

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

20

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SFR INTERVIEWS

Theodore Sturgeon

Joe Haldeman



SF



BY THE EDITOR

11-9-76 Vacation time is over.

The main mailing of SFR 19 went to the central post office on November 4th, and the bookstore packages went out yesterday.

#19... I'm still busy kicking myself over the dumb mistake of forgetting to change the volume-issue-whole number on the contents page. I'll probably get letters.

After comparing the print size in #18 to #19 I've unilaterally decided to go back to a 34 space column and 11" wide layout paper. The print in #19 is just too small for my comfort.

On the morning of November 3rd I sat up in bed all quiver with dread. The election! Who had won? I had gone to bed with Mississippi still undeclared, the outcome in doubt.

Then as I blinked sleep from my eyes, the doorknob on the bedroom door winked and grinned toothily, and I knew.

CARTER. Full of the arrogance of intelligence and humility. CARTER. Eager to prove himself and be an 'activist' president. CARTER. So sure he has government solutions to government-created problems. CARTER. So willing to do good by doing more with more to more. CARTER. Who owes his election to unions, blacks and the south, but who owes his soul to those who provided the "seed money" and media push to get him going. CARTER. Who will surprise a lot of people--unpleasantly. CARTER. It will take him and his crew and the Demo congress about four years to screw things up to the point where "drastic sacrifices" will be imposed on the people and the first steps to a benign dictatorship will be "necessary."

To paraphrase Earl Butz, all Carter wants is a tight bureaucracy, loose budgets, and a warm place to pass judgements.

But of course I prejudice and simplify; I suspect Carter will be in a hassle with his Democratic-controlled congress sooner than we or he expects. He may end up doing a Ford number---vetoing a lot of wild spending bills and boodoggles.

I can make a dire prediction about now: look for a bevy of small banks and one or two big ones to go belly up in the first half of 1977. A succession of big, bad loans will continue to take their toll, and the big banks [who have learned nothing from the history of the 20's] will discover to their horror that more and more of those huge multi-billion dollar loans to needy third world countries have not only gone sour, but are lost beyond any recall. Those loans amount to around 50 billion dollars, from private banks in this and some European countries. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation will run dry of money and will have to appeal to congress to pay back all those clamoring depositors who are making runs on local banks...and savings and loan companies.

THE SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW MONTHLY is bankrupt and has ceased publication with the October, 1976 issue. It was losing too much money. Brian Dougal, publisher, announces that preliminary negotiations are underway to transfer subscriptions to another enterprise. (Perhaps Delap's reviewzine.)

Well, one down and two or three to go. DELAP'S FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW (or is it SF & F REVIEW?) recently had to have a benefit performed by Los Angeles pros to keep it going. These all-review zines are inherently money-losers because of the inherently small paying audience and the very expensive professional printing required for the proper format. I also happen to think the editors are uniformly mistaken in their review format. An all-review mag could be successful, but the structure of the reviews would have to be radically changed from the current traditional form.

How changed? Hmm, should I tell them? Eh! Why not. I'll probably never publish an all-review zine.

The reviews as published in all-review zines are too long and too dense. The editors think

their readers (librarians, they hope, and other buyers of sf books) are willing and able to read through reviews of several hundred words, to the tune to forty or fifty per issue. It would take HOURS! No professional person has that kind of time to devote to reviews of a fiction genre like sf!

The reviews should be structured something like this:

TITLE
AUTHOR
PUBLISHER
ORDERING INFO

TYPE: (for instance) Space adventure. Adult. Interstellar space-ship crashes on alien planet. Crew survives against advanced telepathic natives and deadly plant life. They eventually make peace and begin viable colony. COMMENT: Smooth professional style, great detail, convincing characterization. Recommended.

Now, this is a very brief example. The plot and the comment could be expanded to at most fifty words. However, it takes a lot of thought and rewriting to distill a plot and a commentary to an accurate essence, and most reviewers, I suspect, would rebel at the task and the "mechanization". But a magazine using the above type of reviews would appeal to busy people. And they'd buy it if they were assured the reviews were fair and written by people who know sf and writing...and readers.

11-12-76 Every day I get fanzines sent for trade and (the editors hope) review or mention. They add up at the mailing time of each new issue of SFR to about seventy zines. Fair enough. I suppose I trade with about every sf genzine and some personalzines and some semi-prozines in the "field." Here and abroad. It gives me an overview and a lot of enjoyments even though I rarely am impelled to write a letter of comment.

Yesterday I received SWOON #6 from longtime fans Arnie and Joyce Katz. It is a small-circulation (by choice) fanish fanzine; that is, concerned more with the inner core of fan friends than with science fiction.

In #6 is a letter from Sandra Meisel, a fan-writer and sf critic of some note. She has been nominated for the Best Fan Writer Hugo several times, but, alas, has never won it.

She wrote, in part, 'But now that I've stopped playing that par-

COVER BY STEPHEN FABIAN
Dejah Thoris, Princess of Mars,
from UNDER THE MOONS OF MARS
by Edgar Rice Burroughs

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ticular trade, (writing serious criticism for fan magazines) I'm free to criticize it. Specifically, I propose that the fan-writing Hugo, like the other fan Hugos, is a meaningless award and should be abolished. It does not reward excellence---are the gibberings of a cheap pornographer "excellence"? Neither is it an incentive to new achievement. The FAAN awards are encumbered with complex rules but at least represent the choices of people active in fanzine fandom.'

I have to presume that I am the 'gibbering' cheap pornographer.' My instant reaction was, "Gibbering?! Both I and Alter resent that! And, after all, my cheap pornography does not appear in SFR or GALAXY or any other part of the sf world.

So Sandra got off a cheap shot. The sour grapes of a sore loser? The vitriol of a jealous low-talent who is pissed off at fandom's failure to appreciate her? The lament of a failure who wants to change the rules so the winners can't win no more? Possibly.

As I mentioned last issue, the FAAN awards are so complex because they are designed to keep out myself and some others who are active in sf fandom at large and whose long histories of "excellence" would, it is felt, overwhelm the minority who have decided they are the Trufans--the fifty or sixty 'active fanzine' editors and publishers and their letterhacks. They are jealous spoil sports who are unwilling to do the work and who mostly do not have the talent to compete for the fan Hugo awards in the larger arena that the growth of science fiction fandom has brought about. The science fiction world has passed these people by and they are angry. Tough shit. All they have to do, any of them, is produce a fan magazine as good or better than ALGOL, SFR or LOCUS distribute 500 to 750 copies to the hardcore of sf fandom at large, and they'll have a good chance to win a Hugo.

The unspoken premise of their basic argument is that the Hugo voters are mostly know-nothing morons who don't know a really good fan magazine when they see it.

I suggest that they do, and that the reason I win so often is because I've had a hell of a lot of experience in fanzine editing and publishing and I have a writing talent and style suited to fanzines and fanzine readers.

But enough of this pettiness. It's fun now and then, but...tweak noses and bonking out-of-joint egos is like shooting ducks in a

pond. Especially these sad, wingless ducks. Quack, quack, quack.

11-14-76 Not a sign yet of Swine Flu, and the inoculation of everybody willing is proceeding as slow because once the older people were coned into the needle with scare stories (and scared away for a bit with body-counts) everybody else has taken a jaundiced view of the situation.

It appears that President Ford has been plagued with ill luck; the economy has delayed its programmed recovery (which probably was the major cause of his defeat for election), and now his much vaunted program to nip Swine Flu in the bud has become an exercise in typical government waste and misfired Big Brother Knows Best do-goodism.

11-16-76 I am delighted with the performance of my little wood stove in the livingroom. A big armload of scrap wood will keep it going from morning to night, and as a result of my homemade storm windows the temperature often gets too warm---up to 76 and above. It heats the livingroom, the diningroom office, the kitchen, and one bedroom. (I keep my bedroom shut since I'm rarely in it during the day...only there to sleep, at night.)

The art of tending it for a steady temperature has been mastered--a one-or-two stick addition to the fire every twenty-thirty minutes keeps it going and maintains the temperature. Often during the day a fire isn't needed at all as the sun heats the house through the big windows.

We've had a remarkably warm fall so far, though. Today is like summer, except for the twenty million fallen leaves. The coldest night temperature has been around 37-40, so the stove hasn't really been tested yet. On the other hand, I haven't used a single one of my Presto-Logs yet. And today I picked off the street (and put in my wire basket on my bike) a lovely block of solid wood which will burn a good hour and a half.

I have a good two months supply of scrap wood left in boxes in the garage and uncut in the shed behind the garage. It occurs to me that it should be possible to pick up enough dry scrap wood during the summer and fall to last through the hard winter months, with Presto-Logs

and oil heat used only occasionally.

Speaking of oil heat. I have a habit of not wanting to bother with the stove early in the morning; I usually just turn on the oil furnace for a half hour to 'take the chill off'...and because I'm lazy. Okay, So I had used the furnace only about ten times from when the 675 tank was filled in June. When I checked it after fillup in June it was indeed at the top. Eye and measuring dipstick confirmed. But when out of curiosity I dipsticked it after those ten times of use, I discovered to my horror and alarm that the tank had only about 630 gallons in it!

Was there a leak? Was the burner so out of adjustment that it could use approximately 40 gallons of oil in ten half-hour burns?

But the burner had been serviced and a new nozzle put in and tested last summer.

What was happening?

I called my oil deliveryman and asked the questions. He told me oil 'shrinks' as it cools in a below ground tank. Nothing to worry about. If I had a tank leak there wouldn't be a drop left after ten days, even a tiny pinhole leak will empty a tank that quickly.

Reluctantly, I was soothed. Except... Well, he said they meter out the oil by weight when they fill a tank, so I hadn't been cheated. But, frankly, I don't believe it. I've seen those meters on the oil delivery trucks, and they are calibrated in gallons and tenths of gallons, not pounds.

I think, especially in summer, that the oil delivery companies make themselves a nice little profit. I'll betcha they buy cold oil and sell warm oil. They sell warm, expanded gallons. Like adulterated goods, they make a profit on us in a slick ploy hardly anyone thinks about. It may be a 'trade secret.'

So, I tell you what I'm going to do; I'm going to have my oil tank filled only in the winter. In January or February. Never June or July. And I'll check and see this next fillup, if the oil 'shrinks' in the winter as much as it does in the summer.

And I'll keep you informed.

December will be a bad month for the economy, I think. Bet you unemployment will be up to 8% or more, with cost-of-living uptick at about 8 or 9% (a .7% increase in December will be 8.4% on a projected yearly rate.

Presently housing permits and starts are down again, and new car sales are disappointing and likely to be moreso, and steel production is down and trending down, and sales are slow, and inventories are climbing very quickly (which means the factories will have to cut production even more, lay off lots of workers....).

This is perhaps only a pause, and in the spring things will pick up as the Democrats and Carter get the tax cuts in and start spending their printing press dollars in the multi-billions, but this is also happening to Europe and Japan, and if the OPEC countries raise the price of oil again, even only 10-15%, that will be another hammer blow of reality.

The true-cost of living is going up with the increasing true-cost of energy. We are going to have to change our way of living, and if that ain't enough, we'll have to change the way we strut our stuff....

Much is made of the fact that a new home is now 'out of reach' for more and more people. And soon it will be remarked with great loud laments, that a new car is getting too expensive to buy and maintain, for more and more people.

This will mean a contraction of the suburbs as commuting becomes too expensive, and a revitalization of the cities, more people-per-home, and more cooperative uses of cars.

By the way, the city council voted against the family with the six chickens in their backyard, because some of their neighbors complained of the smell and worried about possible health hazards. Chickenshits.

Our strawberry vines are still producing. Even have some late beans.

My homebrew wine is coming along nicely. I got some yeast food and have been adding a bit of this to the jugs as they quiet down, and it has extended the fermentation period. I expect those gallons to be pretty powerful and dry.

11-20-76 Puritanism, or if-we-hide-our-crotches-in-the-sand-no-one-will-know-we-have-them continues unabated. It is to laugh and cry.

Today in the paper our progressive mayor wants to pass a city ordinance which would impose such onerous conditions on owners and managers and employees of "massage par-

lors" that said places of sin and pleasure would be forced out of the city to the surrounding county.

The reasons for this proposed ordinance? Neighborhood complaints and some acts of violence and the fact that prostitution goes on in these hotbeds of privacy and for-hire masseuses.

Gee. Wow. Gosh! How long has this awful activity been going on? Ever since Ugg gave Ulla a big hunk of roast behemoth if she'd let him Do It to her out behind the big rock?

Our sterling mayor doesn't really think he can force sex-for-money out of Portland. He just wants to force it to change its visible structure. Or force the 'most objectionable' surface away from his territory...and let the county commissioners do something about it if they want to.

A popular \$1.00 per admission neighborhood movie house will create as much neighborhood complaint about patrons clotting up all the parking and making noise at night and occasional acts of violence, as any massage parlor (the owners/operators of which take great pains to prevent indecorous behavior by all and sundry), but the mayor doesn't insist on registration and fingerprinting for all small theater owners and employees.

Nor is he thinking of forcing all the city's high schools out into the county, for the same reasons.

The ordinance is probably unconstitutional and it may not be passed (sometimes a loud, public desire-to-pass is good politics and assures the public as much as actually doing something stupid and having later to admit to an illegal law), but it is a symptom of this society's inability to come to terms with its own sexuality.

This country can't live with sex, and can't live without it. The resulting social and cultural contortions are amazing...and depressing.

But the same goes for drinking, violence, crime, drugs, eating... The schizophrenias are multiple and horrible. We cannot admit we are animals and we cannot admit we are imperfect. We cannot admit there are always going to be a certain percentage of dumb, vicious, twisted, psycho people created by our environments and heredities. We have very little tolerance for human weakness, error, and needs not our own.

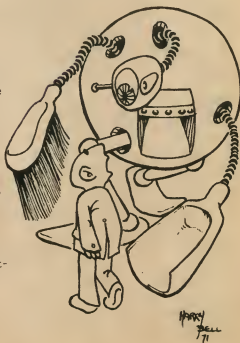
And I wonder if it can be changed any for the better? I doubt it. The desire to improve society is blood-brother to the desire to "improve" it, if you get my meaning.

Maybe society can be changed, a bit, little by little, over the next hundred years, to admit that some people, sometimes, need sex without love and without social preliminaries, and will let it happen with some regulation for health and safety. And maybe society will admit that violence is a need/fascination that is built into our psyches and should have structured outlets and/or vicarious safety valves. And maybe society will admit there are always going to be created/formed/born a few sociopaths who will be criminals or rebels or amoral politicians, no matter what, and will take steps to provide them with a good life in such a way that other people will never or rarely be hurt. And maybe society will one day concede that always a few people per hundred thousand will use alcohol, drugs, cars, eating... to punish themselves and others in real life psycho-drama.

Hey, if you gotta have a yin, you're gonna have the yang. If you insist on sin, you're going to have sinners.

We seem to think we can have one side of every coin. No way.

MONOLOG IS CONTINUED ON PAGE 40



AN INTERVIEW WITH THEODORE STURGEON

CONDUCTED BY DARRELL SCHWEITZER

NOTE: This is the first interview I've ever done that doesn't begin with a question. As I was setting up the tape recorder Ted was telling me about his recent travels, and he said, "You might as well get this too," and I started recording. I think it was worth it and trust you will too.

STURGEON: For a guy who habitually hides under a rock, has an unlisted telephone, and begs people not to record his address, I busted loose very suddenly.

I was a week in Mexico City. I did two conventions in San Diego, and one in Oakland, and one in Los Angeles, and then I went east and I was in Boston, New York, Tampa, Atlanta, and I went back to Los Angeles and I did another convention. I didn't get home for three days; I went straight from the airplane to the convention hotel. And then I kind of accidentally went to Europe last May, the end of May.

A man called me up and said, would I come to his convention in Metz. I said, "Where's Metz? Where are you calling from?" He said "France," and I almost fell off my chair. And after a fascinating hassle in getting a passport, which wound up finally in his calling the American ambassador in Paris, who cabled Washington, who telegraphed Los Angeles, who called me and said "How soon can you get down here?" And I found myself on a plane going to Europe for the very first time. I went to this convention in Metz and John Brunner was there and he was guest-of-honor the following week in Ferrara. He had his car with him and he said, "Why don't you come with me?" So I did, and we drove all the way down through France, and across Switzerland, and across Italy to the sea and back to Ferrara.

Having been so far into Europe I thought I ought to go see my brother who lives in Vienna, who works for the United Nations. So I hopped on a train--a train from an English movie with a corridor down one side and plush seats and mirrors and stuff in the compartments---and went to Venice, and changed trains in Venice after somebody gave me a guided tour of the city--a fabulous experience--and got into a wagon-lit, which is one of those trains with a little bed in it and a little washstand and so on, and we chugged all the way across Yugoslav-

ia and Austria, and from there back to Germany and Holland and back to the States. And it was just an incredible, heady experience. I just wonder how long this has been going on.

And after I got back to L.A., then I went to Wisconsin and did a thing there for a couple of days with associated little colleges and highschools and stuff in between, and then came the Dublin convention, and so I went to New York and fried some fish here and proceeded to Dublin, and when I was in Dublin, in pursuit of a movie producer who had made me an offer, and whom I couldn't find, I dove into France on a one-way ticket and with no other money. After a little hairy escape or two I found him and got a binder on the agreement. The day I cashed his check I had seven francs left in my wallet. From then on everything just went beautifully. I sold seven collections in France and made this movie deal, and met a lot of movie people.

SFR: What was the movie?

STURGEON: WHEN YOU CARE, WHEN YOU LOVE. They approached me three years ago for film rights and I told them no because this was a novel and was part of a novel, and I wanted to finish the novel. I didn't want any screenwriter messing with my plot. Then I forgot all about the offer and all about doing the novel too. Just about four days before I left L.A. I get a letter from him asking if I would consider their funding the completion of the novel so they could get the film rights. That was interesting. It really was. So that's why I was chasing him. Anyway I made it and from then on everything just went beautifully.

SFR: Are you going to complete the novel?



ONE OF THESE DAYS I REALLY MUST SIT DOWN AT THE TYPEWRITER AND DELIVER MYSELF OF THAT THING.

STURGEON: Yeah, providing we can close the deal. That will be a very good thing. I have a mainstream novel going called GODOODY, but in addition this would be a science fiction novel and the beauty of it is it's already plotted and it's one-third finished. So it won't be too much trouble to complete it.

In the meantime I have been involved for the last two years in a very complicated business of designing an overarching contract. By mismanaging my career, I seem to have acquired about fourteen publishers, and some of these contracts have expired, some of them not. Some are unfilled; some are fulfilled, and bit by bit I want all these properties reverted to me and put into one publishing house, a great big publishing house that has both hardcover and paperback. I don't know yet which publishing house it's going to be.

SFR: You mean it's generally better to stick with one publisher?

STURGEON: I don't know if it is, but nobody is going to last forever, and if I should pop off tomorrow my literary estate would be a great big bushel basket full of autumn leaves. Nobody would ever find anything. In addition to that, you know perfectly well you can't buy Sturgeon anywhere. I mean here I have this great big reputation, and I'm in WHO'S WHO and I have all these honors and awards and so forth, and so on, but you can find me more easily and frequently in Europe and even in Japan than you can here. It's just lack of distribution and lack of management and so on. Ballantine has a new edition of MORE THAN HUMAN coming out. They're going to do SOME OF YOUR BLOOD. NOT WITHOUT SORCERY is out. These are the three Ballantine titles. The rest of the titles have just dwindled and dis-

appeared, and when Ballantine runs out of print they may not appear again for a long time. You just go to the science fiction section of the book shop, and where you find lots of Matheson and lots of Bradbury---well these two guys have an agent by the name of Don Congdon who designed their careers for them and did a superb job.

But as far as I'm concerned if you find any Sturgeon it may be one or two very recent titles, but that's all. It's nice that they sell as quickly as they do, but there's never stock; there's never anything in catalogue. So what I'm doing is to put at least twenty titles back into print along with half a dozen new ones. I have enough new and un-anthologized stories now to make two more collections. Then of course it'll go on to British rights and foreign translations, and so on. MORE THAN HUMAN is now in seventeen languages. It is perpetually sold all over the world. That's my big one so far. GODBODY is going to be bigger, although it's not a science fiction novel.

SFR: Do you find that you have to continue to push your work, that it won't maintain itself by itself?

STURGEON: Well, as I say, it's a matter of mismanagement. It doesn't pay so much to push your work as it does to regularize it, you see. Get with somebody who habitually does reprint and does republish.

But MORE THAN HUMAN was remaindered in hardcover within the first year, about eight-and-a-half months after it was published. It was remaindered by the hardcover publisher, not by the paperback. This kind of thing is just incredible---of course they didn't dream that that book would be as effective as it has been.

They had no way of knowing that STURGEON IS ALIVE AND WELL was published in hardcover and remaindered inside of a year or fourteen months or so. The paperback from Berkley was simply allowed to dwindle without being reprinted. I got a reversal on that one. But it's been a tremendous amount of correspondence and hassle and cataloging, chasing down of rights and counter-rights, and so on. A very complicated business.

In Los Angeles there's a radio commercial for a savings company which contains the immortal piece of wisdom, "Fifty-one percent of smart is knowing what you are dumb at."

I have lots of documentation that I'm a real bright boy. For many years I figured this has got to be the case all across the board. Of course I can handle the income tax. Of course I can handle this matter of reversing rights. I just

had to get around to it, but I knew I could do it. And so, fifty-one percent of smart is knowing what you are dumb at. I have finally come to the conclusion that there are areas in which I am really stupid. I'm a real retard.

And so now I've got a New York lawyer, and I have a New York agent, and I have a guy to chase down copyrights, and I have a Hollywood agent for screen, and I have a Los Angeles business manager. This is a whole army of people, but I'm just at the position for the first time in my life of being a writer who writes. Period. That's it. A writer who writes. I've never been able to achieve that before. I've been a writer who scratches and who scrambles and does this and does that, and feeds the rabbits, and I don't want to do that anymore. It's really a pivotal point in my existence right now.

I've come from under my rock; I'm showing my face. I suppose I have the virtue of rarity. If you'd never seen a piece of coal, people would probably be carrying it around in a ring on their fingers. It's no innate quality of my own, but I have been the invisible man for a long, long time. This is no longer true. I'm flying and moving around and being seen and whatnot. This is only good.

It did me an immense amount of good to go to France and to England. I went to England for a week and did the same sort of thing. I know I did myself a lot of good. And when I came back from Europe I went to New Jersey, to a PLAYBOY Star Trek convention. Then I came to New York for the second annual World Fantasy Convention, and then in two days after the convention I have a speaking engagement in Providence at a college, and then I'm going to Boston, and then I'm going to Tucson as guest-of-honor for next weekend, and then on to San Diego before I get back home.

SFR: Well when do you find time to be a writer who writes amid all this?

STURGEON: When I get back to L.A. This has been an incredible trip, marvelous, exciting, and very rewarding.

SFR: What do you consider to be the most important value in writing?

STURGEON: Communication. At the convention last week in Great Woods, New Jersey, there was a very interesting panel in which the qualities of STAR TREK and SPACE:1999 came up.

What filtered out of that discussion was a very interesting thing indeed. Gene Roddenberry, personal-

ly, himself, has certain things that he really and truly believes in. He believes in democracy. He believes in the equality of women. He believes in the equality of the races. He genuinely and truly believes in those things, and STAR TREK continually exemplified those things. The statement made by almost every single episode of STAR TREK was somewhere in these areas. He also believes in compassionate treatment of people. In spite of the militaristic setup there was always that element of compassion.

SPACE:1999 apparently believes in nothing except selling their product. I don't mean selling dog food in the commercial breaks; I mean selling the product called SPACE: 1999, and that's the qualitative difference between those two shows in spite of the fact that since STAR TREK went off the air the state of the art has increased tremendously. The visual effects are like nothing else I have ever seen, but as far as the statements that the stories make, there is nobody involved in that outfit who believes in anything, apparently.

Certainly none of these qualities. Hokey as they may seem to be they are not hokey. They're really things Gene believed in.

SFR: Possibly the SPACE:1999 people have no one who has any ability to tell a story.

STURGEON: Well, there are a lot of ironic and cynical remarks made about that. One person said that they spent so much money on special effects they had nothing left for writers. Somebody got even more catty and said that all the writing budget went into the purchase of novacaine for Barbara Bain's face cream.

SFR: Well, remember that these are the same people who made FIREBALL XLS. Somebody else said that now after spending all this time making puppets behave like people, they've turned to making people behave like puppets.

STURGEON: You know, that same remark was made there. Very good. That's a very sound remark. It's spooky; it really is. But I really think, Darrell, that it comes down to that quality of believing in something.

Now you see what's the most important thing a writer can do---to write good, communicative, well-candenced and well-textured prose. Underlying that is to believe in something, to really and truly have convictions. Not the editor's convictions, or what you think the buying public's convictions are---televi-

ion operates on that basis: what the people will buy and then give it to them--but the idea of believing in something. I think any writer who really and truly believes in something will have a qualitative plus, so that even if he doesn't quite write as well as Joe Blough over there, that's the thing that will win out and capture editors and the public as well.

You know, I have spent half my life or more concerned with what it is that people believe, and chuntering those things around in my head, but more and more I come to the feeling that I'm looking for people who believe in something and I almost don't care what it is.

There's no sense in getting extreme about it and saying do you believe in sado-masochism or in fascism or something like that. You know perfectly well that I'm not talking about extreme situations, but more and more the world and especially the United States seems to be populated by liberal-minded people who have the ability to see both sides of a question and use that ability to cancel themselves out. They walk around as zeroes.

The world has been moved and shaken by obsessive nuts. Obsessive nuts. Nobody can say that Hannibal or Atilla the Hun or Karl Marx or Jesus of Nazareth or the Buddha were even-minded people who saw both sides of the question. Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt---they weren't; they were obsessive nuts, and they moved and shook the earth because of it. They were people who believed in something, whether it was a good something or a bad something. They were effective human beings. Napoleon and so on.

I despair at ineffective human beings, and we seem to be breeding them in hundred thousand lots, and that's a shame. So I'm beginning to be impressed more and more by people who believe in something. I just don't care what it is.

SFR: Isn't there a danger they will believe in something with no regard to the truth?

STURGEON: Well, the truth is a fairly mutable thing anyway. Part of the truth is as dangerous as a lie. The whole truth sometimes gives a totally different aspect. I don't know if truth-telling as such is really part of what I'm saying. In the long run people who produce a large structure that's based on a lie will see it collapse. It may take a while, but it does, as witness Watergate. The government was a very effective machine there for a while based on lies but ultimately it fell apart. The glue wouldn't hold. So coming down to truth and

ethical rightness and the karmic rightness and so on, you build stronger structures and they are more enduring than those which are based on half truths or lies. I can't say it often enough. It comes down to matters of conviction, or the ability to believe in something and have your work exemplify that which you believe in.

SFR: When you started, were your beliefs already set, or did you come to them as you went along?

STURGEON: No. Beliefs change and grow and evolve. I think early in my life I believed in a laminated society. There were decent good people and there was the great unwashed. A very snobbish kind of idea, which I derived from my English forebears, who have always lived in a laminated society. An awful lot of that rubbed off on me, and it took me quite a while to understand that the good people come from everywhere and the bad people come from everywhere too, and that there's no category of human beings, rich or well-educated or a good family or any of these things, which guarantees their being good people. It just doesn't. You produce scoundrels and whatnot from anywhere up and down the social scale. Some of my very earliest work reflected that. Some of the things I chuntered around with before I started to write seriously. There were more stories which exemplified that kind of belief, that a well-bred kind of person would find ultimately a well-bred girl to marry, no matter where she was, and God's in his heaven and all's right with the world as long as those two can get together, being well-bred people and not of the great unwashed. This is ludicrous, of course, and these beliefs have changed very drastically. So has my politics. So has my aesthetic. It's perpetually growing and changing. I hope it always will. I never want to be locked into any ritual or any hierarchical belief. That to me is a kind of death.

SFR: What's the ability to believe in something and a locked hierarchical belief?

STURGEON: I'm not talking about blind faith. The symbol that I've adopted is the letter 'Q' with an arrow through it, which means ask the next question. The very nature of faith, the very nature of the hierarchical attitude and of ritualistics is that you do accept on faith and you do not ask the next question. Credo, the Latin word which means "I believe" is usually followed by a great many things

which are axiomatically taken on faith. I can't do that. I have tried. I've earnestly tried to, incidentally.

My first wife was a Roman Catholic and in all sincerity I went to a priest to take instruction and become a Catholic myself as a wedding present for my wife, especially when I found out that I couldn't be married in the church. I had to be married in the parish house because I wasn't clean enough to be in the sanctuary. I was a little grubby for being that kind of gentile, or whatever.

I made a truly honest, far-out effort to take instruction, to buy the whole thing and be able to say with a clear conscience that I had converted. I couldn't cut it. I had to ask the next question.

The poor guy who was giving me instruction felt persecuted and I



begin to get answers like, when I questioned the Inquisition, "The Catholic Church of today cannot be held responsible for the previous actions of its renegade bishops." This I felt was the great copout of all time. I couldn't handle it. I finally had to tell him "Thanks but no thanks." I knew he'd worked hard, and God knows I did, but I couldn't do it.

SFR: Then what do you mean by belief? It seems there you came to non-belief.

STURGEON: No, I came to a very powerful structure of belief; I found that the only force in nature which is immutable, which says stop, which says Thousand Year Reich, is the human politic in the broad sense of

the word politic. That is the human thought and the human structure and human society, titles, designs, utopias and so on. They all call for a cessation, the permanent monument, the pyramid, that which is totally secure and totally stable, and so on. Every other force in the universe is mutable. Everything changes. The planets move. The stars move. The galaxies move. Life itself is a continual process of change and of growth. Diamonds are not forever. Nothing is forever, and the firmness of my belief lies in the existence of process, or cause and effect and actual process. This is not non-belief at all. This is a religious idea, literally, in the truest sense of the word.

I think you can have guidance as far as worshipping in concerned, but I feel that worship is most potent and most cogent when it's direct.

There's a condition known as Thelepsy, which means seized of God. It's exemplified in a number of ways. For example, people speaking in tongues and going into religious ecstasies, writhing around on the floor and so on. Most organized churches look down on this kind of thing because it's direct worship, and it bypasses the secular organization called the church. The church can never make a buck out of thelepsy. It has to be done through channels.

SFR: You mentioned earlier your changing beliefs in aesthetics. Where did you start and where have you come to?

STURGEON: I have just completed two semesters teaching at UCLA, not teaching non-writers to write---that can be done elsewhere---but teaching good writers to write better. I have found that it's possible to identify and define those usually unidentifiable and indefinable qualities of really good writing: texture, cadence, and atmosphere. I have found out what they are and I've found out how to teach them, and I have been very successful in being able to do that. Some of my students produce some of the most absolutely astonishing stuff, beautiful stuff, and I'm very, very proud of that. My own aesthetics is a greater appreciation of words, and of the texture and cadence and atmosphere involved in words, and how to achieve these things.

I don't think I want to go into it now because, as I say, it's a whole course, but it can be defined and it can be taught, and it's my particular pleasure to be able to do that.

As far as my own aesthetic is concerned, it's a perpetual learning process. You learn more and

more things that you can do with words, and more and more ways to do it. It's lovely to know how you get these effects. Occasionally you do a piece of writing and it may be tremendously effective in one way or another, but you don't know how the hell you did it. It's nice to know how the hell you did it.

SFR: To what degree can writing be intuitive, and to what degree can it be deliberate?

STURGEON: Maybe sometimes its nascence is intuitive; it comes out of somewhere in your head; intuitively you do something right, but then when you analyze what you've done you find out how it was you did it, and once you get into that area, you find it's possible to transmit it, to tell somebody else how to do it, which is a profound pleasure when it comes out right.

SFR: How important is the sound of prose? Is it important?

STURGEON: It is in some respects. I sometimes advise my students, write aloud. It's got nothing to do with reading aloud. It has to do with an inner voice, an inner aural quality. It is difficult for me to write down on a piece of paper two successive "st" sounds, like in "the first stage." Because that's difficult to say. Somehow or other, I like Hamlet's advice to the actors when he said the words must flow trippingly on the tongue. I like them to flow trippingly on the paper the same way. I'm offended by knobby or abrasive prose. There are also ways to change the texture of what you're writing, in a way as if the top half of the page is printed on silk and then suddenly it's printed on burlap, and there's a change which is abrupt and almost shocking. You may have seen that done and then tried to analyze it and wondered how on earth the guy was able to do it. Sometimes the writer doesn't know how he does that. It's just his own approach. His mood changes very abruptly, or he goes away from the typewriter and comes back feeling very differently about the whole situation, or in a new scene feeling, well the sun was shining and it was a warm afternoon, down to the third paragraph, but as he starts the fourth paragraph the wind is howling and it's cold.

I'm using these things analogically, I don't mean actually; but his whole approach is different and he dresses differently and his body relaxes differently and he tightens up because it's cold, or whatever. You don't talk that way, you don't think that way, you don't sound that way when the environment changes ab-

ruptly.

There are some writers who are capable of expressing that, not in describing the situation, but in the way they write, in the way the words fall.

SFR: It seems to me with the aural values, and the amount of lyricism possible in prose, that poetry and prose are not that far apart. Would you agree?

STURGEON: Oh yes, absolutely I'd agree. My adherence to science fiction is the same as my attitude toward poetry---they're the only two forms of literary expression which have no limits whatever. None. Inner space and outer space, distance and time, past time, future time. There are no limits. You can go absolutely anywhere in poetry, and you can go absolutely anywhere in science fiction. This is its tremendous appeal to me.

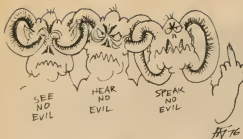
Further than that, my own definition of science fiction derives from the etymology of the word science, which in spite of what the dictionary tells you does not basically mean the discovery and arrangement and retrieval of knowledge, which is the way the dictionaries have it. It derives from the Latin word 'scientia' which means nothing but knowledge.

To me science fiction is knowledge fiction. The operating rule is that if you take the science aspect out of the story, the knowledge aspect, and the story then collapses, that was science fiction. If you take the knowledge aspect out of the story and the narrative remains, then that's the cowboy story that was told on Mars instead of in Arizona, and it's not science fiction. It's the same essentiality that exists as far as specific sex is concerned in a story. If you can remove the essential sex and still have the story, then it wasn't essential and it shouldn't have been in there, but if the entire narrative collapses once you remove that scene, then it was necessary and it should not be removed, no matter how explicit.

SFR: Have you ever had problems with editors over this?

STURGEON: No. I've never run up against that. Once in one of my works---I think I'd rather not say which one, and let the reader guess---an editor did suggest that I remove a word which was the key to the whole book---it was a novel---purely because it was structurally better without it. And I agreed with him, but it was nothing he insisted on.

He pointed out that the book would be stronger and better and



VALLEY OF THE DOLLS would be a classic like Shakespeare, which obviously it isn't. But you notice that Shakespeare endures and nobody is reading VALLEY OF THE DOLLS right now.

SFR: You know, THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS will probably not be a sound commercial property in ten years.

STURGEON: Yes, you're quite right. You're absolutely right.

SFR: But it seems that we've had a case with Elwood in science fiction of bad driving out the good. By flooding the market with large numbers of bad original anthologies, he's got a lot of readers who simply will not read an original anthology, and he has turned the whole market into a wasteland. So this would be the reverse of what you say.

STURGEON: Yes, but it's a temporary situation. I say quality will win out. I don't say it wins out immediately or that it can combat these floods of bad that come in from time to time, but in the long run over the decades and over the centuries quality will win out and quality stands.

SFR: Why wouldn't you write a story in which the Devil wins?

STURGEON: I probably would if that occurred to me. What offends me is being told up front not to. I might write such a story for someone else.

If Elwood or any other editor holds that in his particular credo, he does not want that done in his work, then I give him that privilege. He just won't get it from me. I never would do that if it's going to offend him, but this comes not so much from a subservience to his wishes as an absolute indignation at being told what I can and cannot say.

SFR: In the early days of your career didn't you have problems trying to slip thing past Kay Tarrant and people like her?

STURGEON: Well that was in a very lighthearted way. George O. Smith once put a thing in a story about how somebody invented a ball-bearing mousetrap, which was a tomcat, and it got into the magazine.

It went right over Katie Tarrant's head. She just didn't have the vibes to pick that one up. But Campbell hugely enjoyed the fact that it got into print, and so did the readers. I don't know if Katie was ever aware of that or not. But that was never a matter of profound importance.

She was much more interested in the word itself than anything the word might possibly mean. This is why in "Killdozer" you'll find bulldozer operators out in the field saying, "I don't give a care." That's Katie at work.

SFR: She rewrote that line?

STURGEON: It was "I don't give a damn." That's the kind of thing she was zeroing in on, but you can see that that's not a matter of great importance.

SFR: Well, it can make your dialog sound silly.

STURGEON: Yeah, it can, but that's a minor point. This story was strong enough to carry itself.

Horace Gold used to change lines. In that case it was more of an aesthetic matter than one of meaning. He did tangle with his authors from time to time. He never wanted to censor. In some ways Horace was like---I must say he was one of the finest editors who ever ever lived---but from time to time he was a little like the proverbial Hollywood producer who is going to always improve everything by changing it. It almost didn't matter what it was he changed as long as he changed it. Horace had his own ideas. He had a good rationale---good for him. I can give a perfect example. Do you remember Pangborn's "Angel's Egg"?

SFR: Yes.

STURGEON: Well, he had a perfectly beautiful line. It made me catch my breath it was so beautiful. When the angel was growing up she learned to fly. She was still a little bit of a thing, about eight inches tall, and she flew high up in the sky. If she touched the hero's forehead she could convey thoughts very freely, but when she wasn't touching him all she could do was send emanations: feeling good, feeling frightened. Here she was high up in the sky when he saw to his horror there was a Cooper's hawk zeroing in on her, and he was terrified as the two spots merged, the bright spot of the angel and the dark spot of the Cooper's hawk, and at that moment, aware of his fear for her, she sent emanations of safety and of joy that it was all right. Don't worry.

And Pagborn wrote that he knew then that she was riding on the hawk's back "with her speaking hands on his terrible head."

I loved that line. It was absolutely beautiful. But when the story came out in the magazine that line was changed to read, "with her telepathic hands on his predatory head."

more of an experience to the reader if he figured this thing out for himself. It was crucial to the entire book. That was the only time that anyone has come near censoring me for anything I've done.

Now there have been times when there have been attempts at censorship. I'll give you two recent examples.

Roger Elwood let it be known that he did not want to ever publish a story in which the Devil wins. Roger has his own particular religious bias. He is welcome to it, but as long as he has that attitude, I'm not writing for Roger Elwood. Not that I would ever think of writing a story in which the Devil wins. That is not the point. I just don't want to be told that I can't do it.

Another example is the letter that was sent to writers by George Scithers for the new ASIMOV'S SF magazine in which he says that the magazine will have no part of any four letter words or sex scenes or anything like that.

I can't remember a single story that I've ever written that had a backyard word in it. Maybe I have, but I don't think so, and I don't see any reason why I ever should, but by God don't tell me up front that I can't. I find this very offensive. So I'm not writing for that magazine either.

This is something I feel very strongly about. I feel that quality will win. I feel that the good will always drive out the bad as far as literature is concerned. I think if the effort is made toward quality the quality stuff will outlive all the rest.

I know that's probably naive of me and maybe there are examples of where that doesn't work, but always remember that the classics are good commercial properties, purely by their very nature. They are things that thousands and thousands of people have known and liked and they are the standards by which other things are measured.

Things are either like the classics or brand new and original and not like the classics. That's not to say that things which are widely popular are classics. It's not reversible. I say the classics are good commercial properties. I did not say good commercial properties are classics. If that were the case

I just blew my top. I remember I called Horace immediately and the phone was busy, and it turned out the reason the phone was busy was that Groff Conklin was calling him up, too, and was complaining bitterly about the same thing.

SFR: Did it ever get changed back?

STURGEON: I don't think so. I think it still exists in Horace's form. No, I have a feeling it was changed back, when the story was anthologised.

[NOTE: After doing this interview I checked. When "Angel's Egg" appeared in Damon Knight's A CENTURY OF SCIENCE FICTION, the line was changed back. --D.S.]

But Horace's rationale for that was that in his mind he took a very nuts and bolts concept of what "speaking hands" meant. That meant to him deaf and dumb talk, waving your hands and tapping your fingers to the palm and curling your fingers. That's speaking hands to him. As far as "his terrible head", which is a perfect use of the word and exactly what Pangborn meant, he heard in his mind people riding the subway saying, "I had a terrible day" and "I just saw a terrible movie" and "She looked just terrible this morning," and he regarded the word 'terrible' as a cliché'd word and thought that predatory was much more descriptive of the head of a Cooper's hawk. That was his rationale. The poetry of it utterly escaped him

SFR: Was he stylistically tone-deaf?

STURGEON: I think he was in some respects. He was always more interested in matter than in manner. But you know, I owe Horace so very much.

One of the most important things that ever happened to me as a writer was one time when he'd saved space for me in an upcoming issue and I had a deadline for a novelet twenty-thousand words or so, and he called me up and said, "Hey, where's the novelet." And I began to cry a lot over the telephone. This was the time of the McCarthy hearings. The whole country was in a grip of terror that not having been through it you just would never understand how awful that was. It was a frightening thing. It crept into all the corners of the houses and everybody's speech and language. Everybody started to get super-careful about what they said, what they wrote and what they broadcast. The whole country was in a strange type of fear, some great intangible something that nobody could get hold of. A very frightening thing.

I became aware by that time that I had a fairly high calibre type-writer, and I became alarmed by the fact that I wasn't using it for anything but what I call 'literature of entertainment'. I don't want to knock entertainment at all, but I felt I had the tool to do something but I didn't know what to do with it.

Horace listened to me with great care, and he said, "I'll tell you what you do, Sturgeon. You write me a story about a guy whose wife has gone away for the weekend, and he goes down to the bus station to meet her, and the bus arrives and the whole place is full of people. He looks across the crowd and he sees his wife emerge from the exit talking to a young man who is talking earnestly back to her. And he is carrying her suitcase. She looks across the crowd, sees her husband, speaks a word to the young man and the young man hands her suitcase, tips his hat, and disappears into the crowd, and she comes across to him and kisses him. Now then, Sturgeon, write me that story, and by the time you're finished the whole world will know how you feel about Joseph McCarthy."

For the moment I didn't know what the hell he was talking about and it comes right back to what I said earlier. If a writer really and truly believes in something, if he is totally convinced, he has a conviction, it really doesn't matter what he writes about. That conviction is going to come through.

And at that point I sat down and wrote a story called "Mr. Costello, Hero" which was as specific and as sharply edged a portrait of Joe McCarthy as anyone has ever written. Not only the man himself and his voice and his actions and his speech, but his motivations, where he was coming from, what made him do what he did, which I had never analysed before.

And that was the virtue of Horace Gold that quite transcended any kind of small tone-deafness that he had or the irritating habit he had of changing words apparently sometimes just for the sake of changing them. That was something profoundly important and pivotal to me as a writer. I suppose I always had written that way, but I never realized I did. I had never realized the conscious importance of writing that way, of being a convinced human being.

SFR: How did the story go over when it came out?

STURGEON: 'Mr. Costello'?

SFR: You must have ended up getting called a Communist for it.

STURGEON: Sure. I did. I got hate mail. I got anonymous letters. But I had spoken my piece and I was proud of it.

SFR: Wasn't it true at the time that science fiction was the only area of writing that wasn't censored for these reasons, and you could get away with such things?

STURGEON: I don't know. Science fiction writers come in all hues of the political spectrum. I mean, it really runs the whole gamut to absolute extremes in all directions, although I don't think too many science fiction writers go to the very far left. A good many of them do tend to drift to the right with one or two extreme examples.

I don't think science fiction has ever particularly been a repository for the far left, very largely because science fiction writers by and large, even the right-wingers, tend to be also free souls. If you're a right-winger it's a right-winger in the sense of trying to get rid of the income tax, and of fighting against the concept of a large central government.

SFR: You mean Libertarians?

STURGEON: Libertarians essentially. As far as the left-wingers are concerned, the left-wingers more and more approach the beehive society, the adherence to the rigid rules of Marx and Engels and so on. I think science fiction writers are generally far too free in their minds.

To quote Asimov, the "What if?" syndrome, and the "if only" and the "if this goes on." These things are too important to the science fiction writer to get bound up in any particular ideology.

Science fiction writers it seems to me, if you can categorize them--

WHY TORTURE POLITICAL PRISONERS? EAT THEM AND BE DONE WITH IT, I SAY!



by and large it's not fair to, but I believe you can--one writer, I forget who it is, became absolutely obsessed by the horrors of limb transplants, and his writing for a time was an absolute crusade against the idea of limb transplants. He extrapolated it and he was afraid that people would be farmed out and prisoners perhaps would be raised to grow arms and legs and whatnot for other people.

SFR: Is this Larry Niven?

STURGEON: I can't really recall who it is.

SFR: He had organ banks and the like, and people smuggling them and selling them illegally and killing people in alleyways for their organs.

STURGEON: That's right, and Fred Pohl went into that in *GRAVY PLANET*, as I recall. He touched on that, but it was somebody else who became truly obsessed with it for a couple of years sometime in the early sixties, if I recall. I can't remember who it was, but there were several stories involving a total horror of this thing. Science fiction writers will tend to get sometimes these rather specified obsessions and work those out in their stories, rather than fall into any established political ideology. Or religious one either. There have been some superb religious stories in science fiction, and several anthologies of these, and they're always very interesting.

One of those most powerful explanations of established religion and its various effects is Marion Zimmer Bradley's *DARKOVER LANDFALL* in which she has a priest who got himself involved in a tremendously orgiastic situation. It really wasn't his fault, but it involved homosexual rape and murder and a number of things like that. He was right tight in the middle of it. But actually there was a spore that drifted across at a certain season, and these people from a wrecked spaceship were trying to survive, and when this thing hit then the whole place just went crazy. And he came to the edge of suicide but then he realized that as a priest this was the very worst thing he could do. He had already done so many terrible things but this was the worst.

That was rule one. That was axiomatic. You do not kill yourself. Life was too precious among the survivors for them to commit a capital punishment on anyone. So the priest was set to burying the dead and taking care of the graves. He was a pariah. He was off by himself.

And there's a marvelous dialogue

between him and a young girl who comes out. She has something to confess and there's nobody to confess it to. He no longer considers himself a priest, and there's this dialogue between them which covers the whole question of his philosophy and his theology and the feeling of established religion as it extends itself into outer space, into new planets and new cultures. A fascinating discussion. It really was, and all honor to Marion Zimmer Bradley for that.

By the way, if you'd like to see that quote of that section completely, I used it in the chapter I wrote for Reginald Bretnor's first book on science fiction, *SCIENCE FICTION: ITS MEANING AND ITS FUTURE*. It was a beautiful piece of writing.

In that connection let me say how pleased I am at the explosive growth of women in science fiction. Women science fiction writers are just damn good writers. Not necessarily from a feeling of bias, but



I'm so pleased to see that happen. After all, it began with a woman, didn't it?

SFR: How do you account for the fact that women writers in science fiction are still in the extreme minority, but with one or two exceptions they're all in the top rank?

STURGEON: Yeah, that's right. Also some of the ones who are not in the top rank because they haven't written enough have written top rank stuff.

I think immediately of Doris Pischeria, who really ought to write more, and particularly of Josephine Saxton who is incredibly good, absolutely astonishingly good. Did you ever read a little book called *THE HEIROS GAMOS OF SAN AND ANN SMITH*?

SFR: No.

STURGEON: It's a strange title and it's a strange little book, but it's a unique book. There's a distinction between a unique book and an original one. Mickey Spillane writes an original. After he's done that everybody can copy it. Dashiell Hammett did. Even Hemingway in a sense did, and people can copy his style and his approach. But a unique book is something that couldn't be duplicated even by the author. There's a very slim shelf in the back of my head of books I consider truly unique. *FINLEY WREN* by Philip Wylie, for example. A book by Guy Endore called *METHINKS THE LADY*. And *THE HEIROS GAMOS OF SAN AND ANN SMITH* belongs there with these unique books. It could never be duplicated.

SFR: Wasn't this one of the books that only came out as a Doubleday hardcover and never a paperback?

STURGEON: No, it was a paperback. If there was a hardcover I'd love to see it. I met Josephine Saxton, by the way, a few weeks ago. I was in London, and she did me the honor of coming up from Staffordshire to spend the afternoon with me, and I found her an absolutely fascinating woman. She's as unique as her work.

SFR: Why did all these first-rate women writers suddenly arrive just now?

STURGEON: I think they simply found out they could. You know, something peculiar happened to me with this operating principle of permission. I have a friend in Los Angeles, and when I had this telephone call asking if I would like to go to Metz, I was very excited about it. I had no knowledge at the time or any dream of going to Italy with John Brunner. But I said to her, "I'll be there for four days and I'll come right back again, and I'm really fighting with all my heart the temptation to go to Austria to see my brother, because I haven't seen him for eleven years, and I'm in Europe and I'm that close to him and I'd be tempted to go, but I'm fighting off the temptation because of the work and the money, and so on."

And she said to me. "I think that's silly. Go and see your brother. I give you permission to go and see your brother."

Now, we're friends, but she has no authority over me in any way. But you know, that was magic. Somebody gave me permission. It's amazing the potency of that phrase. Isn't that strange? I give you permission to go and get the catnip, or to tell that girl you love her, or whatever.

I think that in a broad sense

the times, the trade, the area of science fiction has said to women 'I give you permission to write here.' And suddenly with heady acceptance of that permission they have come in and done such extraordinary work.

SFR: Do you think this is because they perceive things differently that they write so well?

STURGEON: I've often thought that, and I've had arguments particularly with women's lib types whenever there'd be any assertion on my part that women think differently from men. But I think it's so.

John Campbell used to deny that. He would say that women were different but he denied the idea of women's intuition, the quantum leaps of understanding that women so often seem to perform. He called it 'instantaneous computation'. He maintained that the intervening step did exist. The fact that women could not recall the intervening step did not mean it did not exist.

But some people feel that intuition is genuinely a quantum leap. There was a German scientist, someone associated with magnetism, who said, "I already have my solution. What is troubling me is the means," which is a good description of that intuitive leap.

I think women do tend to think in quantum leaps---this is of course a by and large thing, that doesn't apply to all of them, like the statement that men are taller and stronger than women on the average. But there are women who are taller and stronger than many men. So I'm not trying to be categorical about it. But whatever the difference, it absolutely fascinates me.

I adore women. I like to be around them. I like to watch them. I like to touch them. It just fascinates me the way women's minds work and the way they conduct themselves. I'm thoroughly interested in that and always have been. Always will be, I think.

But it's perfectly true that they have a way of going sometimes to the absolute heart of the matter without any fooling around, and it's shocking sometimes, like a bucket of icewater in the stomach, how swiftly a woman can get into the heart of the matter when she really and truly wants to.

Also women have an ability for endurance, for acceptance, for the ability to handle a situation which is really too complex to describe.

I go into this in VENUS PLUS X.

So many women seem to have what I call blackout words. A woman who's capable of learning a double-entry bookkeeping machine, or the most complicated kind of zig-zag sewing machine, which most men, even

mechanically-minded men would be baffled by---as soon as you say the word 'transmission', or the word 'frequency' everything seems to go blank in their head. They don't know what you're talking about and they don't make the effort to find out.

SFR: How much of this is a social role?

STURGEON: A good deal of it. I don't doubt that. I'm just saying I'm fascinated that the phenomenon exists.

SFR: A biologist friend of mine insists there are physiological differences between the brains of men and the brains of women. Allegedly the hemispheres specialize late in women, and the result is men have better spatial perception.

STURGEON: I wonder how much of that has been actually verified experimentally and how much is just straight hypothesis. It's hard to put that one together, really.

One girl I know, she's still in her teens and she was teaching math at M.I.T. at the age of fifteen. She's super brilliant. She's a total mathematician. I know another girl who was a professor at U.S.C. and she was teaching Old English as a language in order to be able to read BEOWULF in the original, and she was handling it with the back of her hand. She had an IQ of about 183. I don't know if any of those categories that you're speaking of that your friend mentioned would apply to either of those girls. But there again, maybe they're just purely exceptional. I wouldn't know.

You're right about it being a matter of societal roles. At the word 'transmission' a woman's mind goes blank. There's something in her which says, "This is not feminine. I will not be desirable as a woman and as a person if I show any knowledge in this area," although she's capable of doing mechanical things which are much more difficult. It's alright for her to run sewing machines in any degree of complexity. It's not alright for her to put in a new transmission in a Volkswagen. (Which my wife, incidentally, just recently did.)

Women are indeed capable of these things. I guess it's a matter of what I said, permission. Somebody gives them permission to do it.

SFR: Why should any individual wait for permission?

STURGEON: I don't know. But they do.

SFR: Can't someone control society entirely by giving or withholding permission?

STURGEON: I don't know. I could discuss that with Mr. Skinner and see. He pictures a society run by giving and withholding rewards. Never punishing, just a matter of rewards. He claims anybody can be conditioned into doing anything that way. I find that offensive. I really do.

SFR: Thank you, Mr. Sturgeon.

CONDUCTED AT THE 2ND WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION, NEW YORK, OCT. 30, 1976

LET'S BE SIRIUS ABOUT THIS

THE SIRIUS MYSTERY

By Robert K. G. Temple
St. Martin's Press, \$10.95

Reviewed by M. A. Bartter

This is the story of an archeological dig---by a man who never visited a single site. In 1965, Temple happened upon a report titled "A Sudanese Sirius System" by the French anthropological team of Gri-aule and Dieterlen. He found, to his amazement, that the scientifically primitive Dagon tribe in Africa have preserved, in their initiation rites, astronomically accurate information about Sirius.

This led Temple, whose training is in Oriental studies, to research the Mediterranean civilizations of earliest history, looking for ritual and semantic clues to a body of Sirian-oriented knowledge. Naturally, he found it.

In the course of his studies he virtually convinced himself that at some time in the distant past humanity got a tremendous cultural boost from amphibious humanoid from the Sirius system; creatures so unlike man that they have been remembered not as gods but as monsters; very important monsters.

THE SIRIUS MYSTERY is not a sensational popularization of Temple's theory. He has detailed and documented his research meticulously, included translations of hard-to-find material, and appended an extensive bibliography (including Sagan and Shklovskii's INTELLIGENT LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE) and copious notes. Moreover, he has heroically refrained from leaving his subject for even a moment. Whether or not one can admire the book as a definitive model. This is how such work should be done.

England, September 30, 1976

'Thanks very much for the complementary copy of SFR 18 at the suggestion of John Brunner, fellow sufferer from recent European conventions. Ironically, the state of the game got even worse, shortly afterwards, at Liege - where we were joint GOHs. But I don't wish to retrace that particular morass, in memory, more than I have to...except that I'd always laboured under the illusion that if people invite you to a Con, and put you in a hotel and pay for this and that and ask you to give a talk and lure a few fans there with the promise of a programme containing certain speakers, then they could make some vague attempt to provide a time and a place for the speaker to perform; or I wouldn't now be having to pay for xeroxes of my talk to send to people who wanted to hear it, whose addresses I have, scribbled on beer mats and torn-up envelopes.

'By the way, I like SFR (and TAC before it) very much. Tell you a story about that. I used to buy TAC in Rog Peyton's shop Andromeda in Birmingham, which was next door to where I was working then. Come the Summer vacation of 1975, not wishing to miss out on the next copy I sent a sub to your UK agents, Dawson, enclosing the quoted amount. They wrote back promptly saying the price had gone up a bit, would I send them another £0.72 or some such amount - which I immediately did. This was about the beginning of July, 1975. By about November I'd started wondering, and dropped them a line saying, hey I subscribed to a magazine. Silence. By Easter I had decided they must have decamped to Monte Carlo with my £4 or whatever; however Ken Slater assured me that Dawson was a very reputable firm, just a bit big, that was all. In approximately June 1976 issues 13, 14, 15, and 16 all arrived, in the same packet. Which somewhat diminishes the impact of the individual issues - though you could argue it lends historical perspective? Anyway, I decided I'd buy future issues at Con's, when I visit them, then I'll only be at most six months behind! (This isn't a reproach to you, of course - I'm just saying that in my case Dawson's proved to be the most tardy agent I have ever come across.)

'p.s. Slaves to the Machine department. In the same post as SFR I got my reminder to renew my TV license. The bottom line, the code for me, contains 38 numbers non-stop (not binary either). I thought their computer might have been trying to figure out some of the further reaches of pi in its spare time. Alternatively we are secretly licensing all the TVs in

ELWOOD AT PLAY

SIX SCIENCE FICTION PLAYS

Edited By Roger Elwood
Pocket Books 48766, \$1.95

Reviewed By Buzz Dixon

This Elwood collection is unique since it's devoted to a literary form little used by science fiction.

The book contains three stage plays, two teleplays, and one unfilmed movie script.

One play, John Jakes' *STRANGER WITH ROSES*, was anthologized at least twice before. Ted and George Rae Cogswell's *CONTACT POINT* would be much better if they let the action flow unbroken and eliminated the trite "Captain Future" dialog. Paul Zindel's *LET ME HEAR YOU WHISPER* is not anti-climactic but rather un-climactic since nothing is resolved (besides, Mike Nichols' film, *THE DAY OF THE DOLPHIN*, makes this play obsolete).

Tom Reamy's *STING!* is a ho-hum monster from space screenplay, noteworthy only because the monster is a foot-and-a-half tall. It seems to me Fritz Leiber's *THE MECHANICAL BRIDE* was originally a short story; in any case, his teleplay is confused and ill-defined.

Which leaves us with the sole reason for buying this book, Harlan Ellison's *THE CITY ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER*, originally written for *STAR TREK*.

The *CITY* in this book is the original script, not the final version shown on TV and sold in mimeograph form.

This script and Gene Roddenberry's handling of it caused a falling out between Gene and Harlan. Since then they've become friends again and the incident is forgotten.

At the risk of raking open old wounds, however, I must say the heavily revised final version is superior to Harlan's original.

The original *CITY* would make a fine movie or TV special. It's not suited for *STAR TREK* for a variety of reasons. First, it's slow; the final script tightened the action considerably. For example, Spock doesn't see Edith Keeler until the end of act two, Kirk doesn't meet her until nearly a third of the way through act three. In the final version they

meet her halfway through act one (For those who haven't seen the episode, Edith Keeler was a focal point in time. Her life or death would affect all future history.). Second, the TV version dropped or condensed characters. Harlan's *LeBeque/Beckwith/Jewels* of Sound sub-plot was dropped entirely since it had no real bearing on the main plot. The reason Edith had to die was clearly shown in the final version, not merely speculated on as in Harlan's original.

Harlan often rails against producers who reject scripts because 'it doesn't fit the characters.' Harlan's claim--that the writer can make the hero do uncharacteristic things if properly motivated---is true, but one must consider the other angle as well. The Kirk and Spock in his teleplay are different from the characters portrayed in the show. By the time *CITY* was aired, *STAR TREK* had firmly established that Kirk would sacrifice himself and his friends for the *ENTERPRISE* and in turn the *ENTERPRISE* for the galaxy. He would never decide to let Edith live and future history be changed.

Among the improvements in the final script were changing Harlan's Guardians (three nine foot tall Father Times) to The Guardian (a computer/time vortex) and improving the dialog during that scene, dropping the space marauders, and having McCoy accidentally change time.

By having McCoy accidentally o.d. on a stimulant and go berserk, the story removed the villainy Harlan used in his original. This made the story even more tragic--good men seeking to do good must let an evil thing occur.

Perhaps Gene Roddenberry should have let Harlan revise the script instead of several other writers. The original *CITY* needed punching up but it should have been in Harlan's hands.

Save for *THE CITY ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER* this book isn't particularly interesting.

'This year I have 15-1/2 contact hours of teaching, plus a course chairpersonship and all kinds of headaches with cheating. We've caught four people involved in selling papers for students to turn in as their own, and are going to nail six balls and a pair of labia to the wall.'

--- ANONYMOUS TEACHER

THE DEADLIEST ENEMY

CINNABAR

By Edward Bryant
Macmillan, \$7.95

Reviewed by M. A. Bartter

Some short story groups collect into near nonsense. These stories, published in various magazines over the past few years, grow in stature and vision by being collected. The metaphor Bryant hangs on 'Cinnabar' itself may be too pretentious for its own good, but these cool, photographic vignettes of people hooked by 'Cinnabar, doomed city of hope, haven for paradoxes' are good examples of the most engaging and expressive form of science fiction today.



Bryant knows that what is marvelous today is commonplace in Cinnabar. He writes of erotic vampirism, eternal youth, and pathetically sentient golems with sympathetic comprehension but without agitation.

"Reality is my deadliest enemy," says Cafter, a simulacrum who thinks he is a man. In Cinnabar the controlling computer expresses itself as Network, not a news medium, but a news/reality creator. Nothing escapes its touch: practically all the inhabitants of Cinnabar just might be simulacra, also.

Manipulation is Bryant's theme. Yet when Network goes into terminal senility, in a ritually ambiguous but grippingly real sequence, man---intrinsic value much of the book seems to question---survives Cinnabar.

A PLANET CALLED LLANDYSILIOGOGOGOCH

The explorers Volisseau and Routaire in their spaceship The Pooch were a pair, and the planet they found wasn't quite round--- in fact it was more like a square. It was actually rectangular and flat (if you can imagine a planet like that) but V and R didn't care, they'd start anywhere and decided they'd here hang their hat. With the help of their underpaid crew they began mapping the world thru and thru. But the whole crew was grave when they found a red cave which had worn the poor planet in two. "Do you think," asked Volisseau with much ire, "we should call it The Cosmic Flat Tire?" Routaire said, "Well no but we could call it Doughnut and no one could call us a liar." Then as Vol had a quick hit of hooch (which Routaire now proceeded to mooch) a Welshman named Llew startled the crew with his shout: "Llandysiliogogogoch!" "Gods of space, what an outburst was that," said Volisseau as he straightened his hat. Llew looked quite chagrined and his voice had quite thinned as he said, "it's not doughnut or flat." "Do you know of this oddly built planet?" asked Routaire who had taken for granite the rocks of the hole and now his whole goal was to land on the planet and man it. "In old Wales we have heard of the place," said the Welshman who was mopping his face. "And they say that a knave from close by the red cave gives all strangers a hell of a chase." "What nonsense," said Volisseau and Routaire. "Such tales won't keep us from there." And just as they'd planned they proceeded to land, ignoring poor Llew and his scare. The last message received from The Pooch warned all travelers away from the Smooch. Not a planet, say the tips, but huge cosmic lips are the smiling Llandysiliogogogoch!

--NEAL WILGUS

SF, LIKE WINE, AGES WELL

CITY

By Clifford D. Simak
Ace, \$1.75

Reviewed by John DiPrete

Science fiction's Year of the Reprint is here.

Ace, Berkley, and other sf publishers have reissued dozens of single author collections, and Hugo-winning novels. The industry needs to cut expenses and up sales.

Thus Berkley has come out with a number of Clifford D. Simak books ---OUT OF THEIR MINDS, THE GOBLIN RESERVATION, DESTINY DOLL and others. The books have been repackaged to attract the curious browser, and, as reprints, are easier to produce. All have luscious covers by Richard Powers, who is a long-time Simak fiction artist. (Powers is well-known for his rendering of alien environments. His covers always have a dark and mysterious atmosphere.)

Ace, too, has reissued a number of Simak novels, among them is CITY. In its original version, CITY won the International Fantasy Award and Hugo for 1952 and 1953, respectively. Since then, it has been printed and reprinted innumerable times, and is clearly Simak's finest. The book is comprised of eight stories, or chapters, originally published (before joining into a novel) in AMAZING and ASTOUNDING. Incidentally, one of the stories, "Huddling Place", occupies sixteen pages in THE SCIENCE FICTION HALL OF FAME (Volume I).

As a fantasy narrative, CITY covers 10,000 years of Earth civilization. Man-mutant upheavals, dog-centered societies, and interdimensional travel are all here. The opus tells how Jenkins, a Webster robot, creates a society populated by dogs, cats, rabbits and other animals. Each animal has the ability to speak, think and reason in disturbingly unhuman-like ways.



The best item, "Desertion," explores the perennial question of Death and Rebirth. The tale describes a cold, hostile Jupiter---and an Earthman, Fowler, who visits there. On his mission, Fowler transforms into a Loper, faces the hellish landscape of Jupiter, and survives. In his altered form, he finds Jupiter has transformed into a breathtaking, exquisite wonderland. As a result, Fowler decides to stay, forever, on the strangely beautiful paradise. He is envied by the reader.

Even the worst chapter, "Aesop," is strongly done---relying as usual on Simak's use of excellent metaphor and characterization. The rest of the stories add up to better-than-average reading, and all are deserving of the wide praise Simak has received.

NOT ALL IT'S CRACKED UP TO BE

THE CRACK IN THE COSMIC EGG
By Joseph Chilton Pearce
Pocket Books, \$1.25

Reviewed by John DiPrete

To date everything written on cosmic consciousness has succeeded in obfuscating the matter. Sadly, THE CRACK IN THE COSMIC EGG is no exception. Joseph Pearce has written a vague, meandering book that puts forth a radical "world view" on the Nature of Reality. Pearce re-states the old shibboleth---that the ideas of Man shape and mold themselves into concrete structures. The twist here is Pearce's contention that ideas become solidified; in other words mind "becomes matter". Although his theory sounds interesting, it is hardly original.

In the 18th Century, Bishop Berkeley espoused similar beliefs; he stated that interactions between mind and matter produced a restructuring of the cosmos. THE CRACK IN THE COSMIC EGG mirrors this same theme, but in a slightly updated context.

Despite this, however, Pearce's major fault lies in his shoddy evidence to support this theme. His evidence is repeated over and over throughout the book and he cites highly repetitive arguments. As such, Pearce's academic mantra not only bores the reader, it confuses him.

For the serious scholar who wishes to research this subject, a much better "egg cracking" appears in HUMAN KNOWLEDGE, written by George Berkeley---the man who started it all.

STANISLAW LEM IS NOT A POLISH SALAD

THE STAR DIARIES

By Stanislaw Lem
Translated by Michael Kandel
Seabury Press, \$9.95

Reviewed by M. A. Bartter

The Polish wonder strikes again! The freshly collected adventures of Ijon Tichy, fallguy of the future, burst upon the dazzled American public.

Well, almost dazzled. This time the famous neologisms Lem delights in are neatly fielded by a superior translator. Lem can write a very funny episode; some of these 'voyages' really tickled my funny bone. But he won't let anything, adventure or logic, get in the way of Making his Point. He is Getting the Message Across.

Every satirist reveals himself as he illuminates his subject; Lem is no exception. And as time goes on---the stories were written over a period of twenty years or more---he becomes more and more sententious. He must have taken his praise as 'the thinking man's writer' very seriously. The 21st voyage of Ijon Tichy consists largely of an interminable sermon delivered by a nihilist robot.

I was supposed to view Tichy as the modern Candide; I began to see him as the original Polish joke. THE STAR DIARIES hammers home its points so thoroughly I was finally simply glad when it stopped.

'KNOWLEDGE is what we take in with our senses.

UNDERSTANDING is the action verb of knowledge, what we use of it, what we actually do of our knowledge.

WISDOM is what we pass on of the knowledge we really understand.

BULLSHIT is passing on knowledge without understanding it.

TEACHING is unfortunately generally bullshit.

LEARNING is taking in knowledge and converting it to understanding.

WRITING IS A MIXTURE OF BULLSHIT AND WISDOM WITH HUMOR AS A SUPPOSITORY.'

---John Muir
THE VELVET MONKEY WRENCH

[Thanks to Carl Juarez]

GROWING PLEASURES

BIO-FUTURES

Edited by Pamela Sargent
Vintage Books, V-366, \$1.95, 1976

Reviewed by Lorenz J. Firsching

Pamela Sargent's *Bio-Futures* is very nearly a textbook example of how to put together a reprint science fiction anthology. As the title indicates, the book is about futurebiological developments. Sargent begins with a long and generally well-written introduction that discusses the present and future of biological research, and the manner in which it has reflected that research. She has no axe to grind here, as she did in her previous Vintage anthology, *Women of Wonder*, and as a result her introduction and the notes accompanying the ten stories are both readable and informative.

The stories themselves range from good to excellent. The best known of the stories is Ursula K. LeQuin's "Nine Lives," one of the most often reprinted works of the last ten years. Almost everyone who will buy this book has read it, but "Nine Lives" fits in well with the rest of the fiction, and I can't really fault Ms. Sargent for including it.

Among the short stories, Kate Wilhelm's Nebula-award-winning "The Planners" is the best, with Frederic Pohl's "Day Million" a close second. Short stories by R.A. Lafferty, Leonard Tushnet and James Blish are also included.

However, the book's real strength lies in the four novellas Sargent has chosen. Thomas Disch's "Emancipation: A Romance of the Times to Come", is appropriately ironic for its subject matter and more readable than many of Disch's other works. Paul Anderson's classic "Call Me Joe" is still an effective story after a third or fourth reading. Two views of immortality are provided by James Gunn's famous "The Immortals" and "The Weariest River", by Thomas Scortia, one of my favorite stories.

The list of "Further Readings" at the end of the book is excellent, including both fiction and non-fiction works.

A perfect anthology? No. There are other stories I would have liked to have seen included (for example, Damon Knight's "Masks" or Larry Niven's "The Jigsaw Man"). But Pamela Sargent has come close, very close. I would recommend this book to anyone without hesitation. It is an excellent anthology.

NEWS & COMMENT FROM DARRELL SCHWEITZER

Nov. 5, 1976

'In case you haven't heard, the winners of the World Fantasy awards were:

Novel: *BID TIME RETURN*
By Richard Matheson
Short Fiction: "Belsen Express"
By Fritz Leiber
Special Award-Professional:
Don Grant (I think.)
Special Award-Amateur:
CARCOSA
Life Award: Fritz Leiber.

I don't remember who the award-winning artist was.

'There is a serious problem about these awards which ought to be aired. Very few people at the FantasyCon were at all interested in the outcome because they weren't sure it meant anything. The winners and the nominations are chosen by a panel of judges. Few even know who the judges are, and fewer still how they became judges. (Apparently appointed by the con committee.) There was no pre-publicity, so no one knew what the "nominations" were. It seems to me that since the judges chose both the nominations and the winners, they would save a meaningless ritual by just choosing the winners. After all, there is no voting of any sort, and presumably the winners are in mind from the start. So this award is the opinion of five or six people and nothing more.

'Many were disappointed by the outcome, too. The only other novel nominated was SALEM'S LOT, a best-seller by an author whose name escapes me. (I'd never heard of the book, showing how little attention I pay to the meaningless ritual called the bestseller list.)

(Hardly meaningless. A best-seller means MONEY and a kind of FAME and A BIGGER ADVANCE for the next book.)

'*BID TIME RETURN* is getting terrible reviews, so this was hardly the judgement of a majority.

'I think the idea behind the awards is to have alleged "experts" pick the winners so it won't be a mere popularity contest. But still it's a popularity contest, on a much more limited scale, and even less likely to reflect anything significant at all. An obvious reform would be to have nominations by popular vote, and the judges pick the winners, or the judges pick the nominations and popular vote on the winners. Otherwise there's no reason why every

TAKE MY GOLD, MARIAN
AND SIT ON IT FOREVER



con in the country can't start handing out awards with pretentious sounding titles, and before long all awards will be devalued to the point no one cares to pick them up.

'There also need to be definite rules set on eligibility. I just remembered, the winner for Best Collection was THE INQUIRIES OF DR. ESTERHAZY, but E. Hoffman Price's FAR LANDS, OTHER DAYS was nominated. This is a professional category, and thus more than a few eyebrows were raised when Carcosa, whose sole activity in the previous year was to publish that same book, was nominated in the amateur category.

'It also makes no sense when the other specialty presses, like Owlswick and Grant and Arkham were in the professional category. (To make life interesting, de Camp's HPL biography was also in the special Pro Award category, a non-fiction book competing against publishers.) Apparently the categories are entirely arbitrary.

'Other news is that VOID #4 ((An Australian prozine)) finally having been published about August. For some odd reason this magazine is unnumbered and undated. Americans involved this time are myself (with a 6,000 word story), Joe Werhle Jr., and Paul Harwitz (with a short short), and there are illos by Al Siroid. Also a longish novelet by Jack Wodhams, something by a Frank Bryning who seems to be a big name in Australia and unknown elsewhere, and my reprint column features a William Morris story.'

(When publishers leave off dates and numbers on an issue it means they hope to leave it on the stands as long as possible, and/or they don't have firm plans for subsequent issues. It is also a sign of undercapitalization and/or lack of confidence...or THE END.)

NOISE LEVEL

a column

john brunner

CONCERNING A DANGEROUS DRUG

This is about a drug called--- in Britain---Aldomet.

Or, to be strictly accurate, it's about myself and certain experiences I've had over the past few years. I'm sure there must be many people for whom this drug is being prescribed who do not show anything like the side-effects which it had on me. But I'm equally sure that there may be others who are suffering in similar fashion, who perhaps have not yet identified the drug as a possible cause.

To make clear what I'm driving at, I'll have to go back to a point in time several years ago. Indeed, to my childhood.

All my life I've lived on my nerves. After eight miserable years at boarding-school (which scarcely fitted me for the adult world) and two equally awful years in the Air Force, I opted for one of the riskiest possible careers, and it was probably inevitable that at some stage the strain would become too much for me. When it did, it showed in the form of bouts of prolonged depression. My doctor in London diagnosed me as "a classic case of acute nervous exhaustion" and put me on tranquillisers for a week, which proved helpful enough inasmuch as though I went on worrying I stopped worrying about the fact that I was worrying... I'm a congenital worrier, as so many writers seem to be; I worry especially about things that didn't happen but might have done.

As if the real world didn't supply enough anxiety!

Another thing which I should mention about myself, I suppose, is that I've always had a "short fuse", as the saying goes.

But for most of my life I've been accustomed to losing my temper for a good, sound reason: because that idiot editor put 55 unauthorised changes into the first chapter of THE PRODUCTIONS OF TIME, for example, or because Goldman Verlag cut THE JAGGED ORBIT from



100 chapters to 32. That kind of thing.

Which happened quite frequently enough for me not to be particularly surprised when, in the summer of 1974, I was told why I had suddenly begun to suffer stabbing headaches. My blood-pressure was up to 200/120, approaching the phone-the-undertaker level.

Clearly this was another hard-to-avoid consequence of the chancey life I chose to lead.

So in September I was put on a diuretic and a daily dose of Aldomet. I continued with the latter for three weeks less than a full year.

That year was stolen from my life. During it, I was unable to work (I turned out as much in twelve months as ordinarily I might have done in a couple of weeks); I became horribly, unspeakably, suicidally depressed; I slept atrociously, and often had such appalling nightmares that I was forced to get up and walk around in the small hours for fear of returning to the same dream...but when it did come time to face a new day I was overcome with terror at the prospect of having to spend it in my own company.

On top of everything else the lowering of my blood-pressure made me very nearly impotent.

Oh, the pills worked in that respect! That's undeniable.

But in addition to the effects described above I was afflicted by another unprecedented phenomenon.

I was contriving, at unpredictable but very frequent intervals, to blow up something that warranted a five-minute with Marjorie, followed by apologies all round, into a row lasting for hours. On one terrible occasion it dragged on all night--a night that I spent weeping and moaning uncontrollably and

wishing I had the guts to do away with myself.

Let me not bore you with the ghastly details. Take them as read.

Naturally I ascribed this to a proximate cause: the fact that never before had I been away from writing for so long. The identity "John Brunner--writer" has been so total in my mind for such a long while that being deprived of my ability to work was like having half of my personality amputated.

Clearly the way in which my imagination had been damped down must be due to the Aldomet; equally clearly, one could see why this might be both necessary and desirable if the high blood-pressure level I'd reached I'd reached were due, as I suspected it could well be, to my gift for fretting over wholly imaginary disasters. So I asked my doctor to take me off the drug just before we went away for a holiday in Greece. He agreed that it was an appropriate opportunity.

I found I could work as soon as we returned from our trip: short material first (you'll see it in F&SF), then a major novel, my first historical, which is coming on slow, slow... but coming on.

I was told to continue with the diuretic for another year, but I'm off that as well now, and my blood-pressure is down to 130/95 and shows no sign of going up again. Success!

Success? Well---ah...

Six months after I discontinued the Aldomet, that's to say some time in the spring of 1976, I walked into the kitchen when Marjorie was listening to the BBC's weekly programme "Motoring and the Motorist." (We still have old-fashioned steam radio in Britain, of course.)

And a doctor was talking about the dangerous effects of certain drugs nowadays being prescribed. He cited first and foremost tranquillisers, and conjured up a vivid picture of a driver, stuck in a traffic-jam, losing his temper to such an extent that he got out of his car and went to punch another driver on the nose. (That's tranquil???)

I looked at Marjorie; she looked at me; and almost simultaneously we both said, "Aldomet..."

And then, more recently, we went to the French SF Convention at Metz, where I got to talking with a pharmacist. She asked about my work, and I mentioned the fact that I'd lost a year, and upon my naming the drug she proceeded to

recite--without being told---the symptoms I had suffered from. Did I experience this? I did. That? Yes. The other? Right again...

I just sat there shaking, and feeling profoundly glad that I was no longer taking the stuff. If I'd had a bottle of it with me I'd have thrown it on the floor and jumped on it.

Or, come to think of it, done something much more destructive and much more brutal. Like finding out who makes it and wringing the managing director's neck. Under its influence I became a violent person in a way that I could never previously have credited. I lashed out, and screamed and yelled, and threw things; there's a dent in the bedroom wall to remind me of the fact.

But I'm being reminded in another and more harrowing fashion.

Though not by any means as often as when I was actually taking the drug, I am still losing my temper over trivia. I'm snapping people's heads off when what I ought to do is engage them in reasoned argument. I rely implicitly on Marjorie to administer the business side of my operation, and despite that I get angry with her for no real reason---it seems, of course, that I have excellent reasons at the time...

The sense of helplessness is fearful. Afterwards, I feel bitterly ashamed of myself. But whenever this happens I have another awful memory to add to what was already an unbearably large store accumulated during my year on Aldomet. This is an evil that feeds on itself. Each occurrence makes me despair more, which means that I'm more likely to get angry, which means... And so on.

What it boils down to is that the drug appears to have effected a lasting and deleterious change in my personality. I can only hope that with the passage of time it will become less marked. Because it's making me thoroughly dislikable, not only to people whom I wouldn't give offence to for the world were I in normal control of myself, but also to me.

And that is as near to hell on earth as I have yet been able to conceive.

Let me conclude by making one thing clear. My present doctor is an admirable guy---informed, capable, willing to spend time talking over his patients' problems in-

stead of hurrying them out of his surgery... Indeed, I'd term him as good a GP as I have met.

But I doubt very much (though I confess I haven't asked) that he ever had to prescribe Aldomet for an author before. The French pharmacist whom I mentioned earlier does happen to be acquainted, because she is an SF fan, with quite a few people in the trade. Even so---

Unless patients who display anomalous reactions stand up and yell about their experiences, how in the world are we ever going to make our minds up about the desirability, or otherwise, of continuing to use the frighteningly powerful drugs we are now imposing on metabolisms evolved over millennia for another world, in which they didn't exist?

LETTER FROM ROBERT BLOCH

Nov. 11, 1976

'Congratulations on your well-deserved Hugo and your superlative SFR 19! The Dick interview is memorable---I predict it will bring a lot of comment. He has the same candor which you exhibit in SFR---a rare quality in these days of self-serving hype---and I for one appreciate it. As I do you.

'Happy Thanksgiving!'

((I always enjoy reading self-defeating hype---which most of it turns out to be, in the end.))

LETTER FROM PETER MANDLER

Sept. 25, 1976

'I've delayed and delayed and been delayed; I don't know how your schedules work, but I hope this reaches you before you're too far into assembling the next issue. A lot of the delay arose over a little detour I made---to Kansas City---which in retrospect was a wise decision.

'And while I'm at it: congratulations on the latest Hugo, though I know you were expecting two (since when have you shown a shred of modesty?).

'The del Rey interview was wonderful; I can't say exactly why was better than the Martin, whether the questions were more pertinent or continuous or just that del Rey is a more interesting person.

'I believe he is wrong on one account, however: his assertion

that sf's specificity will get it in trouble. It seems to stem from a misconception of sf as too literally "the literature of ideas," when it is more realistically "the literature of visions" if it is the "literature" of anything (fantasy included). Ideas will always fall by the wayside---even dianetics---but visions, skillful visions, tend to survive. Jules Verne will outlive any number of Apollo programs, as the Viking probes have done nothing to tarnish the vision of WAR OF THE WORLDS. Those striking Martian panoramas have no more connection in my mind with THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES than do Nehwon or Idaho. Both are wonderful visions, one fictional, one factual.

'This does not mean that accurate prediction---like Clarke and the telecommunications satellite---can't be applauded; credible speculation is just one of the writer's tools. But sf is not merely fortune-telling, not even just fortune-telling as del Rey wants to put it.

'Do we ostracize Heinlein because the '60s and '70s---"The Crazy Years"---weren't really as crazy as he portrayed them? Does del Rey really think his children would be disappointed in reading METHUSELAH'S CHILDREN? Or his great-grandchildren? HAMLET still works---and will continue to work long after crowned heads, gravediggers, Denmark, maybe even after stepfathers cease to exist.

'Terrence Green's views of Barry Malzberg come closest of anything I've read to clearing up the confusion I've accumulated on the subject; in particular, this view of Malzberg as a commentator. His critics, book reviews, the occasional pieces he's done for you are all brilliant; his fiction annoys the hell out of me. It explains in



part, perhaps, his persistent use of the present tense, which I'd thought persistently unsuccessful. It may also explain the dreadful similarity between hundreds of Malzberg shorts--if the theory stands and Malzberg really is, after all, just pointing and chuckling.

'That sounds awful and vindictive, though I don't mean it that way. His fiction I just can't take---personal preference. But reading the review of GALAXIES---and despite the turnoff of its F&SF novelet form, filled as it is---for once I am tempted to go out and buy Malzberg. Now that's awful.

'The Prozine Notes were welcome and generally perceptive; reading what you have to say about metaphor in Dann's STARHIKER, I suspect you would like the sequel less. And there's just two small points to add to Darrell Schweitzer's ORBIT review. If he thinks that John Barfoot's last ORBIT appearance was a 'non-functional word pattern' in #11, he is missing "Coils" in #14 (which may also be a non-functional word pattern, for all I know). And if you are both curious---as am I---about Felix Gotschalk's ability to write something other than his usual odd-viewpoint mash (which is beginning to bore me), there's a story of his in NEW DIMENSIONS 4 called "The Examination" which is a bit different and much better.

'Finally, I want very briefly to deal with some confusion that shows in your reply to my letter. When I referred to people of wavering conviction, I did not, of course, mean that they waver generally (as in 'poor dumb bunnies, if only they didn't waver'), but on specific issues at which a story might be aimed. There are all sorts of topics upon which I am undecided, and on the basis of a biased story I might very well---if only unconsciously---slide over to one side. Therefore, a supposedly pro-liberation Coney is doing his own principles damage by encouraging borderline chauvinists. In any case, you're reading into your words only what you want to read. You see the word "censorship" and "total state control of all media" springs to mind. I never even mentioned the state; I was speaking of totally voluntary---but to me only logical---self-censorship in the interest of the individual author's beliefs. The FBI would never even know, I promise. How do I spell that out more clearly?

'I don't think it's useful to go any further into England's financial situation, since we're approaching the matter with unrecon-

cilable perspectives and armed with different "facts".

(*(Since your letter was written, of course, England's financial situation has worsened even more. I submit that my "facts" are faster than yours.)*)

'I totally reject your attitude to the 10% of the population which you call "moron"; since I don't believe that stupid people invariably produce stupid children, I obviously think that it is to society's own benefit for attention to be paid the disadvantaged so that the children don't grow up stupid. You cannot be so naive as to imagine that the poor are poor because they haven't got the sense to be rich; nor, as you say, that all of those Southern black kids who are dying of malnutrition are being fed Cokes and Twinkies instead of the balanced meals their parents could give them if they really wanted to.'

(*(There are two basic questions involved in this social problem: How far do you go to "salvage" the stupid (and the minority of average or higher intelligence in the world of the stupid/poor); and should it be attempted?*)

(*(Of course the poor are mostly poor because they haven't the 'sense' to be better off. There is a fraction of the poor who are poor through choice or because of emotional hangups, including simple lack of motivation and learned laziness. But most of the poor are of low intelligence, and the jobs they can do will not pay very well.*)

(*(And the morons, being morons; can't use the information available in every media to help themselves; it involves coordination, planning, detail, self-discipline. A social worker going into a "poor" home will see dozens of ways to improve the place, improve the diet, etc. which will cost little or nothing. And the social worker will tell the morons how to do it, and even show them, but... the cokes continue to get bought, and the Twinkies get fed to malnourished kids. Because when intelligence is low, emotions are that much more in the picture, and stubbornness, hate, envy, greed, lust, love, jealousy, anger, etc. don't read and understand nutritional advice or plant gardens or come up with ideas for this or that.*)

(*(So what do you do to save these people? Do a Big Daddy And Mommy number on them with pre-planned and cooked nutritious meals, mandatory medical checkups every year, take their babies from*

them for proper "advantaged" upbringing, and forced schooling to teach them better skills to their upper individual limits, and forced psychiatrists adjustments of the "uncooperative"?)

(*(That would be great---for the bureaucrats and the vast employed army of social workers such a program would create. That would be do-goodism in its most naked, self-serving form. For the Liberal and the sanctimonious do-gooder operate best when they can make a lot of bucks from it, and when they can tell themselves how Good they are, how Humanitarian, and how Sacrificing they are. Of course when Liberals and do-gooders do things to the poor disadvantaged, they are also telling the people they are "helping" how incompetent, stupid, tasteless, crude, dirty, and useless they are.*)

(*(Carry it a notch deeper into the Liberal psyche, and you find a carefully hidden contempt for other people, and a terrible lust for power over people.*)

(*(Yes, yes, I've carried this into Diatribe Contry---again. I get carried away. To finish up your letter....)*)

'As to the minimum wage laws creating a welfare class...I hold a minimum-wage job at the moment, and I promise you that the severely mentally-handicapped could take my place without the slightest drop in efficiency. There may not be any handicapped factories in Oregon, but there are elsewhere establishments where the retarded---the 'bottom 1%---do the manual labor and those establishments are as profitable as any. But I think this is pointless.

'Somehow, despite all the fuzzy politics in "Alien Thoughts," you manage to edit a damn good fanzine and as long as you will still take money from "Liberal do-gooders" (or worse), you will continue to edit a damn good fanzine, because I warn you, they are going to be around for a long, long time...'

(*(A Liberal accusing ME of 'fuzzy' politics!!!)*)

'Books seem to me to be pestilent things, and infect all that trade in them...with something very perverse and brutal. Printers, binders, sellers, and others that make a trade and gain out of them have universally so odd a turn and corruption of mind that they have a way of dealing peculiar to themselves, and not conformed to the good of society and that general fairness which cements mankind.'

---John Locke

BITTER MEDICINE

TIME OF THE FOURTH HORSEMAN
By Chelsea Quinn Yarbro
Doubleday, \$5.95

Reviewed by George R. R. Martin

The Powers That Be at Doubleday were clearly of mixed minds when deciding how Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's new novel, *Time of the Fourth Horseman*, should be marketed.

The spine of the book is stamped "Doubleday Science Fiction", but the dust jacket says only "Doubleday". The little information slip enclosed for reviewers claims the book is SF, but the various people who rave about it on the back of the jacket do not, even though their numbers include Gordon Dickson and James Tiptree, Jr. In fact, the words "science fiction" are never used on the jacket; the biographical information about Yarbro tells us that she is a novelist and short story writer, a composer, and a Tarot reader, mentions her Edgar Award, but gives no hint of her formidable and growing reputation within the SF field. Frank M. Robinson, who leads off the parade of quotations, tells us in his opening sentence that this book is part of "a new genre of novels, commonly mislabeled 'disaster novels', that depict the terrifying problems -- and the equally terrifying solutions -- that face mankind in the very near future".

Hoo Hah. What the book really is part of, of course, is an old genre of novels, commonly mislabeled science fiction, that sometimes depict the terrifying problems -- and the equally terrifying solutions -- that face mankind in the very near future. Or is John Brunner supposed to be a disaster novelist?

No matter. Whatever category label is slapped on Yarbro's novel, it remains a taut, solid book and a damned fine read.

The novel is set in a near-future world where medicine has taken three giant steps forward; cancer is conquered, diagnostic computers and various other gadgets are in widespread use, giant medical centers have made private practice virtually obsolete. The death rate is quite low; the birth rate remains as ever; the result is overpopulation. Yarbro's characters, all of them doctors in a major urban hospital, see the results in a particularly grisly form: battered children, victims of a society in which people are beginning to turn on their offspring and each other like rats in an overcrowded cage.

All of this is tired material for the SF reader, but *Time of the*

Fourth Horseman is not a tired book. In Yarbro's scenario, the leaders do not simply try to ignore overpopulation into oblivion; instead they experiment with a time-honored solution -- plague.

Dr. Natalie Lebbreau and Dr. Harry Smith, who alternate as protagonists of the novel, each come upon the problem independently; children are dying under their care, in large numbers, from diseases the diagnostic computers do not recognize. But Lebbreau and Smith do recognize the killers, finally, though the hospital administration makes every effort to block them from the truth. The children are dying from the old ailments, the beaten and forgotten diseases, from polio and diphtheria and smallpox. Lebbreau, whose husband is the hospital's top pathologist, discovers that it is all part of a plan; their city is the site of an experiment, a controlled pandemic to ease population pressure, and for the past five years one-third of all the vaccines administered to children have been placebos. Horrified, she breaks with her husband, one of the originators of the scheme; she and Smith begin to inform and organize the younger doctors. The hospital fires them; the government puts them under house arrest. But then the great experiment begins to go awry; the old diseases are mutating into new ones, adults too begin to die in large numbers, the city is cordoned off. As the pestilence spreads, the restraints of civilization begin to break down, and Lebbreau and Smith and their allies regroup their forces and set up shop in an empty museum, bereft of all their computers, fighting the ancient diseases with the ancient medicine. Meanwhile, the children of the dying city, less gullible than their parents, somehow aware of the scheme, roam the streets and begin to kill doctors...

This is the stuff of Yarbro's story, and for the most part she handles it marvelously well. The book grips right from page one, gathers speed quickly, and does not release its hold on the reader until the end. Which end, by the way, is exactly right; a downer and an upper both at once, an excellent catharsis for the rage that has been building steadily in the readers' breast. Yarbro's medical detail all has the ring of verisimilitude, and she is shrewd enough to make excellent literary use of the average reader's built-in paranoia about hospitals and the medical profession, so the novel speaks to fears that are very real and very common, if seldom talked about.

One can, of course, quibble with the basic premise of the book; a gov-

ernment ruthless enough to conduct this sort of experiment, it might be argued, would also have been ruthless enough to impose mandatory birth control long before the problem reached these proportions. But such a quibble presupposes a basic sanity on the part of the politicians, and it is quite easy for me at least to suspend my disbelief in that regard.

There are more serious lapses as well. Natalie Lebbreau is a well-drawn character, but she is the only fully-realized character in the book. Harry Smith, her co-protagonist, is too much cut from the cloth of the idealistic young doctor, struggling tirelessly against all odds. The other doctors are sufficiently well characterized so that we can tell them apart, but none of them have more than a rudimentary spark of personality, and most of them are only names. Perhaps the worst offenders against good character development are the villains, especially Dr. Mark Howland, Lebbreau's husband and the Villain-in-Chief. Howland is entirely too black to be reasonable; pure charcoal-crisped cardboard. Not only does he administer this dire plot coldly and without a hint of remorse, but he also allows his own son to die of diphtheria, and -- as a sort of extra fillip to make the reader hate him -- he is being unfaithful to Lebbreau, screwing nurses on his examination table. The secondary villain, a fat-headed bureaucratic administrator who finally sees the light at the end of the book, is nearly as bad. Yarbro would have had a much better book if she had jettisoned these two, whose presence inevitably colors everything as a case of the Good Guys agin' the Bad Guys. Oddly enough, Yarbro also has a minor character in the book who would have made the perfect leader/symbol



for the forces arrayed against Lebbreau and Smith; an older doctor who has specialized in treating the battered children of the overpopulated city, who approves the scheme because he feels that even death by pestilence is preferable to the sorts of tortures he treats every day. That doctor is a human villain, and the fact that Yarbrow wrote him into her book indicates that she did realize there could be at least something of a moral dilemma here, that even basically decent men might find it in themselves to do something like this, if circumstances twisted them far enough. Sadly, instead of using this character to underline the grim realism of her scenario and the way it could happen, Yarbrow just sketches him in and discards him, preferring to take the easier way out and portrays the heavies as monsters of inhuman indifference.

On a rather similar note, much is made of Tristram, the leader of the child-packs that terrorize the remaining doctors after the plagues have reached a certain point and the city is in chaos. But very little comes of it in the end; Tristram finally shows his face in the next-to-last scene, has a terribly unrealistic exchange with Lebbreau, and turns out to be not nearly as fascinating a character as he could have been, and should have been. There are problems with Tristram's victims, too; Yarbrow knows that the reader feels a much greater emotional impact when something terrible happens to someone that he has come to know and care about, rather than to a minor character who is essentially a name. But she reaches for that emotional impact rather clumsily. Thus, three times in the novel, we see people who have only been names in the background suddenly walking on stage, talking and reacting and generally impressing themselves on us as people for the first and only time, after which they promptly walk off stage and get stomped. It works, after a fashion, but it is awkward and predictable.

All of these are flaws, some more serious than others; Time of the Fourth Horseman suffers because of them, and it is enticingly easy to sit in analysis and say that this is not the really major novel it could have been, the potential Hugo contender. There is a certain amount of truth to that, but there is also a good deal of truth to this; whatever problems the book has, it also has a headlong momentum that makes it consummately readable, along with undeniable emotional power. The blemishes, such as they are, do not come to mind until after the story has been set aside. Time of the Fourth Horseman is definitely a book to be read, and Chelsea Quinn Yarbrow is an author to

watch.

BIG PRESS NOTES & COMMENT

BY THE EDITOR

The PERRY RHODAN series has had a facelift with the 104th issue. Gone is the cover hype and the Gray Morrow covers. In are more 'heroic', full-cover George Wilson covers reminiscent of the Doc Savage style, with a new, larger PERRY RHODAN logo. In essence, the series' covers are now more sf mainstream. It would appear, too, that the series is down to one issue per month. Poor sales probably dictated the changes.



I note a variation in the time-honored Gothic cover format, for Ace. Dorothy Eden's NIGHT OF THE LETTER, \$7805, \$1.75, has copper titles and an apprehensive blonde in a white bed looking at the partly opened door to her bedroom. A golden light shows through the opening. This is a switch from the apprehensive damsel looking apprehensively at the old house in the background with a light in a single window.

This slightly-open door play is more intimate and provocative.

LETTER FROM BOB TUCKER

20 Nov. 1976

'Let me contribute to your sense of well-being.

'SFR 19 arrived here yesterday, the 19th. On page 15 you said: "He (Carter) will end up slapping on wage-price controls. And go on to ruling by decree in the 'National Emergency.'"

'If you'd care to check back to a 1970 book, YEAR OF THE QUIET SUN, you'll find that the plot has a president elected in 1976 declaring a state of emergency and then taking over the country as a dictator. He did it by the "legal" means of persuading Congress to suspend the Constitution for the duration of the emergency.

'There now, I thought that would ease your anxiety.'

((I don't know about my anxiety, but it shows how two fine minds can extrapolate to the same likely future. Make that superior minds'. Would you believe 'genius'?!))

'I've just learned from Brian Aldiss that that book has won the John W. Campbell Memorial Award, a retrospective award, given at the Dublin, Ireland science fiction writers international convention.

'Imagine that.'

((Congratulations. Well deserved. I'm sure Mr. Campbell is not spinning in his grave.))

LETTER FROM PHILIP JOSE FARMER

Nov. 26, 1976

'I've been (and am) busy with the 330,000-word draft of the third Riverworld novel. I underestimated its length and time of completion. Which means that your statement that I'd finished it isn't true, though that's not your fault. Also, I have a box three feet high and two wide filled with correspondence of the unanswered type. And I have spent my evenings reading for research purposes, though I have snaked in (sneaked, I mean) an occasional book to read just for fun. Mostly mysteries. I don't read much s-f anymore.

'Also, my wife and I gave each other a piano for Christmas, and I'm spending some time taking lessons. Until a few weeks ago I couldn't even read a note, having gotten through the so-called classes in music in grade school without ever learning what those funny little

golf clubs on the lines meant.

'In fact--and this may give an insight into my mind--when I was in second grade I somehow thought that the notes should be read straight down, from top to bottom of the sheet, then the next row should be vertically, and so. As if I was being taught Chinese ideograms. The teacher never noticed how out of step I was; nobody was given individual instruction, everything in that class was done en masse. When we were singing I made up my own words, such as 'The teacher is big, fat and dumb, and she has a broad thumb.' I should have rhymed "dumb" with "bum", but I didn't know the British term then.

'Back to the RR III. I have just finished the final version of volume I. This is going out as the third book, titled MAYA SMILES. The second half will be a separate book, volume IV, titled THE MAGIC LABYRINTH. Of course, all this may change. Anyway, the next book will get to Putnam's in time for the Fall schedule, and, hopefully, the fourth will come out about three or four months later. I wouldn't go into such detail if it were not that I receive so many inquiries about the next book, and this information might keep people from writing to me about it.

'Re J.T. Major's letter containing a manuscript claiming the death of Tarzan--it is a hoax. I got a letter from "Lord Greystoke" dated after Majors' Aug. 16, 1976 letter, and I am happy to report that Tarzan still lives. What Majors overlooked is that a number or people have pretended to be Tarzan (because they were mad or hoped to lay Jane); if he'll read the Tarzan books he'll find I'm not lying. So this fellow slain by Majors was just another imposter. Also, Tarzan is 6'3" tall, not 6'4", and he weighs more than 240 pounds.

'I wonder who "Vlaminck" really was?

'I'm having a little trouble thinking up a title for the third Opar novel. Don Wollheim insists that "Opar" be in the title of every one of the series. What do you do when the action takes place nowhere near that fabled city? Or if Hadon isn't in the tale? I'm planning on devoting the third book to the mighty Kwasin, and all events take place on the island of Khokar-sa. How about FAR FROM OPAR?'

[Geis Note: I wrote Phil suggesting the title KWASIN OF OPAR. Phil replied in the following letter which I am inserting here.]

Dec. 3, 1976

'Actually, Kwasin was born in the city of Dymbeth, but he is a cousin of Hadon's, and he did spend almost all his early life in the Opar area. So, KWASIN OF OPAR is a title stretching the truth only a little bit.

'I had a funny dream last night. I was in church, and I grabbed Steve McQueen as he went down the aisle and argued with him that he should play Jesus Christ in a movie. "All the other actors," I told him, "no matter how great, go stiff and get inhibited when they play Jesus. Now, if you would just play Him with your usual loose and easy style, you'd make a great Jesus!"

'There was a lot more nonsense in this dream (though if it could be analyzed it'd make Alice-in-Wonderland sense), but about all I remember is the McQueen bit and my impatience because Pat Boone wouldn't cut the ceremonies short.

'I look forward to writing NOWHERE NEAR OPAR some day. Let Don Wollheim chew on that.'

[Now back to Phil's first letter.]

'The Dick interview was very interesting. I admire Phil's works very much, and I have affection for the man himself. But I really lost control of my bloodpressure when I read that he wept for Mao. Did Phil also weep for Hitler, Stalin, and Chiang? Did he weep for the Tibetans when Mao committed their near-genocide? Or for the millions of Chinese ruthlessly slain in the name of social progress?

'Apparently no one is going hungry in China, if we can believe Chinese propaganda, and many beneficial things have been done for the Chinese people. On the other hand, during the recent earthquakes, some foreign observers noted that Mao's claim that crime was almost nonexistent in China just wasn't true. Thieving, mugging, prostitution, etc., were easily evident. Nor can these be blamed on a temporary breakdown due to the earthquakes. They obviously had been going on for some time. Also, if Mao really believed that his orders to young people to abstain from sexual intercourse except under certain stipulated conditions was going to be obeyed, he knew very little of human nature.

'Besides, Mao's poetry (in the English translations, anyway) isn't so hot,

'I don't agree with you that in the long run an author doesn't lose any money by accepting a low advance

if the book sells enough copies to earn the advance and more in royalties. A well-known writer and editor who wouldn't want me to reveal his name told me that somehow, by the time the money trickles down to the author, the author doesn't get all he should get.

'I'm glad you plugged Versins' encyclopedia.

'Harry Harrison couldn't get enough stories for his THE YEAR TWO MILLION because too many writers could not keep their stories within the word limits. Or so Harry told me. I started a story for him but it turned into a novel. It should be about 100,000 words or more by the time I get it finished.

'I liked "The Eyeflash Miracles" enough to nominate it for the Nebula Award.

'No, I'm not S. Beach Chester. He really existed, as did Philipotts and Post. Post, by the way, wrote some good books about a lawyer named Randolph Mason. Mason (who may have been Perry Mason's grandfather) was a very good lawyer for his criminal (and guilty) clients. His vast knowledge of the loopholes of law allowed him to get them off scott-free. In fact, one Mason story caused such an uproar, because it was based on a silly little loophole that did exist, that the law was changed. Later, Mason went straight and helped innocent people, but the stories about these cases were not as interesting. Just as it's easy to make an "evil" man believable in fiction but difficult to make a man without flaws or one who's "too good" either believable or interesting.'

((Thank you for taking the time to write and update your output. As for future Opar titles. How about SPAWN OF OPAR...IS OPAR SINKING?... REVENGE FOR OPAR...OPAR IN THE COLD, COLD GROUND...? No, well, I'll keep thinking....))



NEW OLD-FASHIONED SF

THE SPACE MACHINE

By Christopher Priest

Faber, £3.50

Harper & Row, \$8.95

Reviewed By Peter Weston

We reviewers sometimes feel the joy has gone out of science fiction. I mean, we see so many terrible stories in which the hero discovers an evil alien menace about to invade the Earth (that yawn) we just can't take them seriously any more! It was good enough fifty years ago in a less sophisticated age that hadn't been bombarded into stupefaction by repeated doses of STAR TREK and DR. WHO, but not now in so-blaise 1976.

So what has enterprising Chris Priest done in his latest novel? Why, by actually setting the story in the year 1893 he is able to recapture all the period charm and naivete of the time when H.G. Wells first wrote his famous novels. In fact the debt to Wells is obvious from the very title and the Great Man himself appears as a character towards the later part of the book.

It isn't altogether a new idea; the ingenious Brian Aldiss has actually done this sort of thing twice before, with his "Saliva Tree" novella in 1964 and more recently his spoof novel, FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND. Let that pass, for as a device it works very well indeed.

So Chris Priest's poor hero wanders into the setting of Wells' THE TIME MACHINE and hitches a ride on that contraption. Through unforeseen circumstances this deposits him into another scenario and we end up on the planet Mars just before the beginning of Herbert George's WAR OF THE WORLDS.

I must say that Chris does a very nice job of visualising all the bits of hardware that the Man himself left out and all this is really first-class, well-written stuff.

I may be pre-conditioned from intense reading of a short story by the same author for my recent anthology, ANDROMEDA-1, which is also heavily Victorian/Edwardian in its attitudes and writing style. But it seems to me that Chris has really captured the slightly stilted, formal prose of those days. The opening chapters of THE SPACE MACHINE where this flavour dominates are the best parts of the book.

But there are many more interesting things yet to come. We travel from Mars with the vanguard

of the invasion, landing dramatically near Woking and observing the nasty alien invaders from inside the pit as they assemble their war machines. We follow them on their rampage across the English countryside and in the end witness their downfall. Oh, the nostalgia fairly oozes from these pages.

Criticisms? Well, the second half of the novel doesn't quite live up to the high promise of the earlier chapters; things move a little too fast and implausibly from about the time Our Hero kills his first Martian onwards. But then the author has gone to 360 pages anyway and I suspect would have happily carried on for twice that length if somebody hadn't stopped him. And in very general terms I always start to worry when science fiction writers make such an obvious confession that new themes are getting harder and harder to come by these days.

So how do we classify THE SPACE MACHINE? Taken literally it is of course a 'parallel universes' story. You know the theory; all things are possible, somewhere in this infinite universe. Somewhere there is a solar system where events have taken place exactly in the way old H. G. Wells wrote them. That's what Chris Priest has written about here. It will win the Hugo for 1976.

SURREALISTIC SERIAL

ROTWANG

By Tim Hildebrand

Blue Wind Press, 1976, 140 pages, \$3.95 paper.

Reviewed by Neal Wilgus

Is ROTWANG science fiction? Well, not exactly, but it does involve some of the trappings, such as Rotwang's friends John, John and John, Aliens from the planet Alpha. Rotwang makes a trip to Alpha himself where he encounters Ejou, a bird-creature from yet another planet called Zeke. Then there's P.F. Flyer, the Mutant who champions Mutant Power and enlists Rotwang's help in speeding up the mutation rate so everybody can be converted. There are also goodies like telepathy and the South Brain Music Cleaner and Koko-Joko, if Aliens and Mutants aren't enough.

Is ROTWANG a novel? Not hardly, but on the other hand it's not poetry or drama either and in fact doesn't fit any category very well. Blue Wind Press blurbs it as a serial novel but what it really is is a very loosely constructed fantasy consisting of a series of one-to-a-

page paragraphs which give quick snapshots of Rotwang and his friends at work playing with your mind--- Rotwang at the Mutant Convention, at the Idea Collection Agency, at the Mad Scientists Club. The language is disarmingly simple: "I don't know where I'm going but I know I'll get there," Rotwang's opening words, sums up the surrealist style of his book.

Is Rotwang funny? Yes, of course---Hildebrand, who is a professional photographer and collector, has perfected his brand of humor into a distinctive---if minor---form of writing all its own. Sections of ROTWANG have appeared in SPIT IN THE OCEAN, SEARCH FOR TOMORROW, GUM and THE END as well as in Timothy Leary's novel WHAT DOES WOMAN WANT? And some of the pieces are brilliantly done, though the impact of the book as a whole is blunted by the impression that it's not really going anywhere.

Is ROTWANG worth the price? That's hard to say---it's a neat little package with impressive silver covers and a number of strange double exposure pictures by "Miss Photo," one of Rotwang's friends. At a paragraph per page, however, the actual text is closer to short story length than a novel, but let's be generous and call it a novelet. Even so what you're getting is as much packaging as content so you'd better sample a few paragraphs before you buy.

Blue Wind Press,
820 Miramar,
Berkeley, CA 94709





NOW IT CAN BE TOLD

THE SPACE-GODS REVEALED

By Ronald Story
Harper & Row, \$7.95

Reviewed by M. A. Barter

"They wouldn't publish it if it isn't true" is a falsehood, as every good science fiction fan should know. This book is a refutation of Erich von Daniken, point by point and lie by lie. And it's about time.

Even for those of us who are a bit too sophisticated to fall for the 'proof by print' theory have trouble when asked for chapter and verse on von Daniken's irresponsibilities. After all, if his books contain distortions, omissions, or outright lies, why haven't they been refuted already? Most thorough inertia, says Story: experts in their fields simply have better things to do than take on the charming but inaccurate tale-spinner.

Story begins with a brief, unflattering biography of von Daniken, and then proceeds to show what his books really are: guided tours, which let his readers see only what he wants them to.

But Story has his work cut out for him. Carl Sagan's foreword, Thor Heyerdahl's comments, and a discussion of the theological aspects of UFOlogy flesh out this very readable book. But unfortunately, no refutation, no matter how carefully documented and pleasantly written, can ever catch up with a rumor. The best Story can really hope for is to give valuable information and ammunition to anyone who wants to argue the von Daniken thesis on a rational basis.

LETTER FROM JOHN M. LANDSBERG

Jonathan Ostrowsky-Lantz, Editors

July 12, 1976

'A new prozine is on the way, and we'd like to tell you and your readers about it.

'UNEARTH is a magazine with one purpose: to give exposure to new writers. We know from experience how hard it is to get into print, and we think it's time somebody gave the aspiring writer a break.

'We are looking for any kind of science fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, and horror. An UNEARTH story may be staunchly traditional or radically experimental, as long as it's imaginative, well-written --- and by a previously unpublished writer. Of course, once we publish a

writer, we will welcome his or her further submissions. Aside from this one exception, however, we will not consider stories from published writers. (By "published" we mean "having sold fiction to one of the prozines.")

'Manuscripts may be of any length up to 8,000 words. We'd prefer to see them typed and double-spaced, but we want to see them no matter what they look like. Payment will be fifteen dollars on acceptance. This may not seem like much, but what we are primarily offering is publication in an attractive, well-distributed prozine where a new writer doesn't have to compete with established writers.

'UNEARTH will also have book and movie reviews and science columns. These non-fiction pieces may or may not be by unpublished writers. We are pleased to announce that Hal Clement has assumed the position of science editor.

'We are also looking for artwork from both amateur and professional artists.

'UNEARTH will be a digest-size quarterly, available both in bookstores and by subscription. We expect the first issue to be out in November with a cover price of \$1. Charter subscriptions are now available at \$3 for one year. After the first issue appears, one-year subscriptions will be \$3.50.

'Our address is: UNEARTH, Suite 190, 102 Charles Street, Boston, MA 02114.'

'Had a drug party been in progress, one of the participants "freaking out" and slaying everyone there? The police put this at the top of the list of possible reasons for the murders, though well aware this theory had several weaknesses, chief among them the presumption that there was a single killer, wielding a gun in one hand, a bayonet in the other, at the same time carrying 43 feet of rope, all of which, conveniently, he just happened to bring along.'

---Curt Gentry with Vincent Bugliosi, HELTER SKELTER

[thanks to Carl Juarez]

AN ICY CLEAM CLONE

CLONED LIVES

By Pamela Sargent
Fawcett Gold Medal, \$1.50

Reviewed by M. A. Barter

Once upon a time---2000 A.D. to be exact---two girls and four boys are cloned and secretly grown in ectogenic chambers. One of the girls is finished off by a careless lab technician, but five 'identical' children of a brilliant scientist grow up in an atmosphere of love, intellectual excellence, and notoriety. Despite---or perhaps because of---continual psychiatric surveillance during childhood, they become somewhat maladjusted but individualistic adults, each pursuing a single facet of their multi-talented parent's range of interests. And there's plenty for them to do: bio-research is once again permitted, true starships are being built, society is restructuring itself, and the Swensons are right in the middle of it all.

Or so we are told. Once in a while Sargent will break loose some actual conversation, or even italicized attempts at stream-of-consciousness, but mostly the book just talks about the world of the future. We're obviously supposed to be suffused with Awe and a Sense of Wonder.

What overcame me was irritation. Pamela Sargent is certainly a better writer than this; if she isn't, she should be. Despite a few moments when the story almost comes to life, especially in the episode originally published as "A Sense of Difference," the book is as stillborn as the sixth Clone.

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOE HALDEMAN

CONDUCTED BY DARRELL SCHWEITZER

SFR: Was THE FOREVER WAR in any way a response to STARSHIP TROOPERS?

HALDEMAN: No. That's interesting... I got seventy pages into it before somebody pointed out that I had stolen plot, all of the characters, all of the hardware from STARSHIP TROOPERS. It hadn't occurred to me. I was writing what I considered to be a science fiction extension of my own Vietnam novel, and it turned out to follow the form of STARSHIP TROOPERS, at least the first half, very closely.

SFR: Were you aware of STARSHIP TROOPERS at this time? Had you read it?

HALDEMAN: Oh, I'd read it three or four times. I was not thinking of it while I was writing my own book, though.

SFR: I gather that your attitudes are the opposite of Heinlein's, since your novel isn't a glorification of war.

HALDEMAN: Well, I wouldn't be so simplistic about it. I have little enough sympathy for the attitude expressed in STARSHIP TROOPERS, and I'm not sure Heinlein would be a hundred percent sympathetic with it either. Heinlein expressed a reasonable way to fight a certain kind of war with a certain kind of population backing it, and I did the same sort of thing. I think that my type of population is closer to what I see as a 1970's reality, and his is closer to what he sees as a 1940's reality. I don't think that the population of today would support the army going out for a STARSHIP TROOPERS kind of war, not without a lot of conditioning.

SFR: What do you mean the population wouldn't support it?

HALDEMAN: What makes a war? Taxes. You need money to fight it, and Heinlein had everyone essentially all behind it. Now, they grumble and growl, especially if they aren't veterans, but they do pay their taxes to keep the soldiers in the field. What I had was a population that didn't know any better and was led by the nose.

SFR: Isn't that the way it always is?

HALDEMAN: Not to that extent. I tried to make a case for projected Madison Avenue techniques taking over the government, and they were able to program people to support

COME OUT FROM
BEHIND THOSE WORDS
AT ONCE!



a total war, just to not question at all.

SFR: Well, you have a war, which seems to me at least in the outset to be justifiable.

HALDEMAN: Well, it would be justifiable if it were on Earth, but not when you consider the tremendous expense involved. In reality, if the Taurans had attacked 400 light-years away, most likely the voters would say, "Well, we won't go there anymore. We'll go someplace else."

SFR: How do you know they're not going to attack somewhere else?

HALDEMAN: Well, I tried to build that into the book, that you can't really tell where someone came from when he pops out of a collapsar, so they couldn't just trace your track back, and find your home planet, and attack it. They always had the alternative of retreating, and they never chose to use it.

SFR: Do you think that an interstellar war would ever be really practical?

HALDEMAN: No. Wars are fought for economic reasons, and it's been demonstrated adequately, at least to me, that it costs too much to move products from star to star,

even with the ideal star drive. There wouldn't be a reason for fighting a war. The only thing you could exchange is information.

SFR: Meaning you could not pull a profit?

HALDEMAN: Right.

SFR: How about fighting over a planet?

HALDEMAN: Who would we be fighting against?

SFR: Somebody else who wants the same planet.

HALDEMAN: Who is 'else'? There are lots of planets, theoretically, and I don't see it. You just move on to another planet.

SFR: What about consideration of distance? Suppose the ideal colonizable planet is relatively close, and somebody else wants it? Can you actually envision any of this happening?

HALDEMAN: I can't really. The thing is, an interstellar endeavor in the first place involves so much money and so much energy that it would almost have to be international, and the idea of saying this planet is American or this planet is French, or Russian, or Spanish, or Chinese, or something is absurd, because no single country has enough money to do that sort of thing. And I think we're sophisticated enough now, at least in that piece of the pie, that no single country would try to colonize another planet. I think Apollo-Soyuz demonstrated quite adequately, considering the response from the world press, especially the third world press, that this is one of the great things that the space effort has done, not only for us but for the Eastern bloc. It shows that we can get together. The idea of having a single country colonize a planet is kind of like a dirty joke.

SFR: Well, since way back when, whenever an explorer comes to a new place he plants his country's flag and claims it. Was the New World any farther away or harder to get to in the Sixteenth Century than another planet would be in the future?

HALDEMAN: Oh, it was a lot closer. All they really had to do was get enough food for three or four ships, and enough clowns they could knock on the head and put on the ship to sail it, and follow the winds. No, it was not that great an investment in terms of gross national product, whereas to get to another star, unless we find some way whereby you can stand on a magic square and go there, is too large an investment.

SFR: In the FOREVER WAR you are postulating relatively cheap star travel.

HALDEMAN: In fact I say that it costs less to send a hundred people to another star than it costs to send three clowns to the moon. I had to do that to make a war possible.

SFR: Doesn't this mean that when the war is possible the economic reasons all start to fall into place and work?

HALDEMAN: Yes, but I used pseudoscience. There is no way that you can get to another star without expending the energy. I had to do that to make it all possible. But science didn't generate the story; the story generated the pseudoscience.

SFR: As it traditionally does. I've heard Ben Bova talking about the idea of using black holes as tunnels through space.

HALDEMAN: Yeah, you know I discovered that, and I mean "discovered" in big strong quotes, before the first paper came out about it, because I needed it for my story, and I guess about twelve months after I wrote the story this guy from Yeshiva University came out in SCIENCE, and said "Well, black holes will make worm holes through space-time, and perhaps we can go from star to star that way."

SFR: I don't see how you can do it without getting squashed to a few random molecules by the gravity involved.

HALDEMAN: That's a thing I tried to bring out in THE FOREVER WAR. You have a question, "How does this work?" and everybody says, "I don't know." The thing is the tidal forces. When you're close to the event horizon of a black hole, the difference between the forces at the front of your ship and the tail of your ship is so great that there is no material that can stand that kind of a torsion, and it would simply wrench itself apart. And everybody in THE FOREVER WAR says, "Well, I wonder how it does that?" "I don't know, but it does it."

SFR: It seems that the black hole concept itself is science providing the old sf idea of hyperspace, so probably if you wait long enough science will give you an answer.

HALDEMAN: Maybe scientists will find a hyperdrive.

SFR: It seems they all read science fiction and come up with these things to order.

HALDEMAN: They come up with

things, and so many science fiction writers are writing and making so many shotgun predictions that every once in a while one comes true. I predicted the India-Pakistan war because I thumbed through some almanac and found a place that was likely to have a war pretty soon.

SFR: How do your Vietnam experiences go into this?

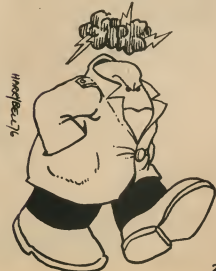
HALDEMAN: Not directly. In the first part of THE FOREVER WAR I was trying to do a parallel with the American involvement in Vietnam, and then the story took over, and just went its own way. But oddly enough, a reader in India got in touch with me and showed me chapter and verse how the last half of the book followed American involvement. I had written it before we had quit the war, and the whole thing followed in a metaphorical way. Well, he was right, and I was simply drawing on the only war that I have experienced, and so that was my psychological background for the thing and I subconsciously followed it. But I stopped doing it consciously after the first fifty pages or so.

SFR: Were you in combat?

HALDEMAN: Oh, yeah.

SFR: I notice it reads like Vietnam in a few places. The first planet they land on is swampy. Was that deliberate or did it just come out that way?

HALDEMAN: I wanted to make it the usual army fuckup. That is, that they had spent years training to land on an icy ball of rock, and the first planet they get to is not at all like that. And here they are all prepared to fight on this cryogenic nightmare, and instead it's sort of a subtropical jungle.



They're walking around in their suits and they'd be better off with an air mask.

SFR: How did this go over with the usual ANALOG readership? Did you get any weird letters from people who resented the anti-war aspect?

HALDEMAN: I got dozens of fan letters saying they really liked it, but I think Ben only forwarded the ones who said they liked it. I know of at least one person who said, "I've been collecting ASTOUNDING and ANALOG for the past thirty-umh years, and when you ran that piece of pornography and leftist propaganda I decided that I didn't want to read your magazine anymore and I cancelled my subscription and sold my whole collection." Somebody actually did that. He showed me the letter in his office.

SFR: You should have tried to buy the collection.

HALDEMAN: Yeah, right.

SFR: Why did you start writing science fiction?

HALDEMAN: Oh, for the same reason most people do. It was what I had always read for pleasure and I felt I knew it. You know, perhaps interestingly, I didn't feel like I could write science fiction when I started writing, and so I wrote maybe four or five mystery stories, and they didn't work at all. None of them were any good, just coming back with rejection slips. Then finally I screwed my courage to the stick and wrote some science fiction. I took a creative writing course at the University of Maryland, and I wrote three science fiction stories and sold two of them, so I knew I could do it.

SFR: When was this?

HALDEMAN: Well, I wrote them in 1967, and I was drafted, and marketed them when I got out of the army in 1969.

SFR: Did you have any intent to write any type of science fiction, then, in reference to the "new wave" controversy that was going on then?

HALDEMAN: No, I just write what I would like to read, and some of it is fairly new wave. My next novel, MINDBRIDGE, is not a straight story at all, although it can be read as a straight story if somebody just wants to be entertained. I think that's the first function. I am an entertainer, like a tap dancer, and if I don't do that I'm failing somewhere.

SFR: Do you see the writer as artist or as paid entertainer?

HALDEMAN: I don't see the two roles as irreconcilable. If you're a good enough craftsman you can be both an entertainer and an artist. Rembrandt's paintings, for example, are tremendously interesting to look at. There's a Rembrandt right here at the National Gallery; I could spend hours looking at it. Now I don't know painting from shit, but the people are there and the stories are written in their faces. When he was doing that, he was telling a story, and he did it beautifully. I know if I were a painter I could go through and analyze the pigments and the positions he put the people in, and everything like that. You can work at both levels. I don't see that there's any kind of contradiction at all. In fact I think quite the opposite. I read so much dumb stuff. Now I have a Master's degree in English, and I'm not a stranger to 'new wave' writing. In fact 'new wave' in science fiction writing is half a century behind the avant garde in American literature.

SFR: What does the term 'new wave' mean to you? No two people define it the same.

HALDEMAN: 'New wave' to me means incomprehensible arty writing, and the people who can do it well come over into my camp.

SFR: When they're not incomprehensible---

HALDEMAN: Oh no, no. The thing is, the new wave was good because the old-liners adapted the techniques of the young turks, and the young turks got the entertainment values from the oldtimers, and now, of course, it has all levelled out, and the field itself has benefited tremendously from it. The thing is you can sit down and write a science fiction novel with your toes. You just have to have a neat story. You can dictate the fucking thing and sell it. And people have been doing that---you know there are some people who have been in the field for forty years, who have done nothing else. And now come the young turks, the new wave, whatever you want to call it, who say, wait, wait, it makes a difference how you put the words together. It makes a difference in the rhythm. A novel is not simply saying how wonderful it is up here in the future. A novel has to have human characters. And so they started thinking seriously and you've got ---Oh, Jesus, Bob Silverberg suddenly started becoming a novelist instead of a craftsman, and Ben Bova's last novel, *MILLENIUM* is just a mindblower. It's been good for all of us.

SFR: How does this affect the read-

er? It seems that somewhere in the shuffle Silverberg has lost his audience.

HALDEMAN: Well, that's what they say, but to me he's broadened his audience. I taught science fiction a year ago at the University of Iowa. I did a graduate course in criticism of modern science fiction, and I did DYING INSIDE and the kids just grooved on it. They loved it. Admittedly half of them are not science fiction readers. They didn't have the cultural background that you and I have. So he's using science fiction as a tool to help him solve his own problems, or to solve the problems of being an American, of being a successful businessman. I don't know. I don't care. Whatever he was doing, it strikes deeper than Tom Corbett.

SFR: But somehow his best books fail to remain in print.

HALDEMAN: That's the industry.

SFR: Is it possible to go too -ar, to outstrip the sophistication of the audience?

HALDEMAN: Yeah, it's possible. It's what essentially the American short story and novel have done, in what we choose to call the mainstream. You have to be specially trained to appreciate a good story in the mainstream, and I have the training and I do appreciate it, but it is writing for a more specialized audience than confession magazines, or, Jesus, *s'm* tales. There can't be more than fifty thousand people in the country who can appreciate what we choose to call good American short fiction.

SFR: Isn't this disastrous not only in a commercial sense but in an artistic sense because you get inbreeding and stagnation?

HALDEMAN: I feel that way, but I realize that mine is a minority opinion. It's sort of public masturbation. You have all these people who will pat you on the back and say, "Boy, that was good." "You

scattered it all over the walls and ceiling," or whatever. I admit to being guilty of this myself, where somebody can turn a perfect little number, where there and me can understand what is going on and all these billions around us don't. There's a certain little thrill of being in the in-crowd. But I don't like that myself. I want to write for hundreds of millions of people. I don't want to write for a small group of Ph.D's.

SFR: Who do you think does write like that? Give me a name.

HALDEMAN: In science fiction?

SFR: In or out of it. Who really writes for a very limited audience?

HALDEMAN: Well, the guy who does it best, I think---Barth does it well, rather well, and Stanley Elkington does it consummately well. Brautigan is an interesting example because he tapered off at the base, so to speak, and got a larger audience. I don't know---it's a vast spectrum. There are maybe five hundred good short story writers in America right now, but many of them are writing in this milieu that only they can understand, and it's sad. I'd like to say if they sat down over the weekend they could write a good ANALOG story, a good SATURDAY EVENING POST story, and so on, but they can't because they've never been trained in that kind of sensitivity. This is the only thing they know how to write. I know people who are just gangbusters, who can write things that just make my ears stand up on end, but most people would say, "What the hell is this?" And that's what I would have said a few years ago. Now I've been sensitized in that area, so I can appreciate it, and it's kind of dumb; it's kind of sad; it's what Robert Scholes, the critic, calls the solipsistic crisis in American fiction. They've turned fiction around to being a tool of criticism, which is really putting the cart before the horse. You



know when you're writing you're very consciously writing, and when you're talking you're not talking a story, you're talking about the process of making a story and it's dumb. You're just talking to a very small audience. And it's neat if if you happen to be part of that audience, but it's sterile.

SFR: Won't the American short story eventually die if we keep that up?

HALDEMAN: Oh, it won't die. No, it's buttressed by academia. The thing is, a guy like me, I couldn't get a job as an instructor at a university although I've published a half a dozen books and a couple of them are serious, and I got great reviews from the right places. I've never done this particular kind of bullshit. Somebody who has done it, and has a couple of stories published in *SENAEE REVIEW*, *IOWA REVIEW*, good places where they pay you in offprints, could get a job by snapping his fingers. It gets complicated. Let me try to boil it down. These people are no less serious about their writing than I am, or than all of us are, but they're realistic about it. You can't make a living writing short fiction for the literary magazines, and you can't make a living writing serious novels. They just don't sell well enough. So they say, "I'll write some really gangbuster short stories within the solipsistic vein that Scholtes complains about. I'll write some very deep novels that will sell maybe two thousand copies, and I'll use those to lever myself into a position of teaching creative writing at a school, which will finance my further writing." Now you and I can write science fiction and make a decent income selling what we write because we have a large audience for it. They don't, but it doesn't mean that their writing is less important. They're simply being realistic.

SFR: It does mean that their market has dried up and died.

HALDEMAN: The thing is that American short story writing especially got so sophisticated that the general public lost interest, and I can see why. Now I have no interest in reading an O. Henry story or a Bret Harte story except for historical context. For short stories we turn on the TV.

SFR: Could this happen in science fiction?

HALDEMAN: I don't think so. No, science fiction readers are a special breed. Science fiction is literature, but it's mainly a medium for the transmission of ideas. I can enjoy a story by somebody who

obviously types with both fists and has never looked in the dictionary and doesn't know grammar from aardvark. If the story behind it is good, I enjoy the story. That's what I go in for, and I think that's what most science fiction readers go in for, and that's why we survive. Isaac Asimov pointed out that there are as many about the same number of science fiction readers now as there were in the 1930's. It doesn't change. It doesn't grow with the population. It's people who read for entertainment, who groove on ideas for entertainment, and any science fiction writer who doesn't provide ideas to his readers just dies on the vine.

SFR: Is this then what happened to Silverberg? For example, *DYING INSIDE* doesn't have any new ideas in it.

HALDEMAN: Well, to me it does. But, again I'll agree with that on a certain level. The thing is that it's a very precise and complicated metaphor for the creative facility. That is, the telepathic facility this guy had and couldn't use is the way I feel when I can't write. It seems very one-to-one, so I got a lot out of it. Although other people may have done telepathy better, I don't think anyone has done writing and telepathy better than Bob has.

SFR: This does come back to the problem of a book getting too sophisticated for the science fiction audience, because we have a lot of people who are just interested in ideas and not people.

HALDEMAN: Well, people generate ideas. I mean you can't talk about rayguns and my new Westinghouse blaster and that sort of thing. The interesting thing about science fiction is the interplay between technology and human beings.

SFR: How about a science fiction novel of character, if that's possible?

HALDEMAN: I tried to do this in my last novel, *MINDBRIDGE*, and I was not totally successful. I don't read science fiction novels for the characters. I can read Flaubert, Dostoevsky or someone like that. I was trying to write a compromise between a straight mainstream novel and a science fiction novel, and it wound up being a very hardcore science fiction novel. I don't know. I ran out of space. I ran out of time. The pacing of it kept me from getting too far into the characters, and it's distressing. I wanted to satisfy both at the same time.

SFR: I remember something John

Campbell is alleged to have said. He wanted science fiction to be like the mainstream of the future. I don't think he meant going after character like that, but suppose he did. Suppose you wrote a book that reads like the product of a 42nd century Flaubert?

HALDEMAN: I don't know. Nobody would be able to understand it, by definition. We wouldn't have the cultural context.

SFR: Then it would be impossible to write it?

HALDEMAN: No it wouldn't be impossible to write it. You'd have to be damn lucky to write it. I mean, nobody can predict what the people in the 42nd century will like to read. You could do it by chance, though.

You know, along those lines, especially along the lines of Campbell, for my money the purest coalition between science fiction and mainstream values is a novel that was written twenty years ago, *DOUBLE STAR* by Robert Heinlein. You know the story, the actor who substitutes for the king. There is a unique and valuable character change in there, that couldn't be done outside of science fiction, or would be very difficult outside of science fiction. It qualifies as a real novel. It says something about human nature, and yet it does it with spaceships and Martians. It's just a consummately good book; I read it again last year, and I'm tearing my hair out. Why can't I write something like that?

SFR: What are your writing methods like?

HALDEMAN: Oh mechanically, they're fairly gonzo. I get up at three in the morning and I run a mile, get some exercise, and I take a shower, hot, as hot as I can stand it, then gulp down a half a quart of orange juice, and brew some Espresso coffee, the strongest I can take, because I find that I can't sit and drink coffee all day long. That's bad for me. I pour myself about four cups of this and chug it down while reading the paper, yesterday's paper it turns out, because we don't get it early enough and I don't get time to read it otherwise, and I get hyper and up and everything, and I go to the typewriter and I sit there and either write or stare at it for six or seven hours. When my wife gets up I quit work.

SFR: Do you work from outlines, or do you just compose it at the typewriter?

HALDEMAN: On a serious novel I compose it at the typewriter. I like to be surprised, and I like to build something as I go along. On

a more commercial piece of writing. I can do an outline and fill in the blanks. Now I'm not ashamed to say that some of the writing I do is simply for the money. About half the writing I do is simply for the money, which is why I can support myself writing.

SFR: Do your ideas come to you consciously, or do they just creep in from the back of your head somewhere?

HALDEMAN: They percolate out. I never sit around thinking, "What will I write?" Gordy Dickson turned me on to a great process. You know, when you've finished a story or a book, when you sit down at the typewriter the next morning, rather than sit or bitch, "What am I going to do?" you start typing, anything, random letters, words, whatever, just keep typing, make yourself not take your hands off the keys. Keep typing, keep typing, and out of boredom you start to get a story. I've never had to type more than a half a page single-spaced before a story starts, and by the time I've reached the end of my legal-sized paper I have half the story outlined. Then I just sit down and write it. It's a magic, magic thing if you can actually get into it.

SFR: Can you actually get a good story that way?

HALDEMAN: Yeah. Almost everything I've written that way has worked.

SFR: Can you get a story that is meaningful to you out of boredom?

HALDEMAN: Boredom is really the wrong idea. Lack of focus. Sitting and typing and having to structure something. I always start out, "Well here's the Gordy Dickson style of starting a story," and typing and typing, and normally something happens within ten lines or so. The stories are all there boiling in your brain, and you've got to get some way to get them out. It's a good method.

SFR: Do you find it destructive to talk about a story before you write it?

HALDEMAN: Yeah. In fact I almost killed my next novel that way. I was sitting down with a bunch of young writers. We had a workshop situation and I was hyper, and we went downstairs to the local beer parlor and sat. For four hours I talked. You know you can't shut up a writer once he starts. And I gave them chapter and verse, things I hadn't even thought of, about the novel I was planning to do. I gave them the whole plot from the first chapter to the last, and they would ask me questions and I would answer them and things like that, and I got home and I thought, "Shit, I

don't have to write this anymore." Essentially what's happening is I have to write a whole other novel. I just blew ten thousand dollars in one afternoon.

SFR: Why do you think it works that way?

HALDEMAN: It works that way, I think pretty precisely because you have to keep surprising yourself. If you know what you're going to do, it's not fun.

SFR: You mention Gordy Dickson. He says he finds this sort of thing helpful. He likes to bounce ideas off someone and talk them out.

HALDEMAN: Well Gordy and I work in different ways. I'm doing a book with Gordy, and he wants everything outlined, and he wants to know where he's going. Well that's alright, and maybe after I've written thirty-eight books or however many Gordy has written I'll feel the same way. It's insurance. You see, Gordy can take a detailed outline and write a book from that. I can take a detailed outline and fall asleep. You know, I don't care to write the thing if I know what's going to happen.

SFR: Do you ever find when writing on impulse like this that you have maneuvered yourself into a corner out of which you can't get?

HALDEMAN: Yeah. You get that way. Foster-Harris out at the University of Oklahoma journalism department had this magic formula, that is when you get to a place in the story and you don't know where to go, what you do is put the main character in more trouble. What you're doing is limiting his degree of freedom, and eventually he's in a place where he has only one way to go, or die, or lose, or have to sign the mortgage, or whatever it is. You see, if you give the character too much freedom you don't know which of several alternative choices is best. But eventually you narrow it down until he can only do one thing, and it occurs to you that that's the right thing for him to do.

SFR: Doesn't this eliminate the element of surprise for the reader, when it starts getting inevitable?

HALDEMAN: I don't think so. Well, you don't carry it down to the mystery writer level of absurdity. You don't have to. But eventually you narrow it down to where there is one best choice out of a half dozen or a dozen courses of action and you carry on from there.

SFR: Thank you, Mr. Haldeman.

RECORDED AT DISCLAVE, 1976

UNEARTHLY DELIGHTS AN ASSESSMENT BY REG

UNEARTH is the new semi-pro sf fictionzine devoted to new writers.

The first issue is much better than I expected. The film reviews by Craig Gardner and the science column by Hal Clement are very good, as good as anything in the Big Profzines. The book reviews are of professional calibre.

The stories are in that tender area of 'almost buys' for, say, GALAXY, P&SF, AMAZING and FANTASTIC. They have none (or very, very few) of the amateur clunkers so rife in slush-pile stories. They are all short and readable and often interesting, with a kind of inner vitality that transmits to the reader.

There is a one-story-per-issue reprint policy---the first sale of a well-known writer. This first one is "Glowworm" by Harlan Ellison, and it is overwritten and awkward... and yet it has the tremendous Ellison dynamics which makes it...er... glow.

I have one grunch to pow the editors with: Listing a long short story as a novella, and a medium short story as a novelette is into some kind of misrepresentation, and they should stop it.

UNEARTH is in the 5-1/2 x 7-1/2 offset, saddle-stitched format. It is typeset in a good, easily readable type, and at \$1.00 per copy, a worthwhile, entertaining buy. Subscriptions are \$5.50 per year in the U.S., \$4.00 in Canada, and \$4.50 overseas, in U.S. funds. Library and institutional subs are \$5.50 per year. Address: UNEARTH Publications, Suite 190, 102 Charles St., Boston, MA 02114.

STORIES I NEVER FINISHED WRITING

When the time warp warped me into the Garden of Eden, I knew---



"The most shameful episode occurred next, when the Torcon committee refused to give Versins a Hugo. When I pressed them for an explanation I got an immediate "but the book is in French!" That was the most unreal moment in my life."
(Etc. SFR #19, pg.17)

'That's why, incidentally, Worldcon Committees in this decade have begun presenting special awards along with the Hugos. There's a growing feeling that the Worldcon should pay recognition to special s-f projects of excellence, even if they aren't covered in the official Hugo categories. Thus you have the special awards to Gunn's illustrated s-f history, ALTERNATE WORLDS, this year; to Lee's 3-volume REFERENCE GUIDE TO FANTASTIC FILMS last year; to Versins' s-1 encyclopedia in '73; to Ellison for excellence in anthologizing in '72; and so on. I think it's pertinent that when the '74 Worldcon tried to make this special award a Hugo by fiat (when they gave it to Chesley Bonestell for his astronomical art), there was such an

((Fair enough. I should have spotted that Hugo rules mistaken assumption and pointed it out.))

Dec. 6, 1976

'Amateur Magazine: My problem with this category has little to do with large circulations. The problem is that this category is for an "amateur" magazine. I fail to accept that SFR and ALGOL are amateur and I have some questions about LOCUS. If this award were for the best "fanzine" my objection would not exist (although even here one wonders what is a fanzine. Is AMAZING a fanzine?)'

'SFR and ALGOL pay some contributors. ALGOL accepts professional advertising, as does LOCUS. ALGOL has rate cards, advertising rates, distribution in bookstores, etc. SFR is also sold in many bookstores. You've stated that you'd like to earn your living by SFR and are trying to make a profit. So where does one draw the line between amateur and professional?'

'You're wrong in saying only 400-500 votes are cast for the fan Hugos. There were 1595 ballots this year & I saw the final tallys. Actually about 1200 votes were given in each fan Hugo category as I recall. This means that over 1000 people are voting in fan categories when only a few fanzines have circulations over 1000 (OUTWORLDS, SFR, ALGOL & LOCUS are the only ones I know of). So it is not surprising that these fanzines are nominated.

The results showed that many people voted for SFR & LOCUS for 1st or 2nd and No Award for 3rd. Similarly in the Best Writer category, Geis and Wood got many first and second place votes and No Award got many 3rd place votes, so many that in the actual totals No Award came in 3rd (Charlie Brown left out No Award placements in his listings in LOCUS).

'Best Writer is a category where the problem of uninformed voters clearly shows. The only real fan writing Susan Wood did last year was in AMOR, a personalzine with a circulation of under 100, yet she came in second, getting (as I recall) several hundred 1st place votes. It is unfortunate that MAC refused to release total votes or you could see for yourself how things worked out. I only saw the votes because I was given the sheet for use in putting out the daily newsletter. It seems likely that Geis and Wood received as many votes as they did because of their pro work in GALAXY and AMAZING respectively.

'The one person who did the most writing and the best fan writing, in my opinion, came in 5th, after No Award--was Don D'Amassa. Incredible but true.

'Then we have the Best Fan Artist, which has been a sorry category for several years. The nominations and winners just have not reflected the Best in Fan work. Tim Kirk has won for the past several years, even though he has done little if any fan work. I'm not sure he had any fan work in 1975, yet he won with 200 more votes than the next person.

'Unfortunately, the problem is simply that fandom has grown very large because of increasing numbers of fans, fringe fans, Star Trek fans, and others who attend conventions but who don't really get into the heart of fandom or know much about or see many fanzines. These people just don't know who writes and draws fan material, so they vote for a name that seems familiar, like Geis or Wood because their material appears in prozines; Kirk because he's had the Tolkien calendar, artwork in artshows (in professional categories), and pro work in several books, and LOCUS, SFR, OUTWORLDS, and ALGOL continue to be nominated year after year because they have the highest circulations and people vote for them even though they may only get 1-3 fanzines.

'So that's why I and some other fans are concerned about the fan awards. They just don't reflect the best in fan work, and they are voted for by a largely uninformed group of people who have little contact with fandom other than the world con.

Perhaps the fan Hugos should be titled Most Popular. At least that would be fairer.'

((It would be more accurate to change the category titles, but not fairer to the small-circulation writer and artist. As things stand it takes years and years to become known to enough people to win a fan Hugo. Assuming Hugo-quality talent and skill, of course.))

'Ok, that brings me to the FAANs. You make it sound like I started them. Well, I didn't. They were the brainchild of Moshe Feder and instituted after long discussion among numerous active fanzine fans and originally sponsored and administered by a committee of 12, of whom I was one. Recently elections have been held and other people are now on the committee, and I am no longer on the committee.

'The FAANs are peer awards, designed to insure that the best fanzine people are given recognition. They are voted on by active fanzine fans. The Hugos remain a popularity award.

'Actually, according to present Fanzine Activity Achievement Awards, only ALGOL and SFR are ineligible, because they don't fit into the following definition: "For our purposes, a fanish fanzine fan is defined as a devotee of literary Science Fiction who manifests that interest by involvement in publications dealing with literary SF and with the doings of amateur and professional literary SF personalities. Such publications are eligible for these Awards if they are fanish fanzines, i.e., publications which do not pay their contributors and which are published for enjoyment to which any financial profit is incidental."

'This in effect defines professional magazines as those which pay contributors or are done for the purpose of making money, so ALGOL and SFR, as well as GALAXY, AMAZING, etc. are not eligible.

'Obviously by the vote at MAC, the majority of fans still want the fan Hugos, even if they don't reflect the "best" of the year in question, so they will undoubtedly remain. I'm really tired of worrying about the awards. I still don't feel they reflect the best fan material, but others do or don't know better.

'At any rate, I hope this long-winded reply clears up some of the errors you made.'

((Yup. Thanks for writing, for the clarifications and the viewpoint.))

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IS THERE DEATH AFTER DEATH?

LIFE AFTER LIFE

By Raymond A. Moody, Jr., M.D.
Bantam 10080-7, \$1.95

Apropos of my comments last issue about the recent spate of articles and news stories about the 'after death' experiences of people who had been revived, here is a whole book about the phenomenon.

In fact, I think the articles and stories were fueled by advance copies of this book.

LIFE AFTER LIFE is a detailed recounting and analysis of the incredible experiences of some people who had been clinically dead for up to fifteen minutes.

Their stories vary, but they have a rough pattern with many similar or identical elements, and often the same sequences. So much similarity, in fact, that the conclusion is hard to avoid that there is something to the afterlife theories.

The possibility that these after-death "experiences" were simply sequential reactions and hallucinations of a dying brain doesn't wash. Moody examines that explanation and demolishes it.

The question he cannot answer is how far/long does this afterlife continue? The people who have "returned" cannot say, of course. And those who have died and stayed dead cannot tell us...can they?

The ages-old belief of mankind in a life-after-death may be more securely founded than we non-believers think. I have thought since childhood that "heaven" and the spirit world were creations of old people afraid of the final, total blackness.

Now...I'm not so sure. But of course, I'm getting old. My position is still that I don't expect an afterlife---but I hope I'll be pleasantly surprised.

If you read this book you may share that hope with some degree of confidence.

---REG

CTHULHU MOVES IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS

--Neal Wilgus

How do you live with a paranoiac?

Conspiratorially.

"Some people have one-track gutters."

---Harlan Ellison

[thanks to Carl Juares]

LETTER FROM MIKE GILBERT

Nov. 8, 1976 'I really liked Freff's ideas, and found myself agreeing with him totally/From when I talked with the DDay's hardcovers sf editor, she said "As long as it doesn't look s.f."

'The brothers Hildebrandt are doing a Mayfield Parrish revival and their problem is they are stiff and cute, flat. Rick Sternbach's problem is people; he can't do them, also he's weak in composition---but he's good in atmospheric effects and color. I always liked early Kelly ((Freas)) better than modern. Oh well---'

((The marketing priorities for hardback dustjacket tillos are different from softcover covers, I imagine. There's bound to be a good, hard, dollars and cents reason for the different packaging slant.))

PROZINE NOTES

Linda Bushyager, in her KARRASS of November, reports that the Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA) have decided that henceforth any story published in AMAZING or FANTASTIC will not be accepted as a credential for SFWA membership. Her report does not say if this decision is by vote of the membership or by edict by the officers. This because Ultimate Publishing Corp. hasn't lived up to a prior agreement with SFWA regarding payments for reprinting older AMAZING and FANTASTIC stories by SFWA members.

That's a very curious way to punish Ultimate. Instead it punishes beginning writers, and pretends that AMAZING and FANTASTIC are no longer in existence as sf prozines.

Linda also reports that the Roger Elwood disaster, ODYSSEY, has folded, and there will be no third issue.

ANALOG will go to \$1.25 per copy with the April issue, and after June the one year subscription price will be \$10.

Production costs and a desire to pay the writers more is the reason given.

Fair enough.

ANALOG, with the February issue, has a slightly new look to the contents page, less formal, more modern and bold.

THE VIVISECTOR

A COLUMN BY DARRELL SCHWEITZER

SHAKESPEARE'S PLANET

By Clifford D. Simak
Berkley/Putnam, 1976, 188pp., \$6.95

I'm going to synopsise the plot of this book. I know it's generally not kosher to do so, and synopsis is frequently used by sloppy reviewers as a substitute for something interesting to say, but there is one time I think it's justified, and that time is when the problem with the book is in its situations and structure.

A synopsis in such a case, with running commentary, is just about the only way there is to demonstrate the difference between a true plot and a string of events and coincidences. So hang on. Here goes.

(But to get one thing out of the way first, don't be fooled by the title. This book has nothing to do with Shakespeare aside from the fact that one character who is dead before the main action begins has been reading the works of the Bard and making notations in the margins. He is referred to as Shakespeare by the other characters because they don't know his real name, but the story itself is remarkably free of allusions.)

The situation: our hero, Carter Horton, who seems to be just an ordinary joe, arrives on an unnamed planet. He comes in cold sleep via Ship, a sentient vessel run by three cyborg brains. With him is a friendly, ordinary joe of a robot named Nicodemus (no relation to the biblical Nicodemus, the closet Christian who snuck in to study with Christ by night). The ship has been in space for a thousand years at least and somewhere along the line an accident killed three other passengers, leaving Horton the sole survivor.

It becomes immediately apparent to the reader and to Horton that the discovery of a remarkably Earth-like planet (so much so that the trees have leaves and reeds grow at the edge of a pond) must go unheralded because in the millenium which has passed Earth may very well have developed FTL ships, and in any case he would be a hopeless anachronism if he returned. He has no instantaneous communication device to let the folks back home know he's hit pay dirt.

In short, the expedition is a waste of time and effort. This is

an idiot situation. I may be getting my critics mixed up, but I think it was Damon Knight who defined an idiot plot as one which never could have happened if everybody involved hadn't been idiots. We have the same thing here, although as I'll show later it isn't really a plot. So, an idiot situation.

Horton seems to be aware of this. On page 12 he asks what's the point of such a mission, but is not adequately answered. Ship just went on looking for a suitable planet until it found one, and it would have taken a million years if need be. So much for sentence. Three brains, apparently, are no better than one, and the people who planned and financed all this leave something to be desired also.

At this point what could have been one of the most interesting themes of the book crops up: a traveller in space is also, relatively speaking, a traveller in time. On Earth it's a thousand years beyond Horton's "now" on the new planet. Time, not in an objective sense, but by human reckoning, travels only as fast as communications. But as faster methods are developed, and swift ships overtake the slow, many parts of the galaxy get "ahead" of others. Things get quite confused. No wonder everybody has difficulty keeping track of the date.

This could lead to a very plastic sort of reality, and a writer like Philip K. Dick could do wonders with it. But Simak lets it drop, just as he does his other most promising idea, the three minds of Ship which may be fusing into one personality of a higher order. I know there have been lots of super-brains in SF before, but how many times has this submergence and transcendence been handled from the inside?

This doesn't seem to interest Simak. In fact the Ship characters (a scientist, a monk, and a philanthropic old lady) are completely extraneous. They do not participate in the story, influence the other characters, or even play the chorus and comment on what's going on. Instead they mutter about their own problems, which are interesting, but which have nothing to do with this novel.

On the planet there is a teleportation device, part of a vast network of "tunnels" (the familiar term for such--have you noticed that everything I've described so far is traditional and familiar?) throughout the galaxy, built aeons ago by an unknown race. No one knows how they work, but this one seems broken because it only goes one way. You can't leave the planet through it, only arrive.

Earlier, Carnivore, an ugly but ultimately friendly member of a warrior race came through the tunnel, met the Earthman called Shakespeare, befriended him, and ate him, at his own request. Shakespeare, according to his flyleaf notations, believes that Carnivore will eventually kill him since he can't allow himself to die in idleness. Like a Viking set for Valhalla he has to go down fighting, or at least fight whatever opponents there are available. But Shakespeare is dying of an incurable disease, so he tells Carnivore it's part of a funeral rite, and has himself eaten to pass the disease on to Carnivore and do him in. We never find out if this works, though. Like so many others, this strand is left dangling.

Next through the tunnel pops Elaine, part of a team mapping them, also with little hope of ever getting home to turn in her findings. (Perhaps all scientific exploration is being handled by the United Federation of Idiots.) Her only significant role in the novel seems to be to have spells of womanly intuition before things happen. She also talks a lot.

To make life interesting for all concerned, there are several mysteries on this planet. First, a ruined group of buildings, purpose and nature unknown. Then there's the "god hour", a periodic telepathic bombardment as regular as clockwork. Carnivore and Shakespeare before him both guessed this was caused by something beyond the planet, perhaps in orbit around it. But Horton, who doesn't seem to be very curious, and certainly isn't a scientist (so why, of all Earth's millions, was he sent?), never investigates. If his instruments pick up nothing from the ground, I would think that with a fully powered ship at his disposal he could take off and have a look. Also, there's a strange, ill-smelling pond which he never bothers to run through chemical analysis, even though it seems to have something to do with the various anomalies.

But these stupidities are nothing compared to the case of the mound. He finds a cone-shaped mound, clearly artificial, and doesn't bother to excavate it, or even tell the others about it. All he and everyone else can see fit to do is sit around chatting while Nicodemus tries to fix the "tunnel."

This goes on for many pages, until the author decides it's time to

end the book. He does so with a climax which does not result from the actions of anyone. The pond, it turns out, is an intelligent entity from a distant planet. (Gee, was Robinson Crusoe's island this crowded? I count five sets of castaways, all within an area of a few miles: Horton and friends, Carnivore, Elaine, Shakespeare, and the pond-creature.) The critter rolls itself into a ball and comes to warn of impending danger, motivated by general niceness, I guess, and sure enough the mound breaks open to reveal and icky, disgusting, and thoroughly evil (Simak's designation) beastie. And a creature which has been lying in suspended animation all this time in one of the buildings (castaway #6) comes to life, turns into a jeweled dragon, and for no discernible reason flops over and dies. Apparently the builders of the tunnels left it to guard against the snot-monster, or whatever it is, only they did an inept job of it.

Now, does this lead to conflict, excitement...anything? No, because Carnivore kills the menace with a couple swipes of his big teeth and is killed in the process, dying the desired warrior's death.

If it's possible to kill the thing so easily, why all the worry and safeguards? Horton asks as much, and again the answer isn't very convincing. It wasn't fully awake. It wasn't at full strength. Where it came from or what its intentions are we never know, as we never know anything about the intelligent and friendly slugs who appear just in the nick of time to fix the tunnel, taking Nicodemus' job away from him and aborting the sole remaining thread of meaningful storyline.

So you see why I synopsized this? Can you see what a confused, poorly thought out, and virtually incoherent novel SHAKESPEARE'S PLANET is? The pieces are not integrated into the whole. You know the analogy of the necklace vs. the loose beads. This is loose beads. It is in fact possible to dismiss almost everything as irrelevant before one realises the book hasn't a story to it, only vestigial beginnings of several.

The characters do not change, affect their situations, or do anything significant with the exception of Carnivore. So when the long arm of coincidence (like the slugs turning up just when they're needed) finishes everything off, Carnivore becomes the protagonist of the book since he's the only one involved in anything I would call a story, rather than a series of anecdotes.

It should be his book by default, but he's kept mostly in the back-ground.

Conclusion: Simak has written masterfully in the past, even in the very recent past, and he will be remembered as a major science fiction writer, but not for this.

A positive note: the edition is very well made, on good paper, properly bound with sewn signatures, with real cloth binding and heavy boards. If Berkley/Putnam keeps this up their books can be guaranteed to have ten times the shelf life of your ordinary brand. There's also an attractive, multicolor dust-jacket (a rarity on hardcovers these days) by Paul Lehr.



REPRINT DEPARTMENT

Gregg Press continues to show the superiority of its reprint series (edited by D.G. Hartwell of Berkley/Putnam, COSMOS, and THE LITTLE MAGAZINE, a man of wide editorial experience, generally good taste, and obviously unlimited energy, who will surely be declared a national resource like Isaac Asimov) by the three volumes they sent me recently: THE DREAM MASTER by Roger Zelazny, STAR by C.I. Defontenay, and THE STEEL CROCODILE by D.G. Compton. They're enlarged facsimiles of the original paperback editions (which means the Defontenay has several drawings George Barr did for DAW and the Zelazny has one Jack Gaughan did for Ace) designed to make these works available to libraries and scholars for the next few geologic ages, and it's a delight to see, in this era of planned obsolescence in

bookbinding, editions which will last.

These will. The boards are thick, the bindings in good quality cloth, and the signatures are sewn, so the books will survive beyond the life of the glue. (I harp on this because I think hardcovers should be permanent, capable of lasting more than one or two readings. If they're not, why are they more desirable than paperbacks?)

The works themselves are familiar, which is the whole idea: to reprint in hardcover famous and important contributions to the field which have hitherto only been available in paperback, in and out of print irregularly, to the despair of academics who want them for their classes.

The Zelazny book is his best, and one of the all-time great science fiction novels, an examination of myth and the subconscious, and, as the introduction to this edition points out, of the nature of fantasy itself. It contains some of the finest writing we've ever had, and if posterity doesn't recognize this I'll just have to hang around and tell posterity where to get off.

The Defontenay isn't a classic. Classics are books which are remembered, which live beyond their time and influence subsequent generations. The opposite of classic is forgotten (hence Sam Moskowitz's favorite phrase, the "forgotten classic" is a contradiction in terms, just like the "instant classic") even though many forgotten books are of merit and worth reading. This one is, and I'm glad some literary archeologist dug it up.

It's a French interstellar novel first published in 1854 (and not again till 1972) which prefigures much modern SF. The technique is quite unusual, the prose narrative breaking into verse and drama in places, and it leaves me with the sneaking suspicion that if this had been composed about 1965 it would have been labelled a "new wave" novel. (Which only goes to show how silly and provincial that controversy was.)

The Compton book is one of many by an excellent but vastly underrated British writer who is ignored in this country, so my theory goes, because new readers discover an author through his short stories in magazines and anthologies, and Compton has only written two or three shorts, none of which were widely circulated.

(One was on IMPULSE, and there was another in a Taplinger anthology, UNLIKELY GHOSTS, which never

came out in paperback as far as I know.)

Perhaps this publication will draw a little more attention to him.

Need I say more? Yes, the prices. The books are \$8.50, \$9.50, and \$11.50. The last one is a little steep, but otherwise these are books for libraries at consumer prices, not significantly more expensive than the average Doubleday cheapie. Now that is something commendable.

Avon, under one of its subsidiary disguises, Equinox Books, has just published a first-rate item which is an absolute must for anybody who doesn't own the hardcover: THE CIRCUS OF DR. LAO by Charles G. Finney (Equinox, 1976, 154 pp., \$2.95) in what seems to be almost a facsimile of the original VIKING Press edition. By random checking I found one page where the first and last words are not the same as the original, so there has been some re-setting of type, but not much, and the illustrations do not always face the same pages they once did. Still the original Boris Artzybasheff illustrations are there in all their glory, and there's nothing quite like them. They're far superior to most of the other pale, Rockwell-Kentish things he did for children's books and resemble and equal (also predate) the finest flights of fancy to come from the pen of Harnes Bok. The reproduction is a little inferior to the original (probably shot from the printed book, not the original drawings, so this is to be expected) but still quite good, and my only serious gripe is that the endpaper designs, which would have made a splendid wraparound cover, are missing.

The novel itself, for the benefit of those few Tasmanian hermits out there who might not have heard of it, is surely the book for which the term "minor classic" was invented. It may not have rocked literature, to the foundations the way ULYSSES did, but it has been frequently in print and able to continually amaze, amuse and mystify audiences for a good 41 years now, not to mention influence writers, which it has quietly been doing, Ray Bradbury among them I would venture to guess. (Indeed, Bradbury once used it as the title novella--this is a short book, about 40,000 words---in an anthology he did in the 50's.)

It strikes me as an earlier manifestation of the extra-cosmic phenomenon now personified in R. A. Lafferty. You know, the story of seemingly crazy and disjointed people and events, which eventually

come to assume their own twisted internal logic. Finney was a master of such things. (I use the past tense because, while I believe he is still living, he hasn't written anything in at least ten years.

His book, I might add, should not be greatly confused with a movie made from it called THE SEVEN FACES OF DOCTOR LAO which, while it did manage to maintain considerable amounts of the original charm and substance, was made commercially safe by a slant toward the juvenile trade, complete with a sentimental subplot about wicked landgrabbers shoehorned in, and a cutesy-poo kiddie hero thrown in for audience identification among the kindergartners.

Finney's marvels, as he wrote them, are for grownups.

TALES OF THREE HEMISPHERES

By Lord Dunsany
Illustrated by Tim Kirk
Preface by H. P. Lovecraft
Owlswick Press, 1976, 140 pp., \$9.00

This is without doubt the second best bargain on the specialty press market today. (The best is the Carcosa Wellman book, WORSE THINGS WAITING, which incredibly remains in print, and is an utter steal at \$9.50.)

TALES OF THREE HEMISPHERES is a gorgeous edition, well bound and printed on good paper, with flawless reproduction of the black and white Tim Kirk illustrations, plus a color painting used for both frontispiece and jacket. (The best of the interiors is probably the one for "The Shop in Go-By Street" which looks plain and quite mundane at first glance, but contains hidden Things which creep out at you one by one as you notice them.) It is in every way preferable to the original 1919 edition, which was cheaply made and not illustrated, and also didn't contain the Love-

craft essay since it was written in 1922.

Lord Dunsany's reputation rests solidly on the eight volumes of fantasy short stories he wrote at the outset of his career, of which this is the eighth. His other works, many of them quite good, including the Jorkens series, several plays, novels (one of them science fiction, even), memoirs, volumes of poetry, and the like have been mostly forgotten, but these early stories have the ability to remain in print and influence generation after generation of fantasy writers. Whenever somebody speaks of something as "Dunsanian" or says a writer through a "Dunsanian period", he is referring to the Dunsany of 1906-1914, who wrote of Dreamland and the Edge of the World. Dunsany's muse took quite a beating during the First World War, and the initial, ethereal phase of his career came to an abrupt halt.

Although TALES OF THREE HEMISPHERES was not published until after the war, most of the stories in it were written before, including the three best ones, "Idle Days On the Yamm" and its sequels were published in THE IRISH REVIEW in 1911. The others probably date from the same period.

Actually, his imagination was running a little thin by this point anyway, or to be more precise, it was changing. His previous volume, THE LAST BOOK OF WONDER, contained many stories of fantastic events taking place within the bounds of geographical reality, and significantly these were the best of the lot, while the imaginary land stuff seemed inconsequential and frequently flawed by buildups which went nowhere.

Somebody who once remarked to me, "Dunsany should have written what he was best at [meaning these fantasies] forever", didn't understand at all.

An artist must change. He will, as he grows as a person, move from one type of material to another. He must do this even if, as in Dunsany's case, he ends up having written his most permanent work first. The only alternative is stagnation.

The result of this growth, and the reason I mention it here (rather than just in the book on Dunsany I'm writing) is that TALES OF THREE HEMISPHERES is not the best collection of Dunsany short stories ever published. Aficionados will probably argue till doomsday over the relative merits of THE BOOK OF MON-

DER, THE SHARD OF WELLMAN, and A DREAMER'S TALES (HPL and I hold out for this one), while assigning TALES OF THREE HEMISPHERES a position a notch lower. But you must understand that we're talking about which of many gems is the most exquisite, which the most beautifully faceted. They all glitter, only some glitter more than others.

Certainly "The Postman of Oxford" and the trilogy of "Beyond the Fields We Know" ("Yann" and sequels), which together take up at least half the book, represent first phase Dunsany at the height of his powers.

Frank Belknap Long and H. P. Lovecraft (apparently) found "Idle Days On the Yamm" to be Dunsany's best work. William Butler Yeats said if he'd read it as a young man it would have changed the course of his entire career.

What more can you ask? If some of the stories are a little slight, and indeed some of them are, you find yourself asking how Dunsany ever got away with that, and there's only one answer: Superbly.

END OF REPRINT DEPT.

ORSINIAN TALES

By Ursula K. LeGuin
Harper & Row, 1976, 179 pp., \$7.95

This book is technically beyond the scope of this magazine because it is mainstream, but I'm reviewing it because anything Ursula LeGuin does is of interest---to me at least, and I hope you most of you. Those purists who read nothing besides SF and fantasy may skip to the next review, because there aren't any fantastic elements here. A commentator in LOCUS purported to find a whole paragraph of fantasy in "The Barrow" when it appeared in P&SF, but I must confess if that paragraph hasn't been edited out it went right by me. The story almost slips into the realm of fantasy. You think it's going to. It is fantastic in mood and imagery, a fine evocation of wintry cold and darkness, and of superstition, but like Dunsany's THE CURSE OF THE WISE WOMAN it never does.

Not that I consider this a fault. It isn't. (Said he, hanging himself by his own provincial ignorance by bringing this up---but I think it's necessary, so you can understand your reviewer and his prejudices.)

But the faults of some of these stories are considerable. They're not top drawer LeGuin, with one or two exceptions, and a few of them are just plain bad.





but when a story of this type falls flat it's drearier than anything short of a NEW WORLDS type non-functional word pattern. So I hope you'll understand my extreme reaction to "Brothers and Sisters." Your reaction may be similar.

One of the stories which does not fall flat is "The Fountains." It's very short, only four pages, and it's a textbook example of the difference between what happens in a piece of fiction (meaning the events) and what goes on (meaning the developments). All that happens is a scientist from an Iron Curtain country while visiting France slips away from his guards and takes a walk, but the development is his discovery of a secret, hidden freedom within himself, and it's a complete story.

Contrast this with SHAKESPEARE'S *PLANET* in which everything happens and nothing develops...a book-length series of anecdotes.

Contrast it also with the thirty-six pages of "Brothers and Sisters" or the fourteen pages of "The Forest" (another clinker), which for all their verbiage haven't a single living character. It gives you some idea of how uneven ORSINIEN TALES can be.

The main theme of these stories is freedom from restrictions, from social roles, blindness in one case, and from political tyranny. The shadow of totalitarianism looms menacingly in the background of most of these pieces. Each has a date of action placed at the end, and sometimes this becomes a devastatingly effective device.

In "An die Musik" we meet an unknown musician struggling to keep his talent alive amidst jabbering wife and kids, and he is told by a master that he should abandon everything but his work, put his entire soul into it, even though in the end music is useless and won't save anybody. Doom hangs over all. If the reference near the end to Mr. Chamberlain went by you, the date tells all: 1938.

As would be expected in stories set in Eastern Europe, the pre-WWII period is regarded with nostalgia. "Imaginary Countries" is about pleasant things, a vacation enjoyed by a professor of medieval history and his family, even if there are hints of chaos in the backdrop, and the characters are happy, the story ending with the ignorant bliss of a child regarding the future, and then a bitter dear-readerism:

But this happened a long time ago, nearly forty years ago; I don't know if it happens now, even in imaginary countries.

Worth reading: "The Fountains," "The Barrow," "A Week in the Country," "An die Musik," "The Lady of Mogé," and "Imaginary Countries." You can skip the rest. Maybe "The Barrow," "An die Musik," and "The Lady of Mogé" show LeGuin at her best, while the others I've named are interesting in varying degrees. As a whole the book lacks emotional intensity and focus, and frequently the characterizations are sketchy, so that the reasons for the characters' actions must be guessed at rather than felt.

It's interesting to note that the copyright credit for "An die Musik" is WESTERN HUMANITIES REVIEW, Summer, 1961. Either that's a typo or this is LeGuin's first published story, predating her debut in *AMAZING* by a year. And this story handles masterfully a shift in viewpoint halfway through, showing that the author can do it, and making one wonder just when the rest of these stories were written. It is possible that these are all early works, published now on the strength of the author's reputation?

Face it, mainstream short fiction is much harder to sell than short SF, and it would have been damn near impossible for an unknown Ursula LeGuin to have sold a mainstream collection in 1961. Even now only one of these stories is reprinted from a newsstand magazine (*F&SF*), while the rest (including some of the worst ones) are originals, or taken from small circulation journals (in this field they're called "semi-prozines") like *THE LITTLE MAGAZINE*.

So this is early LeGuin? Certainly in control of matter and manner some of these stories seem to be very early indeed. It's hard to believe that the same person who wrote "The Day Before the Revolution" (surely the apotheosis of the short story of character) and "The Diary of the Rose" perpetrated "Brothers and Sisters."

But then, as George Slusser points out perceptively in his *THE FARTHEST SHORES OF URSULA K. LEGUIN* (Borgo Press, 1976, 60 pp., \$1.95), Ursula's concerns have been progressing steadily from the external and mythological (or romantic) to the internal and personal. These are very internal, personal stories, and by that criterion I would guess they're quite recent, except as otherwise noted on the copyright page.

So chalk this up as an only partially successful attempt to extend the range of her talents. I only hope it doesn't indicate that she's

There's a longish thing called "Brothers and Sisters" which is stupidly dull, and which jumps all over the place, never settling on a unified point of view (a nicety especially appreciated in short fiction) and containing the seeds of five or six narratives, none of which are ever developed. The end result is a story which vanishes from the memory as rapidly as spilled carbon tetrachloride from a counter top.

I put the thing aside once and came back to it, only to discover that I remembered nothing of what I had read. (And I can't recall ever having amnesia.) I had to start over from the beginning, and even then I couldn't tell the dead-fish characters apart without a program.

This is quite a contrast to the book I'd been reading before I started this column, an unjustly neglected work by an unjustly neglected author, *THE SEVEN WHO FLED* by Frederic Prokosch (Harpers, 1937, common and cheap in used book stores), who is somebody I found out about when Harlan Ellison kept reading his stuff aloud at Clarion to show us what good writing sounded like. Prokosch's book is made up of seven nearly independent novella-length segments, and they're so thunderingly good that you do not stop in the middle of one, but between them you can pause and come back later to find the book still alive and vivid as a real secondary existence you've just stepped back into. You don't have to skim back to pick up what you've forgotten because the characters tower and you don't forget them. I only wish LeGuin could have accomplished half as much.

(Prokosch, by the way, wrote a fantasy novel, *AMERICA MY WILDERNESS* a couple years back. When I get to it I'll review it. I think it's still in print.)

In ORSINIEN TALES LeGuin seems to be trying to do a *DUBLINERS* set in an unnamed central European country (clearly Hungary, complete with a revolution against foreign conquerors in 1956) and the stories are static slices of quiet desperation and non-action. Sometimes they work

slipping.

scare.)

FRIGHTS

Edited by Kirby McCauley
Introduction by Fritz Leiber
St. Martin's Press, 1976, 293 pp.
\$8.95

Another anthology. I've noticed that when I review anthologies I tend to talk about the faults of a book first. My review of UNIVERSE 6 last issue is a classic example.

But this time I think I'll control myself and talk about the good stuff in FRIGHTS first, so I'll give the right impression even to the people who only read the first two paragraphs of my reviews. I want them to go out and buy the book, along with the rest of you. You should.

I admit I'll probably never find an anthology which contains only stories I like, unless I edit it myself (and probably not even then, after a month or two), although I've come close a couple times. One was with Damon Knight's A CENTURY OF SCIENCE FICTION (which Gregg Press or somebody really should reprint), but that was back in the neolithic ages of my adolescence when the field was still bright and shiny, and I hadn't read much of the above-mentioned gunk yet. (Or couldn't recognize it when I did.) More recently there have been Jack Dann's WANDERING STARS, Dozois and Dann's FUTURE POWER, and some of the Carr BEST OF THE YEAR anthologies. And FRIGHTS. This is the first time I've come across such a book in the horror/fantasy field.

McCauley's effort is particularly good news because it tells us convincingly that the weird tale has not succumbed to either a stake through the heart or a millstone around the neck, as many have been predicting for years that it would. The writing is generally of a very high quality and there is a noticeable absence of the basic clichés: not one marble-mouthed vampire, silver-dreading werewolf, modern housewife witch, chain-clanking ghost, deal-making Devil, nameless entity inadvertently called up through a careless reading of the abhorred NECRONOMICON, or monster child out to get revenge on the world which invented puberty is to be found in these pages.

Even if all the stories were lousy this would be an accomplishment in a field more riddled with stock situations and characters than almost anything this side of the nurse novel. (Which is why the critics were predicting it would succumb. Straw nightmares don't

Years ago H. P. Lovecraft broke from the stereotypes and invented a whole new kind of weird tale with a new subject matter, but before long even this was just another cliché. His mythos had been swallowed, shoggoth-like, by an amorphous mass of imitators.

The writers in FRIGHTS have so far managed to avoid this. They practice a kind of modern terror derived from the world today, not from ancient legends transplanted. (Oh, there's a single exception.)

Fritz Leiber (whose introduction is splendid, but I wish he could have been present with a story) and Harlan Ellison (when he's writing like "The Whisper of Whipped Dogs" or "Croatoan") are probably the foremost exponents of this sort of thing. It's a shame that Ellison isn't present either, but of course a field can't be expected to rest on two men, no matter how good they are. This book brings quite a few others forward for your consideration.

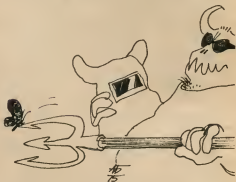
Okay, the good stuff: Russell Kirk's "There's a Long Trail A-Wind-ing" is completely first rate, and an example of how a little controlled ambiguity can help hint at multiple realities. This one can be interpreted as being about an old hobo dying of a heart attack, ghostly survivals in a deserted house, reincarnation, time re-playing itself, a wandering soul working out its purgatory on Earth, or all of the above, but in any case it works. All the pieces fit together flawlessly, and the author shows both a mastery of technique and a fine understanding of human emotion. His story is a great relief after all those accounts of stick people dragged to meaningless dooms because the author thinks that's scary. This one lives.

I'm not knocking clever ideas, genuinely clever ones that is, like the premise of Joe Haldeman's "Amraja Das," which pits a gypsy's curse against modern computer technology and comes up with a surprise ending through logical extrapolation in the UNKNOWN manner. I've never known Haldeman to write fantasy before, so this is a particularly pleasant discovery.

Also, there are old ideas which still work. Brian Lumley, best known as a third generation Cthulhu Millstone writer, shows what he can do with the mysterious old man, nine times out of ten a hunchbacked dwarf, whom only our hero can see as he goes about his malevolent business. The helpless terror in "The Whisperer" is conveyed more vividly than usual. So if you must read one of

these stories, read this one. Too many slip dangerously close to silliness (I wrote one once in which the little man would raise his hat slightly and scare people to death by a peek of whatever was inside... and it got quite silly.) but Lumley avoids that. He writes clearly, directly, and with considerable sensory impact. You can almost smell the reeking dwarf as he shambles through the pages. Brian has come a long way since his ARKHAM COLLECTOR days. He's finding his own voice, no longer doing a Lovecraftian Howdy-Doody routine.

R.A. Lafferty's "Oh Tell Me Will It Freeze Tonight" is a typical Lafferty story, which means it's not typical anything. The plot involves a poison-loaded tree which makes people forget it's there, a giant bird which eats one person out of three it meets and will patiently wait for the victim to be chosen by low card draw, a group of Indians trying to avert these terrors by causing a freeze in the face of a 70° warm



front, and more. The telling is in the manner of the tall tale, of folk lore, but once Lafferty gets ahold of something it becomes Lafferty-lore. It's the mark of a good writer that he can make anything his own.

Alfie Bester said in the interview I did with him (in my book, SF VOICES, T.K. Graphics, 1976, \$4.95) that SF has yet to produce a talent equal to Lewis Carroll (So why are we worrying about Shakespeare?) but I'm not sure eh's right anymore. There's something decidedly Jabberwacky about R.A. Lafferty.

Another writer, nearly as unlikely, with plots nearly as unlikely, is Gahan Wilson, who is here with a prime specimen of his (verbal) art. Again to refer to one of my interviews, Mr. Wilson explains that the difference between a story and a cartoon, aside from the medium, is that a cartoon is just the climactic scene and the story is background and leadup in addition.

This seems to be the case with

"End Game," which achieves a humorously macabre situation worthy of one of Wilson's best cartoons, and by an equally outre means, shows how it got that way.

That's the best in the book, those five stories, and now we move to the middle ground. The most routine story, the only one with oldtime folklore elements transplanted, is "The Kitten," by Poul and Karen Anderson, in which the bad guy gets his courtesy of ancient Egyptian Magic. It's to the credit of the authors, though, that they kept this moving without it becoming as predictable as a CREEPY script.

David Grubb's "Idiots" is an almost deeply moving account of an old man who believes the world consists of nothing more than eight counties in West Virginia, but still manages to shoot Hitler inside the Fuhrerbunker to comfort a Jewish friend.

William F. Nolan's "Dead Call" is NIGHT GALLERY filler about a recently departed soul who calls up his best friend and convinces him death is more fun than life. (The rest is obvious, *nicht wahr?*)

"Firefight" by David Drake is a Vietnam story about things which come out of the jungle to devour hapless patrols. Of course the setting is extremely vivid, because this is Drake's strength. But the plot rambles and lacks direction, and that's his weakness. He's done better in WHISPERS and F&SF.

"It Only Comes Out At Night" by Dennis Etchison may make you never want to stop at a highway rest stop late at night, but the ending is telegraphed and it fails to deliver the punch you just know it's supposed to.

"Sums" by John Jakes and Richard Peck would seem pretty good if not in a book like FRIGHS. It's a rather so-so exercise in ghostly nostalgia and escape into the past, and here it plays a weak second fiddle to Russell Kirk.

"The Warm Farewell" by Robert Bloch is an anomaly by its presence, somewhat dated social awareness fiction. It draws its terror not from the supernatural but from the KKK (for some reason not named) and ends with a grimly ironic and utterly unbelievable twist. This story seems to go against the whole idea of this book, as it does not deal with the special wondrous dread described by Leiber in his introduction:

...the sort of terror we have in mind is not that engendered by the prospect of being tortured by the Gestapo or locked in a room with a homicidal maniac with a razor-sharp butcher knife---physical fear, and the

mundanely gruesome---but rather the sort of terror that always carries a thrill with it, even when we know our lives may be at stake. (p.2)

Bloch's story is mundanely gruesome.

Now, finally, the bad stuff. There are only two entries I would single out as really bad.

Ramsey Campbell's "The Companion" completely lacks motivation or any reason for the things going on in it. This is a serious drawback because even the supernatural horror story must have some thread of logic behind it. The terror comes from a partial understanding of the unknown phenomenon, what its intentions are and how it is inimical to us. At the same time there is a realization that this thing has powers we do not understand, that it does not follow the rules of the universe as we know them, and as a consequence it may be unstoppable.

The wonder accompanying the terror, or which Leiber speaks, comes from a glimpse of new vistas and a comprehension of what they signify. (Or: now I understand and I wish I didn't, yet at the same time I can't take my eyes away.) There has to be more than a (literally in this case) rollercoaster ride past a series of spooky sights which don't point to anything at all.

Robert Aikman's "Compulsory Games" would not allow itself to be read. Aikman has always impressed me as an enormously uneven writer, who can range from brilliant (his story in SF CORRESPONDENT #1) to average (much of his work in F&SF) to simply terrible. It's times like this when his style, which is crystal clear when he's at his best, becomes hopelessly florid and opaque. After six or so pages of non-communication I gave up.

This story lectures. It's wooden. It does not live. Aikman makes the beginner's mistake (and he's no beginner) of telling everything rather than letting his characters act it out. Here's an example of the offending prose. If you think this is good writing, then you may want to ignore me and read the story:

Some people are capable of pleasure, of enjoying themselves, but none are truly capable of content. A conviction of content can be sustained only by consistent coercion, outer or inner; and even then, the underlying reality, the underlying mystery, inevitably seeps through, sooner or later, via some unforeseeable rift. Colin Trenwith was, in a

sense, brought to destruction by his own best impulses, and yet, and yet... (p.223)

Aren't you suspicious of any story which begins with so hackneyed a device as the above bit of foreshadowing? Too bad this thing is a novel- et. It wastes a lot of space in an otherwise fine book.

[And now a word from your consumer's advocate. I'm sorry to say that St. Martin's Press isn't making their books as well as they used to. Haldeman's THE FOREVER WAR, published last year, was properly bound in sewn signatures, but the next St. Martin's book I received, MINDBRIDGE, was not, even though it had a strip of reinforcing cloth down the spine. FRIGHS has nothing but glue. This is paperback binding, folks, good paperback binding I'll admit because it seems to be a high grade paper and good glue, but its durability rating is no higher than that of a Newcastle or Equinox book, and nowhere near a Dover. So if you want to keep this book take extra special care of it. In a decade or so it'll be quite rare when every library copy in the world has fallen apart.]

BRIEFLY NOTED

THE BEST OF C.L. MOORE
Edited by Lester del Rey
Ballantine, 1975, 368 pp., \$1.95

This book will make you understand why old-timers wish C.L. Moore would start writing again. You see, even back in the paleolithic pulp era women writers were on top. C. L. Moore was on top of the field from the start, until her own career was submerged into her collaborations with her (then) better known husband, Henry Kuttner.

I could quibble with some of del Rey's choices (definitely "The Scarlet Dream" rather than "Black Thirst" and "Jirel Meets Magic" rather than "The Black God's Kiss") but he has done a good job of selecting representative Moore fiction without showing too greatly her tendency to repeat herself. (Many of the Northwest Smith and Jirel efforts were simply exercises in invention and imagery, with plots vestigial at best. Those which made sense tended to be better than those which didn't although many seemed to be rehashes of others.) "Shambleau" is here, which is essential, and so are her later, modern science fiction classics, "Vintage Season" and "No Woman Born." And there's an afterword, explaining how they got written.

Recommended, as is the Ballantine BEST OF series generally.

12-1-76 Ah, yes, I have been neglecting this diary. It is time to take a look at the world in all its sad misery and bitter future, and make mock of it.

On the economic front (the unstated war against depression), our New Nixon has summoned 16 prominent economists and sages and seers to Plains to let him judge their thinking and personas. Some of them will be Picked to Serve. Others, known, will slink away to commit suicide, I presume.

BUT let me tell you about my little stove...my wood stove that now so efficiently heats the street floor during the late afternoons and evenings. We tried cooking on it last night. Heated up the dressing from the turkey we had for Thanksgiving, cooked some cabbage, and boiled water for tea. Not much, you say? You're right, but it cooked the cabbage well and was no bother. (Almost burned the dressing--left the pan on too long. Little bugger put out a lot of heat.)

So we saved what? About twenty cents worth of electricity, maybe. Because the wood I used is scrap, free for the picking-up in odd corners of the neighborhood. And we saved maybe 80¢ in heating oil for the furnace because it is below freezing outside these days. So--- a buck a day can be saved on expenses? Not inconsiderable over a winter.



Of course, as the energy resources of this country decline further, making energy more and more expensive, more and more people are going to tumble to the virtues of a wood stove and the freebie wood if you-only-know-where-to-look, and my salad days of scavenging will be over. Wood for stoves will then become as expensive as every other energy source.

I still haven't used any of my Presto-logs. I'm hoarding them... heh, heh, heh...

Interesting sex case decided by the Supreme Court the other day. A Southern couple were prosecuted for indulging in "sodomy" (oral sex) and convicted and they appealed & etc. They were doing it in their bedroom.

(Ah, you say, how could the local authorities catch them? Is not the privacy of the bedroom sacred? And were they not husband and wife?)

The thing is, they were "swing-ers" and (as I remember the news-cast) there was another adult present, and pictures were taken. By their daughter. Ages 12 and 13.

Aha! OUTRAGED, the locals decided to punish these perverts by going for a felony conviction---Sodomy. Instead of contributing to the delinquency of minors, which is probably only a misdemeanor. And the Supreme Court declined to reverse the lower courts.

But we know, don't we, that those people were convicted of involving their children (teen-age and pre-teen age GIRLS!) in an ORGY and performing perverted sex acts, and GOD KNOWS WHAT ELSE! They were not really convicted of going down on each other. And their defense of 'invasion of privacy' was a bit thin, under the circumstances.

The wages of sexual sin is a \$5,000. fine and/or five years in a federal prison. Now, if they had had those sweet, innocent girls take pictures of whipping and hitting and kicking---pain!---(modestly dressed, of course) there would not have been a peep from the authorities. Violence is an Approved Activity.

The reason I called Carter Rex our New Nixon is because the similarities are there. Both are dissemblers. Both are driven by ambition for power. Both are "pure" (in the beginning, anyway), and both want/wanted to reform the government and run things themselves. Both are liars. This last will be more and more evident about Carter as time goes on. Both are vindictive.

The major difference between the two men is that Carter is a lot smarter (and more dangerous!) and more charismatic.

I couldn't believe my ears when I heard Carter deliver those famous lines, "I will never lie to you... and I ask you to trust me." Wow! Delivered with such humble sincerity from the bottom of his born again heart. And he believed it when he said it. Every word. But when anybody says to me, "Would I lie to you? Trust me!" while looking me straight in the eye...I smell a con

job. I put my hand on my wallet and I don't sign nothin'!

When Carter Rex begins talking about "sacrifices" to be made by the American people---run for your life because he has his eye on your money and your freedom.

A little noticed development today: Angola was voted into the United Nations. The U.S.A., having vetoed the admission a few months ago (before the election!), did not oppose Angola's entry this time. No explanation given for the change of policy. I suppose Ford and Kissinger didn't think anybody would notice. But---who cares? The U.N. is a joke anyway.

Speaking of a comedy, have you followed the riotous act put on by Carter, the steel companies, and some members of Congress? Carter says he wants stand-by wage-price controls but (of course) says he wouldn't want to use them. Like Nixon. So the steel companies, like the aluminum companies and every other company including the car makers, have raised their list price for some common forms of steel, as a defensive move against a wage-price freeze. They are prudent men with long memories and a profound distrust of politicians. They will sell current steel at a compensating discount. But that "regular" price is on the books. Whereupon there is a great hue and cry about the "inflationary" effect on the economy, and a prominent congressman comes out and says he will ask congress to impose wage-price controls next year to keep these big companies from ripping-off/ruining the fragile economy!

And Carter Rex, unable to wait till January 20th, insists on playing at being President by muttering at the steel companies and trying to "jawbone" them into a rollback.

And Ford sulks in the White House, still pissed off at having lost the election. The stupid jerk lost it on his own by picking Dole as his running mate. He just couldn't stand to have a man as vice-President who was smarter and better suited to be President than he. And the people---enough people, anyway---were turned off by Dole to lose the election. Tsk. Ford got exactly what he deserved. And maybe the reason he's so pissed is that he knows it.

Speaking of sex, let me review a book, name of XAVIERA'S SUPERSEX, subtitled 'her personal techniques for total lovemaking.'

Ha! Snarf! A big 7 x 10-1/4 inch softcover of high production

quality. \$5.95. A Signet Special, G9967. It has 50 very well done erotic drawings/illustrations by Robert Baxter. These drawings are excellent line drawings of men and women, together, alone, in groups... And they illustrate various situations, positions, techniques....

I tell you, this is just about the most honest, graphic how-to sex book I've ever seen. Xaviera's writing is direct, informal, specific, and eye-opening. She speaks truth, folks. She gives do's and don'ts. Like:

#The "schoolgirl twist." This is the missionary position as practiced, of necessity in the back seat of cars. To keep from tumbling off the narrow seat, the woman twines her legs around the man's. On the back seat or in bed, it forces the couple's crotches even closer and sets up a delicious friction. It also provides the woman with more leverage; she can use the man's legs to pull on as she undulates, and at the same time keep him where she wants him.

And:

Silly Questions--Female Style
"Do you love me?" She knows he's going to say yes (whether he means it or not). Does she honestly expect him to say no? And besides, what does "love" mean? As you know, there's no easy definition for it. So what good does it do to ask, especially at a moment like this? (A variation on this is "Say it! Say it!")

And:

How to Get in Your Best Licks:
Cunnilingus

Nearly every woman I've ever known has complained about how men give head. All too often it feels like circumcision *al dente*. Many men try to bite off more than they can chew--like the clitoris, the outer lips, the inner lips, or the whole business.

Another common fault is the bobbing head, as in bobbing for apples. Some men try to do too much all at once. They rub their noses against the clitoris in an effort to stimulate it; then they push their chins against the vaginal opening in a bizarre attempt at penetration. In a spirit of misplaced thoughtfulness, such men keep up a steady rhythm, but for all the good they do...

It goes on in detail, wittily, humorously, and in many instances, devastatingly.

I'd say XAVIERA'S SUPERSEX is as much sociology and psychology as sex manual. It's fascinating, superbly educational, and a delight. If you can take finding yourself

unflatteringly described several times. There's the risk---you'll probably recognize some of your illusions and flawed styles of making love.

There are twenty chapters. The chapter titles are a kick:

1. Foreplay is Never Having to Say "Are You Ready?"
5. The Power of Positive Positioning
9. Hey There, Orgy Girl; or, A Bicycle Built for Three or More
16. Gimmicks, Gadgets, Stabbers, and Grabbers; or More Power to You
18. The Generation Gap; or Can You Cut It in December as You Did in May?
20. One Play; or, Autoerotic Doesn't Mean Loving Your Car

If Xaviera wrote this all by herself, she's one hell of a smart, talented writer, and a superior-type person.

12-3-76 The government announced this morning that the unemployment rate had gone up from 7.9% to 8.1% in November. (Actually, the figures are for approximately October 18 to November 18.)

It figured, of course. The December rate might go back to 8.0% because of Christmas hiring, but by February it'll probably be upticking merrily toward 8.5%...9.0%...

It bothers me to comment on this bad economic news, but it gives me a chance to make predictions which test my reading of the real world. So far I have a far better track record than scads of reputable, prestigious establishment economists (who are mostly telling us what they sense their bosses want told us.) These so-called economists can't even see what's obviously happening to this country and to the world, can't see even three months in advance, and yet have the preposterous gall to make pronouncements about what will happen to the economy one and two years ahead. They're incredible. I laugh every day.

Canada, Mexico, England, France, Japan...all are in serious economic trouble. There is an on-going international financial crisis brought on by decades of deficits, true inflation, and government interventions into the free markets which always result in exactly opposite to what is wished. But governments are always loathe to admit mistakes. They

blame everyone but themselves---and pile on another mistaken interference to try to correct their previous errors. They are not about to stop. They live on power, and it takes a cataclysm to shake them loose from some of it.

Well, cataclysms are coming.



The Gary Gilmore farce continues. Now the Supreme Court has voted 6 to 3 to look into his case. Can a man legally refuse to appeal his convictions and punishment? Is a firing squad cruel and unusual punishment? Where was the Supreme Court when they had a chance to rule on the legality of the Vietnam involvement? (And all that napalming and bombing of civilians.) They copped out, ducked, and showed how much guts they had. So much for judicial integrity when it counts.

I've just had word that Carlyle Communications Corp, publisher of Beeline books (porno) have effectively died as a market; they have stopped buying new mss and will apparently reprint old titles for some time to come. I do believe Carlyle is the last sex book publisher.

I hear the reasons are bad investments (buying another publishing firm) and hiring the wrong editor to run it.

To a large extent, too, sex publishers are victims of their own greed and the limits of their product and market. Thousands of sex novels have been written and published which depict in ultimate detail every possible sex act for humans. Hundreds of anal novels, oral novels, bestiality novels, incest novels...are on display in porn shops. Every taste is catered to, in spades. The inventory is excessive, to put it mildly. There really is no need to publish new sex novels. Nothing more or new can be written. And sex novel readers have shown no great enthusiasm for grace or style.

And since the publishers almost always buy all rights to the mss.,

they can, theoretically, once they have a sufficiently large pool of published sexual variety to fall back on, reprint and reprint and reprint forever. A new cover, a new imprint...who cares? One percent of the sex novel clientele? Fuckn. Right?

What would you say if I told you the science fiction publishers were in the same seat?

Consider how much science fiction has been published in just the last five years. Thousands of novels, anthologies, collections... Every sf theme has been used and used! Virtually every variation has been written. The existing body of sf is enormous. The Name Writers have large bodies of work to lease out for reprinting. The editors have a huge inventory of published stories to choose from. It would take a dedicated new reader a lifetime to read all the fine, very good, and plain good sf already in print. At this moment I am surrounded by books---hundreds of them---I would like to read. I could not do anything else in life but read and I would take ten years to get through them.

So why publish more? Why don't the publishers simply save money and printing costs by reprinting time after time after time...?

Some of them are. Ace is mostly reprint, and Ballantine is emphasizing reprinted titles with new covers more and more. Why Not? The old stuff sells as well or better than new, and every ten or fifteen years there's another generation to sell to, to whom all this is new.

As for the magazines... It would not surprise me to see AMAZING and FANTASTIC return to all-reprint format in a last-ditch attempt to save money and stay afloat.

There'll be great changes in sf in the next few years.

There'll be a greater reliance

on the good Name writers and the writers whose books always sell well and more reliance on reprints. It may go to 80% reprint, 20% new.

Little reviewing music, professor! I finished a book last night that I consider excellent, and I wish to alert those who trust my judgement.

(TRUST ME! WOULD I LIE TO YOU?)

It is THE TOMORROW FILE by Lawrence Sanders, the man who wrote THE ANDERSON TAPES and THE FIRST DEADLY SIN. It is a Berkely Medallion book T3200, \$1.95. Worth every penny.

It is the story of a high government official in the bureaucracy-ruled America of the late 1990's. But times have changed!

The President is a figurehead. Real social/economic/cultural power lies in what have come to be known as the Department of Bliss. Nicholas Bennington Flair is a Deputy Director of the Satisfaction Section, Department of Bliss.

The country has problems. Despite all efforts, the satisfaction (happy) rate of the people has been declining. There are bombings, sabotage, uprisings, strikes, every day. Government is protected by fences, dogs, armed guards, night and day.

There is a new "language" in use by government officials. Anything more than twenty years old is 'obso', and anyone with 'obso' ideas is held in contempt. Anyone old is an 'obso' and worse than useless.

People are not people, they are 'objects', and they don't have bodies, they have a corpus. They are not male or female, they are ems or efs. There are no bosses, there are 'rulers'. Money (in 'new dollars') is called 'love', and enjoying something is a 'profit'. People don't make love, the 'use' each other. Bisexuality is common. Drugs are accepted as everyday adjuncts to

sleep, better memory, energy, mood changers... You name it.

Most food is artificial--made by chemicals. Real meat, fruit, vegetables are rare and extremely 'love-able.'

Nicholas Flair is ruled by a smart, lovely, tough woman whom he and his lover, Paul, discover is 'on the suck' (taking graft, using her office to make much illegal love).

Learning from her tactics in uncovering and trapping a group of 'obso's who are part of a nationwide 'terrorist' group (who want back their freedom, obso political rights, etc.), he and Paul devise a plan to prove her suck to the higher rulers.

It works and Nick is promoted to her job, and his assistant, Paul, is also promoted....

The Tomorrow File is a file for ideas to be developed someday for the greater manipulation, behavior modification, and rule of the nations objects.

Paul becomes power hungry and impatient to make the Tomorrow File plans operative. Nicholas wants to wait. He has other problems: he must find a way to keep a top-notch genius alive for further service to the nation. The em is dying of an incurable disease and nothing is working. Also, Nicholas is falling in love with the wife of the Chief Director (total ruler), and trying to cope with other government problems, overseeing the development of the Ultimate Pleasure project...

Now, I know this sounds sort of corny and obso, but Sanders makes it all chillingly real. And when it becomes obvious that someone has mounted a conspiracy against Nick, and when you realize the only way to save the genius is to cut off his head and mount it in a bell jar ala DOXOVAN'S BRAIN...

The book is terrifying, because the beginnings of all these trends are in place NOW. The alienation, the reliance on drugs, the centralization of power, the progress of science in invasion of privacy, medicine, genetic control...The attitude that people are only products of physical forces, understandable ingredients, environment. Hunks of complicated meat. Things. Objects. To be used, and manipulated for the good of society. And the end justifies the means.

The book computes. The ending is sad---and a triumph. The book should be nominated for the Hugo, but it won't, because Sanders isn't one of 'us'.



12-14-76 An ironic sign of the times is a reprint of a Fall, 1900 Sears, Roebuck and Co. catalog, priced, now, \$3.95. It is a miniature reproduction, pocketbook format.

It's fascinating to go through the catalog (originally over 1100 pages, edited down to about 300 in this "edition") and compare prices.

Sears sold groceries (staples) in those days. Such as:
 Roasted coffee beans----13¢ lb.
 Raisins-----8¢ lb.
 Canned peaches, 3lb. can--12¢ ea.

Nothing has changed in the non-prescription drugs:

Cure for the Tobacco Habit--40¢
 Liquor Habit Cure-----50¢
 Wonder Heart Cure-----50¢
 Asthma Cure-----1.00
 Internal Catarrh Cure-----50¢
 Dr. Rose's Dyspepsia Powder--30¢
 Dr. Rose's Obesity Powder-----60¢
 Mexican Headache Cure-----20¢
 Dr. Worden's Female Pills
 For All Female Diseases-----35¢
 Blood Pills-----25¢
 Ague Pills-----40¢
 Rheumatism Cure-----70¢

And so on...pills for everything, including pimples, malaria, croup, mumps, kidney disorders.

And a line of Homeopathic Medicines which included arsenic, belladonna, opium, digitalis....2 oz. pills for 40¢ each.

A big item was a line of electric belts (with a loop or sleeve for the penis) which were supposed to cure headaches, backaches, and weak nerve pains, nervous diseases of all kinds. Top price was \$18. for the super deluxe model.

Of course there is listed a 65¢ hair restorer.

You can laugh, but what has the FDA done for us since except make belladonna and opium illegal? There were fewer addicts then per 100,000 people, than now. So much for govt. intervention and protection.

You could buy a good watch for 98¢. Most expensive 23 jeweled item, guaranteed 5 years was \$40.50.

An upright piano cost \$98.50.

You could buy a genuine stradivarius model violin for \$2.50.

A 12 Gauge shotgun cost as low as \$10.45.

Their celebrated Gents Acme King bicycle cost \$15.75.

The most expensive wood/coal cooking stove they had, a magnificent sterling steel range, with six holes and an oven and a high closet reservoir, cost \$31.05.

As you go through this catalog, you realize how people lived in those days, and how similarly they

lived in so many ways. We are really not all that different.

That old Sears catalog got me to thinking about relative costs; energy was high-priced, then. As it is becoming now. And I wondered how on earth people could have afforded most of that stuff then, if their local, county, state and federal governments had taken up to 40% of their income in visible and invisible taxes.

They lived as well as they did because there was no income tax at all. The cost of government was at a minimum---of necessity! They simply couldn't have afforded the mass of expensive government superstructure we have erected to "govern" us today.

And it struck me further that the trend will have to be toward less and less government again, because the production power of the economy will not sustain it. The taxpayers won't be able to pay the huge proportion of their incomes any longer, that government now requires. As energy becomes more and more expensive the true cost of everything will go up and up, and disposable income will decline.

There will be a crunch. As business declines (as now) and as government requires more and more, we will go one of two ways: toward less government and a freer society and economy, or toward slavery to the State as we shrink from freedom and depend on the State more and more. Government will be forced (the politicians will tell us) to intervene more and more into every area of society, every corner of the economy, in order to insure fairness and to prevent ripoffs and etc.

Carter Rex had a press conference today, and announced Blumenthal as Secretary of Treasury in his new Cabinet.

The John Birch Society is about to have a field day, because their theory of a Rockefeller dominated conspiracy of 'insiders' who actually rule this country and much of the world has just been given another measure of proof. Blumenthal and Vance (Sec. of State), and Schultz (Council of Economic Advisers) are all members of the Rockefeller dominated/controlled/funded Council on Foreign Relations. Somehow, over the last fifty years or so, the CFR has had its members in the key powerful government positions. And in fact, Nixon, Ford, Kennedy were themselves members.

And Carter Rex has a membership in a subsidiary Rockefeller "public



service" internationalist prestige group.

Look for the Secretary of Defense, when he is named, to also be a member of the CFR. And the new head of the CIA will also be one of the group.

The feeling comes that we are in the same old hands.

Carter promised new faces and a new broom. Yuk. Yuk. You all has been had.

No wonder Kissinger (CFR, one of Rockefeller's most obvious agents) was so happy with the choice of Vance (who is known as a carry-over-of-policy, not an innovator) and Carter's mention that Kissinger would be 'consulted' on foreign policy. The Rockefeller/Kissinger policies will be continued under Carter.

This means bigger deficits in spite of the noble 'balance the budget' talk. I'll betcha the federal deficit runs to 80 billion in 1977, and over 100 billions in 1978.

I am coming to think that the judicial system in this country is a machine of lawyers and former lawyers, operated by lawyers for the benefit of lawyers.

A case in point is that of a local porno film dealer, very small-time (a spare-time operation) who was 'entrapped' by postal inspectors who ordered some films in Wyoming (as suggested by a Portland, Oregon postal inspector, because it was felt a local jury wouldn't convict, but a square jury from the hinterlands of Wyoming might). He was indicted on 20 counts (one per film ordered and mailed) and he was then systematically broken and fleeced. He lost his job (natch, the employer is always informed), he was charged \$1,000 by a local attorney for preliminary minor legal work, and charged \$5,000. by the Wyoming attorney for the onerous chore of plea-bargaining. The

result is a three year probation and loss of certain civil liberties.

The government had a certain guilty-plea because they let it be known that even if the defendant did choose to go to trial---and did win---they would stick it to him in another state. And then another.

So the man is out of a job, broke, his family eating on food stamps...

For what? Why in hell couldn't a government attorney simply come to him, tell him they had a lead-pipe case against him, and suggest that he stop now and forever selling porno films? He would have, believe me. Anybody would, given the alternative.

BUT---the government wanted its pound of revenge/"justice", and the lawyer machine wanted his money. They bit him off, chewed him up, spit him out.

Until you've been involved in a meatgrinder like this, you don't realize how vicious, malicious, cynical and callous your precious government and its employees can be. And as for the parasites who feed off the victims...the lawyers, who make the laws, use the laws, manipulate the laws...my contempt for that crew is obvious.

Hey, if you're an intelligent young person, become a lawyer or a bureaucrat---them's the jobs to have in the next fifty years...if you have the stomach for it.

THINK OF ME AS A LEGISLATIVE BODY AND YOURSELF AS THE BODY POLITIC, MS MELLISH, AND TAKE OFF THE REST



12-16-76 I smirk with that deellish sense of I-told-you-so. The National Health Service has shut down all inoculations for Swine Flu because a significant number of the recipients have developed a 'slow paralysis' as a result of the injections.

Thus dieth the Great Swine Flu Hoax and Government Screw-Up. And it proves once again the old anti-statist theorem: WHEN AN INDIVIDUAL MAKES A MISTAKE THE DAMAGE IS LIMIT-

ED; WHEN A GOVERNMENT MAKES A MISTAKE, IT CAN DAMAGE MILLIONS OF INDIVIDUALS. Ergo: THE LESS GOVERNMENT THE BETTER.

Item: In the fall of 1973 David Rockefeller invited Jimmy Carter to have dinner with him in London, and invited Carter to become a member of the Trilateral Commission (a CFR front), and Carter accepted.

Item: The Trilateral Commission's founding director in 1973 was Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, a CFR member.

Item: Brzezinski's foreign policy views are virtual carbon copies of those of Henry Kissinger.

Item: President-elect Jimmy Carter today named Brzezinski to be his National Security Advisor (Kissinger's former job), which means to me that Brzezinski will be the actual Secretary of State, while Cyrus Vance will be (as of old) the man who carries it out.

Item: Charles Schultze of the Brookings Institute (CFR) has been named as expected to be head of Carter's Council of Economic Advisors.

It would certainly appear that there is some substance to the Birch Society's theory that the Rockefeller family dominated and originated Council on Foreign Relations is in fact the seedbed of top government officials and government policy, again. And that Jimmy Carter is a willing captive.

To be brutal about it, It's plain to me that Jimmy Carter is the Rockefellers' man. He sold out in order to be president. Without the massive media support and propaganda he needed in the early primary season, he wouldn't have made it. They puffed him. They "made" him. As they made/used Nixon.

Watch Carter closely; he will have to bail out New York City and State---to save billions of dollars in bad loans and bad bonds made and owned by the two huge Rockefeller banks: Citibank and Citicorp), and Chase Manhattan.

12-21-76 Hu-hum, the OPEC raised oil prices enough to keep up with worldwide inflation. Saudi Arabia played a 51 game and threatened to increase production to make it the going price, but then backed down a few days later and said it had to make its oil last, so no massive increases in production will be allowed, which means the other nations 10-15% increases will stick.

Carter appointed a Liberal internationalist as Sec. of Defense

(as the Eastern Establishment wished) and all that remains among the key positions is CIA.

AND NOW...ABOUT MY AGONY....

I have a great and growing pain in the conscience. It gnaws at me. It is not new, ghod knows, but I can no longer ignore it.

Today, a further measure of pain was visited upon me by the post office: three VODs sent by Darrell Schweitzer, two Nelson books, 12 Ballantine sf releases, one small-press novel, five Bantam releases, and a partridge in a pear tree.

Granted, that is a lot for one day, but almost every day a book or two comes in. And a hell of a lot of them look enticing enough to read.

But my reading time is forever being nibbled away by other tasks, other priorities like filling orders, typing, stencils, bookkeeping, correspondence...

And the books pile up, and they WATCH me, and silently ACCUSE me...

As you read this issue you will be aware of a contradiction in my character---a schizoid aspect that has nothing to do with me and Alter. I am part cynic, part idealist & passionate advocate. On the one hand I hold the view that there is no justice, all is illusion, and it's perfectly ridiculous to Care, because it makes no never-mind, and in 100 years so what?

And on the other hand I do care about the world, the way things should be, and I am egotistic enough to wantneed to pass opinions, yelp, howl, scream, roar at injustice, stupidity, incompetence, etc, etc....

And despite my cynicism and mature, cool, detached alienation... I'm bugged that I can't do a better job with SFR.

WILL YOU DAWN BOOKS STOP THAT STARING!

So I have called the printer and have got an estimate on an 80-page SFR. And the extra pages are going into a return of The Archives: a day-by-day listing (with occasional comments) of the books and mags which arrive.

These listings cannot be organized by alphabet. Time is too much a factor. These listings will be included in my day-by-day editorial Monolog so I can keep up with them, and they will include story lists of the collections and anthologies and the contents of the prozines, as had the early Archives.

I think, too, if I can hack it, I'll incorporate letters of comment in the dailies. And then break to

place other reviews, columns, interviews, articles in the magazine.

Obviously I can't afford to jump to 80 pages without an increase in price. Don't blench, don't weep. I shall be merciful.

THE SUBSCRIPTION PRICE stays the same. BUT---the cover price goes to \$1.50. Sorry, but you bookstore buyers will have to pony up with an extra quarter. I'll get 15¢ more per copy, and the dealer gets 10¢. This price will, I hope, urge more retail buyers to break down and subscribe.

I hope 80 pages will be enough room.

12-24-76 Carter Rex (a wrong appellation, I think---he's more a captive now than an emperor) has gone the last mile with his Establishment cabinet. The man he chose for the top spot in the CIA is a New York lawyer, former Kennedy insider, and member of the Council on Foreign Relations, name of Sorensen. If that weren't enough, he picked or had picked for him, James Schlesinger (CFR) as his 'chief energy advisor.' Carter also wants Congress to create a new department of energy for Schlesinger to head. This suggests they have plans for our gas and oil. Big plans. You can bet your tailpipe those plans are in the ultimate interests of Big Oil and Big Money.

Carter did have gumption or desperation to go against 'advice' and pick a close friend (i.e. someone who will be ultimately loyal to him and not to the Rockefeller power locus) as Attorney General. And that choice is drawing media fire.

Ah, what happened to the new brooms, the new faces, the anti-government populism of the campaign? Gone...a con game...and now the people see the same old faces from the same old vested interests pushing the same old policies behind a grinning new puppet.

In the business world that's called bait-and-switch...or worse.

12-25-76 MERRY CHRISTMAS and a SURVIVAL NEW YEAR.

12-28-76

There are two disturbing articles in the February ANALOG: "Is Something Wrong With the Sun?" by Margaret L. Silbar, and "Is the Sun a Normal Star?" by Dr. John Gribbin, which say that the sun may have gone out in its core, may no longer be producing hydrogen fusion, and may be on its way to cinderhood. But not to worry;

it'll be millions of years before that "death" works its way to the surface. And there is some evidence and theory that the sun periodically turns off and then turns on again. The effect on Earth may be a few degrees of heat difference, on average, just enough to cause an ice age now and again....

Carter and his cabinet are saying strange, conservative, opaque, ambiguous things about the budget and promised programs.

Cut the defense budget? Well, maybe only the rate of increase...

Welfare reform? Well, maybe not till the budget is in better shape...

Nevertheless, I note news that Carter had a meeting or two with Mayor Beame of New York city, and with the governor of New York state and those gentlemen came away smiling.

1-4-77 I see that our lame duck President (in fact, if not in name) Kissinger wants to take with him the transcriptions of all of his phone calls while he was Secretary of State. He had had his secretaries record them all and type them up. Now he wants to use them in retirement as reference in writing books and papers and etc.

This has never been done, of course, and Nixon couldn't take his tapes, but then Nixon didn't obey orders as well as Kissinger. It is especially interesting that Henry actually moved all the transcripts to a nearby Rockefeller estate before being called on that arrogant bit of theft.

Now, if Henry had paid those secretaries out of his own pocket, maybe that would make a difference. But he didn't even pay for the paper, ribbons, or typewriters. The government paid for it all.

I'd be inclined to let him have copies of all those transcripts, if he wanted to pay for them, but I don't think that appeals to him.

He may get away with it, though. Good, obedient Rockefeller agents are always rewarded. Look how well Kissinger's aide, Alexander Haig, was rewarded for so adroitly maneuvering Nixon into resigning, and in "suggesting" to Ford that Nixon should be pardoned. He was made chief of NATO and will soon retire, full of honors, with a lovely huge pension.

President Ford's floating of the Puerto Rican statehood idea was interesting, for a Republican, since if Puerto Rico was admitted as the 51st state, it would immediately become a rat-hole down which (by law) the federal government (the 50 existing states) would have to pour unending multi-billions of dollars in subsidies, loans, gifts, payments, etc. in order to bring that new state up to par in welfare, unemployment compensation, school support, etc., etc., etc....

And if Puerto Rico, why not then in a few years, a maverick province of Canada? Mexico? England? One World might end up as one two-hundred "state" country.

1-6-77 I watched that NBC three-hour marathon on Violence in America last night and was amused that the network used such violence-laden teasers to build an audience in the days and hours before the actual show, and used a totally violent "hook" period in the opening to glue the audience...promising more and more of the same shocking gore to sustain interest.

All the arguments/evidence can be capsuled as follows: if babies and children don't get enough love and attention in their critical formative years they'll turn into sociopaths of one kind or another. And a society which likes spectator violence sets standards and roles for children to live by. Monkey see, monkey do.

What to do?

Contrary to the media's claim that conflict in a TV, movie or (even) a printed story inevitably demands violence to "solve" or discharge the tension, any writer of fiction knows that conflict does not have to escalate to violence. Danger and suspense can be built to excruciating levels without one blow dealt or one stab or one shot.

Conflict is what grabs a reader/viewer. Death, torture, agony, are of natural interest to a citizenry who are insulated from raw danger and real death. It would be interesting to know what the favorite movies were of the soldiers in Vietnam...and of those recently returned.

Of course "safe" violence is interesting, often riveting to people. The three most powerful subjects to people are Death, Money, and Sex. And it is these areas of life which give us the most social and psychological trouble. It may always be thus.

THE GIMLET EYE

COMMENTARY ON SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY ART

BY JON GUSTAFSON

I'm going to start this column with an apology. Even the best of us (which I may or may not be) make mistakes, and I made a beaut in my last column for SFR #18. I reviewed THE IMPOSSIBLE SPY by Kirby Carr. It was published by Major books, a company new to the science fiction field, and I mistakenly told you that Wil Hulsey was the cover artist. Well, he wasn't. And, since I had the correct information (supplied me by Major Books) in front of me when I wrote the column, I can't understand how I screwed up so badly; my brain must have been on vacation at the moment, I guess. The artist who is guilty for that awful cover is Gerald Powell; thus, my apologies to Wil Hulsey.

On a brighter note I would like to thank Mike Gilbert for the delightful illustrations he did for my last column (and thanks to Dick for putting them there). Mike has a splendid sense of humor and the skills (as evidenced by his work for ANALOG) to become an excellent sf artist. All he needs is a job to live on while doing sf illustrations (so he won't starve).

I somehow managed to scrape up enough money to go to Kansas City for MidAmerCon; it put me further into debt (it's the American way) but was well worth it. You see, when one lives in a place like Pullman, Washington, one doesn't get a chance to meet very many of the luminaries of science fiction; artists, authors or editors. That personal contact is important to those (like me) interested in, involved in and participating in sf and fandom. It brings depth and meaning to the books and illustrations that abound in science fiction and, as a side effect, makes sf even more of a family affair. Meeting the people whose books you've read and whose illustrations you've admired creates an added closeness missing in virtually all other literary and artistic fields. If it sounds as if I was deeply affected by me experience you are right, I was.

I had two very pleasant experiences at MidAmerCon, although at the time they were also quite nerve-racking. One I knew about before I went there: Ken Keller, the chairman of MidAmerCon, had asked me to host the Artists' Genre Luncheon (at least partly on the recommendation of George Barr, bless his heart), to which



I said, with my usual restraint and decorum, "YES!!!!" Beside the luncheon itself, I was also to moderate a panel discussion immediately following the meal. The panelists scheduled (besides myself) were Alicia Austin, George Barr, Bill Rotzler and Michael Whelan. Alicia didn't make it to Kansas City in time, so I asked Kelly Freas if he would join us; he very graciously did so. Greg Bear also ended up on the panel. I thought it was a roaring success and the general reaction from the people present seemed to bear this out (not that I had much to do with the success of the panel discussion; the artists deserve the credit for that). There was plenty of audience participation, and some particularly good comments from Ian Ballantine, and the panel members were very involved. It was a very interesting experience for me and worth the trip by itself.

The second experience was a bit of a surprise. When I finally found Ken Keller to find out the final preparations regarding the Artists' Genre Luncheon, he asked me if I would mind accepting Dick Geis' Hugo (assuming he won, of course) since he wasn't at the con. Well, when in Rome.... So, I accepted that task, too, and when Dick's name was called out as the winner of the Best Fan Writer that Sunday night, I stumbled up on the stage, accepted the amazingly heavy award, said something appropriate and stumbled off the stage. In a state of shock, I might add; it's hard to act normally in front of 2000 people and a color TV camera.

There were many other delightful things that happened to me at the con, and I could write about them for hours (but won't). The party at the del Rey's room, for instance, where I met Judy-Lynn and Lester and Ian Summers (Ballantine's Art Director) or the party at George Barr's suite. And the dozens of kind, fascinating people I met at the con. It was a time that will be fondly remembered

One of the things that happened at the con was the formation of ASFA (the Association of Science Fiction Artists), spearheaded by Rick Sternbach. I attended the first meeting of ASFA, in Rick's room at the Muehlbach Hotel, where the basic premise (or premises) of the organization was worked out by the attendees.

ASFA is an informational organization with a newsletter to dispense information about copyrights, payment rights and like items of importance to science fiction illustrators. The newsletter may be obtained from Rick at this address: ASFA NEWS, POB 3, West Cornwall, CT 06796. It costs \$5.00 for one year (6 issues) and you don't have to be an artist to get it. I urge all of you who are interested in seeing science fiction artists improve their position in the field to subscribe to the newsletter.

In one of my previous columns, I asked for comments from artists and have received many letters in response. To these people I say, "Thank you." I hope to get more from artists and fans alike. If you would like to comment about the things I say (or don't say), please write me at Box 2003 C.S., Pullman, WA 99163. I'd enjoy hearing from you, pro or con.

Speaking of letters, I received one from George Barr not too long ago that I thought was interesting. In it, he talks about reviewers, including yours truly. He writes:

'I would find it very difficult to think kindly about someone who chose to write about my work for the sole purpose of tearing it to shreds. For this reason I've suffered sympathetically for the artists whose work you've dissected in NEW VENTURE.' ((The Zine I co-edited --JG)) 'I believe your motivations are laudable, but I'd hate to have your razor words turned against me.'

I saw many of George's originals at MidAmerCon and, put quite simply, the man is phenomenal! He would have to go blind and become physically and mentally crippled before he would turn out a work that would become a candidate for "dissection."

He goes on:

'Reviews have always bothered me for that reason. Like you say, it would become tiresome to review only those things which you can praise. But I wonder how often the reviewer has the opportunity to stand at the other end of the sword---to have his own work treated in the same manner as he treats others. Most re-

viewers are fairly safe. If they critique art, they don't paint. If they critique books, they usually don't write books. If they write about films, seldom are they involved in producing them. I personally would be afraid to write a really scathing review about anyone, for fear of running into him at a convention later. Not a physical fear; most fans don't get physical in their disagreements, but the fear that I may really have hurt someone, and that I may have destroyed the chance for what might have been a worthwhile acquaintance."

Most reviewers don't have much working experience in the field they are critiquing; it seems to be an almost universal truth. Science fiction illustration reviewers, on the other hand, almost all have experience working in the field of art. I illustrate for the college of Veterinary Medicine at Washington State University. Preff has had work published in GALAXY, and other magazines. And Vincent DiFate (who does a column for Andy Porter's *ALGOL*) is a very well-known sf artist.

As for the fear of hurting someone, that is something I think about every time I sit down at my typewriter. I don't like to hurt people's feelings, especially artists. But I do feel strongly enough about sf illustration, and the important role it plays in my favorite literature, to be able to speak out strongly when I feel sf is being hurt by inferior work. If there is a chance that some harsh words will make some small improvement in the quality of science fiction illustration, then I will utter them and take the consequences (if any). If I run into an artist or fan who is upset by some of my statements and opinions, then so be it.

There are few examples of perfectly matched writing and illustration. Usually there is some sort of disparity; either the writing is good and the cover illustration is poor, or the other way around (and a large percentage of the time the cover illustration is better than the story). And, if the quality is equitable, that is, the cover illustration is as good as the story deserves, then most of the time the artist's style doesn't match the author's.

I have, however, found one or two examples of perfect matching of quality and style. The first is Boris Vallejo's superb cover for Gordon R. Dickson's *THE DRAGON AND THE GEORGE* from Ballantine Books. The novel is a delightful blend of



humor and pathos, a story of an alternate universe where magic and dragons and talking wolves are everyday occurrences. In a way, it resembles *de Camp* and *Pratt's THE INCOMPLETE ENCHANTER* except it is more realistic and the humor is subtler. Vallejo, whose style is very reminiscent of Frank Frazetta's, has captured Dickson's blend of moods perfectly. The cover, lush with forest colors, shows the heroine and three heroes; a motley crew if there ever was one, consisting of a dragon (large, scaly and befuddled), one knight complete with shiny armor and white charger, a wolf and an outlaw's lovely daughter. The scene accurately depicts the meeting between Danielle, who is busy cuddling Aragh (the wolf), Gorbash, and Sir Neville-Smyth in a forest glade. For a paperback cover, the colors are subtle and quiet.

What first attracts the viewer is the knight/dragon juxtaposition; then, Vallejo's incredible detail and skill become evident. Realism, particularly of the "Frazetta School" is very popular at the moment; but, unlike most, Vallejo has toned down the over-dramatization that is so rampant in covers in that style and used his colors (fewer primary colors, more pastels and ochres). This is a very successful cover and quite possibly one of the best of the year. Vallejo should be a Hugo contender next year... and it's about time.

* * 47 * *

George Barr is too humble. I've talked to him many times, corresponded often, and am convinced that he simply doesn't realize how good he is. I've admired his skills for a couple of years now (does it show?) and had the chance to see some of his original work at MidAmeriCon. Incredible. The book covers-as-printed do not do justice to his illustrations... which is not unusual I suppose as reproductions never look as good as the originals. I will have to admit, though, that DAW Books does a pretty good job on their covers and George's cover illustration for *THE BOOK OF FRITZ LEIBER* (edited by Leiber himself) is no exception. A collection of short stories is one of the hardest things in sf/fantasy to illustrate, basically because of the myriad images formed by the different stories; it is almost impossible to put together one single scene symbolic of the entire collection, and few artists have successfully solved this problem.

(Richard Powers was, I suppose, one of the best but even he had to solve the dilemma by making the cover design abstract.)

What George has done is assemble a number of elements from the stories and place them together in a unique still-life. The basic colors are eye-catching reds, golds, and ivory, and the ground is a very dark violet (almost black). Items from (or signifying) the stories include a large humanoid skull, a female felinoid, a spider, chess pieces and a few others. The overall effect is pleasing to the eye, despite the bright colors used; the use of the skull is particularly good from a sales point, as skulls are attention-getters of the first order. The felinoid, despite having no obvious sexual characteristics, is so definitely female that the usual bumps and bulges are not needed; a stroke of genius. The details are carefully delineated, as are the details in Leiber's stories, and the matching of artistic and literary styles is perfect.

There is a new science fiction magazine being published. It premiered at MidAmeriCon and is called *GALILEO*. It is a large format mag (a shade smaller than 8-1/2 x 11) and has not one, but two full-color covers by a relative newcomer to the sf illustration scene, Thomas Barber.

The cover shows Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) standing in a somewhat formal pose, surrounded by the things that he used and their natural heirs. He stands, eternally calm, his hand resting on a book.

Just behind him is the telescope that brought him so much fame and sorrow; in front of him floats a Pioneer satellite (the first man-made object to leave our solar system); above and to the left is a pioneer of the future, a star ship. In the background, on a field of black, a blue and red nebula spreads its ghostly streamers across the light years. It is a very symbolic cover, simple yet powerful, and is typical of the wat Barber works. It is also a good example of what I was talking about at the beginning of these reviews; the mismatching of cover art and interior writing. GALILEO's cover is excellent but, unfortunately, the writing does not match up to that promise. I'm sure it will improve, given time.

(A short note about the interior illustration: with the exception of one illo by John McIntosh and one unsigned (probably by Ron Miller), the art is pretty pathetic. There are very many talented amateurs around who would fall all over themselves for the chance to appear in a pronag like GALILEO so there is really no excuse for the low quality of interior illos. I hope this will change in the future, too.)

Here is another mis-match, this time one in which the writing is much better than the cover. The book is E.C. Tubb's latest in his "Dumerest" series, SPECTRUM OF A FORGOTTEN SUN, from DAW Books. The cover artist is Ray Feibush and (as

near as I can tell) he never bothered to read the book. Now, I could suppose DAW didn't give him the chance to read the book, but they have been so good about letting the artist read the manuscript in the past, that I would be forced to assume that he didn't read it. The cover painting doesn't match anything in the novel. And it's not done very well, either. The illustration is too static, too postured. It shows a man in some sort of suit of armor facing a threatening batch of batlike monsters. In the background beyond the lunar-like landscape hangs a huge planet in a blue and violet sky. This cover looks as if it was meant for another book entirely. The only things that match with the novel are the man (but not the armor) and the spear he is carrying. I've never heard of Ray Feibush and can't remember seeing his style on any other covers. It is possible he may be a "mainstream" artist that DAW used on this cover, but that is, of course, speculation.

(One of the flaws in this business of reviewing art is that there is too little information on the artists that when someone new comes along, you don't necessarily know anything about him. You don't know if he's been doing fan illustrations or is a "mainstream" artist or what.)

One of the biggest esthetic objections I have about this cover is the way that the greens of the man and monsters clash with the reds of the landscape and planet. There is no effort to make the colors work together, no effort at any kind of harmony. This creates a discordance that is offensive to the eye. On a book like Tubb's, where the name of the author sells as well as the cover (or, in this case, better than the cover), this is not as important as it might be if the author was an unknown. But it is important.

Pyramid Books has one of the most erratic standards of cover illustration in the business. They seem to have only excellent covers or rotten ones. The cover for Gordon Ekland and Poul Anderson's INHERITORS OF EARTH is unfortunately one of the latter. Possibly the best thing about it is that the artist is not named anywhere on the book. The cover shows three figures: a nude woman, a nude man and a large (possibly allegorical) head. From the head two blue silly-looking "bolts" are going to the heads of the two figures. These figures are frozen in attitudes of pain and are very awkwardly drawn. Very crude--not that crudity itself is wrong;

but when done crudely without purpose it is. The main colors are russets and ochres with the "bolts" in a pale blue; not particularly appealing colors, nor colors that are good for attracting the eye. In this case the authors' names are the sole selling point of the book; the cover art detracts rather than adds to the saleability of the book.

(I would like, some day, to be able to do a study of sales of books by new authors and see if there really is any correlation with the type or style of cover art. It would be interesting, to say the least, and would either prove or disprove once and for all the contention that cover art does make a difference in sales.)

The last cover is a different case altogether, as it is a first printing hardback from Doubleday. Hardbacks, whether first editions or book club editions, use slightly different rules regarding their cover art. (The book club editions are more like the paperbacks in that they tend to stress color more than first editions.) The first editions, like this one from Doubleday, depend far more on the author's name and literary reviews to sell books.

In my recent correspondence with Sharon Jarvis, Doubleday's science fiction editor, she mentioned that Doubleday uses only two colors and black on their dust-jackets. This is particularly evident on Emanuel Schongut's cover illo for Isidore Haiblum's THE WILK ARE AMONG US. It is, in essence, a black-and-white ink and ink wash drawing that has been tinted lightly with blue and green. It shows a human body (with clouds for a head) falling or diving through blue-tinted clouds with tentacles (tinted green, what else?) coming in from the sides. A competent enough illustration, if somewhat static (the one attempt at action, the diagonal caused by the human figure, is stopped cold by all the horizontal stripes caused by the ink wash). But then, it doesn't need to be spectacular, as the assumption is that you are going to shell out six to ten dollars for a first edition, you are going to buy it because of the author, not the cover illustration. My only objection is that Doubleday seems to be ignoring the potentials of their two-color-and-black in making an attractive package.

For instance, if I were using red, green and black for a painting, I could end up with thousands of subtle shades plus six very distinct colors (red, green, dark olive green,



a burnt amber, brown, and black. Actually, just two colors and black isn't very limiting at all.

While writing an article a few months ago for an English publisher on the history of science fiction illustration, I suddenly realized that there is virtually no information available on sf illustrators! There is plenty on the illustrations that these men and women did, but nothing on the individuals themselves. Try to find out when Peter Poulton was born sometime (just as an example), and you will see what I mean.

So, I have started to gather as much personal information on these marvelous people as I possibly can. I started by assembling a list of nearly 500 names of artists who had done illustrations for sf magazines (I'm going to do the same with paperback books in the very near future) and have sent lists out to about 35 artists and authors (who have written about sf illustration). The replies have been trickling back to me and have been quite satisfying. However, I need more help. If you have any biographical data on an artist, know the addresses of any artists, or can supply me with any other information about science fiction/fantasy artists, please write to me at the address I gave earlier in this column. I would appreciate it immensely.

Gis revido.

((GIBS NOTE: because of technical difficulties it was not possible to reproduce all the covers mentioned in Jon's column.))

LETTER TO DARRELL SCHWEITZER FROM BARRY MALZBERG

3 December, 1976

'Dear Mr. Schweitzer:

'I've been brooding over your remarks anent me in the new issue of SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW ((#19)). They are reprehensible, not because you dislike my work and say so there are people such as John Piere in this world who make you look like a wild-eyed fan - but because you are into the very tricky and unpleasant business of trying to read the motives and feelings of someone who you have never met, have never had dealings with and who has never done you visible injury. I don't know what my published statements, fiction and essays alike, have touched off in your own head but I do know that you have gone beyond fair

comment. I have never done anything to you (or, as far as I know, to anyone in this field) to justify this vicious, personal, and mindless attack.

'To debate with you would obviously be a waste of paper and spleen. I will correct you in only one detail: you accuse me of pegging my own withdrawal from the field to the withdrawals of Silverberg & Ellison in order that some of their gloss as "better writers" may rub off on me. As it turns out and the published record will support this, my decision to get out of science fiction predates theirs by some months. In a letter printed in the July FANTASTIC STORIES (written in 3/74) I discussed my intentions to "phase out of this field as quickly as possible" and my official withdrawal was published as the epilogue to the Pocket Books BEST OF BARRY MALZBERG which was available exactly one year ago and which epilogue was written (look it up) on 7/23/75.

'There were many reasons leading to my feeling that I had to give it up in mid-career, was, in fact, driven to do so. They have been articulated at great length here, there and everywhere. I can only point out that not the least of them is exemplified by your remarks in this new SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW. I admit it for all the world to hear: I cannot ignore this viciousness and mindlessness; I cannot say that it does not hurt me. And after ten years of breaking my heart for this field I cannot take this kind of viciousness any more. There are those who can and I give them credit but I reached the overflow point a couple of years ago.

'I am sending Richard Geis, a conscientious and fair man, a carbon of this letter and he can print it in his magazine if he cares.'

'LETTER FROM DARRELL SCHWEITZER

Dec. 8, 1976

'Barry Malzberg has no doubt sent you a copy of his letter to me concerning my remarks in SFR 19. You and he are both right that divining the motives of another is a messy and undesirable business, but have either of you stopped to wonder why I would type such an outburst? I don't have a long record of fan feuds, and I never started a crusade or founded a Foundation. I am not normally inclined to this sort of behavior. But then I've never felt this way about a writer before. Active detestation is a new thing for me.

'I don't think I'm alone, either. Ron Nance in the December FGFS considers Malzberg to be the most loathed SF writer ever. Why loathed? Why should Malzberg inspire such feelings when nobody ever got worked up over, say, Lionel Fanthorpe?

'Malzberg is the one who brought up the question of his motivations first. I was peacefully ignoring him until "On Ice" was published in AMAZING and one of the older members of the Philadelphia fan group objected to it strongly. For want of a program, the club held a panel discussion on this topic the following month. The unanimous verdict was there was nothing wrong with printing a story with such content, but this one was much too trivial to be bothered with.'

((I'm sure hundreds of readers are curious as hell about what "On Ice" is about. It's a metaphor, I think, in which Barry used a shock intro to grab the reader and lead him down the garden path to an insight into human psychology, how self-indulgent, how it doesn't matter anyway.... The hook was incest. (It's hardly a trivial story in my opinion, and as I recall I mentioned it favorably in THE ALIEN CRITIC at the time...1972, I think.))

'I mentioned this in a LOC published in AMAZING, and some time later I got a letter from Malzberg saying he couldn't see why anybody cared about his fiction, since he only wrote for the money anyway.

'Now cut to the 1973 Lunacon, where I first heard Malzberg speak. He made all sorts of outrageous statements (while on a panel) about how he thought of nothing but the money when he wrote and it was all junk anyway. He seemed to radiate contempt for his field and his readership. Someone from the audience asked him outright, "Do you consider yourself a hack, then?" and all he could do was evade the answer.'

'At this time I suspected Barry was putting us on, perhaps setting himself up as a caricature of the "new wave" science fiction writer in the same way Vonnegut uses Kilgore Trout to parody space opera writers. (If anything he killed the "new wave" by being the first hackwriter to specialize in something which formerly had claims to artistic integrity, or at least pretended to. So his whole career is in a way a scathing commentary on the field.) But as more and more palid and mechanical stories appeared, all without the slightest trace of life in them, all written in an Obituary-page competent style, I began to wonder. The true mark of the hack writer is

that his stories lack conviction and are nothing but tricks. They have no insides. They're what the Clarion people call "creative typing" rather than real writing. Quite literally nothing to them. And Malzberg continued to repeat himself, rehashing and rehashing. Stories like number paintings. And more blatant admissions of his cynicism and contempt for the field. A story in FANTASTIC Sept. 1973 called "Hanging", about hack-writing. Like HERO-VIT'S WORLD it reeked with self-pity and artistic martyr complex. Once Malzberg refused me an interview (politely) and said I should read HERO-VIT'S WORLD and learn all about him. How serious was he?

'Of course it's dangerous to read an author into a piece of fiction, but as Malzberg made more and more public statements I began to realize he wasn't kidding and I started taking him on face value, as a hack writer of the lowest grade. He convinced me.

'In the light of this his literary pretensions are ludicrous, and his alleged love for the field and warnings of doom ("We're losing our field" he said at Lunacon 1976, which I translate as "Nobody wants Barry Malzberg") become insulting. As a reader and writer I take offense. I've never taken offense at any writer before.'

(Ah, Darrell... You agree that divining the motives of others is unfair, and then you turn around and do it again and again and again in order to prove and buttress your case and justify your previous use of that device.

((Barry, I suspect, was being mocking and ironic when he said he wrote sf only "for the money", given the word-rates of the sf magazines, and the usual advances for sf novels.

((He is hardly a hack. His books and stories have content, even if it is downer/nihilistic, and even though he might be termed a "Johnny one-note" writer. Constant use of one theme and one style is not the mark of a hack. A hack is not emotionally involved/obsessed with his perceptions of the world and with transmitting them to the world in his fiction. A hack is willing to write anything for anybody in any style, with any message inserted.

((That mindreading cheapshot of yours... your translation... in your last paragraph does you great harm.

((You overlook one great, imposing fact about Barry's work. A great many editors have read and liked his work, for many years. They obviously saw something in his stories and novels that you---and I---don't see.

((I don't know if it is a felony or not to have contempt (or "contempt") for the field (but not the genre), or to have written a lot using the same theme. We all may be guilty of that crime given enough time.

((Now on to the balance of your letter, involving other subjects.))

'You really must do something about your typesetter, proofreader, or whatever position is clearly held by a chimpanzee. This new SFR definitely has the look of being "untouched by human hands" or at least unscanned by literate eyes. It's typographically the worst yet, just riddled with embarrassing gaffes, like the inversion of two numbers in my letter this time, changing 1967 to 1976, giving the reader a glimpse at the vast depth of my experience in this field... Of course I was talking about the NEW WORLDS circa issues 173-85, when it was a slick paper magazine.'

(9My apologies for hat, Darrell. I have taken great pains to make sure this issue is error-free of the horrible typos which marred the last issue.)JM

'Damon Knight is completely correct in his letter pointing out that the information I claimed wasn't conveyed until four pages into the story was really there on the second page. The passage he quotes is the one which gave me the start. It is my own sloppiness that I didn't actually go back and check exactly where this occurred. As it turns out I remembered wrongly, exaggerating perhaps because I have a prejudice against stories which give you one mental image of the characters, then suddenly yank that away and produce another.

'(The ultimate in this being the stories in which the evil aliens mess up the lives of the good guys, and then the ultimate shocking revelation is that the invaders are from Earth.)

'But still the point holds that an alien being which is indistinguishable from a human child aside from a few extra limbs, heads, etc. is hardly good science fiction.

'As for the McEvoy story, I didn't find this the slightest bit funny. This is often the problem when burlesquing very bad types of fiction. It's hard to tell the parodies from the real thing. I had a Cthulhu Mythos parody bounced from AMAZING recently by an editorial assistant who didn't seem to be aware it wasn't written in utter seriousness. (Even though it had a

NECROMONICON-producing machine set up by a domestic animal belonging to the Old Ones, making this a Shag-gai dog story.)

((Blasphemy! Mockery! Yug Ug-gle Slughot will slither into your room and Get You For That!))

SMALL PRESS NOTES

Doug Fratz's fanzine THRUST has seen another issue (#7), and contains an excellent interview with Harlan Ellison. It is fascinating reading for the Ellison life-style, work-mania, integrity, knowledge and opinions revealed.

For instance, in response to a question about television content, Harlan responded:

'Well, there are always exceptions. I'm no apologist for television. But I think you expect a nobility from television that you don't expect from books, or magazines, or records, or movies, or the dance, or the theatre, or anything else.

'I can turn on the TV any night of the week in Los Angeles--- I don't know what you guys get here, I can't vouch for here--- any night of the week in Los Angeles, there will be an hour or two of things that I want to see and am willing to spend time seeing. And Jesus Christ, who the fuck wants to spend more than two hours any goddam night watching television to begin with? You go to a movie, it's two hours. You go to a ballgame, it's three hours. You go to a play, it's two hours, three hours. That's it.

'You must not expect that everything that's going to be on is going to be right for you. A lot of that stuff is intended for the red-neck who comes home with a can of beer, and sits there and scratches his belly and says "do it to me". He's had a hard fucking day, and... listen, I've got to tell you something.

'I work out of my own house. I have my office in my house. I get up at six o'clock in the morning, okay, which is nine o'clock here. I go right in, put on the coffee, and go right to work. By seven, which is ten o'clock New York time, the phone calls start coming in with problems from New York. Because that's where all the publishers are. From seven o'clock in the morning until five o'clock at night (and usually six or seven, because at the studios they stay on late, they stay till six or seven), it doesn't stop for me.

I'm lucky if I can grab lunch; I'm very lucky indeed if I can get dressed for the day. I sit there in a bathrobe or bare-assed naked, with a towel wrapped around me so I won't offend my secretary. And when five o'clock comes, and it slacks off, I start sliding downhill, and I get finished maybe six or six-thirty. I put in a pretty goddamn good day, maybe twelve, thirteen, fourteen hours. Because I'm my own boss, I have to work harder, beating all the deadlines. My secretaries go home, I go up to my bed and I lie down, and I turn on the TV... and I'll tell you something, baby, all I want to watch is a rerun of fucking "Gilligan's Island." You know exactly what I mean. It's a necessary panacea.

'So, all those things have therapeutic value. Granted, they should program more broadly, they should program more intelligently. But just this last season, I saw Katherine Hepburn in "The Glass Menagerie." I saw Hal Holbrook in "The Pueblo Incident." I saw Peter Falk in half a dozen "Columbo"s that were fun. I watched M*A*S*H, I--- well I get pretty tired of "All In The Family" pretty quick, but it still has some funny stuff in it. "Mary Tyler Moore" I watch religiously. I've watched any number of made-for-TV movies, some of which I thought were superb, really superb...'

This issue of THRUST also contains a narrative-of-reaction-to an Ellison visit to a convention, by David F. Bischoff, which is a further insight into the incredible human being that is Ellison up and Ellison down.

THRUST #7 is only 75¢, from Doug Fratz, 2008 Erie St, #2, Adelphi, MD 20783.

The time is late---12-31-76--- and the space is a-dwindling. An astonishing number of people believe that a lot of other people are interested in writings about science fiction, instead of the fiction itself. Time will tell.

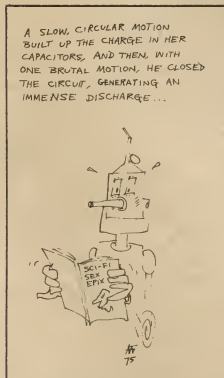
A listing of recent efforts in the academic wonderland of sci-fi analysis and appreciation includes:

● **EXPERIMENT PERILOUS**—Three Essays On Science Fiction. By Marion Zimmer Bradley, Norman Spinrad and Alfred Bester. Published by Algor Press, POB 4175, New York, NY 10017. Cost: \$2.50. Professionally printed booklet format, 36 pages including covers. Overpriced but interesting.

● **SCIENCE FICTION STUDIES #10**. Heavy academia critique. For specialists. Published by Science Fiction Studies, English Dept., Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN 47809. \$3.00, or 3 issues for \$6. 104 pages, including covers, professionally printed in booklet format.

● **THE FARTHEST SHORES OF URSULA K. LE GUIN**, by George Edgar Slusser. More analysis of the academics' darling. The Borgo Press, POB 7589, Van Nuys, CA 91409. \$1.95. Booklet, 68 pages, incl. covers, professionally printed. Small type, wide margins.

● **SF VOICES**, interviewed by Darrell Schweitzer. 14 well-known



sf professionals give voice to questions posed. Interesting if taken in small doses. Some of these have appeared in SFR, ALGOL, THE DRUMMER, AMAZING, others. Five appear here for the first time. Published by T-K Graphics, POB 1951, Baltimore, MD 21203. Cost: \$4.95. 128 pages in booklet format, professionally printed. Small type.

● **ESSAYS LOVECRAFTIAN**, edited by Darrell Schweitzer. Reprinted articles, mainly from NYCTALOPS, by well-known fantasy-horror authors and aficionados. Cost: \$3.95. Professionally printed, booklet format, 124 pages. Small type. Good quality amateur illustrations by Richard Abate. T-K Graphics, address as above.

● **CTHULHU CALLS**, edited by Terry L. Shorb. A quarterly review devoted to horror, science fiction & fantasy literature. With some bad amateur fiction and an amateur comic strip (sf) titled Zora. Published in booklet format, professionally printed, by Northwest Community College, Powell, WY 82435. 72 pages, \$1. per issue.

● **TO QUEBEC AND THE STARS** by H. P. Lovecraft. Obscure non-fiction by H.P.L., edited by L. Sprague de Camp. For completists, and for those who must read anything H.P.L. ever wrote. His thoughts on Science, Literature and Esthetics, Philosophy, and Travel, Description and Historical writings. Cost: \$15.00. Well-made hardcover, 318 pages, published by Donald M. Grant, West Kingston, RI 02892.

● **THE LAST CELT**, A Bio-Bibliography of Robert Ervin Howard, compiled by Glenn Lord. Probably the Complete source book on Howard. Published in superior hardback (as usual) by Donald M. Grant (address above). Cost: \$20. 416 pages.

● There is a HOWARD REVIEW, and the ROBERT E. HOWARD NEWSLETTER, both published by Dennis McHaney, 3400 S. Perkins, Memphis, TN 38118. These may be moribund. Write him for info.

McHaney also has published in booklet form, professionally printed, a story by Howard with lovely illustrations by Stephen Fabian, on heavy paper. The story is "Two Against Tyre" and the booklet has no price listed.

● **ONNIUNGATHUM** is the latest Jonathan Bacon publication received. It is An Anthology of Verse by Top Authors in the Field of Fantasy. In the 8-1/2 x 11 professionally printed saddle stitched, heavy slick paper format. Limited 1000 copy edition. \$5.00, 70 pages. Well worth the money if fantasy poetry is your bag. The verse is by everyone from Poul Anderson to Roger Zelazny. Many fine illustrations.

● **OTHER PLACES, OTHER TIMES** is a Strange (sf, fantasy, weird) coloring book (8-1/2 x 11), 26 suitable drawings by Randy Bathurst. Cost: \$2.50 + 25¢ for mail orders. Published by Outworlds Productions, Inc., POB 2521, North Canton, OH 44720. Professionally printed, heavy white paper.

● Pendragon Press is doing a nice little business in publishing small runs of original short stories by famous authors, of late. They use the quality chapbook or booklet format, heavy paper, professional typesetting. The three latest are: "Funnyfingers & Cabrillo" by R. A.

Lafferty;

"Horns on Their Heads" by R. A. Lafferty; and

"The Water is Wise" by Ursula K. Le Guin. Each costs \$3.00 per copy. The address is Box 14834, Portland, OR 97214.

• Another book about science fiction is *SF IN DIMENSION--A Book Of Exploration*. Twenty essays by Alexei and Cory Panshin. One of these, "Reading Heinlein Subjectively" was published in *THE ALIEN CRITIC* #9. Caused quite a stir. This book is a quality hardback, 342 pages including index, and costs \$10. Published by Advent:Publishers, Inc., P.O. Box A3228, Chicago, IL 60690.

• A gorgeous art book was sent for review, and it is a pleasure to say that *UPON THE WINDS OF YESTERDAY And Other Explorations--The Paintings of George Barr*, is absolutely exquisite! This man is superb, and Donald M. Grant has given him a perfect display in this large hardcover book of 140 heavy gloss stock pages with about fifty reproductions of George's paintings and drawings, almost all in full color. This edition is limited to 2500 copies, and costs \$20. Believe me, it is worth it. Get one while they last. There is a Foreword by Tim Kirk, an Introduction by Stuart David Schiff, and an Afterword by George Barr. Send to Donald M. Grant, West Kingston, RI 02892.

• *NEW VENTURE* #5 is a Special Art Issue, and it is a strong effort by editors Jon Gustafson (columnist for SFR) and Steve Fahnestalk. They have a full color Kelly Freas cover, and mini-portfolios of art from 24 of the top pro and fan artists in science fiction and fantasy. Each portfolio has a page of autobiographical or biographical info. This is of course professionally printed and has the attractive circular plastic binding that permits easy paging and flat opening. This is obviously a labor of love; the cost is only \$2. per copy. You can also subscribe to *NEW VENTURE* if you like. The magazine is a good genuine of sf, with a strong art presence. Four issues for \$4. Send checks and M. O.'s to *NEW VENTURE*, N.W. 440 Windus St., Pullman, WA 99163.

• Howard DeVore sent two valuable booklet books he has published: *SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY PSEUDONYMS*, and *A HISTORY OF THE HUQO, NEBULA AND INTERNATIONAL FANTASY AWARDS*. The pseudonyms listings were compiled by Barry McGhan and are almost complete. Still a secret are the authors who wrote the Cap Kennedy books for DAW, and the man behind Alan Burt Akers.

The history of the awards is

updated to include the 1975 voting. It is by Donald Franson and Howard DeVore.

PSEUDONYMS costs \$1.50.

AWARDS costs \$2.00

Both are must-haves for reference. Send the money to Howard DeVore, 4705 Weddel St., Dearborn, MI 48125.

• I am not into space games, but I can dig the appeal and the fun. *Metagaming Concepts* sent one of their recent games: *STELLAR CONQUEST*, (\$9.00) and a volume of *MONSTERS! MONSTERS!* which is a new game-style involving role-playing by the participants (which gives the monsters equal time). Intriguing idea. *MONSTERS! MONSTERS!* costs \$7.

Metagames also sent a copy of their latest *THE SPACE GAMER*, an off-set magazine, bi-monthly, costing \$1., six for \$5.

Write *Metagaming Concepts*, Box 15346, Austin, TX 78761.

• *AMAZING FORRIES*, dated October 2026, available for \$2.50, is the astonishing celebration of Forrest J. Ackerman's life in sf/fantasy/horror fandom and prodrom. An obsessive/compulsive collector, Forry's house in Beverly Hills filled up totally with books, mags, art, memorabilia, artifacts...until he was forced to move and make his house a museum/library.

AMAZING FORRIES, with a "Frank R. Paul" full-color cover, is a slick, typeset production, full of photos of Forry with famous and fans and friends. It is his life story. He is 60 years old now, and still going strong. Never bashful or modest, Forry is a sci-fi phenomenon. You can have a copy for \$2.50 from *Metropolis Publications*, 2494 Glendower Av., Hollywood, CA 90027.

• *NIGHTSHADE--A Fanzine About Fantasy*, \$1.50, is valuable for its third issue which contains a biography of long-time fantasy/horror writer Manly Wade Wellman, an interview with him, and a bibliography of his works...all by Karl Edward Wagner. Make checks payable to publisher Ken Amos, 7005 Bedford Lane, Louisville, KY 40222.

• Darrell Schweitzer is the U.S. agent for the Australian prozine *VOID*. #2-3-4 are available at \$1.45 per copy or all three for \$4.50.

VOID is published in the booklet format, typeset, and has a subtle out-of-date, provincial aura about it. The fiction, with the exception of stories by A. Bertram Chandler, is bad to not-too-bad. You get what you pay for, and editor Paul Collins doesn't pay much.

If you're curious, Darrell's address is: 113 Deepdale Rd., Stratford, PA 19087.

• You have to understand that *THE DIVERSIFIER* is a vehicle for amateurish sf/fantasy. I read opening lines and paragraphs, and I wince. But it is a place for beginners, and some of the stories do have some good ideas and narrative punch.

Printed, booklet format, \$1.25, from *THE DIVERSIFIER*, P.O. Box 1836, Oroville, CA 95965.

• *Alternate World Recordings*, Inc. sent along two of their records for review. They are:

GONNA ROLL THE BONES (AWR 3239) by Fritz Leiber, read by Fritz Leiber. Also, on the second side is his *Fafhrd and Gray Mouser* story, "In the Witch's Tent." Fritz has a clear, well-modulated voice, but he seems to lack a flair for using his voice as a melodramatic narrative instrument.

FROM THE HELLS BENEATH THE HELLS (AWR 4810) presents Ugo Toppo's rich, whispering, roaring, intense baritone in readings of Robert E. Howard's poems, "The Song of a Mad Minstrel" and "Altars and Jesters--An Opium Dream", plus two short stories, "The Curse of the Golden Skull" and "The Mirrors of Tuzun Thune." Toppo is a skilled professional and his style is ideally suited to Howard's slightly purple prose.

Of some interest is the fact that these are limited editions. The Howard record is limited to 1050 copies. As such, these long-play 12" discs will one day be valuable.

Other AWR records are by Robert Bloch and Harlan Ellison. Send for their catalog. *Alternate World Recordings*, Inc., 148 East 74th St., New York, NY 10021.

• *ANDURIL* #6, a handsome, professionally printed and well-edited magazine of fantasy, has an article by Fritz Leiber, "Lankmar & Lands Around", which details the genesis and writing/publishing history of the *Fafhrd and Gray Mouser* series. It makes the issue of permanent interest. Cost: \$1.50. Make all checks and money orders payable to John Martin, 101 Eskdale, Tanhouse 5, Skelmersdale, Lancs., WN8 6EB, UNITED KINGDOM.

• *THE YEAR OF THE SEX OLYMPICS* is a collection of television plays written by Nigel Kneale, in England. Included are the title play, "The Road" and "The Stone Tape."

The book is clothbound at \$9.00, and a signed copy, bound in buckram, will cost you \$14.00. Again, a small-press item, of limited edition, and worthy of investor/reader attention.

Available from Richard Witter, F & SF BOOK CO., POB 415, Staten Island, NY 10302. Or from the publisher, *FERRET FANTASY LTD.*

Edge Press has sent a copy of **TRANSPARENCIES** by David McLain. It is a large, perfect-bound softcover paperback, of high quality and four-color cover of no moment.

It is in two sections, one of poetry---good poetry---and the other is (as the covering letter describes) 'a series of interrelated Sci-Fi/Fantasy short stories sharing common characters and a common theme.'

I think McLain too willing to make a common 'Sci-Fi' mistake---he describes future history, culture, background in the beginning of his story, like a painter preparing a canvas, and then secure, builds his characters. He takes his time. He trusts the reader to bear with him. I'm untrustworthy.

A copy costs \$5.50 by mail from Edge Press, 2219 Rosewood, Waco, TX 76710. The hardcover edition costs \$10.

It took five years to produce, but the New England S-F Assoc. has brought forth **THE NOREASCON PROCEEDINGS**, the written record of the 29th World Science Fiction Convention held in Boston, in 1971.

It contains the complete text of all the main program events, including the Hugo Awards Banquet. It has many large, clear photos of s-f writers, fans, and Isaac Asimov. It is hardbound, 8-1/2 x 11, 192 pages, and costs \$12. To get a copy you send your check to the New England Science Fiction Association, Box G, MIT Branch P.O., Cambridge, MA 02139.

ART & STORY#2, devoted to what is now termed 'graphic fiction' (elegantly known as comic strip art and scripting) is a bit high-priced at \$2.00 per copy, but if you want photos, heavy book paper, stiff covers and typeset text...you gotta lay out the dough. No, no, let me amend my description of the mag; it has re-print fiction by C. S. Lewis and pays attention to children's written fantasy, too. Err, fantasy written for children. I am tempted to say the magazine is too wide-focused for any hope of success.

James D. Denney manages and edits **ART & STORY**. He printed 3000 copies of #2. Wow. He lives at 32692 Black Mountain Road, Tollhouse, CA 93667.



"Okay, Alter, up and at 'em! Drop your cock and grab your socks. Time to get to work!"

"GRRRRROOOAAAANNNNNNN" "Geis, for the love of Ghod..."

"Oh, what's the matter? Too much cold duck last night? I warned you about that bubbly stuff."

"You encouraged me! You knew all along that stuff would make my section of the brain swell up. Gin and vodka and too much of that awful homebrew wine of yours gives you a hangover, but only cold duck does it to me!"

"Awww... I feel for you, Alter, but I can't reach you. Come on, come on, pry those tendrils up, open your eyes, awaken your one hundred and five brain cells. You have reviewing to do."

"I have vomiting to do. Out of my way---"

((Horrible retching sounds from the bathroom.))

LATER: Alter-Ego sits, grumbling, at the IBM. Geis pours him another cup of steaming black coffee.

"Now, Alter, I have stacked the books we've read beside you. Begin."

"Four books? Is that all we've accomplished in three months? After all those promises?"

"Well, you see---"

"If you wouldn't read all those WALL STREET JOURNALS, and BUSINESS WEEK and all that other economics crap, Geis, we could get some sf read for a change."

"Stop arguing and review! We don't have room to argue."

"WHAT? Two thirds of a page? The readers will have your scalp for this! I demand---"

"ALTER, REVIEW, NOW, OR DIE!"

"Oh, well, if you put it that way... I have come to enjoy more and more Michael Moorcock's Elric series. He has studied the sword & sorcery form and mastered it. This book, **ELRIC OF MELNIBONE**, tells of the time before Elric was called Womanslayer, before the final collapse of the Old City of Melnibone, when he was newly king, sustained by drugs, challenged by an ambitious cousin."

"I like Moorcock's imagination and inventiveness. The ship that sailed over land and sea is fascinating, and the realism of the earth god and the sea god..."

"I smiled at the note on the copyright page: 'A version of this novel, re-edited without the author's permission, was published under the title **THE DREAMING CITY** by Lancer Books in 1972. The choice of title was also not the author's. This text follows that of the British edition published in 1972 by Hutchinson & Co. Ltd.'"

"Let me say, Alter, that **ELRIC OF MELNIBONE** is DAW UY1259, \$1.25. Now we can talk about---"

"Phil Dick's **A SCANNER DARKLY**, issued by Doubleday at \$6.95, made more interesting because of what Phil had to say about the book in the SFR #19 interview. It's a well-written novel about drug addiction and the dealer/user/narc underground."

"And, it isn't science fiction, in a true sense; it's a translation. The 1986 time-frame, the Substance D drug, the advanced spy devices employed...these are not essential to the plot."

"But it is a terrifying novel, Geis, in the subtle destructiveness of the drugs, in the self-destruction, and the horrible end-justifies-the-means plot of the Federal narcs."

"Better believe it. Phil Dick was a 'hero' of sorts to the sf fans who were into drugs, but this book will cool that ardor; he has seen too many friends turn into mental basket cases, and this book is his warning. It has elements of Kafka and Orwell. Recommended."

"Agreed."

"Another publishing event is Fritz Leiber's new novel from Berkeley/Putnam (\$7.95), **OUR LADY OF DARKNESS**."

"Yeah, I really like this one. Fritz obviously is using his own apartment in San Francisco, the

building he lives in, the city, as a "real life" locale for this tale of occult horror. He does in fact seem to use his own life as background and his own personality as Franz Westen, writer of fantasy and horror fiction. He incorporates Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith and others in weaving his terror into reality."

"At the same time, Alter, this is a book bound to appeal more to writers and bibliophiles than to the "average" reader" it is rich in book lore and a nostalgia of the 20's and thirties...even back to the turn of the century."

"Yes, but this novel will endure. It will survive. It has a moment of climactic horror that rivets the reader to the page. I say, well done. Fritz."

"Yes, yes, and look what has happened here--we're into page 54. It can't be helped now, I suppose. Alright, Alter, dispose of the last book and you can go back to bed."

"I despise you, Geis! Do you know that? Loathe you! Everything is always my fault! Well, one of--"

"These days", yes, I've heard that before. Go on, damn it, say your say about THE SIEGE OF WONDER by Mark S. Geston, and be done with it."

"I have no foul words for it. I enjoyed its strangeness, it's detailed concept of a total war between the worlds of magic and science, between spells and machines, between art and formula. I enjoyed the struggle of Aden, the secret agent of the Special Office as he penetrates the lands of Magic to plant a spy-eye-transmitter in the eye-socket of a fabulous magic unicorn, the key weapon of the great magicians against the terrible forces of logic and rational civilization."

"Life under the Magicians wasn't so great, though, for the common man. They kept a cruel, feudal life in stasis; they were selfish, immortal, decadent."

"And the cold, callous, "inhuman" values of the science-dominated side weren't much better, if any. Those masters were as vindictive and powerful as the Magicians."

"An intriguing book, Alter. A slight change of direction from Geston's previous tributes to entropy and despair, LORDS OF THE STARSHIP, OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE DRAGON, and THE DAY STAR."

"You said it. Can I go to my bed of pain now? I need another half-dozen aspirin."

"Go, suffer, repent. I'll see you three months from now."

"I'll see you in hell."

LETTER FROM BILL GIBSON

November 18, 1976

"To paraphrase George Frankl--When pornographers claim to be in the vanguard of sexual liberation and happiness, it's rather like a brothel madam claiming to be devoted to sexual freedom, when in fact her livelihood depends on the frustration of her customers in a sex-needing society."

(No, there are always a few, a small percentage, of people who will want/need/enjoy sex fiction, sex movies, sex drawings, no matter how free society is. There are always going to be certain personality and character structures formed by genetic + parent combinations which will need porno. And there will always be a need for sex-for-hire for a certain percentage of people in certain circumstances. The advocacy of sexual freedom by the bordello boss is actually a desire for freedom from prosecution, and the respectability of legitimacy.)

"As you say, porn serves an educational function in our society, but you must ask yourself exactly what that education consists of, and why it is necessary in the first place. As Reich put it, "suppression of the natural sex life of children and adolescents serves the function of structuring people to uphold and reproduce a mechanistic authoritarian (and oppressive) civilization." Without that suppression, would we need Beeline Books to teach us basic sexual anatomy? Like most of us, you mistake porn's current availability for sexual freedom."

(Again, no, I don't mistake porn's availability for sexual freedom. The authorities are, however, fighting a lost cause; there is an astonishing amount of sexual activity by children and adolescents now as compared to when I was in grammar and high school. Almost literally, no one but men over thirty go to porn movies. The kids are Doing It. And the Old Ones are living in a fantasy world.)

(I don't agree that sexual frustration leads to or supports authoritarian societies. The urge to power over others is a separate and distinct drive and I think exists with or without sexual frustration in an individual and in a society.)



MONOLOG CONTINUED TO THE BITTER END

Let me go into my trance and commune with all the letters of comment about SFR 19.

Yes...um-hmm...if you say so. The readers were overwhelming in their endorsement of the diary format, which is why I'm going whole-hog with it next issue.

They liked the Phil Dick interview for its honesty and revelations and for Dan DiPrez' skill. It was a very real interview.

Also approved was the Kelly Freas interview, with continuing support for art/cover comments in SFR.

Alter-Ego remains popular, and there is a lot of sympathy for his plight. The readers don't have to live with him.

The reaction to Darrell Schweitzer's reviews is printed in this issue, mostly.

A couple of people don't like Lynn Holdom's reviews.

Small Press Notes is of value and interest, it was judged.

The other items received some comment (notably to the Robbins items).

The cover and cartoons were well liked, as usual. Some well-known pros especially paid tribute to Alexie Gilliland's sense of humor.

About a dozen readers sent names and addresses of bookstores they felt might be interested in selling SFR. I thank them all now. The results are not all in, of course, but a few of those stores have decided to try peddling this estimable magazine. Some of the regular outlets have increased their orders. SFR grows on people.

NOW FOR THE TASK of short-quoting, summarizing, and doing violence to letters and notices.

© ZIGA LESKOVSEK of Yugoslavia is angry that Fred Pohl and others have spread the impression that politically and socially 'sensitive' sf is not welcome or permitted in Yugoslavia. Not so, he says. They know about and read LeGuin, Niven, Norton, Herbert, and even Heinlein.

① I wish to thank all those who expressed regrets and support concerning my father's death. It all helped.

② Donn Vicha sends word that Stephen King, author of SALEM'S LOT is an excellent writer; he recommends the book.

③ Yes, there was reaction to my Gro-Lites experiment; one reader (thank you--I've misplaced your letter, alas) listed heights/light power equivalents, and showed that the Gro-Lites are okay for starting plants, but are inherently too weak to bring a vegetable plant to full growth. They'll keep certain house plants alive, tho.

④ RONALD R. LAMBERT suggested I buy a tabletop offset press and save money by printing SFR myself. Hoo and haw. It involves buying a folder, big collators, trimming, and one million hours of work. Besides a great deal of nervous tension I can do without. No, not for a 5000 print run. The economies of newspaper offset the labor costs; there is actually no advantage in doing it myself, at that size run. But thank you for the interest and concern.

⑤ Ah, yes, a much delayed apology to C.C. CLINGAN for screwing up in the following notice that appeared in SFR 18. It was C.C. who wrote the story.

A.B. Clingan, writer and publisher of THE DIVERSIFIER (semi-pro sf fictionzine) writes that in 1972 he wrote a short story titled "High Bank" which was subsequently sold to Scott Edelman's anthology, FUTURE PASTIMES. The anthology was delayed and should be issued about now. Clingan's worry is that his story will be thought derivative of ROLLERBALL, and he wants it clear that his story predates the original ESQUIRE story and the movie.

⑥ THE YEAR'S SCHOLARSHIP IN SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY will appear in the magazine EXTRAPOLATION. Rog-

er Schlobin and Marshall Tymn are the editors. Roger reports that the 1974 listing has over 200 entries. Llord knows how many will be in the 1975 and 1976 lists. Sfr and f may be an academic growth industry. Buy stock in your favorite sf professor.

⑦ I had a #4 Chinese dinner, and received this is my cookie: EVERY GREAT ADVANCE IN NATURAL KNOWLEDGE HAS INVOLVED THE ABSOLUTE REJECTION OF AUTHORITY. Of course it doesn't follow that every absolute rejection of authority results in a great advance in natural knowledge. These thoughts courtesy of WONG'S.

⑧ WARD DEAN seeks info on THE SPACE PATROL by fans of same. His address is 1129 McClellan Way, Stockton, CA 95207

⑨ HARLAN ELLISON will be a contributing editor of the new sf zine, UNEARTH. He will do a column on writing. UNEARTH, Suite 190, 102 Charles St., Boston, MA 02114. (Quarterly, \$3.50 per year.)

⑩ The editors of ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE sent a card asking for submissions. As a monthly they need to build up their inventory. Need cheerful, colorful stories to balance the good but down-beat mss. they've been getting. Short-shorts and limericks are always welcome. They pay good.

⑪ DIANE W. WHITE advises: 'I picked up a copy of TAC #11 at Mid-AmericaCon. The Avram Davidson interview tickled me, especially the part about the Guggenheim. I have it on good authority (Mike Royko, CHICAGO DAILY NEWS) that there is a funny tale to be told about the Guggenheim. To wit: A number of years ago Nelson Algren applied for the Guggenheim by submitting a novel in progress. He didn't get the award, so he went off to Mexico to finish the work that became THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN ARM. Here's the kicker: that year's winner of the

Guggenheim was (I kid you not) E. Howard Hunt!!!'

Obviously, this means that the Guggenheim awards are a CIA front. (Joke!)

⑫ FREFF reports that ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE is going fully illustrated with the second issue, instead of just depending on spot illos that have nothing to do with the stories.

⑬ An advertising letter from ASIMOV'S SF MAG says the first issue will have a print run of 125,000 copies, will be 192 pages, and will have 'Special Still 4/Col-or Stock.' Isaac's picture is on the cover. Cover price is \$1.

⑭ The cover this issue is one of the plates from Steve Fabian's second portfolio of FANTASTIC NUD-ES. These are limited editions (750 copies, this time) and are available from Gerry de la Ree, 7 Cedarwood Lane, Saddle River, NJ 07458. \$8.00 per set of 10 plates.

⑮ The Fabian illo on page 22 appeared originally in Bill G. Wilson's THE COLLECTOR.

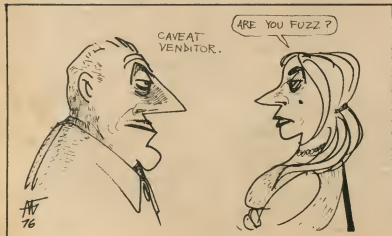
⑯ A reader bought a copy of the reprinted ALIEN CRITIC #9 and discovered a paging error on my part; the page numbers jump from page 41 to page 46. I had to eliminate "The Archives" in that edition to fit the 48 page format, and goofed on the layout numbering. Sorry, all. No vital text is missing.

⑰ NEXT ISSUE will feature a long, informative, nostalgia-filled interview with Edmond Hamilton and Leigh Brackett, as well (I hope) as the interview with Tim Kirk. Barry Malzberg will be checking in with the first of a limited number of columns on science fiction, and Darrell will be on hand, and I'm sure there will be a few surprises. My Diary will no doubt fill an astonishing number of pages.

⑱ I just had word (from a writer) that Roger Elwood's LASER BOOKS line has been cancelled by the publisher. If true, I hope to have details in the next issue.

⑲ The post office is talking about a 16¢ first class rate, probably asked for late this spring.

⑳ Local Portland supermarkets are cutting out sf magazines, because of lack of sales. Only ANALOG is carried. ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF MAGAZINE (that has got to be shortened to IAM or IASFM) is available only in city-center smokesops. This from the leading magazine distributor in Portland. Cyanide, everyone?



BACK ISSUES

THE ALIEN CRITIC SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

No other numbers are available
ONE DOLLAR PER COPY

EACH ISSUE CONTAINS MANY REVIEWS.
EACH ISSUE CONTAINS LETTERS FROM
WELL-KNOWN SF & FANTASY WRITERS,
EDITORS, PUBLISHERS AND FANS.

THE FOLLOWING LISTINGS ARE OF
FEATURED CONTRIBUTIONS

THE ALIEN CRITIC #5 Interview
with Fritz Leiber; "The Literary
Dreamers" by James Blish; "Irvin
Binkin Meets H. P. Lovecraft" by
Jack Chalker.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #6 Interview
with R. A. Lafferty; "The Trench-
ant Bludgeon" by Ted White;
"Translations From the Editorial" by
Marion Z. Bradley.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #7 "The Shape
of Science Fiction to Come" by Freder-
ik Pohl; "Noise Level" by John
Brunner; "Up Against the Wall, Rog-
er Zelazny", an interview.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #8 "Tomorrow's
Libido: "Sex and Science Fiction" by
Richard Delap; "The Trenchant Blud-
geon" by Ted White; "Banquet Speech"
by Robert Bloch; "Noise Level" by
John Brunner.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #9 "Reading
Heinlein Subjectively" by Alexei and
Cory Panshin; "Written To a Pulp!"
by Sam Merwin, Jr.; "Noise Level"
by John Brunner; "The Shaver Papers"
by Richard S. Shaver.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #10 An Inter-
view With Stanislaw Lem; "A Nest of
Strange and Wonderful Birds" by Sam
Merwin, Jr.; Robert Bloch's Guest
of Honor Speech; The Heinlein Re-
action.

THE ALIEN CRITIC #11 An Inter-
view With Avram Davidson; "The
Foundation on Sands" by John J. Al-
derson; "Footnotes to Fan History"
by Larry Shaw.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #12
"Smoke and Glass"---a non-fiction
fantasy about Harlan Ellison by
Richard Delap; "You Can't Say
THAT!" by Richard Lupoff; "Confes-
sions of a Wage Slave" by David
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