred thousand people, sixty million moments...and from all this chiaroscuro, the feeling lurks, the best that could be done would be to painfully reconstruct the field inch-by-inch, a useless process. We already have the field. We have our history now and at last. Gunn has given it to us.

How he has given it to us! not by text or snapshot alone although the book has a lucid and useful amount of the former, a scattering of the latter, not even through the illustrations, hundreds of them, of covers and interior from the old magazines, many of them in full color, not even by virtue of the author biographies, of the quotations from the Noted Basic Works... but through some witchery and amalgam of all of this and something else too, maybe I am confusing my own history with that of

the field. Gunn has provided for the first time in twenty years hereabouts the Sense of Wonder.

I have no idea what someone not familiar with this field will make of this book. Probably a good deal; Gunn has managed to put together a competent history of science fiction with a rogues gallery of faces and covers which spills all of our dirty little secrets and some of our grander ones as well. But I do not care about this hypothetical someone not familiar; it is a question of what we, the book's true audience, those of us who congregate here in this magazine month by month from a divergence of motives but toward a single essential outcome...what are we to make of this book? Or, to be most specific, adopting my reviewer's position as surrogate, what am I to make of it?

What am I to make of it indeed? In the early seventies I become embittered with the field (the reasons for this will show up in another issue and time enough then) and found myself late at night thinking of all of the great souls of the nineteen fifties, our valiant dead, our valiant silenced, our valiant scattered and considering all of this ask myself over and over again, What did they think they were doing? What were they after? What was the point?

Aside from the three cents a word on acceptance, aside from the second serial rights and Danish rights and Spanish rights...were they after anything else? And if so what has it come to?

Here. The answer is here and in ALTERNATE WORLDS I see for the first time (or maybe I merely mean the second) what all of our valiant living and dead alike were pursuing, what their successors, raddled as they may be, pursue to this very moment because this book lives, it is incontestably alive, and looking at the full-page, four-color reproduction of the cover of INFINITY SCIENCE FICTION, a magazine dead for lo these fifteen years, a magazine at the best in the high second rank of the forgotten... it all came back. Uneven spurts of energy, sympathetic storm, hint of tach...all of it. This is what Gunn has done?

Item: 1951. I am in Stephen's Book Service and back date magazines located in the rear of a book store called Dayton's in the Fourth Avenue district of Manhattan now long gone along with giant Wanamaker's across the street. I am staring at a red cover amidst a stack of yellow and black, my twelve year old palms sweating unevenly, Steve giving me quick sidelong glances as slowly, slowly I reach forward and then, my God, there it is, there it is and I am holding it, the April 1943 issue of Street & Smith's ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION. "\$2.00," Stephen Takacs says. I only have one. I walk to the apartment of my aunt at 3 Gramercy and she gives me the other dollar. I return. The magazine is still there. Steve has held it for me. I give him the dollar. I hold the magazine.

Item: I read DREAMS ARE SACRED by Peter Phillips in the September 1948 issue of

ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION and then I read it again. For the next several months I feel that someone has joined me in sleep, fumbling and reconstructing the figures against the inner screen. In time this passes but I still hear the stagehand's bustle in nightmare.

Item: Astor Place bookshop, 1953: a funny-looking kid (I'm pretty funny-looking myself) says he doesn't believe I am a true fan because I have never gone to a meeting of a club or for that matter even heard of a fandom. He challenges me, at random, to recite the contents page of the September 1948 ASTOUNDING in proof of my credentials. Oh joy! I reel it off. He falls back stunned. The Astor Place bookstore is suffused with light, with radiance, with small, vaulting figurines of glory which waft me singing toward the subway kiosk.

Item: I have abandoned the faith; I have walked in the way of the wicked, I have turned stiff-necked from glory and have neither read nor thought of science-fiction for ten years; from 1956 to 1966 I did not consider it but I am sorry, I am truly sorry and all that I ask now is that I be permitted, permitted to return and to do what I had always wanted: merely to write it. That was last year. Now it is Labor Day weekend 1967 and I am in a hotel room near New York's Pennsylvania station, the world convention is here, this is a professional's party and on the basis of my one published story, my bitter connection to a bitter literary agency, I have wangled myself in. I stand against the wall with Jerry Carr. I have never, you understand, met a major professional writer except for Carr until yesterday when Jack Williamson visited the agency. I hold my drink tightly. The door bursts open. In to the room come Donald Wollheim, Isaac Asimov, Richard Wilson, Lester del Rey, Damon Knight, Thomas M. Disch...oh my God, oh my God, be still my heart and now Asimov turns upon the room, Richard Wilson calls his name, Asimov embraces him, young girls fall palpitating at Asimov's feet, I learn quickly into the wall, turning away, can no longer take it...the ten years past do not exist, neither do the eight years to come: I am frozen in true time as I am frozen before the—

Item: January 1950 cover reproduction in full color on page 18 of this book. "The XI Effect" by Phillip Latham (pen-name, of course, of Robt. S. Richardson) and it is Brooklyn again, I am twelve years old, the Brooklyn will surely come to us once more, they cannot deny the Dodgers... "To Explain Mrs. Robinson", a story which I

have not thought of in many years also occurs to me.

All right. This is part of what Gunn has accomplished; I do not know, am not equipped to say whether he has accomplished this for others who, unlike a couple thousand of us, grew up feeling that this field was not a mere valid paradigm of the universe but was in fact a satisfactory alternate reality. Return to the question which haunted the nights of my mid-thirties: What did all of these people think they were doing? What were they really after?

Well, according to Gunn, who has wedged in a pretty lucid overview here amidst the covers and the pictures of the anointed, what most of them were trying to do was to clamber out of the dismal pothole Hugo Gernsback had dug for them and rejoin the great literary tradition of speculative fantasy from which they had been untidely ripped as of March 1926 and super stories of scientification's coming. I think that Gunn is wrong here, he has fallen into the same noble misapprehension in my opinion which haunts Brian Aldiss's otherwise worthwhile BILLION YEAR SPREE, I think that what we think of as science fiction was born abruptly and without history in that very month of March fifty years ago and what most of us have been trying to do since then has been to stay within it; expand it, correlate it, fashion it, raise the literary or speculative or technical perceptions if we will but do nothing whatsoever to break out of the separateness. This is a matter for debate; Isaac Asimov (who has a gracious introduction) agrees with me and so, I think, does A. J. Budrys but equally respectable people do not and Gunn makes his case, going back to the time of Chaucer (naturally the least interesting chapters in the book are those that deal with s-f before it had its own name) and forward with convincing specificity. Maybe some of these people indeed were trying all the time to get into MODERN MASTERS OF WESTERN LITERATURE and the O. HENRY PRIZE STORIES COLLECTION although, I will insist, not by a longshot all of them and not some of the very best. Indeed not to want to stay in here was actually frightening to most of the best writers of the nineteen forties and fifties and even now those of us who have had success within the category yet wish literary recognition as well voyage in, voyage out with the terrifying feeling that to leave science-fiction is, perhaps, to leave a reality for an emptiness for modern fiction, in its bleakness and barren nature more and more is seeking something from us is seeking, at least, our

energy. This is another offshoot.

Gunn's text implies one thing; his book however says another. I submit that the message of the whole package (and the book cannot be disentangled from its graphics) is that what these people, what I sought is more framed in that convention table snapshot, is more visible in the reproductions of the covers than could ever be discovered in the longest and dullest seminar of the Science Fiction Research Association. Whatever it is, and in glimpses I see it in this book, Gunn has caught it whole.

For the record, in the interests of federal truth in review laws, one must make some caveats. The book is littered with small, probably insignificant inaccuracies and one very large confusion: the confusion is Gunn's inability to decide whether or not he is writing biography or history and to what degree his own persona should intersect with the material. He thus begins to tell us a fascinating anecdote about his first none-sale to H. L. Gold and then breaks it off cold ("But that's another story for another place") without ever returning. At about the same point he seems on the verge of explaining the mystery of H.L. Gold's GALAXY for the first and runs for it; he quotes long passages of Don Wollheim dissecting JWC making disapproving comments in the margin but never comes to grips with Wollheim's thesis. I suspect that at some point early on Gunn junked the idea of a memoir for this much larger book and although what has emerged is honorable I am not sure that he made the right decision. Gunn's own experience, like the individual experience of any fine writer, is of more lasting significance than any generalities, all overviews.

The inaccuracies are less distressing but from the point of view of absolute scholasticism undercut the book. My own name is misspelled in the caption underneath my picture (it is one of the few encouraging aspects of being 36 to observe how much worse I looked in my late twenties, even with hair and hopeful eye), my own first appearance in the field is called 1969 instead of the proper 1967 or 1968 if you date from my first important work. Katherine MacLean's entrance date is similarly off by a year, Larry M. Janifer's five or six, Tiptree's by one, that of Winston K. Marks by twelve. Minor, very minor, but in my school if you can't get it right (which would be a trivialization if accomplished, who cares with the possible exception of my wife and helpless children when I came into the field let alone why?) it is best to leave it alone which I wish Gunn had.



FORECAST, THE VILBAR PARTY, 1, ROBOT, First Fandom, Second Fandom, GULF, THAT SWEET LITTLE OLD LADY, Street & Smith Publications, Inc....ah Thomas Stearns, Thomas Stearns Elliott, you may have said it after all in the quartet and nothing to do but praise thy name and retire:

THE SPIRIT KILLETH BUT THE LETTER  
GIVETH LIFE

New Jersey: Sept. 27,  
1975

## MORE OF THE SAME

There seem to be two or three themes "serious" writers use over and over. They cannot resist telling us they have special information about The Awfulness of Life and The Futility of It All (although it isn't too futile for them to expend great energy to point these Truths out to us, again and again and again. Somehow, despite wide reading on their part, they imagine nobody else has ever noticed the grim realities before), and the Evil of Big Business, Big Bureaucracy, Big Science.... Anything Big will do.

In THE ANIMAL DOCTOR, P.C. Jersild, a Swedish writer, sets up a Big private research institute...the Alfred Nobel Medical-Surgical Institute, to be exact, in 1988-89, and subtly, realistically, satirizes its inefficiency and mundane nuts and bolts stupidities. Rules and Regulations are the point of mockery, but he is so soft and unobtrusive about it that the reader sometimes doesn't notice—because bureaucratic idiocy is so prevalent Now in every area that it takes wild, savage exaggeration to prick the insensitive hides of people who have to cope with the IRS, Welfare, Licensing, HEW, FDA, Environmental Impact Studies, Etc....

This is a Pantheon Book, \$7.95.

## CAUGHT IN THE COMPUTER NET

I am of two minds about John Brunner's THE SHOCKWAVE RIDER: I am impressed at his ability to make his futures chillingly realistic and believable, and I make note here that his characterizations have improved markedly over the years. He is at the top of his form, a thorough-going professional writer who delivers a top-notch story.

Yet—damn it, he does tend to run a theme into the ground, and he has been warning us now for years about Big Pollution. In this novel we are warned against Big Computers and the dangers in letting the sys-

tem serve us not-wisely, but too well. Everything, every tool used for the benefit of mankind can be abused and used for evil.

In SHOCKWAVE RIDER, too, there is the ancient formula: one man, disaffected, a maverick, rebels against the System and with the help of Good People, overthrows it. The villains are very, very villainous (although trapped in their evil by their old-fashioned beliefs and limited vision). Again, the System is at fault.

So change the system, improve it, set up procedures to prevent the evil from happening again, right? So sayeth Brunner. I have a few reservations.

In THE SHOCKWAVE RIDER there is a good deal of low-key lecturing on favorite ideas and the Nice People are so nice it gets cloying at times (the ideal town of Precipice, Arizona is too good to be true).

The basic strength of the novel is its hero, the man who escaped a government super-thinktank (near-genius children are recruited and trained and educated and trapped in Service...alienated sociopath scientists are experimenting in human genetics) and with his superior knowledge of computers and the vulnerable country-wide computer net, manages to feed sets of new data into the system to change identities at will.

But after he falls in love and learns to trust...he is captured and systematically taken through the memories of his free life by his government captors, to better understand his methods and psychology ("where did we go wrong, Igor?").

Eventually he subverts a government scientist/inquisitor and demolishes the system by programming the computer data banks and network to reveal the true nature of the evil government and its evil allies to the citizenry in such a way that the government cannot stop it; a masterful use of the tool against those misusing it.

Good suspense, good action, good basic structure and very, very good science. So good that I have no idea where modern computer technology leaves off and Brunner is into extrapolation.

(Harper & Row, \$8.95)

'Children who are tired of lying in their cribs or sitting in a schoolroom find...the penis's...reachability a great temptation. ("Their arms are made just long enough to reach it," as one mother said reproachfully to her clergyman.)'

—Eric Berne, M.D., SEX IN HUMAN LOVING

On the other hand he has summed up, briefly and with utter command of the point of their work, the careers of most of the major writers: his paragraphs on Van Vogt are the first in many years to attempt to set the record right on this remarkable writer, he is neither awed by Asimov's contributions nor dismissive because of Asimov's youth at the time; he understands what Sturgeon was trying to do better than anyone except Budrys and possibly Sturgeon himself; he tells the truth about Gold (up to a certain point, alas) fairly and as no one has ever before. He tends to overrate certain writers a little while managing to ignore or minimize certain others. Why nothing on Kornbluth? Why are Mark Clifton's contributions to social science fiction simply not touched upon? But taste, as they say, is taste.

But this essay should not dribble off into caviar, into endless qualification: this is how the literary writers do it, not science fiction writers. From the beginning we would destroy the universe for a plot pivot, change the chromosomes of man for a gimmick ending. There was no shame in it; this was what we had to do, this perhaps is what they thought they were doing in the fifties then, they were changing the nature of man, they were manipulating existence itself, slowly and invisibly in their special cachet these people were changing the way we lived.

That was what they thought they were doing. It has been my considered opinion, recently, that they failed (and if one attends to Gunn's last chapter closely I think it is fairly clear that he thinks so too) and that the field is collapsing now into the decadence of repetition and self-loathing while the new approaches and writers from which it drew strength are getting out or worse yet not getting in but I am not so sure of this, I am not so sure of anything after having long and prayerfully considered this book. VANGUARD SCIENCE FICTION, Kornbluth's THE LITTLE BLACK BAG, John Wamaker's, the backdate magazines in the back, GRAVY PLANET, DREAMS OF SACRED, MANNA, TROJAN HORSE LAUGH, The Analytical Laboratory, IN TIMES TO COME,



# NOISE LEVEL

a column

john brunner

No sign. Nor in the years preceding and following.

Hum...

Now at this point I want to diverge in two directions. That not being possible, I must digress. First: be it known that in the spring of 1974 Ace Books sold UK and Commonwealth rights in my novel *THE DRAMATURGES OF YAN* to the British firm New English Library, without having bothered to buy those rights beforehand from myself. This drove me and Marjorie to conduct a tiring and time-consuming inspection of all our records connected with sales to Ace, and the outcome was that we discovered an alarming number of other "errors"—payments due to us not only for normal royalties, but for book-club editions, and for a good few translations too, were in some cases as much as four years overdue.

When I let it be known that we'd done our homework, to quote my agent: "No one in living memory has seen cheques flow so fast from Ace."

Moreover a friend of mine from Brazil had recently brought me a copy of a Portuguese translation of *TIMES WITHOUT NUMBER*, in response to a circular request for missing copies of my foreign editions. I hadn't heard about that edition either, or been paid for it. (Ace declare that it's news to them, too—we may have a case of simple piracy here.)

And, just to top off the mix stewing in my skull, I found among the mail accumulated during our trip abroad a copy of the Fall 1974 Bulletin of SF Writers of America. Why it arrived in Fall 1975, I've no idea. But on opening it the first thing I saw was an assurance from the President that Ace had caught up with all outstanding obligations, they were back in good odour, and members might again sign Ace contracts with a clear conscience.

We are now digressing within the digressions, but worse is to come.

Unfortunately, shortly before we went abroad, we'd had a clear demon-

## On Having Real and Unreal Enemies

The prospect of writing this piece fills me with dismay; however, I shall grit my teeth and plough on with it, since I think it will be good for my soul. Yesterday in a fit of impetuosity I did something really rather awful, and it's not the first time I've had to pick up the pieces after acting in a similar manner. If I carry on like this, I'm bound to get myself in to trouble one day—quite apart from the risk of acquiring a reputation as quarrelsome/arrogant/infuriating or what-have-you.

That is absolutely not the way I'd wish anyone to regard me! And yet all too often I find I'm drifting into a state where my conditioned reflexes take charge. I suppose that is the nub of what I want to set down on paper: the evidence drawn from my own experience that indicates—whatever the truth may be in respect of other forms of mental derangement—paranoia is a response to real outside stimuli... at any rate to begin with. Later on, it becomes a different matter.

"What is he rabbiting on about?"  
—I hear you cry. Well, it was like this....

Marjorie and I just managed to visit our beloved Greece again for the first time in nine years, since before the "colonels' coup". On the way out and back we detoured to visit science fiction friends and business contacts, including Gian Paolo Cossato in Venice. Chairman of the first Eurocon in Trieste, 1972, he now works as an editor and translator of SF and, in partnership with a couple of friends, runs a specialist SF bookshop called "Solaris".

Looking along the shelves, I found sundry copies of my own work in Italian, some of which I didn't know existed. Since on at least three occasions work of mine was sold in Italy by a "literary agent" who didn't represent me, had no authority to make a deal, and kept the money, I bought six such items and brought them home.

In one case my memory had slipped a gear; I did already possess a copy of the book. But the next three were indeed things I'd never seen, although a check of my records showed that I'd received notification (through my agents in New York) concerning each sale. And the fifth was an item I had no knowledge of whatever: a short story included in a collection with an introduction by Harry Harrison. I still haven't worked out who sold the rights in that case. Whoever it was omitted to tell me, at all events. Still, it was ten years ago, too long for me to worry now.

Number six, however, was a real puzzle. It was a translation of *TIMES WITHOUT NUMBER*, part of the highly respectable Galassia series, dated March 1970. I've done other deals with that firm, and apart from an incomprehensible dislike of sending copies of their books to the authors I have no fault to find with them.

Yet when I looked at my record card for this book, I saw no mention of a sale of Italian rights. I went to the contracts file, to see who controlled the sale of translations.

Ah: reserved by Ace Books, exclusive power to licence. So if this book appeared in March 1970, our 1969/70 accounts ledger should record a payment in respect of it. (Our company year runs from October to September.)

stration that even though this might have been true when the message was sent to SFWA, it had become tarnished with the passage of time. Another of the Portuguese translations brought by my helpful friend from Sao Paulo was also of an Ace book; I hadn't been told about the sale, and hadn't received any money. I don't believe I would have, except that I got Marjorie to write and ask Ace for our share of the proceeds.

Now we digress in the second direction.

For more than a year and a half I've been unable to write owing to a succession of nagging disorders, each minor, but taken together forming a ghastly total: trouble with a nerve in my right eye, with an infuriating skin complaint; with hypertension and extreme high blood-pressure; with insomnia, and so on. This bunch combined to make me dreadfully depressed, even more than I'm accustomed to putting up with, because every time I imagined I was well enough to start a new project something else went wrong. Moreover, the drug I was given for hypertension turned out to have side-effects, dampening down the activity of the mind and in particular reducing the powers of concentration and imagination—the worst conceivable drug for a working writer, hm?

Before I went on holiday, I asked my GP whether I could be taken off this drug, because my blood-pressure was back in the normal range, and he approved. Result: during the trip my mind has gradually begun to approach normal again, and I arrived back tired out but nonetheless eager to start work. My real work—not this fiddling business of checking on authorised and unauthorised foreign sales. (Why not leave it all to my agents? Well, because I already give my New York agents, on their own admission, twice as much work as their other clients. Besides, while I'm writing a letter explaining to the agents what needs to be done, I might as well do it and let the agency take over when the ball has started to roll.)

Summary, therefore.

Author comes back from holiday eager to resume writing, in a hurry to get rid of annoying minor problems concerned with foreign rights. Finding a case where: (a) he has not previously seen the book in this edition; (b) there is

no mention of it in the record card; (c) there is no sign of a payment for it in the accounts for that year, nor the year before or after... he drops a brief letter of complaint to SFWA, Ace, Galassia and his agents, thinking that is that and now he can get on with something really important.

No prizes are offered for guessing where I went wrong. Yup: I forgot that the payment for this deal might have been one of the four-year-overdue bunch that we pried loose from Ace in the early summer of last year.

It was. Marjorie found it for me this morning—after I had posted my letter of complaint in multiple copies.

So I've just had to send out—hopefully in time to save my bacon—corresponding copies of a retraction. And I can picture people shaking their heads sorrowfully on hearing that once again Brunner has flown off the handle. Which is entirely true; I should have thought of checking those 1974 payments as well as the other accounts.

But I've become nervous. I've become conditioned into suspecting fraud automatically. I've had to put up with not only the sort of dishonesty described above, but also cases of literally unbelievable inefficiency on the part of certain publishers (not once but twice a firm I no longer deal with put books of mine into production without bothering to issue contracts for them!), while as for editorial interference—Well, no regular reader of this column needs to be told more on that subject.

And now look what's getting in my way!

Although she found that payment from Ace, when she came to tell me Marjorie appended a disturbing footnote. She can't find any trace of a payment for the next of my novels that Galassia published...

I wish she hadn't mentioned that. I wanted to get some real work done today. I have no shortage of projects in mind.

Instead, I find myself fretting, unable to forget that when we totted up those delayed payments from Ace we found that, had we been paid when the monies fell due, we would not have been obliged to sell our lovely home in Hampstead and move out here, away from all our friends.

Naturally enough, we're determined not to let that happen twice. But the problem is that, because it happened once, it's reduced me to the sort of state where I'm prepared to believe I'm being cheated even when I'm not.

Oh, hell! With real enemies the way an author can have real enemies, how needs paranoia?

The countless reports on the efficacy of cocaine in the treatment of gastrointestinal disorders have never been given proper clinical trials. (Until recently, a similar closed-mindedness prevented marijuana's effectiveness in combating nausea and restoring appetite from being scientifically validated—although both effects are well known to users.) In the case of cocaine, the medical profession rejected a possibly useful drug for self-serving reasons, while welcoming amphetamines, another "feel-good" drug with potentially far more dangerous effects.

—Norman E. Zinberg,  
THE NEW YORK REVIEW  
October 30, 1975

"The monsters are destroying Tokyo! Fortunately, they're in the Negro section of town!"

—MONSTER FROM A PREHISTORIC PLANET

"Many games are played most intensely by disturbed people; generally speaking, the more disturbed they are, the harder they play. Curiously enough, however, some schizophrenics seem to refuse to play games, and demand candor from the beginning. In everyday life games are played with the greatest conviction by two classes of individuals: the Sults, and the Jerks or Squares."

—GAMES PEOPLE PLAY by Eric Berne

"Soon-ok and I saw DEATH RACE 2000 the other day. Soon-ok says it's the strangest film she's ever seen (she watches very little stuff).

"It was an uneven film that missed a lot of chances to spoof other films (such as BEN-HUR, THE GREAT RACE, and THOSE DARING YOUNG MEN IN THEIR JAUNTY JALOPHIES).

"Parts were too gory, sadistic, and gruesome to be really effective as satire. The best line in the picture was when Frankenstein (David Carradine) showed a bomb that was built into his mechanical right hand. "What is it?" the girl asked. "It's a hand grenade," he said. But of course."

—Buzz Dixon

## PROZINE NOTES

The damage Jack Williamson has done to his reputation as an sf master of the golden age with his two recent Benefactor stories is probably irreversible.

The first Benefactor story I read was "The Eternity Engine" in the June '75 GALAXY, and I thought him clumsy and incompetent in plot and dialogue.

Now in "The Dark Destroyer" in the January '76 AMAZING, Mr. Williamson again mishandles human relationships and flounders in a swamp of WmLib role reversals and inevitable male chauvinism.

Through most of the story the heroine, Snowfire (!), is the Competent Woman who expertly pilots a spacecraft, outranks her envious, less skilled husband, Blacklantern (guess the skin colors), and gives orders when they crashland on icy, primitive Earth (after eons of benign neglect by star-borne humanity) and contact a conveniently approaching woman-dominated sledge party with six husky man pulling the sledge.

Blacklantern is held captive and for tactical reasons Snowfire joins the ruling women.

There follows even more bad logic, unbelievable motivation and idiot behavior for experienced, supposedly intelligent agents/scouts. But unless this idiocy is swallowed the story cannot stand.

The metal-hungry alien life form and the black hole menace steal the show from the stupid black/white duo. (As the gigantic mining machines and Swarmworld technology stole the story in "The Eternity Engine.")

If only Jack Williamson, now, could write stories without people in them!

A sample of his "people writing" shows something of what I mean:

"We were rather hoping you wouldn't want to go." Nodding calmly, Thornwall sipped his scalding tea. "A very chancy mission. Our problem is that the probe got caught by the hole and delayed too long. With Old Earth next, the portal experts want us to scrub the whole project. I think they're right—"

"Sir!" Snowfire burst past him a heady breath of sweetleaf scent, a blur of red-gold hair and green-gold eyes and pale-gold allure. Eagerly she seized Thornwall's lean old hands. "I'm not refusing."

"No!" Blacklantern gasped his protest, gazing at her in blank amazement. ... "If the mission is so dang-

erous, sir, you wouldn't send a woman!"

Thornwall would and did. Blackie (as Snowfire affectionately calls him) is forced to volunteer, too.

During the black-moment crisis when all seems lost, Blacklantern asserts his male superiority and changes from a cowed, pussy-whipped nebbish to a strong-willed, keen-minded hero:

Just beyond the nearest signal fire, he pulled her flat beside him in the snow. The bonzeeth came roaring down, more appalling than any ty. The ice quivered when it struck. Sliding on to Larlarane's offering, it began licking up the broken iron with an enormous rough black tongue.

"Come along!" He hauled her up-right. "We're going for a ride."

She hung back, staring blankly. "Are you crazy?"

"Maybe," he muttered. "But the craziest chance is better than none."

They board the alien beast, direct it to their destination by prodding it with a laser gun, and are rescued.

In the last line of the story Snowfire squeezes Blacklantern's hand and tells him, "We're going to have a son." They'll probably name it Tanflashlight.

The third Benefactor novelette has just appeared in the February 1976 F&SF, and it is the best of the three. It is "The Machines That Ate Too Much," and is the first of the trio, chronologically: it is Blacklantern's story (Snowfire is an off-stage Benefactor agent on his home planet of Ngongonga whom he is sent to rescue, and when on-stage she is a classic pulp heroine—helpless, afraid, incompetent and in dire need of masculine strength, love and guidance. The next sound you hear is Joanna Russ grinding her teeth and thinking black thoughts about Ed Ferman's choice of fiction.)

This novelette is what might be called "good pulp" in plot and treatment; it is a relic, a throwback, an example for new readers to experience, written by a man in his late sixties in the true style of the pulps, complete with predictable plot, clichés and happy ending.

Never mind that implausibilities abound, that the whole future Williamson has constructed is incredible, the action forced and the psychology self-serving. In the days of the pulps this would have been top-drawer. We've come a long, long way.

Let me share with you (if you haven't already read the story) some of the grand old phrases used:

Blacklantern peered at the red-robed Benefactor, not quite daring to hope.

Alarm struck him. "Has anything happened to her?"

"Do they—" His breath caught. "Do they have Snowfire?"

"A maggot!" Snowfire whispered. "A planet-eating maggot!" Her haggard eyes looked at him. "Why is it after us?"

The 'maggot' is a giant Swarm Worlds mining machine.

I like the following passages for their pure PLANET STORIES flavor:

Stripped, she was streaked with sweat and grime. Her pale hands gripped the lancegrass bars. Yet she stood proudly straight. Her green-gold eyes swept the gazing crowd, level and aloof, still somehow brave.

Pity swept him. He thought she was too clean and fine and fragile, too highly cultured, to endure the primitive cruelties of Ngongonga.

"Mercy, sir!" Blacklantern shouted. "I was born here. I'll take my own chances on the sacred uplands, but I beg mercy for Agent Snowfire. A tender girl. From a cultured world, where life is sheltered. The justice of Ngongonga is too cruel for her. I beg mercy!"

"If our ways are too cruel for her, hers are too cruel for us." Flintbreaker's strong teeth glinted through his mask of scars. "Her white kindred opened the portal with promises of all good things—and came through to steal our sacred treasures and profane our holy places, to buy our bodies and blight our souls, to scatter the eggs of monstrous worms to eat our world. We have no mercy left."

Approval echoed around the pit. "But we do pledge justice," he boomed again. "The game may be hard but we play fair. We limit the hunters to three. We allow you a whole day to run, before the first takes your trail. We promise you freedom,

if you reach Ngoggo alive."

Of course the following passage could not have seen print in the old days:

Bidders filed down from the seats, to peer and poke through the lancegrass bars. One huge slow pale bald man stopped to squint at both of them. He reached a huge yellow hand to tweak Snowfire's nipple, spattered Black-lantern's penis with a hot squirt of purple spit.

And what would we do without:

With a stifled cry of fear, Snow-fire touched his arm.

Yet—after easy sneers at the clichés and ancient plot, there is a vitality to the story that carries it forward, and the writing has a great vividness, a richness of image and color.

I imagine these three novelettes will be combined and published in paperback sometime in the near future.

#

Putnams has just sent a review copy of THE POWER OF BLACKNESS, by Jack Williamson; the novel introducing Blacklantern and his becoming a Benefactor and meeting Snowfire. (\$6.95)

In the Feb. issue of F&SF with the Jack Williamson novelette, is the featured novelette "The Samurai and the Willows" by Michael Bishop.

The contrasts between are striking. Bishop is a very fine writer, able to hold a reader through goings and comings, work and play, casual everyday future living under the Atlanta city dome and down to a cubicle on the ninth underground level... able to weave a complicated, real culture into the lives of two dissimilar people who did not choose to live together.

He chose to present two worthwhile people, to make them human—to make us care about them...and then (with lots of "good" reasons planted) he chose to let one of them commit honorable suicide...and I resent it.

In a tragedy, you see, the "black moment" is when things appear to be working out well, when it seems happiness might be in store for the central character. But, no, inexorable, cruel fate dictates death, and so it goes.

I grant that it takes a superior writer to make a tragedy work, because the characters must inspire concern and caring in the reader to make the inevitable end effective. But I do not like a writer who does that to me, for in a very real way I am that character...and that character is someone I love and wish well.

I can admire Michael Bishop's writing talent and skills in "The Samurai and the Willows," but I leave the story disappointed and...injured. I already know about death and ruined lives and despair. I do not need instruction. I do not understand why so many fine young writers feel it is necessary to display these bitter truths in their fiction.

I'd rather be adroitly, skillfully lied to in the last two or three pages. That is why I invest money and emotion in fiction—those lovely happy lies. And perhaps a bit of compassion on the part of writers is in order. Have pity on us readers, if you're really good at making us care for your characters; you'd be surprised at how much we know of life and death...sometimes even as much as you.

Oh, I know, you must do your thing, and follow your inspiration... But I'll tell you, Michael Bishop, I'll be wary of you in the future.

DOORWAYS IN THE SAND, a serial in the June, July, Aug. issues of ANALOG, by Roger Zelazny, and out in paperback by now, I imagine, will strike some readers, as it did me, as literary Chinese food—three hours after you've read it you're hungry again.

Of course it is written with the Zelazny magic; that indefinable stylistic touch that makes him extremely readable.

But...but...the impression remains that in this novel he has used a lot of seasoning to make up for a thin plot.

Seasonings like a central character, Cassidy, who likes to climb things—buildings, mostly—and is a perennial student, adroitly taking course after course, shifting from major to major, in order to keep collecting a handsome education allowance from the estate of his cryogenically limboized rich uncle.

Seasonings like an alien team of cops who are on Earth to catch a galactic criminal... A "star stone" statue (that is not a statue) from an incredibly old, dead alien civilization on display and which has been stolen.

A mystery: why does everybody seem to want an apparent copy of the statue? Why will they kill and torture to find it? And why is Cassidy hallucinating messages from Somewhere?

A heady, interesting brew, I have to admit, but at the end I was left vaguely unsatisfied.

Maybe it is the casual, lighthearted, not-quite-serious approach Roger uses in this one. As when the baddies stake Cassidy out in the Australian desert sun: Cassidy is to turn into a raisin unless he gives the location of the star stone. He adopts the metaphor in his thinking and seems not really concerned as his body sugars concentrate as he dehydrates. He is also not very surprised when a talking wombat comes along and frees him....

Roger treats lightly and skillfully along the edge of whimsy and incredibility: only his skill saves him.

I wish I knew where Joanna Russ was going with the very real people in her serial, WE WHO ARE ABOUT TO... in the January GALAXY. This is the first sustained writing of hers I've read that I consider first-rate. It quickly became compulsive reading for me once I started it. But I worry; she has killed off the three males and one of the women on a far planet where a lifeboat deposited eight passengers of a spaceship ship gone wrong. There remain only four women.

Despite this, I admire the tough, intelligent central character, her philosophy and her ruthlessness.

There's a welcome aura of quality about the March AMAZING...a fine cover by Barber, a restraint in the use of cover hype...and the positioning of the redesigned logo in the upper right corner. I note the 'AMAZING' of AMAZING SCIENCE FICTION is shrinking. Good move. 'Amazing' is too 'pulp' a word for a title now.

I'm going to have to disagree with Jon Gustafson, this issue, on his estimate of the quality of the October, 1975 GALAXY cover. I think it functions rather well as a cover—provoking viewer curiosity and interest.

And while I'm thinking of GALAXY, a belated compliment is due editor Jim Baen for



## THE LITERARY MASOCHIST A Column By Richard A. Lupoff

Starting just about a hundred years ago, or a little less, millions of ashkenazim poured out of the shtetls of eastern Europe in search of the bright promise of the New World, hoping to escape the pogroms of arrogant imperial rulers, to find new freedom, dignity and prosperity for themselves and their descendants. By the shipload they debarked at Ellis Island and entered the New World only to find themselves crammed into the new ghetto of the Lower East Side, poor, oppressed, exploited, trapped by their own oddities of dress, diet, by ignorance of even the language of their new homeland.

Undaunted, they strove to learn English, to make a place for themselves, to scrimp and save enough money to escape Henry Street, Delancey Street, Chatham Square; few enough of the immigrants ever left the ghetto, but their children found their way to Williamsburg, to the Bronx, to Long Island; and their grandchildren to Scarsdale, to Connecticut, to Los Angeles.

Then, strangely, when it came to take stock, those comfortable, respectable, dispersed, assimilated grandchildren began to discover that—they long for the ghetto! The sense of warmth, of struggle, of unity-in-adversity. And there began the flow of novels and dramas harking back to the days of the ghetto and even of the shtetl. From Russian Hill, Avenue D attains a golden glow; from Cos Cob, Lublin looks beautiful!

Am I the first—surely I cannot be the first—to remark that science fiction is

the Jew of category publishing! The wasps and the micks, the krauts and the wops and the frogs can have their westerns and who-dunits, gothics and romances, and of course their fantasies dear and fey or thunderous and blood-drenched.

But science fiction has been dominated for fifty years by a crew of editors and writers bearing names like Gernsback, Schachner, Asimov, Bester, Silverberg, Ellison, Harrison, Harris, Maiblum, Davidson, Malzberg, Ferman, Friedman, Moskowitz, Kornbluth, Kidd, Grossman, Wollheim, Weisinger, Schwartz, Margulies, Kuttner, Russ, Mervin, Klass, Greenberg, Feldman, Cohen, del Rey (!) and doubtless scores of others.

As the Jews made their way from shtetl to American ghetto to suburb to diaspora, so has science fiction made its way from general magazine to pre-category pulp (e. g. ARGOSY, BLUE BOOK) to category pulp (e. g. AMAZING, ASTOUNDING) to growing acceptance in the general publishing industry and a respect bordering on reverence in the universities.

And as Jews have lately manifested an almost inexplicable nostalgia for the ghetto, so has science fiction begun to exhibit an overwhelming yearning for the good old/bad old days of the pulps. Vide, a growing stock of lushly produced books about the development of science fiction, ranging from the basically text-oriented but heavily illustrated history by James Gunn to a number of graphics-oriented volumes with accompanying commentary. I have six of these books on my desk at this moment; their prices range from \$4.95 for a large-format paperback by Anthony Frewin to \$29.95 for the hardbound Gunn; total price for the six would run you \$73.90 (ten bucks more if you opt for the hardbound version of one title that goes either way), and before you plunge that deep, I think you ought to listen to somebody who has studied all six books and can give you a rundown on the validity of various efforts.

The Gunn book, ALTERNATE WORLDS, strikes me as the best place to start. It's by far the most expensive of the group, and the most ambitious. In 256 pages Gunn presents a good, if conventional, history of the field. He traces back to the days before the usually-cited founding fathers Jules et Herb to cover such proto-SF writers as Plath, Lucian (but of course!), Kepler, Swift, Mary Wollstonecraft and all the rest of that gang, having first struggled through a densely academic piece of what-is-SF-and-where-is-it-today. We have the usual pre-pulp treatment (before the Jews

came to America/before SF entered the pulps), a much-deserved bow to the too-often overlooked Frank A. Munsey, and then the real heart of Gunn's book, the familiar but endlessly dear tale of how science fiction came up the river from Hoboken with Hugo Gernsback and John W. Campbell.

The bulk of Gunn's book (five of thirteen chapters, plus Isaac Asimov's infantile introduction) is devoted to the pulp era and the major editors and authors it produced. The book offers few startling facts and fewer startling insights, but it is a good elementary history of the field, and the illustrations it contains—scores of magazine and book covers, hundreds of author and editor photos—are very attractive. Shots of Murray Leinster at various ages from dew to dottage, Jack Williamson and Edmond Hamilton from the 1930s to the 70s, mug-shots of Larry Niven and Alexei Panshin, Tom Purdom and Joanna Russ and endless others.

And a stirring envoi painting SF as the Angel of Light, pretty near. There's also a table of Hugo and Nebula winners since the inception of both series, and a tabular history of "western civilization, science, technology, and science fiction" that's fun to peruse.

The major flaws in Gunn's book are the bibliographic flaws, with which the book is rife. There are other errors, minor ones, such as the occasional startling solecism in a work whose general prose level is quite adequate if not exemplary. ("Pence" as a singular—I've come across this particular flub only once before in my life, the other time by Sam Moskowitz)...the photo of Bob Silverberg identified as Tom Scortia...an incredible piece of laziness ("A volume or two of STAR SHOT NOVELS also came out, beginning in 1953"; it was either one volume or it was two, and could have been checked easily enough; what is this, a fanzine?; in fact, it was one)...the statement that SKYLARK OF SPACE had two sequels; in fact it had three...the identification of the first issue of WONDER STORIES as volume 1 number 1; in fact WONDER STORIES came about through the amalgamation of SCIENCE WONDER STORIES and AIR WONDER STORIES and never had a volume 1 number 1...the identification of a Pyramid Books cover as the product of a fan press...the attribution of "When the Earth Screamed" to Rider Haggard (it was by Conan Doyle)...the identification of AUTHENTIC SF as an American magazine (it was British)...the identification of Curtis Newton's three aides as "a robot, and android, and a beautiful girl," thus substituting Joan Randall for Simon Wright...a strange reversal of the



WONDER STORIES both by stating that the AVON SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY READER was an amalgamation of the AVON SF READER and the AVON FANTASY READER; in fact it was a wholly separate publication...and so on and on, culminating in a series of botched authors' names (James Schmidt, F. M. Bushby, Janet Lepson)....

If Gunn or someone else would go through ALTERNATE WORLDS and clean up the scores of gaffes it contains, and then reissue the book in a trade paperback at one-third the present price, it would be a good book at a reasonable amount. As for the present edition—look for it on the remainder table.

#

Franz Rottensteiner is the author of THE SCIENCE FICTION BOOK, a volume superficially similar to ALTERNATE WORLDS, but only about half as big (160 pages) and only about half as expensive (\$14.95). Like the Gunn book it's blurbled as "an illustrated history" and like the Gunn book it contains many pages of reproductions of magazines and book covers, illustrations, pictures of authors, stills from motion pictures and television shows, even comics.

It opens with an introductory essay on science fiction, and it is an excellent essay indeed. Rottensteiner displays a clear perception of the place of science fiction and a firm grasp on its sources and relationships. "Modern science fiction is a mixed genre that has derived its concepts, story patterns and techniques from many sources, both literary and non-literary, and has transposed and assimilated them to such an extent that it is difficult to tell what is 'pure' science fiction, and what is 'contamination' or 'loan genre' (e.g. the Western or war story simply dislocated into the future)." That sentence carries more load and transmits it more effectively than a whole book of essays, and Rottensteiner goes on for page after page, making his introductory essay one of the finest pieces of criticism of SF that I've ever read.

He deserves high grades for that essay, but once he moves beyond it THE SCIENCE FICTION BOOK begins to slip.

The book's jacket identifies Rottensteiner as a fanzine editor, and the book comes across as a rather naive fan's scrapbook, with little two- and three-page sections devoted to the author's favorite authors, illustrators, movie and TV spin-offs. As thoughtful and rigorous as is the introduction, these "essay-lets" are completely the opposite: shallow, incomplete, capricious. There's a three-page section on anti-

utopias, two-thirds of the space given over to stills from CLOCKWORK ORANGE and 1984; six pages on robots that come down to one page of superficial text (the rest is pictures); five pages on "The 'New Wave'" that come down to less than one page of shallow discussion; a section on "Stanislaw Lem, the greatest contemporary SF writer" which is a ludicrous claim quite unsupported by Rottensteiner's flimsy argument (but considering that Rottensteiner is Lem's agent....); three pages on comics that are worse than no coverage at all; and a section on "The fabulous art of Hannes Bok."

Now I happen to admire Bok's work, and to have known and hugely liked the man. But Rottensteiner's singling out of Bok for this coverage, and by implication his deprecation of the many other (and many more important) SF illustrators of the past, is typical of the sloppiness, arbitrariness, and fan-scrap-bookishness of THE SCIENCE FICTION BOOK.

Rottensteiner also suffers from the same kind of sloppy scholarship, especially bibliography, that mars Gunn's book. The major difference is that Gunn's is a solid product with superficial flaws. Rottensteiner's is just as flawed on the surface, but utterly lacking the solid underpinnings of Gunn. Just for the record, here are a few of Rottensteiner's goofs: the claim that Karloff was the first film Frankenstein monster...the statement that FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES was a "pioneer" SF magazine (it appeared in 1939, thirteen years after WEIRD TALES and thirteen after AMAZING STORIES, and was primarily a reprint journal anyway)...the attribution of ASTOUNDING STORIES to Gernsback (!)...a screw-up of the SCIENCE/AIR/THRILLING WONDER family...gratuitously commissioning Edgar Rice Burroughs during World War II (he was a war correspondent, not an army officer)...stretching the serialization of Campbell's THE MIGHTIEST MACHINE through an extra year...calling the film FANTASTIC VOYAGE, FANTASTIC JOURNEY (is this the result of translation and retranslation? If so it may be the publisher's fault rather than the author's, but is still a flaw in the book)...listing Bradbury's first book as DARK CARNIVAL, New York 1948 (it should be Saut City 1947)...Advent: Publishers of New York (they're in Chicago and always have been)...the classic fanzine FANTASY MAN (it was FANTASY FAN)...LOROS OF THE RING...SEEDS OF MARS...the Japanese author who admired Poe so much he wrote as Edogawa Ramo (no, Franz, he wrote as Edogawa Ramo)...General Electrics...

Rottensteiner gives a nice chronological bibliography, a list of award winners

like Gunn's, and that's it. Don't bother with this one, even if it does turn up on the remainder table.

#

Getting over from illustrated histories to histories of illustration, we come to FANTASTIC SCIENCE-FICTION ART 1926-1954 edited (i.e., selected) and with an introduction by Lester del Rey. There are forty full-page, full-color plates here, and strictly as a bunch of reproductions of pulp-era SF covers they are a gorgeous hour's worth of browsing-material (or may be clipped as pin-ups), but as history or survey, I'm afraid that the book is sadly lacking.

Del Rey's choice of covers to reproduce is appallingly narrow, and his critical perceptions as displayed in the introduction are appallingly shallow; the book might better have been titled THE COVERS FRANK PAUL PAINTED FOR HUGO GERNSBACH AND A FEW OTHERS and it would have been more honest. As for Lester's introductory essay, about the most penetrating observation he can bring himself to make is that Paul's "machinery" was "interesting." This is criticism? This is kitten-poopoo.

All of the forty plates come from three sources: AMAZING STORIES, WONDER and its assorted spin-offs and successors, and ASTOUNDING. Eighteen of the plates are by Paul, five are by Earle K. Bergey (the king of the fen-bem-bum triad), and the remaining seventeen have to be parceled out in ones and twos and threes among nine other pulp-era artists including Hubert Rogers, Howard V. Brown and Leo Morey.

There's not a single Finlay in the book!  
Not a single Bok!  
Not a single Wesso!  
Not a single Enshwiler!  
Not a single Bonestell!  
Not a single Leydenfrost!  
Not a single St. John!

The sources are AMAZING, WONDER, and ASTOUNDING, as I mentioned—no sign of the nearly 100 other SF magazines that appear-



during the years of Rey pretending to cover, nor even mention in passing of the many SF stories (and covers!) that graced the general pulps during the same era.

No mention of PLANET STORIES, GALAXY, F&SF, FUTURE, STIRRING, MARVEL, COMET, OTHER WORLDS, WEIRD TALES, FFM, UNKNOWN, SUPER, FLASH GORDON STRANGE ADVENTURE MAGAZINE, etc., ad annui. (Heh, I threw in FLASH GORDON just to see if you'd sit up. It was a real magazine and it could really be included here.)

Lester's book is pretty, and it's fun for what's here, but it is so woefully incomplete that I have to give it a bad mark.

Hey, we ain't doing so well, are we? Well, onward....

#

Jacques Sadoul is another European like Rottensteiner (French, though; Franz is Austrian). Sadoul's 2000 A.D. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE GOLDEN AGE OF SCIENCE FICTION PULPS was previously published in France, in French, and the translation botches a lot of titles, much as was the case with the Rottensteiner book.

Thus we get FOUNDATIONS, THE WORLD OF THE A, THE ARMS MANUFACTURERS, TOMORROW THE DOGS, THE SUPREME MACHINE, ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER-SPACE, THE ISHER ARMS FACTORY, PLATO'S CRITIC, and INHABITANTS OF THE MIRAGE. I'd be surprised if there's anything there you can't decode, but just for the record (knowledgeable readers skip to the next paragraph, please) I decode those as FOUNDATION, THE WORLD OF NULL-A, THE WEAPON MAKERS, CITY, THE MIGHTIEST MACHINE, ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER SCIENCE, THE WEAPON SHOPS OF ISHER, PLATO'S KRITIAS, and DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE. Sigh.

There are other, factual botches, too. Mort Weisinger did not "invent" Superman. Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster cobbled him together out of WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE, GLADIATOR, a doll of Doc Savage and a tiny pinch of the Shadow; Weisinger edited the Superman comics for the thieves who "bought" Superman from Siegel and Shuster for 35¢ and two hamburgers.

THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES is made up of short stories, not novels.

It's J. Harvey Haggard-with-a-d, Henry Hesse-with-an-H, Poul-with-an-o Anderson, Raymond Z-not-A. Gallun.

Ray Palmer edited AMAZING STORIES and OTHER WORLDS plus some lesser magazines, but never did he edit THRILLING WONDER STORIES.

And so it goes, on and on and on.

But when Sadoul finally gets going on SF art, he apparently knows his beans, and he hasn't been betrayed by a bad translator or a lazy or ignorant editor. He divides his book into sections by themes—aliens, robots, spaceships, "Women of the Cosmos," etc., and the art that he uses is very varied, well selected, nicely commented upon, and in general a pleasure to peruse.

One drawback is that there are only a very few color plates in the book. A few covers are reproduced in color, and many illustrations that originally appeared in black-and-white are reproduced in that form, but there are unfortunately many covers reduced to monotone (to save money, presumably), and these do not show up to good advantage.

Still, as a survey of science fiction art accompanied by a well-intentioned and moderately well-executed commentary, give Sadoul a pretty good rating. This is far from a definitive book, but it's a lot of fun, certainly head-and-shoulders above Rottensteiner or del Rey; for text it is not up to Gunn, but for illustrations it is superior to Gunn.

#

Unlike the other author-compilers in this group, all of whom are basically writers (or in Rottensteiner's case, an editor-agent) and hence primarily oriented to text with the consequence that they view artwork as an adjunct of words, Anthony Frewin is apparently an artist. His valuation is thus primarily upon art, with text ranked as the adjunct. His ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SCIENCE FICTION ILLUSTRATION thus contains the most knowledgeable analysis and commentary on artwork, with a relative de-emphasis on the stories, their authors, editors, and publishers.

Frewin himself writes with something of a wise-ass, snide attitude, which is rather offputting at first. But it's worth your forbearance to read what he has to say and to look at the pictures he presents.

For one thing, he offers excellent sections on two nineteenth-century futurist artists, Isidore Grandville and Albert Robida, whose drawings are astonishing and well worth observing—as Verne, Wells, and that crowd are the ancestors of today's SF writers, Grandville and Robida are the forerunners of Paul, Wesso, Gaughan and the rest of their bunch. Rottensteiner and Sadoul said a little about these early artists, but Frewin's comments are more extensive and perceptive and his selections of drawings are more attractive and coherent.

Frewin's text exhibits its little gaffes, of course: ANALOGUE magazine, FRANKENSTEIN published in 1819, the Wright brothers' great lighter-than-air-craft, the familiar batch of WONDER lineage, and a total jumble of MARVEL SCIENCE STORIES and the totally unrelated MARVEL COMICS.

Hey, just for the record, let's get that WONDER lineage straightened out, shall we? Here it is 1929; Gernsback has lost control of AMAZING STORIES (and its spin-offs, the one-shot (1927) AMAZING STORIES ANNUAL and the ongoing AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY). Hugo sets up his new corporation and begins a line of magazines: SCIENCE WONDER STORIES, SCIENCE WONDER QUARTERLY, AIR WONDER STORIES, SCIENTIFIC DETECTIVE MONTHLY. Okay? The Great Depression strikes, Hugo can't keep up all the



magazines so SCIENCE and AIR are amalgamated to make WONDER STORIES. No volume 1 number 1, the lineage continues from the older titles. The quarterly also drops SCIENCE and becomes WONDER STORIES QUARTERLY. SCIENTIFIC DETECTIVE MONTHLY becomes AMAZING DETECTIVE CASES, drops its fictional content, is sold off, and eventually sinks without a trace. Selah!

As the depression deepens, Gernsback can't keep up even WONDER STORIES monthly and quarterly. The quarterly goes by the boards. The monthly struggles along, sometimes bi-monthly at that, but by the mid-30s it's nearly dead; Gernsback is getting murdered by newstand returns (God help us all!). He tries a desperate gamble: a high-pressure subscription campaign to line up mail-sales and he's going to abandon newstand distribution, but the scheme flops, he sells out to the Ned Pines chain and WONDER STORIES is rechristened THRILLING

WONDER STORIES in keeping with the other "Thrilling" magazines in the chain.

THRILLING WONDER STORIES it remains until its death in the early 1950s. After a couple of years the publishers try to revive it by reprinting stories from past years; the revival, ironically, goes back to the name WONDER STORIES. Again it flops but the publishers still don't give up and they change the name to—are you ready?—SCIENCE FICTION YEARBOOK. But it still doesn't make the grade and is finally allowed to rest in peace as the Pines chain is gradually merged into the great corporate body of—are you ready for this one?!—the Columbia Broadcasting System!

As part of CBS it still exists under the name Popular Library, and the Popular Library logo, if you examine it closely, reveals the outline of a stylized pine tree. Yep, old Ned Pines rests uneasy.

During the pulp booms circa 1940 and again circa 1950, THRILLING WONDER had a number of spin-offs, the most famous being STARTLING STORIES; for some years TWS and SS were known as "the TWINS." Others were CAPTAIN FUTURE, STRANGE TALES, WONDER STORY ANNUAL (reprints), SPACE STORIES, and FANTASTIC STORY QUARTERLY (reprints) which succeeded well enough to become a bimonthly and changed its name to FANTASTIC STORY MAGAZINE.

The last, not to be confused with FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, FANTASTIC STORIES OF IMAGINATION, FANTASTIC NOVELS, FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES, FANTASY STORIES, FANTASY MAGAZINE, FANTASY FICTION, THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY which became F&SF, FANTASTIC UNIVERSE, SCIENCE-FANTASY...I have to stop now, I think I'm having a heart attack.

Okay, Anthony Frewin (remember him?) knows a lot about art, and a helluva lot about science fiction art, and I recommend his book to you with very high marks for the choice of plates and the commentary that accompanies them, but not (again) for the reproduction of full-color covers in black-and-white or monotone or for the placing of a color wash over drawings that were originally published in black & white.

#

This brings us, last but by no means least, to SCIENCE FICTION ART, THE FANTASIES OF SF, compiled and introduced by Brian Aldiss. Aldiss is an accomplished SF writer and critic; as an art critic his judgments and comments tend to be somewhat naive, especially as compared to Frewin's (or even Sadouls') but his choices are mostly good, or at least interesting and repre-

sentative, and the format of his book provides for the largest and hence most luscious presentation of numerous color plates.

Even the knowledgeable Aldiss can't keep his bibliography completely straight; he has the STAR SCIENCE FICTION magazine turning into a paperback book series after one issue when in fact it was the book series that spawned the magazine; and he jumbles the MARVEL SCIENCE STORIES sequence too. This magazine was started before World War II as a pulp, suspended during the war, revived as a digest-size magazine, converted back to a pulp and then dropped for good. Good! Quits!

Aldiss's book comes across as a bit of a scrapbook too, but there's no pretense at anything else, and it's grand fun. What's most appealing is his presentation of thirty "mini-portfolios" of SF artists, ranging from the great and near-great (Paul, Bok, Bonestell, Finlay, Rogers, Wesso) to the minor-but-interesting craftsmen who managed to produce, on occasion, a fine piece in which they outdid themselves (Cartier, Dold, Urban, Jack Binder, Schneemann, Rod Ruth).

The book is lush with color plus many well-chosen monotypes, and while I think Aldiss includes a few clinkers (he's home-towing the British audience) the gallery is generally a delight.

What all of this means is—for me at least—the clear emergence of Frank R. Paul as the definitive pulp science fiction artist, and through the artwork of Paul the single clear ringing note of the pulp ghetto in which science fiction, the Jew of the category fiction world, expressed its essential spirit: optimism.

Paul saw technology as creating a bright, clean, exuberant world; he saw the future as a golden road to glory; he saw space a panorama glittering with exciting places for Man to visit and races for him to befriend. Several of these commentators point out that Paul's machines are all clean, glowing, vivid; his aliens, even when he attempts to make them monstrous and menacing, come out looking cuddly, friendly, funny. Those great slaving fangs somehow seem more like the teeth of a puppy who wants to chew on your finger than those of a beast that's going to eat you up.

That's why, I suppose, the ghetto looks nice to us in retrospect. It was a terrible place while we lived there, but we knew things were going to get better.

27 We escaped from the ghetto and here we

are in the promised land beyond, but somehow, for some reason, things are worse!

That's why Judy Lynn del Rey has taken Ballantine Books back to the 1930s, and is selling more books than anybody else in the field.

Somehow this all makes me feel vaguely sad.

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#### THE HARD FACTS

ALTERNATE WORLDS, The Illustrated History of Science Fiction by James Gunn. Prentice Hall 1975, 256 pages, \$29.95. (Hardbound)

THE SCIENCE FICTION BOOK, An Illustrated History by Franz Rottensteiner. Seabury 1975, 160 pages, \$14.95. (Hardbound)

FANTASTIC SCIENCE-FICTION ART 1926-1954 by Lester del Rey, Ballantine Books 1975, 96 pages, \$5.95. (Paperbound)

2000 A.D. Illustrations From The Golden Age of Science Fiction Pulp by Jacques Sadoul. Henry Regnery Company 1975, 176 pages, \$17.95 (Hardbound) or \$7.95 (Paperbound)

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SCIENCE FICTION ILLUSTRATION by Anthony Frewin. Pyraeod Books 1975, 128 pages, \$4.95. (Paperbound)

SCIENCE FICTION ART, The Fantasies of SF by Brian Aldiss. Bounty Books - Crown Publishers 1975, 128 pages, \$9.95. (Paperbound)

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#### TIME BOMB

What do you do when a friend sends his first (I think) published novel with the inside cover message: "Merry Christmas to Dick Geis from Ray Nelson"? (And below that is a Nelson drawing of a fan with his propeller beanie raised in salute.)

Well, you note that his novel is titled BLAKE'S PROGRESS and is Laser Book #13, and maybe in anticipation you groan a little.

This is known as prejudging.

With a sense of injured obligation I opened the book and began to read Terry Carr's interesting introduction. He has nice, perceptive things to say about Ray Nelson and the novel.

Terry Carr is rarely wrong.

For it is a remarkably good novel. In fact (and I hesitate to admit this), it triggered some tears at the end. It got to me. It may get to you, too.

It is about a war between good and evil up and down the time stream, and it involv-

es radical altering of human history, alternate civilizations, the fate of mankind, billions of souls (yes, damnit, souls!), and more.

It is about love and loving in a physical and character climate that you'd swear would result in divorce or murder ten times over. It is about a kind of faith and loyalty and character and virtue the existence of which one must today accept...as an act of faith.

It is about the lives of the 18th century mystic poet and artist William Blake and (especially) his wife, Kate. It is their struggle with Urizen, the bearded, naked man from the far, far future who travels in time and who loves to make changes, to indulge himself and to exact a terrible and strange vengeance.

BLAKE'S PROGRESS by R.F. Nelson (Laser #13, 95¢) is worthy of a Hugo and Nebula nomination. I kid you not.

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Entrepreneurs are rejects. They employ themselves because they are, in one way or another, unemployable.

—Richard Cornuelle, DE-MANAGING AMERICA, THE FINAL REVOLUTION

"I see a hungry mind. I shall feed it on wormwood and gore."

—"Death's Other Domain," SPACE: 1999  
(Thanks to Buzz Dixon)

## PLUGGED IN An Essay-Review By George Warren

THE COMPUTER CONNECTION By Alfred Bester  
Berkley/Putnam, \$6.95

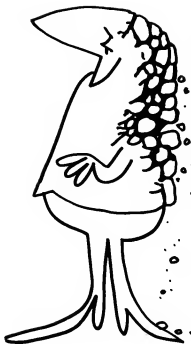
Every writer worth a damn, on the way to learning his own mind and finding his own voice, tries his hand at stealing what he needs from his elders and betters. This is not the same as what the crickets boys, up there in their academic haze, like to call literary influence. One simply sees a technical device lying around and, sending up a quick prayer that nobody's looking, tries to smuggle it out of the store under his coat.

The reason there are not more plagiarism suits these days, considering the sheer volume of print out there and the impossibility of coming up with a new plot, is that this form of larceny simply doesn't work. You're tired of the same old hamburger and you swipe a leg of lamb, but in truest Looking-Glass style by the time you get it home it's the same old hamburger again. The trouble is that you can only use as much of another writer's stuff as you can use, and that's the long and short of it.

Exhibit A: I can remember trying to snitch a certain *je ne sais quoi* from James M. Cain, or maybe it was Dashiell Hammett. It sounded like just what I needed. After hours of snipping and pasting, however, I had to admit that the damned stuff kept going sour until I had reworked it in my own way, and then it was so damned different from the stuff I'd tried to swipe that you couldn't really call it plagiarism any more. (You could call it stealing, though, and acknowledge the debt. Thanks, fellows.)

What did I get out of all this...ah... let us call it research? Only the slowly dawning knowledge, which grew more secure as I went on, that nobody's voice but my own would do, and that when I found that voice I'd better trust it because it was all I was ever going to have. Same for you too, pal; if you're going to win any ball games it's going to be with your own nickel curve and forkball, not Nolan Ryan's smoke. And that's okay: when you've found your own voice and taken the trouble to train it some, it will miraculously become the Almost Perfect Instrument for saying the only things you're ever going to be worth a damn at saying.

You'd better learn to be satisfied with that. No apprenticeship you can put in, no education no matter how expensive, is going to do much more for you as a writer. Some things simply have to be lived through.



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(As Sir Donald Tovey put it once, there's one thing every composition student would love to be able to learn from studying Haydn and Beethoven, but can't, and that's how to get out of trouble, and the reason is that these guys never seemed to get into trouble in the first place.)

So: the process can't be replaced, it can't be elided. Some people don't seem to have the same trouble with it that others have...but you'll notice I said seem. You have to fail at being everybody else before you can be yourself, and of course that's the only person in the world that it's any good at all for you to be. And nobody can save you from the pain of finding this out first hand; it's dues stuff.

This should be self-evident, but we keep on trying to steal and failing. Why, I used to wonder, couldn't I steal from Ray Bradbury? Well, for one thing, my ear is better than his (we are talking about taste, mind you), but his eye is goddamn terrific, and mine is smudgy and inexact (I have to work like hell to make you see anything at all when I write). Ray Bradbury's individual mixture of strengths and weaknesses differentiates him from me absolutely; they make it as impossible for me to do the "bad" (meaning not-to-my-taste) parts of Bradbury as it is for me to do the gorgeous flights of fancy I've envied for twenty-five years. I'm not only weak in all the wrong places, I'm strong in all the wrong places.

Heinlein? Forget it. First off, he's the absolute, world's champion, totally non-visual writer of them all. Sounds like a

negative assessment; but just you try holding the reader's attention the way he does for oages and pages without ever drawing a picture of things now and then. Try making a character come alive without letting the reader know what he looks like. (There is only one guy in a Heinlein story of whom you can say that you know what he looks like, and that's the feisty old goat who looks just like Robert A. Heinlein—and sounds like him, too, and usually steals the show from everybody else.) And, worst of all, you can't write so much as a page of authentic Heinlein without throwing away forty ideas, because that's how many ideas he has to your one, and a less prodigal talent would have mined each of those ideas for a complete novel. all by itself.

There was a writer once who came up, so to speak, when I was just beginning to read science fiction, and who seemed to have the finding-your-own-voice problem solved to definitely that the mere contemplation of his separate gifts was enough to take my breath away. At the time—and it was, believe me, a real Major League time for science fiction writers, beside whom the pale talents of today seem paltry indeed—this man, more than anyone else around, seemed to have everything. Perfect voice: Like Willie the Whale, he could sing quartets with himself, and every separate tonsil as true as a crystal glass. The guy could do anything: plot, characterization, visualization, keep the crowd on the edge of the seat, and, for lagniappe, toss off world-shaking ideas as if they came in the mail. And his stories moved so swiftly, and so inexorably to their smashing climaxes, that you never quite had the time to think about whether he had any style or not. (And is there anyone out there so big a fool as to dispute my contention that this constitutes the finest style of all?)

Yeah, Alfred Bester nearly put me out of business...until I finally figured out that I couldn't win any ball games by borrowing his fast ball, either.

Now? Not especially. The best explanation I ever heard of Bester's impact on science fiction was Larry Shaw's: Bester simply took the novel more seriously than anyone else in the field. Novelty isn't that important; the best stories are the old ones anyhow. Bester wrote a book called THE DEMOLISHED MAN, in which he stole some technique—as much as he could use, remember?—from ULYSSES, and a plot from CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, and made a story out of the result that can still stand you on your ear. I repeat, nothing was new—except Bester's own marvelous mind and eye and ear and per-

sonality, and (just as you might expect) these were enough to make the old ideas sound new and the tarnished old plot look shiny and golden. A couple of years later he did the same sort of alchemist's stunt with an old plot called THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO, called it THE STARS MY DESTINATION, and blew the dust off the old chestnut even more expertly than he'd done before. Apparently I'm not alone in thinking this the best science fiction novel I've ever read.

Then, fortunately for him, unfortunately for the reader, Mr. Bester moved on; he was a man who knew other, more reliable ways to make a buck, and science fiction didn't pay him well enough to keep him. Perhaps a dozen or so short stories followed, scattered over the years. And that was it. And now, God help me, I'm faced with the very messy personal problem of reviewing his first science fiction novel in twenty years, THE COMPUTER CONNECTION (the shorter version was published in ANALOG as THE INDIAN GIVER, a better, if less "commercial," title).

(Messy? Personal? Well, I owe Bester more than a bit. Failing at the task of stealing at Bester was a necessary and important stumbling block along the road to the limited enlightenment I possess. If it's not too highfalutin a term, he's a literary father of mine, and as such I love him and revere him. But if the only currency I have to repay him with is praise for THE COMPUTER CONNECTION, I'm in trouble.)

The problem: Mr. Bester seems to have lost his voice. Or, perhaps, lost his faith in it, which amounts to the same thing. That lovely, supple, versatile instrument he had, that he could do anything in the world with that any writer in his right mind would want to do, is now (if we are to believe THE COMPUTER CONNECTION is anything but a momentary aberration) walled away from us behind a barrier of bad—pretentious, pompous, "literary" in the worst sense of the word—style. In this book—a mistake if ever a writer of genuine, God-given, self-honed-to-a-razor-edge talent made one—Mr. Bester has sacrificed suspense, empathetic identification, resolution, and virtually everything else that would make a story worth re-reading to the ugliest, most forced, most artificial, most infuriating narcissistic literary style since the darkest days of Nelson Alden or the worst excesses of Herbert Gold (whose THE MAN WHO WAS NOT WITH IT I recommend as the very model of how to write an outline for a serious novel and the very model of how not to execute it).

Loss of voice! God, what a thought... particularly when the voice was as virile and important to one as Bester's. There are, to be sure, a few "literary" writers of science fiction today, pushing the notion that the proper way to write is to ring unmelodious changes on a static situation, and thanks to their uplifting influence we now have three-and-a-fraction professional science fiction magazines where once we had one or two dozen. Several of these are making big noises about leaving the field; a good idea, if ten years too late for everyone, but this defection business is in their cases strictly twelve-point-bold headlines on page sixteen. This, or any other, field can afford to lose any number of small, bad writers. It can hardly afford to lose even one good, big one.

Is the loss permanent or temporary? Voluntary or involuntary? I'm not sure, but I'd put my money on the whoring-after-false-gods syndrome, which is curable by a return to the religion of one's fathers. How long the aberration will last I have no way of knowing, either, but I'd guess it's not over by a long shot. Mr. Bester shows some signs of enjoying writing this way. And he constantly stops the action, blunts points, spoils scenes, smothers promising characterizations and slows story motion to absolute-zero stasis, all for the sake of that ghastly, cutey-mutey style. Even that A. J. Liebling Test ("The book to write is well, and how you go about it is your own business"); but there is about enough plot in that 220-page book for a forty-page novelette, and the padding shows, on all sides. "Good" writing? I think not.

All this seems to have given even an experienced precis-writer like Ben Bova trouble, doing blurbs and synopses for the serial version in ANALOG. Both times, introducing the story for the second and third installments, Bova spent the bulk of his space helping the reader straighten out the totally static scenes he'd been left with at the end of the previous sections. Reading these precis one right after the other, you begin to notice how little has happened each time.

(And, of course, you're bound to ask the one question which must most infuriate Mr. Bova most: would John Campbell have bought the book in this form? Would I myself, who complain about it, have bought it? The answer is probably yes, reluctantly, and we'd all three have cried our way to the bank. A new Bester novel after twenty years? Are you kidding?)

But compare. THE DEMOLISHED MAN opens

this way:

Explosion! Concussion! The vault doors burst open. And deep inside, the money is racked for pillage, rapine, loot. Who's that? Who's inside the vault? Oh God! The Man With No Face! Looking. Looming. Silent. Horrible. Run. Run....

Run, or I'll miss the Paris Pneumatic and that exquisite girl with her flower face and figure of passion. There's time if I run. But that isn't the Guard before the gate. Oh Christ! The Man With No Face. Looking. Looming. Silent. Don't scream. Stop screaming....

But I'm not screaming. I'm singing on a stage of sparkling marble while the music soars and the lights burn. But there's no one out there in the amphitheater. A great shadowed pit... empty except for one spectator. Silent. Staring. Looming. The Man With No Face.

This is Ben Reich's recurring nightmare, disturbing and unforgettable. If that doesn't make you want to read on, stop here; you won't like the rest of what I have to say either. But my, did I ever wish I could write like that, and did it ever bother me for a long time until I learned to live with the fact that no, that wasn't my proper voice either.

THE STARS MY DESTINATION, after a brief preface, opens this way:

He was one hundred and seventy days dying and not yet dead. He fought for survival with the passion of a beast in a trap. He was delicious and rotting, but occasionally his primitive mind emerged from the burning nightmare of survival into something resembling sanity. Then he lifted his mute face to Eternity and muttered: "What's a matter, me? Help, you goddamn gods...."

And the damned story never lets up for a moment; with that first mood of bristling tension established, Bester really pours on the steam.

Now try THE COMPUTER CONNECTION:

I tore down the Continental Shelf off the Bogue Bank while the pogo made periscope hops trying to track me. Endless plains of salt flats like the steppes of Central Russia (music of Borodin here); mounds of salts where the new breed of prospector was sifting for rare earths; towers of venomous vapors on the eastern horizon where the pumping stations were sucking up more of

the Atlantic and extracting deuterium for energy transfer. Most of the fossil fuels were gone; the sea level had been lowered by two feet; progress.

Ugh.

Goethe once said something to the effect that the only problem the novel poses is that of getting the reader to let you treat of life from a specific point of view. If you can get his collaboration on that, Goethe said, you're home free—provided you have a point of view.

Another problem, then, that I have with Mr. Bester's new book is that of point of view. There are ways of thinking buried in there that put me off horribly. For one thing, he seems to be going out of his way to butter up every fashionably bellicose minority of 1974-75. But this isn't bad enough (despite the perfectly workable axiom that the one sure way to write bad science fiction is to make it "relevant" to right now); hear him on the WASP, who is ineptly referred to as a "honk" (the exact equivalent of "kike" or "jig"):

A capsule floated down on top of the bobs with its jets spraying fireworks. A blue-eyed blond astronaut stepped out and came up to us. "Ouh," he mumbled in Kallikak. "Oud-duh-duh-duh...."

"What's this thing selling?" Uncas asked.

"Ouh," Fee told him. "That's about all the honks can say, so they named the product after it. I think it's a penis amplifier."

A passage like that, which reflects, not the prejudices of the characters but the prejudices of the author, and quite directly too, does not make me want to know the writer better.

Other cavils come up here and there, boobies that should have been caught in the copyediting phase: one of the characters is named Fee-S Grauman's Chinese after her birthplace; it's already been Mann's Chinese for some years, and locals simply call it "The Chinese." The narrator is called "Guig" as a diminutive of "Grand Guignol"; I shudder to think how Mr. Bester pronounced bologna. If you're the type, too, to be turned on by the sort of tin-ear lingo Anthony Burgess made up for CLOCKWORK ORANGE, with every damned word ringing false, Bester's "Black Spanglish" version of the Beatles on page 121 will be right up your alley. Otherwise....

Much of this can, of course, be passed over. I would, however, like to think that if I'd been copyediting the book I wouldn't have statted the reference on page 165 to

"a rare Nixon nickel." How about Agnew postage stamps?

For the rest—and yes, the plot does seem to be the least important thing, fit to leave for last—there is a bit of plot there about a mad doctor of sorts and a computer (the title), and some fairly interesting ideas on cryonics and epilepsy and immortality and a lot of other things, all of which might have seemed fascinating in the context of an honest-to-God story. There's a love story of sorts, but it quickly settles into stasis. There's a promising character in the Chinese Theatre girl, but Bester kills her off just as her relationship with his antihero (a very unlikely sort of Amerind indeed) is getting interesting; can't have any conflict in there, any growth, you know, any change. All interest the story might have had for me died early on the Procrustean rack of that cloying style and that wrongheaded, unworkable, untenable literary theory, a victim of Beste's relentless urge to sabotage each and every faintest hint of a traditional story value for the sake of silly verbal fireworks, better than half of which fizzle like cheap Taiwan stuff.

The curse of it all is that this is not some poor floundering stiff of a twenty-year-old, struggling out of the cocoon, writing this dreadful guff. It's a master who has lost faith in his own voice—in its validity and its viability in a world in which semiliterate rock poetsasters not only make millions but gather all the literary goodies (Oxonian exegeses, Major Reviews in THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF EACH OTHER'S BOOKS, deniged status) in the fashionable-let establishment) as well, and all for barely—just barely—manging to rhyme moon, June and runcible spoon. (On second thought scratch "runcible"—it has three syllables.) In a world of bad values Mr. Bester seems to have lost faith in the notion that that One True Voice of his own individuality that he discovered many years ago is more important than any he might assume in what seems to be his present panic.

Halfway through the present book Bester gets off an epigram with a bit of poetry in it (and a bit of truth, too, as is so often the case with things that have a bit of poetry in them): "There mere fact of youth is beauty; the mere fact of longevity is authority." Yet here we find a man, the master of a difficult art in his sixties, bowing to the feeble authority of youth and writing trendy-kid-writer stuff, fit only for some damn fool summer writing course. Can Alfred Bester, at his age and with his accomplishments, be afraid to be Alfred Bester?

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Thomas Nelson, Inc. sent along three books for review recently, and they sat on the kitchen table for a week before I impulsively grabbed them and spent an hour and some spotty reading during TV commercials to find out where they could be placed in the pantheon.

PASSAGE TO PLUTO begins on page one with three astronauts being given information about Pluto. "Gosh!" exclaimed Tony Hale, the mechanic, "it must be awfully cold."

Well now. An astronaut mechanic? And I doubt a grown man a few years in the future would say "Gosh!" in any circumstances. "God!", "Shit!", or "Christ!", but not "Gosh!" I doubt if there are even any kids around who say "Gosh!" in real life. Only on TV and in juveniles in which people speak a special language called Nice English.

Later, on page 10 of the novel, the Project Director, in answer to a question, replies "Good gracious, no." It was then I realized I was in the hands of lazy editors.

There is some Nice political philosophy expressed early on: the space probe is a project on the United Nations Exploration Agency. The team is 'international in character': Sir William H.R.G. Gillanders is director, and the three astronauts are Morrey Kant, American (team leader), Tony Hale, mechanic, an Englishman, and Serge Smyslov, Russian. All white, of course. Truly international.

Some allowance must be made for the fact that this novel was written by an Englishman.

On the copyright/credits page a Summary is printed as part of the Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data. It says: "Three astronauts on a space flight to Pluto encounter a huge mass that pulls the spaceship toward it with a murderous attraction."

What we have here is a Juvenile, of course. An extremely Nice Juvenile. Safe and suitable for any child who is not yet old enough to know when he is being written down to (a very narrow time span).

(PASSAGE TO PLUTO by Hugh Walters. Thomas Nelson, Inc., \$5.95)

#

On the other hand, the movers and shakers at Thomas Nelson had the good sense to contract with Terry Carr for an anthology titled CREATURES FROM BEYOND (\$6.95): nine

stories of sf and fantasy, only two of which are recent. Here are the original publication dates:

- "The Worm" by David G. Keller (1927)
- "Mimic" by Donald A. Wollheim (1942)
- "It" by Theodore Sturgeon (1940)
- "Beauty and the Beast" by Henry Kuttner (1940)
- "Some Are Born Cats" by Terry and Carol Carr (1973)
- "Full Sun" by Brian Aldiss (1967)
- "The Silent Colony" by Robert Silverberg (1954)
- "The Street That Wasn't There" by Clifford D. Simak and Carl Jacobi (1941)
- "Dear Devil" by Eric Frank Russell (1950)

It's a fair bet that most of these stories will be new to most readers. Some were to me, and I've been rotting my mind with sf since 1958.

These stories are written in a different mode than most of the sf of today; they strive to startle and amaze, and the authors were not afraid to be sincere and direct. The idea, the joy of revelation is the goal.

#

The third Thomas Nelson book is BEADBON-NY ASH (\$5.95), a novel by Winifred Finlay: a densely written story of Scottish myth and time-travel from now to the sixth century and back.

A young girl with emotional problems who is visiting young friends in Scotland becomes enmeshed in the embodiment of Scottish myth—The Hag—who is part oracle and part catalyst for the supernatural (magic) taking of the three young people to the remote, pagan past, to the kingdom of Dalriada.

Winifred Finlay knows a hell of a lot of Scottish lore, superstition, mythology and history, and she incorporates her knowledge in this story very well.

It did seem to me she mucked around too long, rather confusingly, in the opening section of the book, with Bridie's problem and her interpersonal relationships with family and friends. But once the Hag does her thing and the young people find themselves with different identities in pagan Scotland the story becomes interesting and powerful.

You might call this a heavy Juvenile.

It has a "happy" resolution and the kids make it back to the present.

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'Last Saturday, I went to Bookwest '75 and had a marvelous time. For starters, they admitted me for \$1.00 because I'm unemployed and as a fellow, cost-conscious reclus, you can appreciate how that jazzed me. Wambaugh was impressive. Carobeth Laird, an 80-year old woman in a wheelchair, was astonishing. Irwin Shaw—as interesting as a man can be who sounds like a driver for a wholesale meat packer... And there were side benefits at the authors and publishers displays. For instance, I met a faggot who writes poetry and calls himself MANROOF. My first glimpse of Ellison was off-putting since I'm leery of short men and biased toward pipe smokers but he was witty and wildly entertaining in a way Woody Allen only aspires to be. That was for the first twenty minutes, and then he read a story he had written—an allegorical put-down of the New York publishing scene—and proved himself to be a pipe-smoking shortie after all. There was no way to get him off; he ran 20 minutes over his allotted time while the Kronhausens fidgeted in the wings anxious, no doubt, to make their presentation and get back to sex.

'I didn't stay for The Sex People. I think the subject has been exhausted and Eberhart K., an atrophied mummy of a man, looked like a horrible example of what happens to you if you do it too much. But I did get to talk to Michael Kearns (bright and adorable) and my supper was paid for by Vernon Quick, a black, ex-thief who lives on the royalties from a book he wrote on how the citizen can protect himself from thievery. Truly a splendid day!

'ON THE CONSUMER FRONT:

'Dinner Pot, the meal in a box with flavored chunks of protein, is only marginally edible and will give you bad breath and turn your stools green.

'Smoking a 120 mm. cigarette (Dawn) is an incredibly boring experience.

'Lipton's Make-A-Better-Burger won't.

'Old Dutch Cleanser not only doesn't chase dirt, it barely nudges it.

'The lemon scent of Fab is so overpowering, it will make whatever room it's kept in uninhabitable. Thankfully, it disappears in the wash.'

((And has everyone discovered by now how long Teflon really lasts on frying pans?))

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# THE GIMLET EYE Commentary On Science Fiction & Fantasy Art

By Jon Gustafson

I'd like to open this column with a short plea to the science fiction illustrators in the field, those men and women who have done and are still doing so much for science fiction; please help me in my quest for understanding about the field of sf illustration.

While my art background allows me to make cogent comments about the actual illustrations as they appear on the books and magazines, there is still much about the artist-art editor-publisher relationships that I don't yet completely understand. I need information, and lots of it. I need opinions. I need complaints and praises, from both the artists and the editors/publishers. If you feel that you have anything that might help, please write to me at:

Box 2003 C.S.,  
Pullman, WA 99163.

Now, on with the reviews.

When I look for excellent examples of sf illustrations in the magazine field, my first thought is to pick up the latest issue of ANALOG because it consistently has the best illustrations of the pro mags.

The cover on the November, 1975 issue is no exception. It is by Vincent Difate, a steadily-improving artist whose work I have been familiar with for quite a number of years. As far as I can determine, it is his first cover for ANALOG (and I pined through about fifteen years of mags to be sure), though he has appeared with interior art for some years, and has done some paperback covers.

In a way, he seems to be like Jack Gaughan; his forte is black-and-white illos which he does with great skill and imagination. It is his sense of chiaroscuro (the dramatic use of dark and light areas in a work) which helps this painting become an attention-getter and very successful in the artistic sense.

The picture is a portrait of a robot; we can see the head, upper torso and one hand in the foreground; in the background is a rocky bit of ground, and Jupiter hangs in the sky, large and orange. A scattering of stars completes the picture. The robot is mainly colored silver, with hints of violet on the body, and a violet "visor" on the head. It is tilted slightly, as if the viewer were looking up at it, creating

diagonal movements (this is important, because diagonal movements attract the eye more than ones that are exactly vertical or horizontal). The skill in rendering the feel of metal is readily apparent, and adds to the effectiveness of the work.

This is a strong and effective painting; Difate has not always had this feeling of confidence and skill in his works (a good example of one of his poorer covers is on a recent paperback edition of John Brunner's POLYMATHEM), but has improved greatly in the past few years.

In this issue of ANALOG, there is a special feature about Difate; I wouldn't mind this becoming a regular feature as it adds some insight about the artists' own feelings about their cover work.

###

GALAXY is a magazine that has had its ups and downs lately, and its covers seem to echo this. The cover for the September, 1975 issue is definitely one of their "ups" and is by one of my favorite illustrators, Stephen Fabian.

Fabian is another excellent artist and one whose use of dramatic darks and lights is equaled by very few in the field.

This cover shows an arrowhead-shaped starship, colored in blues with touches of magenta and yellow towards its bow, floating (actually, it's moving quite rapidly towards the "nebula" in the left side of the picture) in space. It depicts what is described in a "Forum" article by Paul Anderson; i.e. what an observer aboard a starship would see at speeds approaching that of light. What looks like a nebula is a "starbow", the visual distortion of the light from the stars in those areas near where the starship is headed. The colors in the starbow are quite lovely with red being the main color, complemented nicely with some strong greens and small touches of yellow, blue and white.

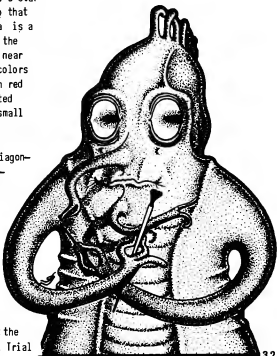
Again, there is a good use of diagonals in this painting, and the arrowhead shape of the starship pulls in the viewer's eyes. While it looks like a very simple painting, there is a wealth of detail in the ship that isn't noticed immediately and there are subtleties in the handling of the colors that turn a mere illustration into a delight for the eye. If there is one thing about it that bothers me (and it isn't the artist's fault), it is the "Special Trial

Offer" thing that the publisher pasted on part of Fabian's painting. It looks stupid and ugly, and is an insult to a fine piece of art.

###

And now the Gimlet Eye turns to the other side of the tracks; those magazine covers that just don't have it. In a very real way I don't like to do this; I'd much rather review only those covers and interior illos that I think are noteworthy and good, those done with care and skill, those (this is a very subjective business) I like. However, this isn't possible, as art and illustration need some criticism, some outside critique that isn't blinded by self-interest.

With these thoughts in mind, I now turn to the October, 1975 issue of GALAXY. The cover is by Pini and Pini; I presume Wendy Pini is one half of the team, but the identity of the other Pini is as yet unknown to me. The painting illustrates a scene from Niven and Pournelle's INFERNO: in the foreground is a car (that looks like it came out of the horrible "sf" movie, DEATH RACE 2000) with an assortment of frightened humans (and a couple of other characters of unknown lineage) scattered over it. The car is careering across a desert and is being bombarded by what look like small meteors. In the background, behind the smoke trailing the car, is what looks suspiciously like the demon from Walt Disney's FANTASIA (specifically, from the "Night on Bald Mountain" sequence), though this demon





lacks the aura of menace that the Disney studio was able to impart to their demon (in a cartoon, yet; there is a message in this somewhere).

The overall impression is not one of great heat, as Pini and Pini obviously intended, but rather an impression of a movie set with a very large red light somewhere just outside the picture. In fact, the only parts of the work that do impress one as being hot are the meteors, which are flashing past the figures. The colors in this picture are basically red and purple, with a black cloud of smoke neatly dividing the foreground and background. The effect is too monochromatic to be really good and detracts from the potential of the painting. Wendy Pini is an artist who has the talent to become an exceptionally fine illustrator; however, she will have to overcome a couple of minor problems such as her tendency towards a cloying sentimentality (her interior illos in this same issue are an example of this) and her rather poor use of color. I will continue to look for her work with a sense of hopeful anticipation.

###

The works I look forward to with the least amount of anticipation are those of the team of Mazzy and Schell. I absolutely cannot understand the fascination that they apparently hold for Edward Ferman, the editor of *FRSF*.

The cover for the October, 1975 issue is the current leader for "The Worst SF Illustration of the Year." It's beginning to look like Mazzy and Schell are going to come in first, second and third in the competition. It's a particular shame, too, as this particular one is on *FRSF*'s 25th Anniversary issue.

As you can see, the illustration seems to be some sort of a symbolic work, since it makes no obvious sense (while, in sf illustration, this is not an absolute prerequisite, it does require some skill in presentation). It shows an inverted pyramid with another pyramid upright on its base, standing on a flat, Hallowe'en-orange surface. On this surface are lines, giving it a feeling of perspective; on the top of the pyramids is their latest version of the "magic eye", which, in this case, is created by an eye-shaped shape behind which is a yellow-orange circle. This circle has another circle in it, thus the "magic eye". The background (the sky?) is a flat, unrelieved blue and has just about as much character as cold oatmeal; this simile, I suppose, pretty well sums up the whole picture, for that matter.

Now, I can't go on about bludgeoning Mazzy and Schell's work forever, though sometimes it seems that way, and I will have to give them credit for three things:

1. They sign their names very neatly and keep the letters small.
2. They have to be the gutsiest (or least expensive?) artists in the field to keep Ferman buying their stuff, and to keep turning out the most consistent work I've ever seen (it's all uniformly bad), and
3. On a slightly more serious note, their cover for the December issue of *FRSF* is a marked improvement, even though they made an evil-enbadandnasty wind-god look like a kindly Neptune with frostbite.

###

So. Laser Books, edited by our friend and resident missionary, Roger Elwood, has come out with their first dozen books (as of late November), although the last three haven't hit the stands here in backwater Pullman, yet.

I was originally planning to do a composite review of all of them, but since they're all so similar, I'll just take the one I think the best and comment on it.

The book is *INVASION* by Aaron Wolfe and the cover is by Kelly Freas, as are all the Laser covers. There are four standard elements in all of the Laser covers so far issued: all have a portrait of a man or woman in the lower right corner (apparently the protagonist, although sometimes the face doesn't match the story description at all), all have some kind of cursory illustration depicting some element or scene occurring in the story, and all have a heavy black border running across the top and down the right edge. These elements lead to a sense of monotony that will eventually lead to artistic stagnation in the series; I hope this can be avoided by some alteration in either artist or, perhaps, elimination of the portrait theme in some cases.

So much for generalities. I picked this cover because the portrait on this book showed the most emotion of the batch. The hero is showing his teeth and rolling his eyes downward in fear at the "monsters" lurking about the house in the background. Said house is abandoned in the snow and three of the yellow-eyed critters are coming towards him. In the story, they are described as insect-like; unfortunately, that doesn't come across very well from the painting. As with all these paintings, this one was probably done in a hurry; it has that slightly unfinished look that Freas seems to use more and more lately, in strong contrast to the carefully delineated

works he used to do. The quality is definitely not up to the level we are used to seeing from Kelly Freas and makes me wonder whether or not he has become so much in demand that he no longer has the necessary time to do a really good job on his illustrations. This is a matter that I will press, as I would hate to see the quality of his work deteriorate (for whatever reason).

((REG NOTE: Jon may get an argument from Kelly Freas, since Roger Elwood, in a phone conversation in mid-December, mentioned that Kelly reads each Laser manuscript before he does the cover, which speaks to a high level of conscientiousness. I doubt he would scam on the actual painting time after taking the time to read the full ms. It is possible the "unfinished" style is deliberate and was chosen for subtle commercial reader-impact reasons.))

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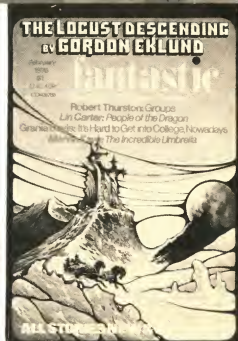
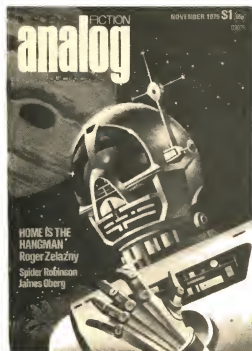
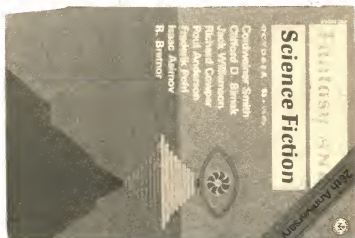
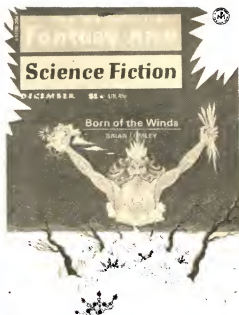
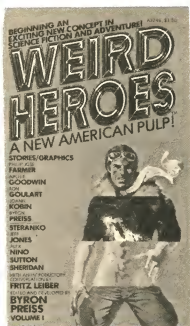
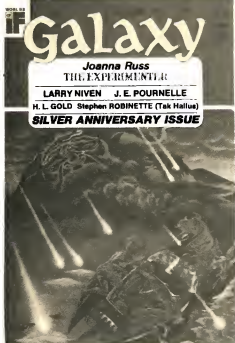
Another book I picked up recently is *Pyramid Books' WEIRD HEROES, Volume 1*, edited by Byron Preiss. I haven't read it yet, and may not; that not why I bought the book. I purchased it because it is a "standard" paperback with interior illustrations, and lots of 'em.

There are five stories in this book, by five different authors, and each one is illustrated by a different artist. The artists are well known to followers of comic art: Jin Steranko, Jeff Jones (one of my favorites, regardless of category), Alex Nino, Tom Sutton and Dave Sheridan. Although most of the illos are not of a very high calibre (with the exceptions of those by Jones and Nino), they are what I have hoped to see for years; books with more than just a cover illustration, books with a series of high-quality, black-and-white illustrations to break up the monotony of a couple hundred pages of paper with nothing but words on them. As I have said before, the human eye (and mind) really needs some sort of break from the humdrum routine of word after word after word after....

I hope this is a trial effort (as opposed to a one-shot) and that Pyramid will receive a slug of letters asking for more books with interior illustrations (hint, hint). Wouldn't it be great to see a reprint of, say, *DUNE* or *STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND* or *THE DISPOSSESSED* or Clarke's new *IMPERIAL EARTH* with five or ten really good interior illos?

###

The last book I want to review is from DAW Books (a company that seems to know the



value of good cover illustrations by talented artists) and is STAR (Psi Cassiopeia) by C. I. Defontenay.

The painting is done by a very gifted California artist, George Barr, who has just recently (in the past couple of years) been "discovered" by the sf publishers ((after years of fan artwork)); science fiction illustration is very much like the entertainment field in that the "overnight discoveries" have invariably been around for years, working hard to perfect their skills. George Barr is one of those "overnight discoveries"; two years ago I had no idea he existed (for that matter, two years ago I didn't know fandom existed!), then I saw a cover by him on an sf book about 18 months ago. Now, I can hardly turn around without seeing something more by him.

Back to the cover. One of the primary visual attracting stimuli used in the sf illustration field (and has been used for about 45 years) is the partly-clad, young, beautiful woman. This cover is a prime example of that stimulus, and a very good one. Rarely is the female figure rendered with more grace than is found on this cover.

The painting shows the woman holding a fruit to a heron-like bird; in the near background is a blue/grey-skinned alien servant holding a tray of more fruit. The setting is idyllic and peaceful, with a gnarled tree in the background forming a visual frame around the figures, making them more pronounced and important. The colors are soft and radiant, and deny the "theory" that loud and glaring colors are needed to attract the eye; the woman does that quite well simply by being beautiful. There seems to be a subtle influence from Hannes Bok in the depiction of the alien (though this is unconscious, George says). More influence comes from Maxfield Parrish, particularly in the style of application of paint and the use of colors; the orange at their feet is very similar to a favorite Parrish color. The alien's eyes, mouth and "ears" are very similar to the style of Bok; if an artist is going to be influenced by anyone, Bok and Parrish might as well be the ones (it would be hard to find better).

There is no such thing as a perfect work of art, let alone a perfect illustration, and this is no exception (although it comes pretty close). The flaws in this cover seem to revolve mainly around the pose of the woman; it seems too stylized and, thus, loses some of its effectiveness. It is, however, better than almost anything I have seen for months (in the paperback, anyway), and I applaud George Barr for

creating it. There are, I might add, three interior illustrations by Barr, none of which I am wild about...they seem too sketchy to be really effective. However, it is nice to see another book with interior illos; my thanks to Don Wollheim. George Barr is an artist from whom we will see many more illustrations, I'm sure, and for that I'm grateful.

At a vista.

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• REG NOTE: Jim Baen wishes it to be  
• known that he was not responsible  
• for picking the Feb. 1974 GALAXY  
• cover.  
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REG NOTE: I had some space left on the page devoted to covers analyzed in Jon's column, so I included the Feb. 76 FANTASTIC cover by Steve Fabian. It is the most lovely fantasy cover I have seen in years. Congratulations to all concerned.

#### PROZINE NOTES Continued

the change in style and tone in the magazine since he took over. He recruited me and others as columnists, began art features, changed (and improved) the contents page format, created the "Forum".... And he has, I think, presented some very interesting and provocative fiction, especially in the longer lengths. GALAXY is a much livelier and provocative magazine than before, and he deserves recognition and credit.

I read through "Men of Greywater Station" by Howard Waldrop and George R. R. Martin in the March AMAZING SF with increasing enthusiasm, wondering in the back of my mind howcom Ben Bova didn't snap it up (as it must have been offered to him first, let us be realistic).

Then I read the final page and understood. The authors Do It to the readers.

The men are stationed on a vicious alien planet, fighting for their lives against a cunning alien spore-intelligence which can direct all animal life on the planet against their base. Then a troop carrier of Earth soldiers crashes not too far away. Has the spore intelligence gotten into their air and taken them over as it had a few unwary and careless men from the station? Will the alien intelligence march the armored soldiers against the station?

The ending is a sourness. The alien intelligence has, after all, outthought and outfoiled the humans. The last man, wounded,

waits for death or spore-invasion of his body.

This is a gallant, all-out fight...and miserable, humiliating defeat of farmmen/Scientists! Faw! Ptooy! Ick! No ANA-LOG reader wants that to happen. Not after living with and identifying with the Computer Man leader of the station personnel. That ending is positively un-Heinlein!

Led White bought it. It's a well-written piece of work...if you like downers.

It's always an Event in my life when I discover a fine writer. In this case my "finding" Algis Budrys this late in the game is inexcusable, even if he hasn't written sf for ten years.

What triggered my recent gluttonous reading of Budrys (THE FALLING TORCH, Pyramid N2776, 95¢; ROGUE MOON, Equinox 20925, \$1.95; and WHO, Ballantine 24569, \$1.50, all very good to superb novels) was his new novella in the November issue of F&SF: "The Silent Eyes of Time."

Budrys is a writer of clean, detailed, absorbing fiction; the quality is also in his control, his excellent, understated real characterizations, his sureness of his power. The reader is aware that Budrys knows and will give of his knowledge of the world, of people, and give of his wisdom, and will satisfy a hunger for maturity and serenity.

The plot of "The Silent Eyes of Time" isn't exceptional—hundreds of other sf writers could have conceived and written it competently. But Budrys fills it with calm sureness, writing that obtusely will not let the reader go, till the story has ended and the Wish is born that it could continue.

The authors do, however, take note of and illustrate Ghandi's quirkiness, especially in his attitudes to sex. Unlike most of Ghandi's biographers, they are explicit about what is often described as his darkest hour, a moment of horror and extreme spiritual suffering, leading to weeks of self-punishing muteness on Ghandi's part, and a profound pall of gloom over all the inmates of the ashram where this calamity occurred: Ghandi, at the age of sixty-seven, had woken in the night with an erection.'

—Neville Maxwell, reviewing FREEDOM AT MIDNIGHT by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre

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## SAY, DIDN'T I SEE YOU AT LAST YEAR'S MIDWESTCON?

NOW YOU SEE IT/HIM/THEM by Gene DeWeese & Robert Coulson. Doubleday, \$5.95.

Reviewed by Richard Lupoff

It's hard to maintain objectivity when you start reading a book and discover in the first scene that you're a character in it.

That's what happened with NOW YOU SEE IT/HIM/THEM... by Gene DeWeese and Robert Coulson. It's a strictly minor romp of a novel, only just science fiction at all (it's mostly a formal detective story and not, to be as charitable as possible, likely to set that category on its collective ear either) and I just enjoyed the hell out of it.

Coulson and DeWeese are longtime fans from the Middle America belt—I first met them in the 1950s when I was a poor foltom lost soldier boy and they welcomed me into the fellowship of the Indiana Science Fiction Association—and they have the verbal facility of experienced fan writers. In recent years both have emerged as good reliable genre writers turning out nice, safe, enjoyable fiction pretty much at a lower end of the artistic scale, Coulson in SF, DeWeese (as "Jean" rather than "Eugene") in gothics, and now together.

The book is full of Tuckerizations—real SF personalities woven into the story under either their own names or in transparent disguises. In honor of Wilson "Bob" Tucker who instigated the custom eons ago, Tucker himself is murdered on page 1. Numerous other fans and pros appear, including Don (Cleveland) Thompson who is allowed to keep his own name.

The idea of a story set in a science fiction convention has a lot of appeal. They're colorful events at which a lot of eccentric people are hauled together for a brief, intense sequence of time. Tony Boucher saw the potential way back in the dawn of time and wrote his novel ROCKEET TO THE MORGUE. Since then Barry Malzberg used a worldcon for his novel GATHER IN THE HALL OF THE PLANETS (and did a couple of other novels about science fiction collectors, fans and writers), Fredric Brown used a prozine editor and a fan to build his book WHAT MAD UNIVERSE, and short stories galore have been written with fandom or conventions as backgrounds, most notably Robert Bloch's "A Way of Life" and most recently my own "Whatever Happened to Nick Neptune?"

All of which is maybe more than you

want to know about this odd little sub-genre. Let's get back to NOW YOU SEE IT/HIM/THEM...

Once the narrator of the story, Joe Karns, discovers Tucker's corpse, the book alternates between con-report investigations of the SF fan world and conventional (sorry, gang) mystery-detection with the hero unavoidably tangled up in the matter of whodunnit. Karns also manages to get involved with a nasty and possibly crooked visiting sheriff, some mafia types and a number of characters possessing various psi-powers like "mood-reflecting" and maybe teleportation/telekinesis.

The characters are quite standard typ-



es: inquisitive newsman, tough demanding editor, nice cop & nasty cop, mafia hood & mafia don, and of course a whole crew of science fiction fans.

James Blish used to say that a roman a clef was acceptable only when the reader who lacked the key could still read the book with full enjoyment and understanding while the "in" reader got a bonus. By this test, I think NOW YOU SEE IT/HIM/THEM... is just barely passable for the keyless reader (to whom it's "just a story"). But to anybody who's seriously into science fiction, especially anybody who's ever attended a science fiction convention, the book should offer a completely delightful few hours of reading. (Doubleday, \$5.95)

## CHILDREN AT PLAY

AUTUMN ANGELS by Arthur Byron Cover  
Pyramid (paperback) July 1975, 191 pages,  
\$1.25

Reviewed by Dave Wixon

This is a strange, weird book, the product of an incredible imagination. The author is a relative newcomer to SF, and in fact may not really be an SF author at all. But the book is labeled No. 2 in "The Harlan Ellison Discovery Series," and Ellison's is an active presence. In an entertaining and informative introduction, he does just that—he introduces both author and novel.

Moreover, he was an active editor, making the author submit many rewrites. It should not be surprising, then, if the editor's influence can be found in the book. And I thought I saw it there, most of all in the concept of the crawling bird, one of the most painful creatures ever detailed in literature. This bitingly real creation has no purpose but to suffer, to pine for the unreachable, and to be frustrated. It was created, in the book, by godlike men, as an exercise in cruelty: a creature with a bird's desire to fly, but without the ability. And I think author and editor feel it to be the most human character in the book.

The novel does not lend itself easily to summarization, and is best experienced. The action takes place long after aliens have given the human race such powers and immortality as to make it "godlike," an adjective much used in the book. The people all modeled themselves—even to appearance—on characters of fiction or history, and with time forgot they had ever been otherwise. (See how many you can recognize!) They have godlike powers but no goals, and the only thing worth striving for is fame among their peers, a truly fleeting thing. It is the quest for fame by the demon, the lawyer, and the fat man that precipitates the action.

In this book there are eternal children, who are pets; the godlike men are themselves childlike, and there is not one adult in this book. That detracts from its value, for now it is a tale of large persons who are as cruel and unthinking, as one-track-minded, as unreal—as children, yet without childish charm. This book is about what happened to the lost children after Never-neverland lost all its dangers. Peter Pan would have loved this world. (In fact, I'm surprised he wasn't a character in it!)

There is much action but little movement in the book. It is full of hints unfilled and ends left loose: was the other fat man really the secret master?; what happened to the crawling bird?; to the matured eternal child?; did the lonely hawkman and the godlike man with no name remain lost in the anti-matter universe?

All the loose ends and the lack of resolution would suggest this is a not-untypical first novel by an author not yet at home in his craft, were it not for Ellison's assertions of control. Harlan has not, of course, produced long fiction himself, but it would not seem likely that he wouldn't, by now, know something about it. Double negatives aside, Ellison's association with this work suggests that it is more than a first effort, and that it is best judged by other standards. However, the book does not seem to be effective as allegory, for there is little real message in it, beyond the obvious lessons of a humanity with powers too big for its morals. Yet, in the introduction, Ellison proclaims this is to be an exercise in looking at things "from the wrong angle;" apparently, he sees something here.

In fact, the real clue lies in two places: firstly, Ellison states that the book "melds" a vast assortment of pop culture heroes and concepts "into a gestalt that is fresh and different..." secondly, the author includes Philip Jose Farmer in his dedication, for inspiration provided by his novels. Farmer is of course known for an assortment of novels which collect and mix the characters of other authors. Cover is either trying to outdo him, scale-wise, or else to parody the concept.

Even more than in the Farmer books, the game-playing has left little room for meaning, and I cannot, with Ellison, applaud what I cannot find.

What I will applaud is style, storytelling ability, and imagination. This is a wacky book of wild shifts, whether of scene, direction or emotion; it is fantasy, melodrama, and a place for every situation you could imagine. This is an entertaining book—brilliantly so—even though it lacks depth: after all, so do the godlike men.

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"Doc Savage, listen! You've got to help me! Millions of people are going to die if you don't— arrrrh...."

—DOC SAVAGE: THE MAN OF BRONZE  
(Thanks to Buzz Dixon)

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Don't read this if you value your sanity!  
Sorry about that, you nut!

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## BY LOVECRAFT OUT OF DEMILLE

THE WINDS OF ZARR by Richard Tierney  
Silver Scarab Press, \$4.50

Reviewed by Neal Wilgus

In THE WINDS OF ZARR Richard Tierney attempts a three-way marriage between sword-and-sorcery, the Cthulhu Mythos and deMille's version of Exodos—and he damn near brings it off.

This is familiar turf to just about everyone: after the Pharaohs of Khen have kept the Habiru tribes in slavery for several generations the prophet Moshe ben Anram leads his people to freedom, aided by an all-powerful god who brings radioactive plague to the oppressors, then destroys them under the waters of the Crimson Sea.

But in ZARR the Pharaoh and the Prophet



are only minor figures, for the central character is Taggart, a rather faceless time-traveling scientist, and the part of God is played by Yog-Sothoth. Taggart begins as a captive of the priest of Khen, but his knowledge of modern science and the aid of super-powerful aliens called the Zarr soon springs him from life in the brickpits and makes him and his sexless girlfriend witness to the real action—interference in human history by Cthulhuan powers who manipulate things to their own unknowable ends.

There are also links to Atlantis and UFO/Ancient Astronaut themes which we'll probably hear more of, for this is the second in a Zarrian trilogy, though the only one to see print so far. But despite ZARR's involvement in the Cthulhu/deMille Mythos, it stands on its own feet as a tightly-plotted adventure story, convincing

and entertaining if not especially original.

The surprising thing—given the inherent limitations of all the stereotypes Tierney juggles around—is that ZARR works as well as it does. In spite of one-dimensional characters and the built-in defect that everyone knows what's going to happen, Tierney is a powerful enough writer that once you get past the first chapter you're hooked. And there are some compelling scenes, such as the destruction of the city of Rameses and the parting of the sea by the Zarrian wind-towers, which more than make up for the melodramatic climax in which Taggart's visit to the Flaming Mountain triggers the release of Yog-Sothoth.

With this title Silver Scarab Press is attempting to make the leap from "amateur" to "professional," which explains the relatively high price for this paperback. Unfortunately, it doesn't look like a professional book because it's printed in 8 1/2 x 11 fanzine format rather than the standard pocketbook size. It looks thin, too, running only 77 pages (with six full-page drawings by Randall Spurgin and two cover illus by Stephen Fabian)—but narrow margins and small print squeezes close to 1000 words onto a page, making ZARR a full-length novel after all.

This limited edition (1000 copies, 125 signed by the author) promises better things to come: a talented new author and a potentially important independent publisher it'll be good to have around.

## FEAR OF THE DARKOVER

STAR OF DANGER by Marion Zimmer Bradley  
Ace 77945, 160 pages, \$1.25  
THE BLOODY SUN by Marion Zimmer Bradley  
Ace 06851, 191 pages, \$1.25

Reviewed by Lynne Holdom

Finally someone at Ace has realized that people are looking for the older, out-of-print, Darkover novels and has reassured two of them that there have been unavailable for over seven years—two of the best.

STAR OF DANGER takes place early in the history of Terran-Darkovan relations. Darkovans want nothing to do with Terrans and keep contact with them at an absolute minimum despite the Empire's desire to learn more about Darkover. The automatic assumption by the Terrans that their culture is superior annoys Darkovans who are just as sure that theirs is the better way.

Larry Montray, the sixteen year old son of an Empire employee, has succeeded in winning the friendship and trust of an

aristocratic Comyn family, the Altons, and is invited to spend a holiday with them at their country estate. The Terrans, anxious to learn more of Darkover, practically order Larry to accept, which he does.

While he is at Armida, Larry is kidnapped by bandits who mistake him for Kennard Alton. Honor bound, Kennard rescues him from the bandits but, in order to get to safety, they must cross a completely unexplored part of Darkover.

During the journey Larry and Kennard come to learn and trust one another completely and find that their strengths and weaknesses complement each other. Kennard knows woodcraft and mountain climbing while Larry is willing to try new approaches rather than do what has always been done or do nothing. The boys' relationship slowly changes; Larry has felt inferior in a Darkovan setting because he is not as physically able to do things but his knowledge of science saves their lives more than once... and Kennard grows resentful at this as he is used to being the leader and the idea of teamwork is distasteful to him as it is to all Darkovans, but he slowly comes to accept it. These changes in attitude form the core of the novel and are masterfully done.

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THE BLOODY SUN takes place roughly thirty-five years after STAR OF DANGER but Terran-Darkovan relations haven't improved much. The Comyn still keep aloof from the Terrans and their affairs while the Terrans are still trying to learn about Darkover (particularly about matrix sciences) and to open up the planet. However they have learned to think in long-range terms.

Jeff Kerwin Jr., the half Darkovan son of an Empire employee, returns to Darkover to find out about his origins completely unaware that his presence sets off a Terran plan.

He learns that his mother was a Keeper at Arilinn who broke her vows by running off with a Terran and was murdered because of it. Some of the Comyn resent his very existence but Jeff has inherited his mother's telepathic gift and it is desperately needed to prevent the Terrans from taking over. With his aid the Circle at Arilinn can find and use the planet's resources without the help of Terran sciences. However, as soon as mineral deposits are located, the Terran dominated Aldarans claim them. Someone is obviously leaking information to the Terrans and Jeff is the logical suspect—he even comes to believe it himself. Even worse, he has fallen in love

with Elorie Ardais, the Keeper of Arilinn and a consecrated virgin. Jeff has finally found a home at Arilinn, but....

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All in all, these are both excellent reading: STAR OF DANGER for its sheer adventure, and THE BLOODY SUN for its puzzle and its portrayal of a Tower Circle. (Kennard Alton is one of the Circle). It's a shame that they have been out-of-print so long.

## SEEK AND YE SHALL...

SEEKLIGHT by K. W. Jeter  
Laser #7, 192 pages, 95¢.

Reviewed by Lynne Holdom

One of the better things that Laser books is doing is allowing new writers to see their works in print. Jeter is just such a writer and SEEKLIGHT is very good for a first novel and good for a third or fourth.

SEEKLIGHT is a puzzle novel. Young Oaenek is the son of a traitor thane and so is hated by the populace. Upon assuming adulthood, he has to flee for his life and hopes to make his way to the Capital to find out about his father's death. He learns that his father was the leader of a movement that was attempting to fight the stagnation and regression of culture on the planet. There are a few of his followers still around but they don't seem to be able to help. Oaenek wants to succeed where his father failed but doesn't quite know how to go about it.

There are some nice touches in this novel: the sociology students at the University appear as angels when questioning the people about trends; the priests are all robots. SEEKLIGHT certainly deserves to be read even if the ending of the novel is a bit weak. Jeter should be encouraged to write more.

## HOW MUCH IS THAT DNA IN THE WINDOW?

Macmillan have published a small novel which, when it is made into an R-rated movie, will shock the hell out of people.

BEYOND CONTROL (\$7.95) is by George Leonard and it is a gripping, suspenseful, horror story about a big city municipal (slum) hospital, about the ugly, appalling alienation possible for a scientist, about a very unwilling common-man hero, and about the lengths to which an illegal scientific experiment will force important government

and army men to go to protect their good names and futures.

(The necessary scientific procedures inherent in this experiment in DNA using lower-class mothers and their pregnancies, and the monsters produced, are utterly revolting! If they show it on screen....)

I hesitate to give away too much of the story. This short novel is written tight and tough and is practically a screen treatment for a film. It is detailed, convincing, real in gritty, unflinching characterization and locale. It is a sad story and a tragedy and inspiring.

Unfortunately—it has a plot hole big enough to fly a 747 through. But you don't realize it until you've finished the book and thought about it for a few minutes. It comes down to Leonard needing his tense finish, the chase on the empty, roaring subway train, the final devastating volley of shots, the final delivery of the incriminating scientific report to the free press. And in order to have his way, Leonard had to turn his hero (admittedly in shock) into a dumb cluck who can't think of but one way to deliver the goods.

Well, even so, it's a hell of a good read.

## A CRASH OF SYMBOLS

I've done it again. A reader in New York (sayeth my flawed memory) sent me a copy of Marvel's new STARLORD, and I have effortlessly forgotten his name and cannot find any clue among the last few days' debris.

I say thank you, kind sir. My apologies.

And now on to a few comments on this Stan Lee Marvel Preview of STARLORD ('Heroic Fantasy in the Far-Flung Future').

For lack of a better descriptive phrase (and better phrases have been searched-for, believe me), this is a comicbook SF-adventure about a boy, Peter Quill, whose mother was killed by aliens in 1971 and who vowed to get revenge! He grew up with a single-minded determination to get into space. He joined the NASA astronaut corps and...

Peter Quill has big emotional problems and is misunderstood, and finally conforms enough to get assigned to a space station where the voice of (apparently) God informs the crew that one of them must be chosen as a representative of Earth to be a (or the) Star-Lord.

Peter goes berserk and kills his way to the spot, after a fashion. He is taken and

goes through Changes after taking his revenge on the reptile-type aliens who had killed his mother. He becomes a cleansed and balanced person and as the episode ends he walks with God/all-powerful-benign-father-figure-with-beard-and-ropes into an unknown future.

Depending on sales, I suppose, there will be a series of STAR-LORD adventures.

**Evaluation:** damned good artwork by Steve Gan and story-telling by Steve Englehart. An amazing amount of story and detail and subtlety is conveyed.

But the real interest for me is in the gut/psyche level of appeal that is engineered into this story. STAR-LORD is a Christ figure, a Chosen One. He is, once he has ruthlessly attained his position next to God, all-powerful, with a "magic" helmet and gun. He swoops through space at light speeds or faster, never misses....

And as is unmistakably shown in at least one illo, the gun is his symbolic penis.



**Question:** Is all this leverage an appeal to innate youthful frustrations and needs, or is it an appeal to paranoia, neurosis and damaged personalities? Are buttons being pushed here and in myriad other Heroic comic books merely to sell comic books?

**Answer:** Sure. Editors, publishers, artists, writers have over the years found that certain elements, certain appeals, sell books. They use them. EVERYBODY in the marketplace does this. Those with knowledge always use their knowledge to their own benefit.

And if you go along with the belief in freedom for everybody (not just us intelligent few) you see that there's nothing wrong with other people having their egos stroked and triggered one way or another. It pleases them (and us!) to have writing and drawing that satisfies our deepest emotional needs.

There is the arrogant urge, of course, to protect other people from being manipulated and taken advantage of by money-hungry capitalists." Of course, in order to do that protecting we the elite who know what is best for others must impose our will on others, must tell them what they can and cannot do, think, hear....

It has always been necessary to destroy freedom in order to save it. And how sad (but deliciously necessary) it is that in order to protect people from themselves and from others we must enslave them to us.

The first STAR-LORD segment in this magazine took only half the pages, approximately. The second half is another opening segment of a possible new series: SWORD IN THE STAR, the story of Wayfinder, a young prince in the far future of mankind who battles the alien black starships which have ravaged Earth and killed his father and his people.

Wayfinder is in the familiar mold of one heroic man against aliens and incredible odds. In the graphic illustration on page 42 his sword is (symbolically) his penis.

SWORD IN THE STAR is written by Bill Mantlo and the art is by Ed Hannigan, Craig Russell & Rick Bryant.

## LETTER FROM MICHAEL CONEY

Dec. 20, 1975

I've stated elsewhere that I'm through reacting against minorities, and this includes the self-proclaimed "queer" Denys Howard and the multiple assumptions he makes re my personality and station in life. I realize that he is an unhappy person with a grudge against straight males, and I present a ready target for his bile. So be it. I can't dispute that it is the distaste which the majority of straight males—and females—feel for his sexual preferences which has caused his bitterness, and I sincerely believe it is we who are at fault. I can't do anything about it since I don't know him personally, but in this case my shoulders are broad enough to represent us all, if your preferences run also to mixed metaphors.

((Seems to me you make a number of assumptions about him that you have no personal knowledge to support. Your noble understanding of his affliction will no doubt cause him to grind teeth and burn you in effigy.))

Death is life's way of telling you you've been fired.

## WHATEVER HAPPENED TO FAY WRAY?

An Article  
By MICHAEL G. CONEY

This article is an admission of failure. It is an admission that I am not a good enough writer, or maybe not a plausible enough liar, to get across a series of points on the subject of bigotry and the characterization of women in SF. This article will be self-contradictory because my own views are self-contradictory too. As I wrote to Joanna Russ once: I don't really hold views; I merely pass among them, idly picking them up and putting them down, always hoping that someday I'll find the best pick of a lousy bunch....

The characterization of women in SF has been a sore point with me for a long time—maybe since I first saw Fay Wray fainting in Kong's hairy mitt. When I eventually got around to actually writing the genre, I knew that my women were going to be different. My first female lead was a good strong character who had as much to do with the plot development as the hero. My second was instantly forgettable. My third was a strong protagonist. I cast around for further ideas. Anti-heroines! Selfish women! Stupid women! Incompetent women! I wrote about them. Vonda McIntyre wrote back: "Your women characters have a depressing tendency towards selfishness, stupidity and incompetence." She was right. But aren't there enough nice women in SF today? Aren't there enough male villains? Vonda was right but others joined in with more sinister interpretations—particularly when I invented an anti-heroine named Carioca Jones ....

Do you remember some years ago, in the days of sexual censorship, how forward-thinking we were? How we derided the Establishment and wrote stories like BUG JACK BARRON, and NEW WORLDS was banned by certain narrow-minded bookstores? I was in England in those days and by God did I hate the Establishment! That particular Establishment consisted of a group of people who sincerely believed that detailed descriptions of varied sexual practices might have a bad effect on Society. But we weren't interested in what they believed; what enraged us was that they should seek to censor our prose! In due course they either changed their minds or died, and we won. Now we can say what we like.... Or can we?

Of course we can't. In the absence of global war we have sublimated into minority groups, each one terrified he is not getting his share. His share of wealth, of territory, of respect. And it is not respectful

to speak badly of a member of a minority group because it reflects on the whole. The balloon of pomposity has inflated into a new censorship. Am I the only one with a pin? Am I the only one who remembers NEW WORLDS?

It has become a sign of intolerance, bigotry and prejudice to write about stupid and cowardly women, just as it is to write about stupid and cowardly Blacks. Ideology has taken the place of characterisation and literature is the poorer for it, because our fiction is being forced to assume that certain people don't exist. The hook-nosed miserly Jew went out years ago - yet I know one now! The powerful but stupid Black (I've known a few!) was buried in the 50's and we changed the words of a few songs, and a number of children's books ceased to exist. They never existed.... And now we have the purification of the female image. Suddenly, our fictional women must be intelligent, straight-dealing, flat-chested. They must never panic under pressure and as for the menstrual period - why, it doesn't exist! It never existed!

Not surprisingly our fictional heroes must have a different style of relationship with this new woman. (And so would I, so would I) Because the rallying cry of the critics is STEREOTYPES! Instead of attempting to analyse a writer's style and content, our critic has only to shout Stereotype! and every red-blooded person born a person's person will not sit head wisely. So now the new gimmick - stereotyped relationships. "The sex roles are stereotyped." Familiar words? In reality, the critic is saying, "The sex roles reflect elements in current human relationships which I, and certain of my friends, would like to see changed."

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JUST READ MY BOOK  
AND SEE WHAT'S IN  
STORE FOR YOU...YOU  
DISGUSTING MAN...

Joanna Russ once said of a story of mine, "The sex (act) and childbirth are stereotyped." Well, yes. I try hard; years ago I even read the KAMA SUTRA, but still when indulging in sexual intercourse with the human female, it strikes me that the performance is stereotyped. I try not

to let this deter me. You can contort all you like but the end result is approximately similar. Just look at a crowded street sometime, and consider that every person represents some bygone groan of ecstasy followed - after a typical nine-month period - by a childbirth of stultifying sameness. Boy, are we stereotyped.

So in our science fiction we try to make a few changes, to get away from the everyday life aspect. We invent new sexual mores, we invent robots, antigravity machines and alien invasions. But we can't change everything in an SF story otherwise the reader, having no points of reference to current experience, will lose interest. Damon Knight once criticised a short story of mine which dealt with psi, I'll travel and sex reversal "...One fantastic assumption per story is enough..." And he was right. But to criticise any story on the basis that it contained no extrapolation on sex roles is just as meaningless as complaining that it contained no robots or antigravity machines or alien invasions. The complaint is simply a reflection of the critic's own unexpressed wishes.

And anyway - who in hell knows how dominant or subservient women are going to be in 2075, or 32075?

Here's a quotation. "Marriage was, I think, the psychological result of the environment; that outside unadmitted peril which caused the strengthening of family ties, drawing people together so that united they could face whatever the hell the planet intended to hit them with. There was no overpopulation problem; kids were precious and had to be protected for the sake of the social organism as a whole."

The quote is from my recently-completed novel BRONTOMEK! and is a rationale for arranging things the way I want them. It describes the situation on an Earth-type planet some time after the first colonists have landed by when - for various reasons - the more adventurous have moved away from the regimentation of the central colony and have set up independent sub-colonies. The human situation is akin to the old West. There is little domination by a central government, sophisticated hardware is almost prohibitively expensive, and industry consists of fishing, agriculture and ancillaries. The parallels with the West end there, because the people are aware of the immense technological resources of the planetary conglomerates (Big Business has reached new heights) but are unwilling (or unable, due to expense) to call for help except in grave emergency. They would rather go it alone. There are people like

that around now, and I hope they will still be around in the year 2500. And admittedly because of my own prejudices, those are the kind of people I like to write about. A newly-formed 'family' unit will not consist of a man, a woman and a baby-machine, or even a homosexual and a baby-machine. It will consist of a man and a woman. Why? Because it's economically sound, and because I say so, and it's my story.

That's my view of colonisation, reflecting my preferences. So I'm naive, but I'm not alone. The final draft of BRONTOMEK! was typed for me by a girl whom I can only describe as a truly beautiful person; I asked her views on childbirth, since she has a young daughter. She said: "I felt so proud of myself. It was the best thing I ever did." She wouldn't have had it any other way. Now - we will reach a time when most women will not be obliged to undergo natural childbirth; but this does not mean that we should deny a woman the right to natural childbirth if she wants it - or that we should despise her for wanting it.

So we can go on talking about the characterisation of women in SF, if we have to; but let's not kid ourselves that we know what we're talking about, you or I. I like women to be as different from men as possible, so I associate with that kind of women, and I write about them. You may feel that the only difference should be in the sex organs, which are concealed anyway. So write about that kind of woman if you must, and fool around with them, if you can. I'll grant you that freedom. Will you grant me mine?

It seems a long time ago that Joanna Russ wrote about the kind of men whom I despise - whom we all despise, I guess. But she wrote "When It Changed" as though this was the only type of man. And I was under treatment for hypertension at the time, and certain phrases hit me between the eyes.

"I can only say they were like apes with human faces.  
"As heavy as draft horses.  
"Muscle like bulls."

Inserted with the intention of exaggerating the insensitivity of the male, of equating him with animals. At no point in the story does a man say one single sensible humane thing. Joanna was making a point and she made it well, relentlessly well - but at the expense of the sex to which I feel a great loyalty.

And I over-reacted. I have since apologised to Joanna and our recent correspondence has been friendly if guarded - since



12 November 75

I've read Mr. Thompson's report of my panel appearance in Denver last April. I do not feel his comments reflect my position accurately.'

((Harlan refers to "Spec Fic and the Perry Rhodan Ghetto" by Donald C. Thompson in SFR 15.

((A pity Harlan couldn't take the time to make his position accurately known, for publication.))

## LETTER FROM ISAAC ASIMOV

20 November 1975

I read, in SFR 15, the material concerning Silverberg's reasons for retiring from s.f., and for once I agreed with everything you said.

'Who ever thought science fiction was the route to fame and glory, except among the very small world of science fiction readers? And who ever thought it was the route to wealth?

'Actually, Bob, has as much fame and glory as the field can deliver and as much wealth as one can expect to make out of s.f., so I don't know why he feels bad.

'Maybe he doesn't get the kudos from the great lights of literary criticism, but so what? The kudos and a dollar bill will buy you a dollar's worth. Maybe publishers think primarily of money, but how can that possibly surprise a professional writer who has been in the business for decades. — Think it over, Bob, and come back. We love you.'

LETTER FROM L. SPRAGUE de CAMP  
17 Nov 75

'Thanks for sending me SFR 15, with Darrell Schweitzer's interview with me. I have no amendments to make to the interview.

'I will say, however, that I agree with you in your comments on the comments of colleagues Schweitzer, Ellison, and Silverberg. These colleagues give the impression of sharing the illusion that H. P. Lovecraft and Edmund Wilson had in common: that they can look at an example of any one of the things that men do for the amusement or entertainment of their fellow-primates and pick out certain ones as Great Art, or True Art, destined to last for eons.

'Experience indicates otherwise. Any-

we obviously hold opposing views on certain subjects. At the time, however, I was filled with childish temper which I vented in two other ways. Firstly, I wrote an offensively sexist/racist story for Harlan Ellison. He said in best Ellisonese, "....fairness, full exposure and open discussion will be sufficiently potent weapons to dissect the open wound of your sick statement." I regret he may be right.... And secondly, I wrote THE JAWS THAT BITE, THE CLAWS THAT CATCH.

Through the device of a first-person anti-hero it attacks everything in sight except lust and scotch whiskey. As bad luck would have it, this hostile book has been more widely reviewed than any of my previous novels. And since it is a book about people, it is the comments on characterization which reveal the critics' prejudices; these range from "a fascinating collection of characters... interesting, believable people," to "Not one person acts in a rational manner." The protagonist, Joe Sagar, is variously described as a 'nerd', a 'chump', a 'bum', and, with commendable impartiality by Geis, as 'a vacuum.'

Readers, the anti-hero is me. Indisputably Coney at his worst. He talks like me, drinks like me, loves and hates like me. He is short on morals and long on prejudice. If anyone ever tells you again not to judge a writer's personality by his work, don't believe him. Every author must put a little bit of himself into everything he writes even though he may (as I do) frequently support opposing viewpoints. The ego will show through.

I'm hoping people will forgive Joe Sagar because he will be appearing occasionally again, drinking and bitching on his Peninsula, since it would be like suicide to kill him off. But I, personally, am through with reacting against the more radical manifestations of feminism. It doesn't add anything to my life-expectancy, and it doesn't help me to write any better.

So future novels will exhibit the Jekyll side of this delightful fellow pounding his typewriter. A while back I wrote to Terry Carr, "I'm so goddamned obstinate that I will always use sexism, racism or any other ism if it helps me make my point. My point, incidentally, is pacifism." And Terry Carr, God bless him, wrote back, "You have to judge a story's success or failure to communicate by what the readers get from it, not just from what you put into it. And maybe the readers are wrong — but they're the people to whom you're talking and it's up to you to put the story down there for

them to understand." How goddamned right. I was arrogant enough to think I was able brilliantly to communicate my horror of war in any form — national, sexual, racial or whatever — and I failed because I wasn't good enough.

The drawback to pacifism is that sooner or later you're going to have to fight for what you believe in. And in my case, this inevitability is accelerated by an unhappy personal quirk. You see — if I notice a whole mob of people running in one direction, then I am unable to prevent myself rushing the opposite way. Sometimes I come face to face with a tiger. Instead of crediting the mob with good sense, I try to confound the brute with logical arguments.

It's only a logical argument for freedom. Freedom to write about all women with all characteristics: honesty, crookedness, intelligence, vapidness, bravery, cowardice — in other words, freedom to write about real women. And that includes the freedom to resurrect Fay Wray, if I so desire. She's real! I know a dozen of her!

And finally, having re-read all this, I can acknowledge and understand the inconsistencies in what I've said. I could go back and smooth it all out — but I'm not going to do that, because then it would not be an honest statement. It is my belief that any sincere person thinks in the way I do: that is, he will admit that his views are open to reversal, that they are internally self-contradictory, that they have weaknesses which invite rebuttal by those of opposing persuasions. I'm not going to cover my tracks, because I have no need to. I'm stepping down from the platform, permanently — yet I'm fully aware that one day I might clamber back up there again, and sound off just as irrationally as ever....

Acknowledgement. I have used short quotations from private letters written to me by a number of nice people who, I hope, are still my friends. I like and respect them a lot, but I just can't face writing to each one and asking if they mind the tiny quotes. To Vonda, Joanna, Damon, Harlan, and Terry, please forgive.

.....



body can say that any such production — even a subway graffiti, a painting of a tomato-soup can, or a finger painting by an orangutan — and call it True Art (which term has actually been seriously applied to all three of the foregoing examples). There is no way to measure or weigh the thing to prove him right or wrong. So to say: "That is True Art" is just another way of saying "I like it" or "I get a thrill out of it." It is merely a subjective reaction, no more significant on a broad scale than the fact that I like the taste of almonds but dislike that of olives.

'As far as we can attach any objective meaning to the term "Great Art," it means a work that was not only enjoyed when it was made but has continued to be enjoyed long after its creator is dead. Hence we call the works of Homer and Shakespeare, of Praxiteles and Velazquez, of Shelley and Brahms, Great Art simply because they have outlasted the works of these artists' contemporaries.

'But we cannot, in any realistic sense, foresee which works of our own contemporaries will continue to be enjoyed one hundred or one thousand years hence. Most of them will be forgotten, and even those that fare the best have their ups and downs. Shakespeare underwent an eclipse in late XVII, and a survey taken at that time would have excluded him from the ranks of great artists.

'So there is nothing for it but to do such works of art as we think we can do well, and that will command a large enough public to enable us to live on the proceeds, and do them as well as we can, and leave it to remote posterity to decide whether we have committed Great Art or not.'

((I often suspect that 90% of the Great Art from the past is considered Great only because of reputation and present-day vested interests in the perpetuation and perpetration of new and old Great Art, in both academic and commercial circles.))

'All games have an important and probably decisive influence on the destinies of the players under ordinary social conditions; but some offer more opportunities than others for lifelong careers and are more likely to involve relatively innocent bystanders. This group may be conveniently called Life Games. It includes "Alcoholic," "Debt-or," "Kick Me," "Now I've Got You, You Son of a Bitch," "See What You Made Me Do" and their principal variants.'

—Eric Berne, M.D., GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

## CARD FROM ROBERT BLOCH

Nov. 17, 1975

'It seems my fate to encounter every one of your featured interview subjects just prior to their appearance in the pages of SFR. This time I met L. Sprague de Camp in Providence, where we both attended the 1st World Fantasy Convention. I hope the next interview-victim is a Californian: I simply can't go rushing off to the four corners of the world just to encounter future subjects of SFR articles. What's wrong with interviewing Mickey Cohen for a change — or some of those nice people Pearl mentions in her letter? I live practically around the corner from where the action is, and it would be a lot easier on me than racing off to Rhode Island to see whether Sprague intends to stay there or de Camp.'

((You'll be thrilled to know I'm trying for an interview with Linda Lovelace. I know you won't let her down.))

'However I have no quarrel with the rest of the issue: in fact, I have no quarrel, period. You are providing an excellent forum, and your Hugo was well-deserved. Personally, I was rooting for HUSTLER... But maybe next year....'

## LETTERS FROM BARRY MALZBERG

15 December, 1975

'Christmas doesn't bother me all that much although I admit it bothers me a hell of a lot more each year; it is the damndest paradigm for death that was ever created in the history of the world although the mass media in the post-technological west must share a lot of the blame. What really bothers me is stuff like the article on sf in the issue of NEWSWEEK just on sale ((Dec. 22, 1975)); the usually ill-informed and patronizing job with the added insult this time around of grudgingly praising a few of the modern writers who are not really deserving of the "recognition". This confirms an old insight I've had about these national fiction magazines; every once in a while they run an article on a subject about which one has firsthand knowledge and you realize that if they lie about everything the way they lie about the checkable then they have never printed the truth and most of our "insights" and "opinions" and "points of view" are based upon information which is wholly lacking in veracity. The fact that this argument would not be disputed one jot or tittle by Richard M. Nixon does not, for me, diminish its power.'

((Sturgeon's Law (90% of everything is crud) obviously applies to all interpretive

reporting: thus 90% of all analysis and/or reporting is not good as written or spoken.

((Does it follow that if 'the truth will make us free' we are doomed to continuing slavery? That 90% of us are into hopeless ignorance? That we are all tied to 90% of the time? As a friend of mine once said, 'I'll tell the truth eleven different ways before I'll tell a lie.'))

#

20 November 1975

'Going through the new SFR slowly (and this letter you may indeed publish) I note James K. Burk's letter on page 23 acknowledging that criticism of his book reviewing for Delap was in order and some pages down the pike your own man, Peter Mandler's, review of Carr's THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF THE YEAR #4.

'Reading that review it strikes me that, flawed as Burk's might have been, the advisory service should begin somewhat closer to home because Mandler's review of this book is simply incompetent. He does not, for instance, appear to have read, let alone comprehended the plot of Fred Pohl's "We Purchased People" (which appeared originally in my co-edited anthology, FINAL STAGE) and synopsizes Silverberg's BORN WITH THE DEAD in a fashion which indicates that he has not read that story either.

'The fact that he "likes" both stories means as little to me as the fact that he "dislikes" Philip Dick's "A Little Something for Us Tempnauts", also originally from FINAL STAGE, a considerable work of art which he sums up and dismisses in something less than twenty inept words.

'I cannot conceive how this kind of reviewing has any place in what is certainly the best (maybe the only) journal of commentary the field has and I do not know how you can let work of this sort get by you particularly with the example of Burk before your eyes.

'This kind of reviewing to swipe a line from the much admired James Bligh, is really an insult to any professional out there in the wilderness struggling to improve his craft. No review at all would be better.'

((I'll let Peter Mandler respond if he wishes, in SFR 17. Readers are invited to check the review in SFR 15 for its competency and phrasing.

((I accept reviews from readers if they are well-written, seen knowledgeable and if I am unlikely or unwilling to read the book reviewed. If I must read a book in order to check on a submitted review of it, I might as well review it myself and be done

with it.

((If all the sf publishers would get together and agree to limit their output to say 20 books every three months, this job would be manageable. Ha.))

## LETTER FROM RICK STERNBACH

November 22, 1975

'A friend of mine sent along a xerox of Jon Gustafson's column on the SF art he saw around Westercon time. I have a little information to fill in the questions he had about my work.

'I haven't done much for Space Merchants in a while, putting my work for ANALOG in a different category than work done in my spare time. New one coming out for February, by the way.'

((Yes, your Feb. cover for ANALOG is one of the most intriguing I've seen for a long time. The eye is trapped by the white spaceman, the green fractured globes, the red Martian sand, the lander, and that "star" which is upon close examination a recently departed spacecraft. Excellent composition.))

'Only the background on the September ((ANALOG)) cover was airbrushed. The spacecraft was done by hand (why do people inevitably get it into their minds that if they hear I use an airbrush, they immediately think that is all I use. Brushes work very well. They have for a few centuries). I like working up a painting with brush equally well, and got some nice results with that cover. The new February one was done almost entirely with brush. Hardly any spraying.

'There is no such thing as "Sternbach Purple." Although...wait a minute. Do I use violet all that much, really? Well, maybe for galactic backgrounds, but usually I like to use oranges, blues, reds.

'I want to thank Jon for the incredible number of compliments. Boy, if he liked the September ANALOG, wait til F&SF comes out for around next summer or fall. I would like to point something out, however, about the fact article in the ANALOG. I did the cover for Harry Stine's Starflight article, in the October '73 ANALOG, and the following October did the Velikovsky cover.

'I can make a pretty decent living off SF art, though some additional income is the result of my purely astronomical art for technical and general publications.

'Payment, as Jon mentioned in the re-

view, is meager, but only from certain companies. With the proper number of publishers under an artist's belt, he or she can come off at the end of the year owning Uncle Sam a few bucks after all the deductions.

'The next time he reviews covers, it might not be such a good idea to list what each company is paying. I don't know as the editors and publishers would take kindly to it, since many times it is something just between them and the artists. Sure, I, as an artist, will have grumbles here and there with an editor, but it has never been anything worth elaborating.

'The other point I'd like to comment on is the discrepancy between the final painting on a paperback, let's say, and the story inside. Yeah, there's a squabble over that, but listen, the art directors for a lot of these publishers are not SF-oriented. Not in the least. They have other subjects to worry about. Their big thing is selling the book, not the cover art tying in with the story. Maybe that'll change, but for now...

'Gee, I've never run into an art director with a preconceived cover idea. If the artist has different thoughts, he really should make them known, shouldn't he?

'The description of the SF art "industry" is not entirely true, though elements of problems surface now and then. Example: when Jon talks about the limited amount of story info to produce a cover or interior, I can tell you that one editor used to read me a few paragraphs from a manuscript, and expect me to paint a really catchy cover. These days, I get entire manuscripts (sometimes I don't know which is worse, getting no info or getting too much if a ms. is like 300 typed pages long).

'There's plenty of work to be done, not enough really good artists, but that too is changing. Look at all the people writing SF.

'Hope you can get around to some more cons, Jon.'

'Many people think things would be better if the government were more efficient. Happily, it isn't. For collectively, we are free to the extent that the government is inefficient and unable to carry out its coercive programs. And individually, you are free to the extent that you take advantage of the government's inefficiency.'

—HOW I FOUND FREEDOM IN AN UNFREE WORLD  
by Harry Browne

## QUAKE-GRAM FROM CHARLES W. RUNYON

5 December 1975

'Your latest SFR arrived with the first mail delivery after the big shake.

'I know now what the squiggly lines on a seismograph really mean, and I wouldn't trade the experience for a Hugo (speaking of which, congratulations). There were times, though, when we were trying to leave our beachfront apartment house, with pieces of concrete falling around us, the volcano belching black smoke overhead, and water piling up outside the bay in what promised to be the end-all tsunami (it wasn't) that I longed for the familiar peace and quiet of a tornado-alert in Missouri.

'My brain is just beginning to jell again, and I will have to run like hell to find out how far behind I am.'

## LETTER FROM MIKE ASHLEY

28th December 1975

'I found Darrell Schweitzer's letter about the time taken by pronouns to return mss. most interesting. It may interest him to know that for a while I acted as free lance first reader for SF MONTHLY ((England)), and am frankly surprised he actually got an answer within 4 months.

'The reason is that SFM has just a single editor — a young, rather pretty female for that matter — with no assistants at all. Since the mag is chiefly visual all the art side is left to the art department whilst Julie Davis is left on her tod to do all the text side of things. With everything else to be done, mss. pile up incredibly there. I was only reading about 50 a month for about three months, and that barely scraped the top. Consequently many of them get left lying around for months, because Julie has concentrated more on producing some special issues aimed along a theme or whatever, and with regular contributors the space for new stories is usually only 1 or 2 a month. Yet with submissions being around 50 — 100 a month, not only is there little chance of a story being accepted, there's an even lesser chance of it appearing this decade!

'Anyway, currently SFM seems rather borderline. It has a circulation of around 40,000 — which is good by AMAZING standards, but considering its high cost of production, rather dangerous. But so far as I know it's still going. I wouldn't know, though, as I'm still waiting for a reply to my letter of five weeks ago.'

## LYNNE HOLDAM HAS A LITTLE LIST

12-31-75

"My ten (or rather, seven) best list is as follows. I couldn't find ten best books this year.

1. THE HERITAGE OF HASTUR by Bradley.
2. SHOWBOAT WORLD by Vance.
3. THE GRAY PRINCE by Vance.
4. BLAKE'S PROGRESS by Nelson.
5. MARUNE: ALASTOR 933 by Vance.
6. THE WARRIORS OF DAWN by M.A. Foster.
7. A FUNERAL FOR THE EYES OF FIRE by Bishop.

"The last three all have defective endings. MARUNE doesn't end so much as stop; World has a Deus ex machina ending; while FFFF has a lot of speech-making as if everyone is always explaining to everyone else. However in the case of Nelson, Foster and Bishop, these are their first novels so they may get better.

"My ten worst SF list for 1975:

1. THE FEMALE MAN by Russ.
2. OHALGREN by Oelang.
3. THE BIRTHGRAVE by Lee.
4. WALLS WITHIN WALLS by Tofte.
5. THE KING OF EOLIM by Jones.
6. UNPOPULAR PLANET by Smith.
7. UNTO THE LAST GENERATION by Coulson
8. TOMORROW MAY BE DIFFERENT by Reynolds.
9. THE GENETIC BOMB by Offutt.
10. TIME SLAVE by Norman.

"I only put one book per author on the list or Tofte, Reynolds and Norman would have been the list.

"If I wanted more Worst I'd add:

11. SPACEJACKS by Well.
12. SPACE RELATIONS by Barr.
13. RED TIDE by Chapman & Tarzan.

### VITAL INFORMATION/HOW-TO-DO-IT

THE SCIENCE FICTION HANDBOOK by L. Sprague de Camp and Catherine de Camp. Owlswick Press, 1975, 220 pages, \$8.50

Reviewed by Darrell Schweitzer

Somebody on one of the panels at Columbian last summer mentioned an attempt to track down the original SCIENCE FICTION HANDBOOK through a book-finder service. They found it alright, but the price they wanted was in three figures. This goes to show not only how much demand there has been for the book since its first printing but what a great service Owlswick press has done by making it available again.

THE SCIENCE FICTION HANDBOOK published

by Heritage House in 1953 was not a collaboration. I'm told that Catherine has basically revised and updated Sprague's original, adding new chapters and rewriting the old ones. The book is several things at once, a concise history of science fiction and fantasy, advice on the writing of the same, and notes on how to conduct yourself as a professional. Unlike most "writing books" you find advertised in the writing magazines, this one doesn't give you regurgitated writers conference peptalks - but good, solid, valuable information based on the experience of one who knows of what he speaks, which explains the constant demand for the book. It is a rare item indeed.

The chapters on the history of the field are of the least interest, too brief to be critical and unlikely to tell you much you don't already know. The capsule biographies of leading SF writers read like dust-jacket copy. However, this is only the icing, and the cake follows.

The two chapters entitled "Editors and Publishers" and "Readers and Writers" tell you something about the conditions in the field, how book and magazine publishing works, how an editor deals with writers, and so forth. Fans and semi-professionals might find a lot of it familiar, but still it's worth going through.

The following sections, "Those Crazy Ideas," "Plotting an Imaginative Story," "Writing an Imaginative Story," and "Selling an Imaginative Story" are worth anyone's time. Sensitive Artists and other naive persons might be rather horrified at the businesslike and almost mechanical way de Camp goes about these things, but one must realize that imagination and talent, the basic ingredients of any good story, can't be taught or learned from a book, and it's a waste of time to write about them. So these chapters are devoted to what can be gotten from a book, internal consistency, plot logic, structure, effective endings, proper use of language, reader hooks, and even such things as how to handle a character who speaks imperfect English. The advice given is all very sound and sensible, if elementary. I particularly like this:

For those who want to write stories of this kind ((sword & sorcery)) we suggest they use plots more original than the simple one of the big barbarian oaf who slaughters monsters, wicked wizards, and decadent civilized scoundrels with equal ease. Howard could get away with this simple scheme because he had a knack for sto-

rytelling that few can match today. (p.32)

"Selling an Imaginative Story" is of great value, and may come as a shock to those who think that anybody who actively hucksters their material is a "hack". In the real world of publishing you have to go to the editors; they won't seek you out just because you may have potential. Presumably the purpose of a story is to communicate something to a reader, and therefore getting the story published is as important as getting it written.

The final chapter, on "The Business Side of Writing" is worth the price of admission all by itself. Its excellence cannot be overstated. It is an absolute must, I think, for anyone who has ever sold a single word of writing or ever intends to. This is the section that tells you how to copyright work, what should be in a book contract, how to manage your royalties, pay your writing income taxes, etc. Lester del Rey says on the back of the dustjacket:

"I'd have been a richer man today if I'd had it when I began writing; and now that I've read it, I expect to profit from it for many years to come."

You better believe it. This should be your writer's Bible.

Entropy is nature's way of telling you to slow down.

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The response to SFR 15 was interesting. Most of those who wrote to comment were sympathetic to Rob Silverberg's position and offered suggestions to reconcile him to sf and the market...but a few others said in effect, good riddance. Harlan Ellison was treated to the same suggestions, pro and con, by the fans/readers.

The interview with L. Sprague de Camp was appreciated but brought little comment.

The review column featuring Alter-Ego also went begging for reaction. Alter opened each letter eagerly at first, then became bitter and discouraged. In the end he accused me of stealing his mail. Tsk. He is sulking now and may never review again.

Ted White's column on the using of other writers' characters and his dislike of this practice touched a considerable number of similar-thinking hearts. A few don't mind reading "new" Doc Savage, Sherlock Holmes, WIZARD OF OZ, etc., a few consider it a lazy man's way to make a buck, and a few more like the variety.

Jon Gustafson's "The Gimlet Eye" continues to provoke response—the printing of the covers in question is approved heartily—and a few disagreed with his value-judgments. One of the artists who was praised (but who has the work copyrighted in his name) objected to the cover being reproduced. Jon and I had assumed it was permissible to use a cover reproduction for review purposes. Thus far this is the only objection. It is curious that this artist would object since a publisher saw the cover, read the review and asked for the artist's address—to offer him work!

As usual a lot of you urged me to write more in SFR, and this issue I have expanded my share of the space. And as usual a good many things of mine have to wait for next issue.

Not only my opinions—a lot of letters I promised to publish are languishing in the box next to my left elbow as I type this,

gazing up at me with reproaching eyes.

Of course the worst reproach is in my own mind—for Terence Green's "Philip K. Dick: A Parallax View" had to be bumped again. The unexpected Malzberg review came in and I couldn't resist.

NEXT ISSUE, I SWEAR—may my precious member turn to purple jelly if I renege—the article will be published. (How do you go about stiffening jelly?—no, no, I mustn't even think about it....)

My problem is that my editorial eyes are bigger than my publisher's stomach. I accept too much.

No Small Press Notes this issue, either—apologies. Damn, this endless recounting of failure is a drag.

I had hopes that Steve Fabian would get to the cover idea I sent him, in time for this issue, but I imagine he is so busy with prior commitments he is very far behind. But it pleases me that he is becoming so much in demand as a professional artist; it confirms my early judgement of his talent when he first began submitting work to the fan magazines about ten years ago.

So I'm using Jim Shull's drawing now. I had planned to use it on the May issue.

NEXT ISSUE THE FEATURED ITEMS will be an interview with George R. R. Martin by Darrell Schweitzer, (Darrell, by the way, has humbly accepted appointment to the post of Official SFR Interviewer; he gets around to a considerable number of conventions, has a fine knowledge of sf and fantasy, has shown that in-person interviews are superior to mail interviews, and asks keen-minded questions.) the Green article mentioned above, a long review of Ellwood's giant anthology, EPOCH, by Mike Glyer, and some columnists—probably a lot more than I can find space for.

Let me say now that I appreciate very much the letters of comment many of you take time to write and send. I read them all, I chuckle, I snort, I scowl, and I am torn up sometimes when I promise to publish and can't squeeze them in. Your opinions help me, and often I forward your letters to those who would be interested.

Often readers of SFR send along items from magazines they think I'd be interested in seeing. I am grateful....and interested. This feedback from the readers of SFR is one of the greater joys I get from editing and publishing the magazine.

Most of the time the mail load is too great to allow me the time to respond or reply...but I love the mail.

NOW—to summarize and short-quote as many letters as I can.

RICHARD LUPOFF, puzzled at the lack of comment about his previous books, alerts us to his soon-to-be released THE TRIUNE MAN (Berkley/Putnam); THE CRACK IN THE SKY (Dell—Feb.); a non-fiction from Mirage, BARSDOM; a Juvenile from Bobbs-Merrill, LISA KANE; and later in '76, from Dell, NEW ALABAMA BLUES.

Rich may or may not be happy to know that I have received THE TRIUNE MAN and will give it my full attention...one of these days.

HOWARD J. BRAZEE III found that reading P.J. Farmer's adaptations of other writers' series inspired him to try the originals... and he found the original Doc Savage, the original Holmes—to be inferior! He thinks today's sf of high quality.

JACQUELINE LICHTENBERG reports that STAR TREK LIVES is in its fifth printing (approx. 500,000 copies) and is proof of the authors' (Lichtenberg, Marshak and Winston) theory of why people like Spock. She also reports that Doubleday is almost sold out of her novel, HOUSE OF ZEOR.

She and editor Sharon Jarvis at Doubleday agree that Lynne Holdon's review of M. Z. Bradley's HERITAGE OF HASTUR in SFR 15 is a model effort.

GEOFFREY MAYER, enraged at Harlan Ellison's quoted remark that he doesn't write sf stories, he writes Harlan Ellison stories, wonders how come those stories appear in sf magazines and how come Ellison accepts science fiction awards like the Hugo and Nebula?

A cheap shot. As long as the Hugo and Nebula awards are voted that way, Harlan will accept them. I would.

BUZZ DIXON reports: "Several weeks ago a large meteor crashed in the ocean off San Diego. It was reported on the late evening L.A. news and then the story was squelched, despite the fact that several people saw it hit. It landed about a mile offshore and according to the news would have done quite a deal of property damage if it had hit land. Two weeks later the Navy quietly announced it had found a sub that sank back in the thirties "just offshore" of San Diego but no attempt will be made to recover any of the bodies. There were rumors of a

UFO but such reports are rare whenever a big meteor lights the sky. Question: Where and what did the meteor hit and why is Uncle Sugar so eager to keep it hush-hush?"

NEAL WILGUS and TOM COLLINS disagree strongly with my "glancing blow" review of the *ILLUMINATUS!* trilogy, contending it may be confusing and tongue-in-cheek, but still a hell of an interesting total conspiracy trip.

TOM MONTAG, editor & publisher of *MARGINS*—A Review of Little Mags and Small Press Books, wrote: "You are a creep for sending me your magazine at a time when I have more work to do than can possibly be done in one lifetime, your magazine forcing me to take the time to read it cover to cover, a couple of hours I can't afford, unable to put the damn thing down, and I haven't even read sci-fi since I was in my teens. It's no damn wonder you won the Hugo for best fantasy, you creep."

Just for that, Tom, I'll keep on sending it to you! And, Tom, calling science fiction "sci-fi" is on a par with calling a black a n-----.

RICHARD W. BEBAN calls attention to the lyrics of "Crown of Creation", a song written by Paul Kantner, rhythm guitarist for the *JEFFERSON AIRPLANE*, in 1968. Richard contrasts the lyrics to quotations from *THE CHRYSALIDS* by John Wyndham (1955) and notes many close similarities in text.

CHERYL CLINE asks why don't I reprint my early personal journal, *RICHARD E. GEIS*. She and others, newcomers, would love to read those issues.

Yeah, but I'm into a secretive phase now, and would prefer to let my lurid past die as much as possible.

MICHAEL R. (Squiggle) complains that *THE GREY PRINCE* (Avon 26799, \$1.25) by Jack Vance was serialized in Aug-Oct. *AMAZING SCIENCE FICTION* as *THE DOMAINS OF KORYMBOS*. There is no mention of this in the Avon book, so don't think you're getting a new & different Vance novel if you've read the serial.

There will be a long interview of me in the upcoming issue of *EMPIRE*, Mark J. McGarry's fanzine. We did it by mail. Mark is a persistent, impertinent questioner. I am a shameless answerer. His address is: 631-C South Pearl St. Albany, NY 12202.

I'm not sure of the zine's price. A dollar, I guess.

NO MORE ROOM!

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