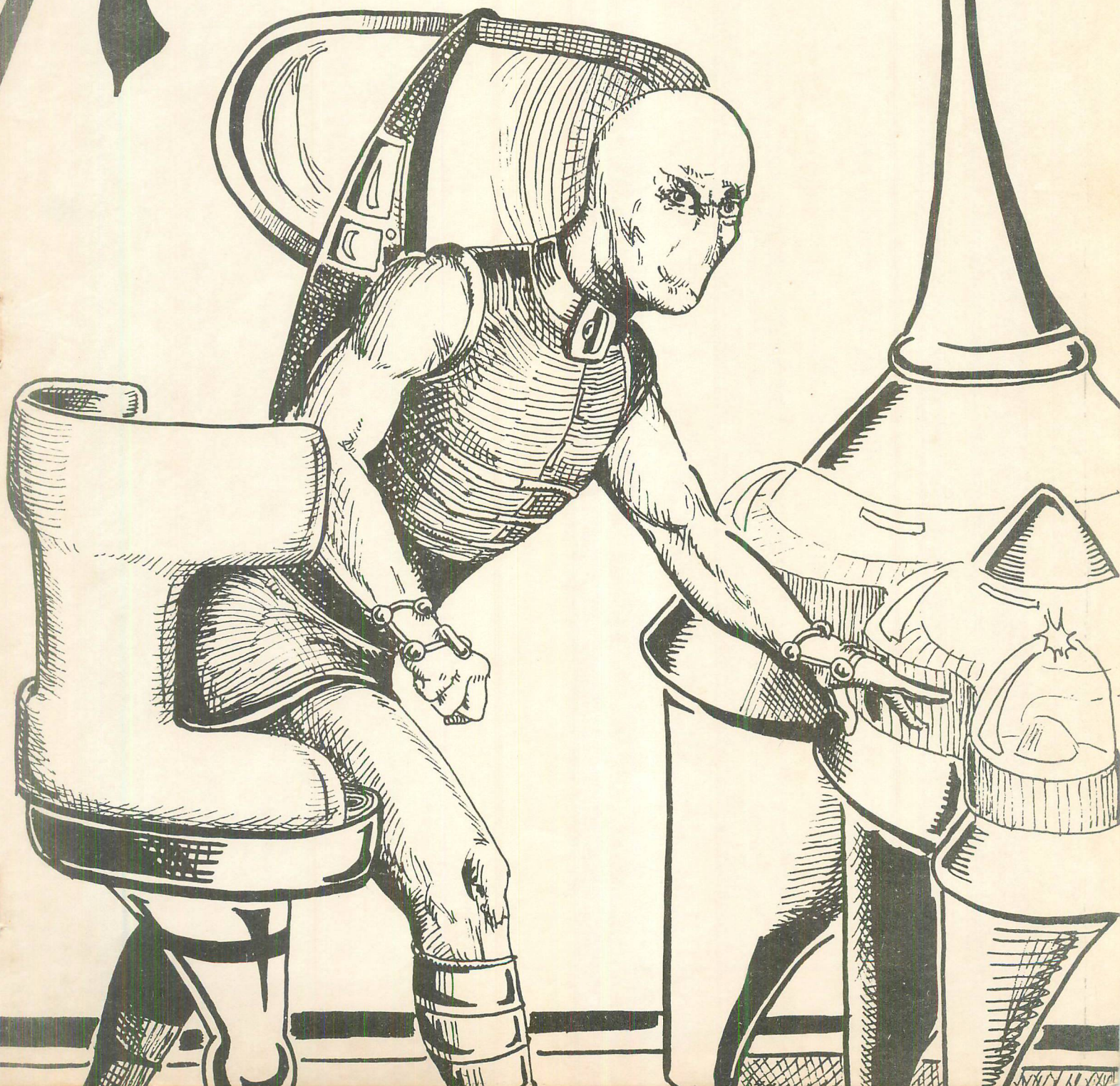


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TIGHTBEAM



TIGHT BEAM

This is Tightbeam 61, June, 1970, the letter column of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. Tightbeam is published for the NFF by Gary H. Labowitz, 1100 Betzwood Drive, Norristown, Pa. 19401 to whom all letters, manuscripts, and artwork suitable for cover use should be sent. A return envelope with sufficient return postage would be appreciated with all non-letter material.

Tightbeam is published more-or-less bi-monthly and is distributed free to members of the NFFF and for trade of other science fiction fanzines. Persons mentioned in passing are invited to comment, regardless of membership status, if so inclined.'

This issue has two enclosures. They are the Constitution and Bylaws of the NFF, which some of you may not have seen before. Although it is a little early to be mentioning the elections, anyone considering the possibility of running for one of the offices should look over the two documents provided and determine the duties and regulations surrounding filing.

Since I have finally used all the letters on hand, it is time to write if you have anything to say. My system has gotten pretty well set up now and with luck I will be rolling TBs your way whenever I get the pages filled. If that means monthly, then it is monthly. If not, not.

Cortney Skinner, who did this month's cover, has also done a lovely birthday card for NFF which I have been running here the last few weeks. Thanks go to artists like Cortney that take the time and trouble to work on special projects like this. Cover art is still needed and always appreciated.

Please notify me at once if you detect any errors in the roster or if you have a change. Let's keep it current this year.

Since I seem to have omitted the addresses of the correspondents this issue there is a small table of contents down there::: and, oh, yes, if you are a new member and are missing any of the publications of this year, drop me a line of what your first TB was. I'll see you get copies (as long as they last) of the ones you missed.

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Tex Cooper

I've just received No. 59 issue of Tightbeam. It sure is a pleasure to read news and views that are not completely out of date. For my own part, I heartily endorse your suggestion to send us overseas fen onionskin Tightbeams.

//Unfortunately, it didn't work out too well. Oh, I can run them, but not on both sides and I find it personally disagreeable. So, I just airmailed regular way. Until I get more practice on the onionskin, you'll continue to get your copies as fast as I can afford to send them. ghl//

One does tend to feel left out in the cold, if you only receive publications months after everyone else. You are unable to participate actively in any feuds, arguments or general discussions, because, by the time you hear about them, the issues have been resolved, buried, and forgotten. And some of the issues should stay buried.

I have a suggestion to make. In order to cut mailing costs and also for overseas fans to get their publications airmail, would it not be possible for the fees for overseas members to be raised to cover the extra cost? This would, of course, only apply to those members who wanted their publications sent air mail. Otherwise their fees would remain normal and they would receive their stuff surface mail. I feel sure that if one was really keen to get info early, the extra cost would not be grudged. What do other overseas fans think?

//It has been mentioned in the past, but no real study of the costs involved have been made lately. So, I can't guess what the extra cost would be. Another thought had occurred to me: would it be cheaper to bulk mail copies to some distributor overseas who could mail individual copies at more like "local" rates? At present we list overseas members as follows: Belgium - 1, England - 4, Venezuela - 1, W. Germany - 2, and S. Africa - 2. Plus our exchange with BSFA. ghl//

George Willick

Nice issue, No. 59, logged as Jan/March issue. Too bad things get in the way and make Tightbeam a nearly irregular publication. I find it very stimulating to the N3F. It is especially important in that it allows newer members certain perspectives that the Welcommittee can't totally impart.

..Eli Cohen: Yes, your point on 'c and c squared' well made and well taken. But let's play with it, for fun and thought. Why not a formula for ' $c^{\frac{1}{2}}$ squared' or ' $\frac{1}{2}c$ '? You see my point? Damn convenient wasn't it that the Universe just happened to fit into our mathematics and calculations as a neat, trim 'c squared'? I mean; if I elbowed you a little and said subjectively, "Isn't that a bit much?" could you disagree?

How about some of the speed of light thoughts dabbling about? Let's see, the receding galaxy theory will do. What happens when a galaxy does actually recede from a common point with us and we reach a mutual parting speed of light? (I will not go into the obvious contradiction of one galaxy being stationary while the other exceeds the speed of light.) Some say light gets deposited behind in ever increasing spans of pulses. Some say the light cannot leave the retreating galaxy as the speed is not sufficient to overcome mass's faster motion. That's a fascinating concept. E equals mc squared doesn't help. For, truly, mass is made of atoms is made of particles is made of energy...which is the same stuff light is made of and we haven't detected a light particle of

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infinite mass have we? In short, mass is a lie and another one of those terms that fit an unknown into our thinking. Another example of this is centrifugal force. It doesn't exist either except when a body is restricted from tangential motion by another body...be it a string, car wall, or bucket bottom.

Asimov has come up with a piece of thinking lately that fascinates me. His theory of parallel universes, one with speeds of light or less and the other with speeds of light or more. Unfortunately, he seems to give in to convention and declares one of these universes positive and the other negative. Foolish. Why? Because it limits the other universe to a top speed of light doubled. Good old convenient, again. Then why not a third universe where light travels above light doubled, etc.?

//The only problem I see here is that any universe would have a concept of bodies at rest, i.e. with no velocity. Besides, a negative (or perhaps inverse) universe could have speeds greater than double light. Consider the numbers on either side of the point on a line representing 1. There are as many greater than 1 as less than 1. Each number N has a related number 1/N. And for numbers approaching 0 there is a corresponding extremely large number we conceptualize called infinity which is being approached. Perhaps a body moving at "infinite" speed corresponds with the body at rest in the alternate universe. Maybe not. ghl//

Anyway, we know particles exist that exceed the speed of light. But these are explained away as not conflicting with relativity because they contain no mass....and an infinite amount of these would still produce no mass. Hairy, ain't it? Always wondered what would happen if we stopped a particle of light, cold. What would that little part of forever do then?

//Or how about freezing fire and storing it up like we do air and water? ghl//

Other laws await us. We need only to learn from what has gone before, free our brains from shackles and explore...with science and with fiction. One way out of maze...berate not those who chase the deadends for like a way to the new world, all passages must be explored.

Roy Tackett: Your remarks re distribution and total newsstands got me to thinking about what a cumbersome society we have developed. The answer, of course, to this very limited problem is to subscribe. This, in turn, is tied to the larger problem of getting me or mine off our asses long enough to find 5 or 6 bucks, get a money order or write a check, and get it into an envelope and mailed. This applies to everything...gas bills, taxes, mothers' birthday presents, etc. So it occurred to me that what we need is a handy dandy single system tied into everything. I feed this machine instructions and it eats my money from a fund where my salaries are deposited. And then when this marvel is everywhere and is in full use, I will die and feed myself into it, to be buried in tape that belongs to the accounts of my relatives. See?

//Why not? Indeed, this goal is currently being implimented. And as for your body -- it does have a certain intrinsic value, which I believe is now somewhere about \$10, which will probably be credited to your relatives. ghl//

Matt Hickman: Tsk, Jake shouldn't have hit Campbell directly, granted. But the points of the editorials in Galaxy and If were well taken against Campbell's expressed views. We are a dissenting people...or haven't you heard? I'm just a poor, humble whtie myself and have been brain numbed more than once by an ignorant black. Don't know if that means one of us is inferior or not. Unless we drop this race question quickly and the attendant compromise

solution that 'smart is better regardless of color' then we're doomed to a perpetuating class system that cannot endure long without attendant violence of unpredictable proportions. I would hate to have to kill a man because I was white and he was black. Campbell fans an open flame and this is what Jake was against. You think this is a bad thing?

General comments. It looks almost like there are going to be more city and regional cons this year that there are fans to attend. I expect to pop in on the Midwescon for a few hours but only because it has such an excellently informal air. You can't really call this a Con of the new school...more like the World Cons of old that many bemoan the loss of. Those of you who plan to attend for the first time and expect a program, well, forget it. Bring a swim suit, a guitar, or a bottle of bonded. Tis fun for people and maybe a few books for sale if that's your bag. Otherwise, panel discussions are held on a concrete wall along the apartment complexes and editors hold forth in isolated bunches. The most relaxed human being there will be Wilson Tucker... and he may be the only human being there, anyway...that is, if he plans to make it. I don't know if his own Illinois personal con this year will deter him from Ohio. BOB? Let us know?

I guess all is well with me and this typer keeps working. I look forward to a relaxed spring and am keeping my fingers crossed for a calm summer. After a few more years we may be restricted indoors anyway if this disaster to the atmosphere continues. Let's fight that, kids, and forget about the color of the fighter, his race or political beliefs. Hate is an eating disease that feeds on men's souls. Do you really need it?

Otherwise; bheers and cheers, people. Stay as sweet as you are. TWACK!

Alex Krislov

Richard Sabella suggests a poll for the best stories of the past decade. Good Lord! I spent over an hour deciding on my Hugo nominations for the past year.

John Andrews: do you really believe that copying is the best way to write a story? No kidding? Alright -- you can watch Star Trek, while I read some James Joyce. You know, if more fans would tackle Joycean literature, we wouldn't be hearing so many claim that the "New Wave" is incomprehensible. It isn't impossible to understand, only difficult. Michael Moorcock, for instance, doesn't ask the reader to work very hard to understand Jerry Cornelius; if the readers can accept an FTL drive, just what is so impossible about a cyclical man?

Darrell Schweitzer: Nightwings came out from Avon, not Ballantine. To Hell with that, though; I wish to argue re Bug Jack Barron. I simply cannot accept the idea that Spinrad had any real depth in his characters. They all thought the same way, talked the same way, and were different only because Spinrad gave them different names. Social comment? Any that was there was sort of dull and/or unconvincing. When Spinrad shows the all-black southern areas, for example, he is boring where he has the opportunity to by horrifying. If Bug Jack Barron is nominated for the Hugo, I won't be surprised -- but I won't be happy either.

Paul Doerr: Forget about the smoke from the cigarette smoker. Drive around in your car for a day or two and you will produce far more unavoidable pollution. The ratio of cigarettes to a single car, in the area of air pollution, is about 50,000 to 1. Worrying about cigarette smoke is the same as being a diabetic who merely removes the whipped cream from his super-sundae.

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//I object to the smoking on purely personal grounds. When I am forced to breath the foul smoke from the cigarette monster in some public place (like a restaurant or airplane) I get sick. Why can't people respect the rights of others and stop inflicting the foul smells on others? ghl//

Ed Krieg: If "no more than say 60-70% would vote anyway for /the presidential candidate/ of their choice," then who are the rest voting for? I fail to see what is wrong with voting for one's favorite; I nominated A Cure for Cancer (Michael Moorcock), even though I despair of its chances of making the Hugo short list. Whether a book is "worthy" of being nominated or not is purely a matter of opinion. I seem to notice that whenever someone's favorite is not nominated he blames it on the lack of participation in nominating, rather than on the story (or whatever) itself. When I find, at cons, that most people never do read all the nominees, I wonder what would happen if all the final members nominated -- I'll wager that the outcome would surprise everybody.

Matt Hickman: I doubt if Ejler Jakobsson has done any disservice to science fiction by attacking Campbell. It is about time that a platform for being against JWC appeared. When was the last time you saw a pro-"New Wave" letter in ASF?

Analog's high sales, by the way, do not prove that the magazine is publishing good stories. You might take note that Harold Robbins is one of the big best-sellers around, and that the Critchon book, The Andromeda Strain, was also a best-seller, even though it was terrible sf.

If your main complaint against the "New Wave" is that it glorifies anti-heros, you would be well-advised to read Moorcock's A Cure for Cancer. The hero wins in the end and therefore is not an anti-hero. But is Cure an "Old Wave" story? I doubt if Pierce would enjoy it.

Jerry Lapidus

"Illustrated Man" isn't really bad, it just isn't as fantastic as many people seemed to expect. Steiger is quite good -- not up to "Pawnbroker," but he remains one of America's top actors, and it shows. Claire Bloom is also very nice, and, all around, the film could have the best acting yet in a really serious sf film (and this emphatically does include "Charly," with Robertson and his abominable performance). There are some rather gaping holes, and the overall film is very choppy and poorly tied together. The basic problem lies in the attempt to make one story out of three separate shorts; the director would have been much more successful in making three completely different, separate stories, as was done with O'Henry and Maugham short stories in past movies. In the original collection, the only position for the "Man" was to provide some very loose framework for otherwise unconnected stories. But the picture is certainly worth seeing, and is probably the outstanding Hugo choice for Heicon voting. Even with all its flaws, it was quite a bit better than any Star Trek episodes of '69, and there wasn't really anything of note around. Next year, Marooned is probably the best bet.

//I hear Universal is releasing "The Forbin Project," a 1968 sf film they haven't released till now. ghl//

"Beneath the Planet of the Apes" is indeed the sequel, and promises to be another big money winner. 20th Century Fox is doing a bit publicity thing on it, including a policy of releasing no stills until the film itself comes out -- ostensibly because the sets are going to be so fantastic that they want it all to be a surprise.

"Variety" of a few weeks back says that a "Star Trek cartoon version is being prepared for the 70-71 season. In addition, rumors have also been mentioned that one or more made-for-TV movies of "Star Trek" are in the works.

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Left Hand of Darkness is indeed excellent, but it lacks -- perhaps as a result of its binocular vision -- a certain life, which other (otherwise "inferior") novels possess. I point to Bug Jack Barron, with all its flaws, as a novel vital and alive, compelling on a strong emotional level. Left Hand is so damn intellectual that it often loses a human quality.

Jesus, I love Delany's writing. I have read nothing by that man that I don't consider at least "merely" good, if not superb. "Time Considered," Nova, Einstein, "Aye, and Gommorah...", "Star-Pit" -- everything he writes is so damn great! And he has never won a Hugo (let's have one for "Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones" this year, huh?), do you believe that?

Distribution of prozines, so true, so true. Analog I see everywhere. Galaxy/If I see around occasionally. F&SF and Amazing/Fantastic I must search long and hard to find at all. And that happens to be in descending order of quality and/or interest.

Sorry, Joanne. I find it very difficult to enjoy more than one or at most two stories in a given issue of Analog, or indeed any of the US prozines with the exception of F&SF.

Andrew Phillips sounds like an interesting chap...his Pierce tendencies are showing rather broadly. Fascinating...

//Why not write him? ghl//

Vonnegut's handicapper series is similar to, but by no means identical to, Harlan's tick-tockman idea. Best story was probably "Harrison Bergeron" (a really fine story), from F&SF and reprinted in Welcome to the Monkey House. Hey, what about a Hugo (at least a nomination) for Slaughterhouse-Five?

//Is it sf? An interview I saw with Vonnegut implied it wasn't. Of course, Vonnegut has been disavowing sf for some time now. ghl//

So I commented last time about how cruddy "Sharing of Flesh" was (and still is) and it won the Hugo. Right. I've got a very strong feeling this was a Name victory, i.e. Poul Anderson has a much bigger name than Richard Wilson and Galaxy is read by a hell of a lot more fans than Orbit.

For my money, F&SF has the best fiction -- consistently -- and Amazing/Fantastic the best features, also consistently. Choose your winner, but I'll take the fiction. Problem with a best editor award is that too few fans are really aware of the pb editors -- in fact, I'd wager too few are aware of even the prozine editors! Got a better idea -- what about an award for the best anthology or collection (with details worked out, of course)? This should give the annual collections, like Knight and Carnell's, as well as the occasional giants (Dangerous Visions, The Farthest Reaches) a chance at the pie.

No, Gary -- the novelette is incorporated into the short story. Short story now runs up to 17,500 words, with the novella going from that to the novel, at 40,000. Remember too that the committee can put a given nominee in another category within 5,000 words (I think, no time to look it up), to place it in a more appropriate category if necessary.

If science fiction is to have any validity at all as a literary form, there must be a "place" in the field for every aspect of human existence. I don't mean to suggest that to be good a story must be about "pimps, sadists, homos, and pros," or anything like that. But the author must be free to write about or use these characters, if they are required to say what he wants to say. Their labels mean something different to every reader, but almost any reader can see something of himself in a well drawn character, no matter his position in life happens to be. Why must someone be "perverted" to be interested in the "lower" aspects of

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humanity? Why is it pornography and hack writing to look at the darker side of man? Why is it wrong to talk about man as he really is for a change (NOT for a permanent diet), rather than man as we pretend he is or would like him to be? Not only will the field be weaker if such subjects are barred -- it will be seriously harmed. The field must be free to try anything -- the reader is compelled to accept only what he feels applies to himself.

Won't question your opinions on 2001, Darrell, but your comment on Kubrick's use of the Bond gimmick is totally wrong. If you'll recall correctly, the film's set (You Only Live Twice) finale was the interior of an extinct volcano. It was covered over by a false lake top, which simply slid back in one piece; if I recall correctly, it sort of folded up like an accordion. In any case, it definitely was not segmented. More important (I concede I may be totally wrong about the first bit, my memory not being perfect), this was full-size, for all the action in that incredible finale took place here. The Moon landing dome (that segmented back) was not full-sized; very little was in the film, with the exception of the centrifuge/interior of the Discovery. The dome was also sort of bubble-shaped, rather than being flat -- as was the case with the artificial lake in the Bond film. Nice try -- but no sale.

//Strange, I recall a Bond film with a dome-like structure that fragmented; perhaps it was Thunderball. Anyway, are there any Bond fans who can settle this?
ghl//

I'm an actor. Robertson absolutely STANK in "Charly." His overacting was incredible to behold, particularly in the light of some excellent past performances. For not one single moment was he anywhere near being believable as a really sick person -- he was constantly an Actor, playing a moron. Want an example of a really good job in a similar role? In "The Heart is a Lonely Hunter," one of the characters (not Alan Arkin, though he was also excellent) plays a deaf-mute with intelligence just slightly below Charly's. The basic gimmick was simple -- he didn't understand. He didn't understand what people said to him. He didn't understand what people wanted him to do. He didn't understand his own motivations and desires. The performance was superb -- and totally "real." In comparison, Robertson's mugging and physical shambling came off as so much sophomoric trash.

//Was that performance by Chuck McCann? We have admired him for years based on the marvelous characters he created and acted out on his "kiddies" show in New York. He turns up in commercials once in a while, but we have always looked forward to his talent being recognized. ghl//

Steve Goldstein? Not the same Steve Goldstein that writes the incredibly dumb book reviews for Beabohema? Hmmm, reading on, I see it IS the same person. "Riders of the Purple Wage" plotless? Really?? I admit the first two or three pages are rather incomprehensible, and are extremely difficult to understand without having read the rest. But after this opening -- did you ever make it past, Steve? -- several plots are obvious: Chib, trying to make it as his own artist in his corrupt world; Grandpa, trying to stay alive without giving in to the society; the society, trying to catch up with Grandpa, etc., etc. Look a little harder next time.

Gary, I'd say that right now Amazing certainly deserves a Hugo nomination, though I'd still give the award itself to F&SF. But over the past year, fiction has been pretty nearly as good as the other three magazines, with some particularly good stories (the Bunch, Up the Line, others) approaching Hugo caliber. The features are already the best around, with excellent science, book, and fanzine departments, as well as the only intelligent lettercolumn or editorial section in any of the prozines.

8 Hugo voting certainly is completely independent from attendance, and theoretically, there's no reason at all why a group of foreign fans can't get together and vote a particular work onto the ballot; or should I say there wasn't, until the St. Louis rule restricted the award to English work. This action was taken as part of the overall North American Con-Worldcon thing, but previous to this, I'd say as few as 40 fans could get a given work on the ballot with no trouble at all. Even now, a group of, say Australian fans could get something on the ballot, merely by working together. As a matter of fact, I imagine any group of twenty fans could influence the nominating, possibly even the final voting.

//Jerry then says he'll comment on the November issue. What do you members think? Should I publish long letters like this one? Abridge it? ghl//

Mmm, yeah. "A Boy and His Dog" is a fantastic story, isn't it? I really can't see any reasonable competition for the novella Hugo, although I'd like to see Fritz Leiber's "Ship of Shadows" at least nominated. While, I'm at it, other Hugo choices: Slaughterhouse Five, with nominations to Left Hand of Darkness and Bug Jack Barron; "Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones," with "Muse" (Koontz) and "I Am Crying All Inside" (Simak) with nominations; F&SF, a nomination to Amazing; Leo and Dianne Dillon; "The Illustrated Man;" Warhoon or Algol or Speculation; Richard Delap; Mike Gilbert.

For an example of a good prozine (or anywhere) con report, see Bloch's pun-filled piece in the January If, on St. Louis. Possibly the best con report I've ever seen in a professional magazine.

Everybody notice how high "Getting Through University" placed on the Galaxy/If poll? Quote that, next time you want to demonstrate the average critical ability of those magazines' subscribers!

Leo -- I didn't know you were a musical theatre fan..."Big Eddie Confetti" indeed (from "What Makes Sammy Run," of course).

I also seem to be one totally unimpressed by Larry Niven. And if thought "Organleggers" was bad -- did you read A Gift from Earth ("Slowboat Cargo")? Actually, the correct title is "All the Myriad Ways," rather than "Along," but the idea is the same.

I really didn't consider any of the nominated shorts last year of Hugo caliber; Terry Carr's story was the best of a mediocre lot, with Harlan's probably taking a poor second. This year, however, I can list about a dozen shorts I would call Hugo quality. In addition to the Delany, Koontz, and Simak stories I've already mentioned, I could also see "The Big Flash" (Spinrad), "Nine Lives" (LeGuin), "Broke and Hungry, No Place to Go" (Goulart), "London Melancholy" (John Harrison), and "In the Time of Disposal of Infants" (Bunch) as definite contenders. And there are at least a dozen more I could list after these.

If you liked Stand on Zanaibar, people out there, I hope you know about John dos Passos's U.S.A., the massive historical novel on which Brunner based his essential style. It's a huge book (four separate "books," each SoZ size), but very much worth the effort.

All too many people try to start reading Tolkein with The Hobbit, get bored, and give up in disgust. What they overlook -- or what they don't realize -- is that The Hobbit is essentially a children's book, describing events which take place before LotR begins. The universe and characters are the same; the writing style is not. If you ever attempt to encourage someone to try Tolkein, make sure they start with the "trilogy" itself.

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Got bored with Lord of Light? I find it hard to believe anyone can get bored with Zelazny, but I suppose it's possible.

Gary, about reasons for copyrighting fanzines. As one fanned who does, I can say unequivocally that reaping reprint rights have nothing at all to do with it. Basically, the prime reason is to protect contributions from professionals and near-professionals. For instance, the last issue of Tomorrow And... featured material from Harlan; the next will have Gerrold, Leon Stover, Richard Delap, Bob Toomey, Gaughan, Mike Gilbert. All these people have sold or worked professionally, and by copyrighting their material, we protect it for them, allowing them to use any and all of it later on. We always assign rights to contributors. Besides, it's really quite cheap -- only \$6 per issue.

//Andy Porter tells me that the registration of the zine with the attendant \$6 fee is not actually required. All one need do is put "Copyright 1970 (or whatever date applied)" on the material and that is that. We used to rely on common law copyright, which protected the rights of the authors if one could prove prior publication. This hinged on establishing the date the zine was published. This could be done by mailing yourself a registered copy of the zine and not opening it when received. Do we have anyone who's checked this all out legally, etc.? ghl//

Oh, and thanks for the review of Tomorrow And..., although I do wish you'd listed my address rather than Mike's in the review. TA... 5 should be out eventually, ...

//Well, gang, use Jerry's address in sending for TA... ghl//

John Shirley

I am a new member of N3F and would like to thank all those from the welcome committee and elsewhere who wrote me. You were all a great help in unravelling the complexities of N3F.

ghl: I noticed in your listing of regional cons you seem to have left out the Norwestercon, to be held in Portland on May 29-31.

//I missed that one. Better you should check Locus, Focal Point, Luna, etc. for the con listings. They are more complete and more timely. I was putting down those I happened to remember, that's all. ghl//

What is the Manuscript Bureau? Is it something you send stories to that various fanzines may pick from? Sort of a communal literature pool? At least that is the impression I get from various vague references in some of the fanzines I have received. If so I should be interested in contributing manuscripts. I need the practice. Your fears are justified; as I am another one of those Schmendricks hoping, someday, to be a pro writer.

//Yes, by all means submit material to the Manuscript Bureau. The general thought is that the person heading it will evaluate your stuff and send it to an appropriate fanzine, with which you may not be familiar. There is also the Writers' Exchange by which means you can get your stories criticized by fellow amateur writers. ghl//

I don't agree with Phil Muldowney's views on sf and the visual arts. Though many of Star Trek's scripts are rotten (especially the third year), due to the changing script writers, some of them like the scripts of Sturgeon, Spinrad, and Ellison, are excellent. Particularly the one by Harlan Ellison -- he can't write a bad word anyway. The Invaders was almost always good, as was Roy Thinnes' acting.

10 Darrell Schweitzer's list of potential Hugo winners was fairly inclusive though I think The Black Corridor by Moorcock, neglected too often, deserves a Hugo, if only for its depth of characterization.

Redd Boggs

The comments in Tightbeam #59 on the postal system were truly mindzapping, and probably deserve a retort or two despite the fact that (presumably) your columns are open to "Neffers" only.

//Well, persons mentioned may always reply; and considerate comments such as your own will be received by me with favor (something like a Labowitz Declaration). However, basically you are right; Tightbeam is a sounding post for N3F members. ghl//

Paul Doerr complains about the postal rates, a justified bitch, but also worries, apparently, about postal efficiency, which is probably a less justified complaint. At any rate, if he worries about things like "the Chicago Xmas tie up" his idea of "protesting" by using only 1¢ stamps on our letters so they'll have to handstamp mail is kind of silly. Cutting off your nose to spite your face. Not that that kind of protest would matter a damn. A huge proportion of the mail is business mail, much of it metered rather than stamped. Using 1¢ stamps on personal mail, even on most of it, wouldn't matter a great deal. And if Paul is very observant, he will have noticed that the post office doesn't always bother to handstamp where, technically, it should.

Doerr bitches about the PO hiring "poverty people," who he says "don't know how to and don't want to work on mail." Well, for god's sake! Hardly anybody wants to work -- on mail, or on anything else. People do it in order to eat. The PO is a place of last resort for a great many employees who for one reason or another couldn't find suitable or secure jobs elsewhere. This is true of most businesses too. As for the "poverty people" not knowing how to work on mail, well, it takes a certain amount of training to do it efficiently, but anybody with a small amount of brains can learn to do it pretty fast. Doerr's bane, "poverty people," are no different in that than anybody else: they need training, but so what? Everybody does. And they can learn as easily as anybody. What's so awful about "poverty people" being hired by the PO, anyway? Even if they weren't as good employees as anybody else, is postal efficiency really more important than keeping a few people, at least, from starving? The anti-human bias of some people appalls me.

As for your own suggestion about "a much better way to cancel the mail," in which the "letters are simply shanken (sic) up in an atmosphere of the specific gas and the stamps (all or some part) change color," well, OK. But why? Probably cancelling machines are not the most efficient way to handle the matter, but cancelling stamps is not, I think, a major holdup of mail handling. A big post office has a dozen or more such machines chattering away fulltime during the busy part of the evening. Each machine cancels dozens, maybe hundreds, of letters a minute. The letters are carried away in huge armloads and put in front of the sorters, and the mail stacks up and up in front of the sorters -- not in front of the cancelling machines.

Usually a good many employees are stuck with the job of arranging the mail for the cancelling machines (the machine is run efficiently by one man, often with another man to "carry away," during rush hours). But the mail would have to be sorted that way anyway. To ready the mail for the cancelling machine, it is separated into "long" and "short" letters -- the size of the envelopes -- and it is "faced," so that a whole handful of letters can be held and sorted, with the addresses all uppermost and rightsideup. No doubt machines can do the "facing" job too, and machines could "read" addresses on letters no matter which way they were facing, but sooner or later it is handiest to have the mail separated and faced, for efficiency of handling. Generally it stays separated

into "longs" and "shorts" till it is turned over to the mail carrier -- your local postman -- who of course sorts to address and mingles longs and shorts. And it is handled faced till it is dropped into your mailbox. Thus the job of readying mail for the cancelling machine is not something that needn't have been done at all, and if mail was cancelled by your chemical method it would be separated and faced sooner or later anyway.

I may sound iconoclastic, but I think generally the PO itself is efficient enough. It hasn't been mechanized to the extent that modern practice would dictate, but it gets the job done by using hordes of personnel, who do a pretty good job, by and large. If the mails are slow, it is largely because of the fact that in the past 40 or 50 years thousands, yes, thousands of mail trains have been removed from service, and the number of planes and trucks the post office department has utilized to replace them has not been sufficient. Our transportation system has gone to hell indeed, and getting a letter from here to there was an easier process in 1900 than it is today and, in some ways, speedier. If the USA could rebuild its railroad system to the level enjoyed by most other civilized countries, then mail service would perforce improve.

Gary Mattingly

Roy Tackett: I have often wondered how much that small group of people who wish to get involved would do. You don't really need the power elite to get something done, although it helps. With a little bit of inventiveness and will power a lot can be done. However, in order to do anything, a cohesive group must be formed. If 1/1000 or even 1/100,000 th of the population could be moved into action, constructive action, a lot more than talking, yelling, and marching could be done. Would anyone like to help prove or disprove this?

Darrell Schweitzer: How do you run fillos? I am a new faned and would like to know how to get art work to stand out better using mimeo.

//As far as I can tell, Darrell would like to know too. ghl//

Has anyone made up a total fan directory? Of course N3F puts out a membership list, but I would like to find out total stf and fantasy readership plus acti-fans. If anyone is interested and says so, I will do it. Have material for mimeo or ditto. Am also interested in making up a general dispersion map of fandom.

Ed. Krieg: I thought the idea of the Hugos are that people vote for their favorites, too? No objections here.

//There have been various censuses of fans, and currently Brian Burley may have the largest name and address list (how many you got, Brian?). It would be a fairly sizable project to list fans, even the active ones...a list of readers would be too large and useless. ghl//

John Steele

Reading through this issue of TB I seem to have realized just how long I have been out of circulation. Most of the letters make no sense to me at all, could it be that I'm not alone in this feeling.

I tell you, being in the service and travelling takes a big chunk out of the understanding a person gets from TB. It used to be a could sit down and understand what was going on. I guess I'm just getting too many outside interests (like my job, for instance). Or maybe I should find some special-interest club. My experiences with those, though, are very unhappy.

//Your new address encourages me to mention that I am a radio amateur (WA3HTH) and

12 perhaps we could get together on the air and I could keep you up to date. ghl//

As I sit here at my desk, trying to figure out what is what in fandom, and trying to decipher this zine, I find myself looking more and more towards OSFan. At least I can understand it...coming from St. Louis, as I do.

Anyway, to get to the point I would like some information from the other members of N3F. If anybody out there knows of any fans in Western Puerto-Rico, I would appreciate hearing about them. It does get a bit lonely, being the only fan on the base in Organized Fandom. Most of the people down here that read Science Fiction in any of its many types do not care for organizations. They do not care to sit around and discuss Science Fiction all the time, of course, I don't know any fan that does, but these people are under the impression that all anybody talks about in a Science Fiction Club is that topic. It might be worth-while to point out that not all clubs do that. One club, in particular, thinks it is Taboo to even mention the word Science Fiction at a club meeting. Of course, that is going a bit far. But, it is true none-the-less.

The local group -- "ISA S F AND FANTASY SOCIETY" has a small membership. Of course, how can a club be very large, if there are only 125 eligible people and only a minority of these people read science fiction. I find it harder and harder to recruit members, basically, because our library started out with 45 science fiction and related books and is now (in the period of four months since I arrived) down to 5. (I am afraid to check today -- we might not have any left.) We are in a small problem, here, because we have to rely on people donating their precious books. Most of them are like me. "If people are going to fail to return them when they are finished, why donate them?" I find if I am going to read a book I have to hide it everytime I leave the room if I want to find it again. If anybody has any suggestions as to how we can improve this system, please notify me.

//I would think that each person taking a book should sign out for it so that at least you would know who has what and who is not returning books. Of course, there must then be somebody watching to see that everyone signs out for the books, or they will get stolen anyway. ghl//

Harry Warner, Jr.

This seems to be the right time for my annual letter to Tightbeam. The elections, all three of them, are only four or five months in the past and already they've succeeded in providing four of the five directors needed, and someone has grown angry with Alma Hill again and the NFFan has experienced its annual production problems. Next thing I know I'll realize I've almost forgotten to renew my membership.

//Gosh, Harry, I think we is doin' fine. We have all five Directors and this is the third issue of TB this year. We just keep plugging along. ghl//

The basic idea of choosing the best science fiction of the decade is a good one. It could still be salvaged by the dodge of counting the decade to run from 1961 through 1970, as the mathematicians claim it does. But as you say, there are more things to be done than simply ask people to choose their favorites. One point you don't mention is the necessity to find a way to remind participants what is eligible and what isn't, partly to lessen the advantage that would be given to the most recent good stories, which are freshest in memory, partly for the sake of people who lack the patience to look through all their magazines and books for copyright dates and year of first publication. A list of the

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most obvious possibilities might be drawn up by a preliminary vote of a dozen or so people who have read most of the field's output during the decade. Naturally, it would include all nominees for Nebulas and Hugos, it might also contain all the fiction from the period written by anyone who won a Hugo during the period, the most frequently anthologized shorter stories, and if publishers would cooperate, the best-selling titles during this period, plus whatever other stories the committee think should be included. Such a listing of a couple of hundred titles would have some permanent value, over and above its use in the poll, because it could serve indefinitely as a picture of what was best in a ten-year period for future newcomers to the field of fandom. Naturally, votes in the final poll wouldn't be confined to such a list but unless politics got hold of the preliminary panel, it's unlikely that anything really first-rate would get left off.

You overlook some problems connected with making an artificial language a worldwide tongue. It's to be devoid of nationalistic ties? Then does it get written in the letters of the alphabet with which we are familiar in the Americas and Europe or in some completely new form to prevent the Asiatics from pointing out that the West has an unfair advantage in learning the language? If it's standardized in pronunciation, what, as a very small sample of the difficulties, do we do about the vowels? Keep them pure, as they are in Italian, or diphthongize them, as most of them are in English? Whichever we do, it'll be very hard for either English-speaking or Italian-speaking people to adapt. If it's "reasonably constructed to allow for additions and ease of learning" does this mean that inflection can change meaning, as in the case of Chinese? That's reasonably constructed to hundreds of millions of people, not reasonably constructed to hundreds of millions of others. The basic problem is that you and I and almost everyone else in fandom are familiar only with a few languages native to a minority of the world's peoples, while the majority of the world speaks languages so wildly different from ours in grammar and concept and pronunciations that Esperanto seems as difficult to them as cracking a Japanese code would be to us. Esperanto is just a fusing of a few tongues that are spoken in Europe, constructed like them, and not really easy for even a Russian to understand, what with that language's habit of having two separate words for most verbs, whose use depends on the tense, but no equivalent of something as basic to you and me as the verb "to be". The Russian doesn't say "The man is a doctor" and he'd be confused if the Esperanto equivalent of that statement didn't read, in translation, "The man--doctor." One final point: another stupendous argument against any artificial language for the entire world is the publishing task it would create. As the hundreds of millions of people in Asia and Africa gain literacy and knowledge in the years to come, either they'd be forced to learn some existing major language or hundreds of thousands of books would need to be translated and published in the artificial tongue, so they could have access to the literature and scientific texts and other lore that hasn't yet been published in Swahili or Upper Northern Congo.

//Some thoughts: Firstly, the artificial language would not replace the natural languages used in the country, but would be an alternate language used when speaking, writing, and communicating with people on an international basis. Toward this end the main emphasis should be on training the young in two languages: the native language of the country and an international language. Yes, there are nationalistic traces in Esperanto, but not because the nations involved wanted them. It is an attempt to blend the various language groups so that speakers from different basic language groupings will understand part of it without much difficulty and learn the portion unfamiliar to him. Since the language is to be phonetic, pictographic languages were rejected; however, there is no reason why a combination alphabet-pictographic system couldn't be worked out. Several of my friends in college had just such a system for taking notes which they invented themselves.

4 As to grammar, the whole idea is that by training the young in a language as they grow and learn to speak there is no "translating" going on; this is the commonly referred to "thinking in a language." Hebrew, Chinese, and I suppose other oriental languages omit the verb "to be" in various of the tenses (the present being the most common) but the speakers are not unduly confused by the addition of the verb. Also, I believe we are not terribly confused in leaving it out: "Gary Labowitz, publisher of Tightbeam!" Of course, I've inserted the comma to indicate the absense of the verb, but with some practice we'd all get it.

As for publishing, I think the new works coming out could be published in one uniform edition, rather than several hundred languages over a long period of time. Works desired that way would be scientific works, journals, etc., and basic reference works like dictionaries, encyclopediae, etc. Unfortunately, I think it's like the long awaited metric system in the USA: too late for us old folks. ghl//

I feared this British reaction to Star Trek, because science fiction on British television has from all reports been far superior to anything we've had regularly over here. What I'd like to see is a science fiction equivalent of "Love, American Style" on television. Perhaps 90 minutes per week, with freedom to use almost the entire time on one story or to split it among three or four, plus a few two-minute dramas something like Fred Brown's short-short stories. This would solve the troubles created when writers try to adapt existing science fiction stories to the rigid time requirements of standard-length programs.

George Willick's categories pose some problems. How long does a PRO remain a PRO after his latest novel? If he's devoting his life to it does he stop being a PRO when he has trouble selling his next novel after a given number of months? Who except God could know for sure if the person deserves to be called a pro because his science fiction writing "could be sufficient to support him" or if the other person must be considered a semi-pro because he "could not support himself through his efforts in the field"? Would Weinbaum have been an "apprentice" after his first nine short stories in the prozines while someone who sold an extremely hackish novel to Ace for his first literary success skipped over that status?

If Bob Weinberg ever encounters a crafty contractor when he tries to have a house built, or finds himself saddled with a \$175 repair bill because he called the wrong guy to fix his television set, he might change his opinion about Tolkien's "complete lack of all interest or understanding of modern business affairs." The copyright laws are such a mess throughout the world that most writers are in the same position as the average man who doesn't know what's wrong with his automobile or if he has a clear title to land he's just purchased. The writer can't afford to hire an attorney every time he sells a story so he normally relies on his agent or publisher on the theory that those people stand to lose money too if the story falls into the public domain somewhere through carelessness. That seems to have happened in the Tolkien instance because of a publisher's oversight or the publisher's assumption that the American market wouldn't be worth bothering about.

Chester Cuthbert

Your correspondents are all more familiar with recent developments in the fantasy field than I am, so that it is difficult for me to contribute anything of value to current discussions. To the extent of a very limited leisure, I have been interested since my favorite book "The Ship of Ishtar" was serialized in 1924; Merritt is still my favorite author; but I have accumulated a considerable library and have much information available, particularly with reference to material in books and magazines published prior to 1960.

Collecting, reading and writing are my main interests; corresponding is almost my sole fan activity; but I am now engaged in compiling a Checklist of Fantasy and Science Fiction Books by Canadian Authors. Art Hayes has promised to publicize this for me soon. In this restricted section of our hobby, I probably have special information not available elsewhere, as most of my time for the past three years has been devoted to reading books possibly eligible for inclusion. Another two or three years may be required to investigate other books, some of which are not easy to locate.

I have just finished reading a historical novel "The Devil" by Alfred Neumann (translated from the German by Huntley Paterson), (New York, Knopf, 1928) and London, Heinemann, 1928, under the title "The Deuce". Although it is not fantasy, I recommend that any fantasy enthusiast should read it. A powerful and strange portrayal of Louis XI of France and his Chamberlain Oliver Necker, their personal relationships and their intrigues, probably Michael Arlen's "Man's Mortality" comes as close to it in sophistication and mood as any fantasy novel I can recall, but Neumann's is by far the greater book. I don't intend to belittle Arlen's book, which is a good one.

The fantasy field is now so extensive that clarification of the definition which warrants inclusion of a book should be attempted. Many books in both Bleiler and Day are not fantasy in my opinion, and anyone interested in comparing notes with me is welcome to write.

//Indeed, I wouldn't mind your "comparing notes" right here in Tightbeam. ghl//

Art Hayes

The main purpose of this letter was created when Ann Wilson asked me the question, "What does one write to clubs as welcome?" This question started a whole line of thought. Why does another club join the N3F? Not many do, but it does happen and nothing is done about it by either the N3F or the club joining.

A club joining the N3F MAY get the following: (1) They could submit a combozine to N'AFA. (2) They are able to negotiate an arrangement wherein the members of that club may be able to enter the story contest without entry fee (3) They get the club publications (4) They can make use of the publicity available to them in our publications.

The N3F gets another name on its roster, a group that could be put in charge of some activity such as a Bureau or a project. But neither side is doing anything to make it mutually advantageous to such happenings. It is my opinion that this should be investigated more thoroughly to see what benefits each could acquire through greater attention given to this type of thing. Both sides are losing out and nothing is being done about it. Maybe the members might contribute their ideas as to what should be done about this. It seems to me that both the N3F and the other clubs, whether they actually join the N3F or not, should be able to use each other to mutual advantage. For the clubs that do not specifically join the N3F, there is a fertile area for the Publicity Chief to investigate. For the clubs that DO join the N3F, the Membership Activities and Fanclubs Bureaus. These clubs joining the N3F could negotiate participation in Round Robins, use of the Manuscript Bureau (both as to use of material and contributing material) and better use of the Tape Bureau material (though I don't think that N3F membership is mandatory for use of the Tape Bureau service).

//Not enough room left on this page, so -- SPACE TO DOODLE IN. ghl//

Darrell Schweitzer

New Worlds, after having dropped out of the field over a year ago, has finally collapsed they say. (Source: letter from Matt Hickman in the July Amazing.) The latest issue I saw was 195 (November 1969) which was only 32 pages long, contained one serial installment, three short stories, some poetry, the book review section, and editorial. No SF, though both the shorts had some SF derived imagery. A couple SF books were reviewed.

Funny, NW was something many fans always wanted and bitched about not having -- a general literary magazine that reviews SF seriously and even publishes some occasionally. We had one for a while, and people still bitched. Guess it was because NW used to be such an important part of the field -- New Wave and all that -- and people resented its dropping out. Speculation here: I noticed that the real shift away from the SF field came right after the banning of #180. There was a complete reversal of policy. Compare editorials in #179 and #183. They used to be looking for involved stuff: "serious fiction and articles that attempt to make some sense out of today's world and tomorrow's." The idea was to satisfy both the demands of SF and the mainstream. Now then, four issues and eight months later, after the banning, threats of losing their Arts Council grant, a distributor dropping them and similar woes (including many pounds out of the editor's pocket) we were told that if you are interested in SF you can go read SF mags and the stuff they published was concerned principally with "the development of a new literary form rather than the infusion of new subject matter into existing forms." The stories changed accordingly, although #185 seemed to be an attempt to use up all the SF in one issue (it was a brilliant issue, sold out, and there's an ad in #190 trying to buy back a few to fill overwhelming orders) and they pubbed SF once in a while ("Ouspenski's Astrabahn" by Brian Aldiss in #185, and "A Boy and His Dog" by Harlan Ellison in #189). The moral of the story: New Worlds was running scared. They hadn't the nerve to keep up with the reputation they'd set. The sudden about-face came when lots of people in high places threatened them. (Funny side-thought: The magazine that received the grant from the Arts Council was the little sized thing pre-173, solidly a SF magazine. They went to the large size only when they got the money.)

The whole thing is a damn shame. Any magazine that can have the superb visual presentation of NW and publish things like Camp Concentration, An Age, Bug Jack Barron, Stand on Zanzibar (1 excerpt), Barefoot in the Head (6 excerpts), "Time Considered As A Helix of Semi-Precious Stones", Disch's "Casablanca", plus material by Zelazny, Sallis, Calder, Leiber, Carol Emshwiller, Sladek and others will be sorely missed. NW numbers #173-80 were perhaps the finest SF magazines of all time.

//On the other hand, they were not particularly well distributed over here. I for one never saw them on any newsstand. ghl//

Top bad Coven 13 collapsed. I had a little correspondence with the ditor. I said the zine didn't sell because there were no name authors in it. He said the writers he had were well known as regular writers, Hollywood writers, etc. I said they weren't known to the kind of people who were most likely to buy the magazine -- the same ones who buy all the other SF-Fantasy publications. He seemed a little snobbish, claiming he could pit these guys against the "SF hacks" anyday. The magazine collapsed. I wonder who was right?

Bob Sabella's poll sounds like a good idea though the deadline will make it only an East Coast poll since the mails will not enable people in California to receive TB and reply in time. What did I vote for? If anyone's interested; Stand on Zanaibar, ...And Call Me Conrad, The Left Hand of Darkness, "He Who Shapes," "Behold, the Man," (short version), and "Requiem" (Ed Hamilton). Author: Zelazny, Delany, Silverberg.

Pretty New Wavish. Two from New Worlds, one from F&SF, one from Cele Goldsmith's Amazing. J.J.Pierce will probably scream high treason, others

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will call me a hypocrite. I think I'm supposed to be solidly anti-New Wave, due to my contris to Renaissance (and I'm not going to stop) and the fact that I did not think Dangerous Visions to be the ultimate anthology. I'd rather not take sides, though. Holy Crusades accomplish little. See page 28 of Procrastination #4 for a startling insight into the whole matter. Contains letters from Pierce and Harry Warner, reply by yours truly.

//Well, you got your plug in for you zine after all, didn't you, Darrell? And Canticles from Labowitz (from me) is still available for only 25¢. Next issue may cost more, so hurry. (Plug, plug, plug.) ghl//

Bob Vardeman: My comments on foreign SF were based on translations, especially in the two issues of International SF (which failed because they could get enough foreign stories that were up to the level American readers expect) and a talk that Dr. Paul Lloyd gave at the Philadelphia SF Society. Let's face it; modern SF is almost a purely English language thing. Russian SF is quite good, usually, though terribly old fashioned. Sort of like what would happen if the writers for the Gernsback Amazing, or (some) the current Analog turned literate. The rest is usually imitations or worse. Dr. Lloyd mentioned plagiarisms in Spanish. I think the best foreign story I ever read was "The First Days of May" by Claude Veillot, even though it was heavily derived from John Wyndham and presented nothing original.

Pierce: The Man In the Maze was "a totality of its own." When I first read it I did not notice the significance (if any) of the name Lemnos. It didn't matter. The novel was still excellent. Your statement seems to say that it is wrong for an author to have any outside references. From this we can conclude that you want to rule out mythological references (I thought you like Rodger Zelazny?), any reference to the world at the time of the initial writing (yes Wells does this -- talk about escapism!), any other references. The author must assume a certain amount of general knowledge on the part of the reader, be it mythological or scientific. Are we to assume that if an Analog character makes a reference to the time dillitation effect, the reader shouldn't have to look it up if he doesn't know what it is? Or whould you rather have little footnotes like they did in the Palmer Amazing?

Ed Krieg: I've read England Swings SF, or at least most of it, in the magazines. It isn't really the best of the New Wave. Most of that is novels. Probably the best thing in it was Aldiss' "Still Trajectories" which is part of Barefoot In the Head and actually doesn't make all too much sense by itself.

